

TRANSCRIPT: ALICE WADE

Interviewee: ALICE WADE
Interviewer: David Cline
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DC: This is David Cline, and I am in Louisville, Kentucky, on May the seventeenth, with Alice Wade. Good morning.

AW: Good morning.

DC: We'll just go ahead and begin. Thank you very much for taking time to meet with me this morning. This is for the Southern Oral History Program's Long Civil Rights Movement recording project. What I'd like to talk to you about basically is your activism in Louisville over the years, and looking at how issues may have changed over the years and how things are now. So if we could start with—. You worked for a long time with Anne Braden at the Braden Center.

AW: Right, since 1993 in the Braden Center. I worked neck and neck with her, hand in hand. We were really best of friends, confidants, whatever you want to call it. The last three years she had began to start failing and actually lived at the Braden Center. So therefore, you were with her twenty-four/seven. On down to the end, everything that she needed, she turned to me -- to help her do her banking or go to the grocery, to be with her when she was sick. So we were just hand in hand.

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DC: How did you first become involved?

AW: I actually was with another organization, probably in '90, '91, called the Black Women for Political Action. I was with them for about a couple of years, but it seemed as though their organization, the leaders and things, started falling apart, falling down, becoming ill, and so the organization just eventually fell apart. It was a very prominent organization, but it began to fall apart. So I just sort of phased out of it and happened to meet Anne one day at Kinko's out by the University of Louisville. She swore that I was on a Kentucky Alliance Board, which I had never been to one of their meetings and didn't know anything about it. She called me later on and said, "Yes, you're supposed to attend the meeting because you're on the board." So I went to the meeting, and that's where I started for real activism was through that meeting.

Then my job went down to where -- well, it didn't go down -- I just decided I was tired of what I was doing in a nursing home. I'm a licensed LPN and I'd got burnt out there, so I thought I'll go to a home healthcare agency and that will give me a release. So I was working for an agency four hours a day, and I would volunteer at the Kentucky Alliance for four hours a day. But the agency that I was working with began to go down the drain, and I knew that eventually the agency was going to close down. So I decided, well, I'm going to go and look for another job. Anne was talking to me about it, and she says, "We don't want you to go any place else. You can use your time here." So then they began to pay me a stipend instead of just volunteering, and then after they started paying me a stipend—. [phone rings] I need to turn that off. And it wasn't long before the director, maybe it might have been six months to a year, the director resigned. Then they asked me to fill that director position. That made me full-time, so my salary

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changed. I stayed with them instead of going looking for another job in nursing, because I had really gotten burned out. I'm ashamed to say I worked in nursing for ten years, but you see so many sights and do so many things and you're constantly around death and dying, and I just got burned out of it.

DC: Um-hmm.

AW: I needed to back off and get my head clear. So when this position came open, I accepted it and I've been here ever since.

DC: Right.

AW: Strangely enough, I sort of like it. It keeps you up on day-to-day issues and happenings, and being aware of what's going on around you and being in contact with people. I'm a people person. I've worked in a lot of job positions that have been [with] people. I just like the people contact. Then I got to really exercise my politics with no arguments like sitting and arguing with you over a political favor. It's just that everybody is stressed with politics, and you can get some good conversations going and you can really see what people feel, what they would like to do but they didn't know that they could do it. So I really enjoy this.

DC: Um-hmm.

AW: I often wonder what I was going to do with my life when I retired. After I was here, I said, "Well, I can retire and still come here everyday instead of sitting at home watching soap operas. [Laughter]

DC: Right. Do you see that as your future?

AW: Right.

DC: You never stop.

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AW: Right.

DC: So were you born here in Louisville?

AW: No, I was born in Indiana and moved to Louisville in '63.

DC: What year were you born or what's your birthday?

AW: 1938.

DC: Um-hmm. And you moved here in, I'm sorry, nineteen—?

AW: '63.

DC: '63. And DC: So, can you tell me a little bit about your educational background?

AW: Well, I'm a high school graduate, and later in life after my husband died, I went to business college and graduated from there. And a few more years later after my kids got up where I had to send them to college, I went back to school and took up LPN nursing and got my license.

DC: Now the activism that you described getting involved in, was Black Women for Political Action the first organization that you got involved with?

AW: Yes.

DC: And what motivated you to get involved?

AW: I didn't know anything about the organization and a friend of mine carried me to a meeting and I saw what they were doing, and I thought, well this is nice. They dealt more with the educational system and things of that sort so I thought that's where

AW: I thought that's where I'd like to be, and they had after—. Like I say, the leaders began to get ill and fall apart, and couldn't carry on the organization anymore. They never had an election for any new officers to replace these officers to carry this

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organization on, so I said, "Well, it looks like it's going to go down the drain," and which it did. Just by luck, I was picked up at this organization. Now this organization is not so one issue-focused as the Black Women for Political Action. This organization deals with a lot of issues—police brutality, education, prison reform, medical issues because we are supporting single-payer healthcare [which] is trying to get through Frankfurt and the John Conyers bill, six seventy-six I think it is; we're supporting that whole-heartedly.

So we are more focused, universally focused, than just a one-issue organization, which makes you constantly shaking your head and scratching your head and wondering, well, we need to be over here, and what can we do over here. And you're sitting here wanting help, and we even—. People have sent people to us like we were social service, which we don't do social services. But we never close our door in their face. We always try to help find some link that can help these people's needs, too, because the way bureaucracy is now, either you got money, you don't have money, you're not eligible, you're not eligible for that. People that we're seeing, they're getting really tired and they're broken-hearted, because they need some help and everybody says no. They get frantic, though: well, what can I do?

DC: Um-hmm.

AW: So we try to figure out some links with, a coalition with other organizations where we might not have a bureaucratic link, but maybe we can get you over here with another organization that can help you better than we can, and maybe they can get you in the door somewhere. Because nobody should be neglected, but that's what's happening.

DC: Um-hmm. So it's about information sharing and organizing.

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AW: Right.

DC: Now do you consider yourself an activist?

AW: Well, I guess I would, being as I'm the organizer/coordinator of the Kentucky Alliance. [Laughter] I got to be in there somewhere. I don't think that being an organizer/coordinator that if I couldn't duck my head in somewhere, sometime, maybe not all the time, but sometime, somewhere, I wouldn't be a good representative of the organization.

DC: Um-hmm. Yeah. Can you see how your own sense of activism or yourself as activist has evolved or changed over the years?

AW: It has brought me out a lot, because I wasn't as active back before '93 as I am now. I always read the paper, watched the news and the TV. I always knew what was going on, but I never was a part of it. And I told Anne, I said, "Well, I was being at home, being a housewife and a mother to three kids." So my plate was full, but as soon as that plate began to empty and I could find something else to put on the plate, then that's when I came out. I didn't want to be sitting around not doing anything, because I think that when you do that, you deteriorate. I didn't want to deteriorate.

DC: What do you see as the most pressing issues you have in Louisville?

AW: Everything. Single-payer healthcare, pollution, police brutality, you name it. Louisville is a smudge pot, and none of it is getting solved. That's the reason we're constantly trying to get people educated and on top of this stuff so we can, wherever the target is -- we need a bounty of people there to make them see that we're sick and tired. You can't do this with one or two people. You have to have a bounty of people. People have just got so disheartened and disgusted that it seems like nothing does any good, and

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so what are we fighting for? It really becomes a little bit hopeless, and some way or another we've got to pull them out of a hopeless spot and make them realize there's still hope. There's still light at the end of the tunnel, but you've got to keep pushing to get there.

Just like the election was yesterday, the election will be in November, so the first part of the year, we really have to pounce on these new politicians that took these seats and let them know this is this and this is this. "We are the taxpayers, you are our servants, we pay your paycheck, and this is what we want. We're tired of you all saying no and handling the monies like it's coming out of your pockets for frivolous things."

DC: Um-hmm.

AW: Like seventy-five million dollars for a sports arena? But that seventy-five million dollars could have went to education to help upgrade and get better qualified teachers in here to teach these young people. That's where it could have went. Split it in half: thirty-five million to education, thirty-five million to the medical world to help these senior citizens pay for their prescriptions, instead of deciding whether they take a half a dose today and a half a dose day after tomorrow in order to stretch their medications. Or indigent people going to the hospital and being treated harshly because they don't have insurance. But you got to treat them, *but* you make them sit and wait if you don't turn them away. In certain cases, there have been people turned away, and so this is just pathetic that you throwing this money around like—. I know all you had to do is go in the next room and crank up the machines and make more money. [Laughter]

But why don't you spread it instead of spending it frivolously?

One of the reasons yesterday -- I got home and I got to thinking about it -- I did

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leave it blank, because I didn't vote for that position, was executive judge, county judge. Rebecca Jackson was our county judge, and we had a mayor. County judge always oversees the county, and the mayor the city. Well, when they merged, they decided, well, OK, there's no county judge because this is a merged metropolitan now, and we have the mayor that does the whole thing. But they got a man on the ticket running for county judge exec, and he doesn't have a job qualification.

DC: Oh, really?

AW: He goes to work everyday on his own job and draws a paycheck from county judge exec, and they don't have a clue what he's supposed to be doing. So why is that position, of about a hundred thousand dollars a year, being held there, paying somebody that's not doing anything. I would say I would like to run for that position to get four hundred thousand dollars for four years, but I'm one who likes to be doing something.

DC: Right.

AW: If I'm going to get this paycheck, then let me do a little bit of something. Give me some of my ideas or something for a hundred thousand dollars. You could use that hundred thousand dollars for something else. Our organization, give us a hundred thousand dollars, and we'll show you what to do with it. [Laughter]

DC: That's incredible.

AW: Yeah, he doesn't have a job description, but yet he's got that office. The same man that had the office from the last election, he ran this time. So far the primary he won that, so if he's uncontested in November, he'll have it for another four years.

DC: Hmm. This is just part of the politics of Louisville.

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AW: Politics. Politics. In the last eight years, I think I have really got into politics as much as knowing what politics is really about. It might have been this corrupted when I was younger, but the last eight years, I've really dug into it. I am really astounded what is being done that they get away with that shouldn't be done, but yet, you know. It's really pathetic.

DC: Have you, through the Braden Center, worked on just getting people out to vote?

AW: Not through the Braden Center, through the Kentucky Alliance, because we're bipartisan.

DC: OK.

AW: But I work with other organizations like the NAACP, the A. Phillip Randolph Institute; I've worked for them several years. Then the NAACP, too, and getting people out to vote, getting them registered to vote.

DC: Can you tell me more about the A. Phillip Randolph Institute and the chapter in town and how—?

AW: They're very forceful as far as getting people out to vote. They really put on a big campaign every election, and they get the people. I mean, you sit on those phones constantly all day Election Day. Otherwise, when it's not election time, they're very active with the unions, because A Phillip Randolph was about that. They're very active with the unions. I don't have a membership with them. I should, but I don't have time to work with them like they work outside of Election Day. I have worked on Election Day and got a little stipend, but they cut down on the money, so that's the way—. I just enjoy being out here on Election Day that I volunteer to sit and make

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phone calls and get people out, waking people up in the morning. You voted last time; do you need ride to the polls?

DC: Right. So just getting people to the polls is a challenge.

AW: Right. It is, because being registered is not the whole thing. If you're registered, why waste your vote? There's 30 things that happen, and yet you say, "Well, I don't vote." Well, you don't have a say. Now you want to tell me everything that's wrong, but you didn't go vote for somebody you thought would make it right, so you got what you deserved. So it's hard to get people—. The primaries is very light, and I don't know why people tend to treat primaries light as they do, when it shouldn't be treated that way. It should be just as heavy for the primaries as it is with general elections. But it's very light, it's a long day.

DC: I went the other night out to the Yearlings Club to listen to the Democratic candidates I guess for the Senate seat, Anne Northrup's seat. [Note: Democrat Jim Yarmouth went on to win the primary and general election.] I listened to them—.

AW: How did they sound?

DC: I was curious how they would present to West Louisville, speaking to a black audience and what the questions would be.

AW: Did there sound like any hope was there?

DC: A little bit. They sounded like politicians, to be honest.

AW: [Laughter] Only one had his own money and the other one didn't.

DC: Right.

AW: Because they think that notice in the paper today that that one guy that was the retired military man, he only raised two hundred thousand dollars, and that was just

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half as much as Yarmouth had.

DC: Right. Yarmouth put up a hundred and thirty thousand of his own.

AW: Right. Exactly. But I think that if she doesn't back down, I think he's a good person to debate her. Tony Mellon was not the person to debate her in the last election. I mean, she just jumped in there and talked all over him, and he was just shut up. I got sort of infuriated. I said, "Now, if that was your wife you was fussing at, you'd have to the biggest mouth in there. [Laughter] Fuss at her, too. But she would talk so and talk over him that he just—. I guess maybe he lost energy or something. He was just shut up, and then he never could rebound and get back on course. But I don't think Yarmouth's going to be like that. But usually, somebody she's afraid of, she will cancel debates. She did Eleanor Jordan that way when Eleanor ran, and she never had one debate with Eleanor.

DC: Hmm. So you have to see what happens with that.

AW: Uh-huh.

DC: One of the topics that came out there that night was about environmental pollution and Rubber Town, which is the other thing we are focusing on, and specifically, someone was asking about the rail cars, that they're idle next to the school there?

AW: Right. Right, and not fenced in. Well, it's not so bad that it's right by the school, but it's not fenced in, there's no security. It's like a field, and it runs right through a neighborhood that is loaded with kids, and they don't have to be school kids to go over there. You know how kids like to play, and they climb train cars and things of that sort. They could mess with a pipe or a hose that's connected to one of those tankards, and be seriously [en]dangered. I don't know why they did it, but they did, and they have not

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been able to—. I don't know; I guess you just have to keep raising hell with somebody to make them put some protection on it, or either cut the rail cars off from coming in there. I'd personally like to see rail cars stop coming through, because those are dangerous chemicals.

In fact, I live not far from the tracks, and I'd hate for anything to happen. Our area could be wiped out if something happened, tankards explode or anything. Then a track crosses the main drag of Thirty-Fourth Street where they come around, and it actually blocks this south end away from that. Emergencie [vehicle]s have to work their around past the railroad tracks to get to an emergency on the other side. Something, I don't know, seems like they could work out something to stop that. I think they should limit the amount of cars that they hook up, where you won't have to sit there waiting on to cross the track fifteen, twenty minutes, and either way you're cut off. Or maybe they should run at different times. Nobody likes night work, but maybe if you ran at night, extreme night, nine o'clock, people are beginning to settle down and not having use to the main drag. In the morning, it should never be blocked and never be stopped when you've got people trying to get to work, school buses trying to get to the kids. But they just mess it up. They usually do.

DC: Um-hmm. Do you see that, the environmental concerns, as one of the major issues right now?

AW: Definitely. Definitely. With all the—. And that has been for many a year. In sixty-three, when I moved here, it was a big problem then. It's still the same big problem. Of course, you get the politicians playing ball back and forth about the emissions. This one says the emissions is not that great, and the other one says the

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emissions are that great. Then you've got the public sitting here hollering about your health, which it is a health hazard, and then they're hollering about that we're trying to knock people out of work. We're not trying to knock people out of work, because the companies could stay here. They make enough money to do the right thing and wouldn't even feel it. So let them spend some of their money, instead of trying to take it and threaten that they're going to leave town and move to another area and give those people havoc.

DC: Right.

AW: Like Georgia, Louisiana, they already have problems with all these chemicals. Don't come running down there and add more salt to the wound. And it should be some way or another that when people in those areas hear these companies leaving and saying they're coming there, they out to be able to block it some kind of way so they can't come in. And they'd have to set where they are and do the right thing.

DC: So how do you pressure those companies? Do you pressure companies or do you pressure the politicians or—?

AW: Both. Both. And REACT [Rubbertown Emergency ACTION], the organization that Ebony runs, has been doing a very good job of that. That's the reason I asked you had you talked to Ebony.

DC: That's Ebony Cochran that I should speak to, yeah.

AW: Yes. They stay on the air pollution control board. They go to all the meetings, and they have their say at all the meetings. They've had a postcard and letter-writing campaign that really affected those people. We need those people paying attention to us. They've gone to the mayor. They've gone to the council people.

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They've gone to Greater Louisville, Inc, which plays at—. They're just the Chamber of Commerce. Used to be Chamber of Commerce; now they call themselves Greater Louisville, Inc. They've played a major part in that, so they've been down there storming their office. They're on top of it, and they're really doing a way-out job.

DC: Um-hmm.

AW: They just got to get the people worked up again. There for a minute they got the people really worked up. People were going to the meetings and things, and I guess they really don't realize that there's not going to be immediate action. It takes a while, so they're now tired of going to meetings. They don't go, and you just have a faithful few that goes. But they've got to rev up. Everybody's health is in danger. It's going to take—. They have to realize—. I don't know; sometimes I get upset with how much education does it take? And everybody says, well, there should be a good educational piece, or this should be—. It's the lack of education that these people have. Well, how much education do you need, when everything we tell you, anything we send out, we saturate the community with flyers, newsletters, and we're talking about the same thing? How much education do you need? But it's really a hard job.

DC: It seems like there was just a lawsuit filed. I got here last Thursday; I think it had just been filed that day by neighbors. The neighborhood to the west of Rubber Town?

AW: West of Rubber Town. Or south of Rubber Town.

DC: I think looking on the map, it looked like it was just west of Rubber Town. It's another neighborhood that's also surrounded by plants, but isn't called Rubber Town.

AW: Hmm, I've forgotten the name, but they used to meet with React. They sort

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of backed out because they wanted a buyout. They were talking about a buyout. They wasn't settling for anything less than a buyout, and yet they're right on the verge of African-American area that should be bought out. But what they did, they tore down the housing project in the black community, and they built these fabulous hundred and ninety thousand dollar homes. They built apartments, they built some individual homes, they built some apartments, and then they built some townhouses. They really changed the look of that area, and there when they did talk about a buyout, it was like south of Algonquin where the people—. If you're going to buy out south side of Algonquin, what are you going to do with the people on the north side? They're in as much danger as the south side, so they don't want to tackle all that new housing and stuff that they just threw up there. Because that would go into a lot of money to throw about.

DC: They wanted to buy out people's new housing?

AW: No, this area that you were talking about, it butts—. The communities butt each other.

DC: So if you bought out one, you'd have to buy out the new housing.

AW: Um-hmm.

DC: And is the new housing you're talking about, is that the Park Duvalle area?

AW: Yeah. Yeah. So you know that area. Have you seen the Park Duvalle area?

DC: Yes.

AW: So you know they're not going to tackle that, because I think that's just maybe five years old. That's a lot of money. They took the hazmat fire engine from over there at Duvalle and reduced the fire force. Now they got maybe five firemen over there

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now. And—.

DC: Based on what, on budget or—?

AW: On budget, and that they didn't need the hazmat engine there. They took it out on Manslick Road, and Manslick Road is not sitting in a situation like this area is with Rubber Town. So who understand why you take a hazmat engine that is prepared for chemicals to an area that doesn't have chemicals, and leave the area with chemicals with just plain firemen and plain machines. Now I don't know what a hazmat engine has that the other engines don't have, but they must be something special or else they wouldn't have had it over there.

DC: Right, and it wouldn't be called "hazmat!"

AW: Right! [Laughter]

DC: It seems like you've got these different neighborhoods, some that are largely African-American neighborhoods, some that are mixed or largely white neighborhoods, that are both experiencing the same air and they're both by the same companies. But has this issue united across race lines like that, or has it not?

AW: It was united, but those people, like I was saying, that wanted the buyouts, they just faded away from React, because it seemed as though they were wanting a buyout. We were more concerned with making the companies do the right thing than doing a buyout. So that's where they split. They stopped coming to the meetings, and they went their way and we're still over here fighting the cause, trying to get these companies to listen up and do the right thing. Nobody should lose their job. If it's that dangerous for the community, because there are some days that air down there is something that you can't hardly stand, the people that live closer to it get it more than the

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people that lives a little bit [further away], let's say where the Braden Center is.

But the Braden Center sometimes gets that. Up that far you get the air that is diluted down some, but the people that live right there, I said, "I don't know how you all breathe this stuff every day." But if they would do the right thing and clear that up, to make the community's health records look better, you could imagine people working in there, what is their health like? What is it going to be in a few years? But of course naturally the company is poisoning them and saying those people just want to lose your jobs and they don't really want to help you at all. At one time, REACT had the union on their side, but now the union has backed away. So I don't know.

DC: Has that—?

AW: But people are so scared of losing their jobs.

DC: Right. Do you see that as part of the sort of long story starting in Louisville, the relationship between labor and the environment?

AW: Yeah, because labor has really taken a blow in the AFL-CIO split, so they're trying to heal from that. And yet you see it every day; these companies are by hook or crook killing the unions. You still have to fight for the unions, because that's the only way they're going to get any fairness. You wipe those unions out completely, people are not realizing that they're going to catch hell with the union gone. You might think you've got a half-ass union now, but if you don't have a union at all, you going to catch hell, because then they definitely won't have to pay the labor wages. They'll just throw you whatever they decide to throw to you and probably cut your health insurance. Those were the major things that they're talking about is the increase in salaries and how much it's costing the company for health insurance. And yet these are companies that are

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making billions of dollars. So it's really a headache.

DC: Um-hmm. Let me just ask one more thing with this. We talked a little bit about Rubber Town and the Park Duvalle housing situation in Louisville and affordable housing as an issue. You're rolling your eyes. [Laughter]

AW: That's another gimmick to me. I don't see any affordable housing. I really don't. When it ends up in a certain amount of years that Section Eight is gone -- they're dwindling down Section Eight; they plan on getting rid of it. They haven't come right out and said it, but it's not going to go on forever. Those people are going to be hurt, because now you've got people paying eight hundred dollars a month for rent. If it wasn't for their Section Eight, they'd be sunk, because their jobs don't give them eight hundred dollars hardly a month, let alone a week.

DC: Um-hmm.

AW: And then you've got people out here try to pay six hundred dollars a month and they just got a job, and it's like if they get paid on a weekly basis, their salaries are such that definitely—. What if one and a half of your checks are going for rent? Then you've got your LG & E, water bill, telephone, food, because if you make that much money, you don't get food stamps. So you have no—. You've got to go out and buy your food. And they call it "fair market price." But it's really, to me, it's no affordable housing. They keep talking about it, but to me there's no affordable housing.

I know over there where I live, they got a small section that is for subsidized housing, but it's such a small area that they have a waiting list of people to get in there. I think that in a complex like that, they should have built it back, but they should have built it corresponding with the project. I don't know, maybe it might have been two or three

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hundred people out of homes when you tore it down; then you ought to have accommodations for two or three hundred people to come back.

DC: Right. What area is that?

AW: Park Duvalle.

DC: And you're in that area?

AW: Yeah. But what they did, instead of bringing the people back, they put in an income guideline. You have to make at least eight thousand dollars a year. AFDC mothers don't get eight thousand dollars a year. So why are you overlooking and leaving those people out? They said also that to get rid of the projects, they put the nicer neighborhood in and they get rid of drugs. I said, "Well, have you ever thought that the city was full of drugs before you closed the project down and tore it down? And you're just adding more to it, because now you put those people out into the community who was into the drugs and dealing the drugs, you put them in somebody's community.

DC: Um-hmm. It just moves.

AW: But on the other hand, what I'm hearing now, we have a section back over where I live that they even have the dogs down there. It's drug people now that lives back there. It's still in Park Duvalle, but it's closer. It's like the last two streets of that new subdivision, Thirty-Seven and Thirty-Eighth Street. It's almost back to where the fence goes up to the expressway. What I hear about a big drug thing going on back there, said they ought to have the dogs back there. People talk about they can't sit on their porch, they can't do this, they can't do that. I'm fortunate; I live right across from the police station, so. [Laughter] I don't get any of that baggage. But some way or another, some of them have crept in back there some kind of way, so you might as well—. If a

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spade's a spade, you might as well go on and recognize it.

And eight thousand dollars, I think, is a very unfair guideline when you knock people out of homes that don't make eight thousand dollars. Jobs are just bare to minimum of getting a job. It takes a lot of education there, because a lot of jobs, they run that random drug testing, and that knocks a lot of people out of work because of the drugs. Some of those people are into the drugs because of their income, so you just try to mix apples and oranges. It's really hard, and nobody really is trying to do as much as they can do. It's a lot that can be done, but people are not doing it. They talk about bringing the religious communities in together. There's no cohesion with religious community. They're for themselves. They don't care what's going on out here for real.

DC: Hmm. So what needs to be done, do you think? Is it leadership, or it's lacking, or—?

AW: Probably leadership. There's not much of it, because everybody's not born to be a leader. The leaders that are out here now—they call themselves leaders—they're out there for the buck, and they're making their pockets fat. They're not doing what they should be doing with the community, but that's the catch word. If you go to somebody with a program and it sounds good, well, they can get some money, and they get grants and things. And they come back, and it doesn't happen. That's what's disgusted me so much about it: it doesn't happen. In all case scenarios, it doesn't happen. You've got some that says, "Well, we got this kind of program at our church and we got this kind of program, and all you have to do is this and that." But there's a charge. People don't have the money to pay. They don't belong to the church, so that's another out. So—.

DC: I've heard people say that, that [Republican Senator] Anne Northrop has put

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money in some of the churches?

AW: Oh, she has. Yeah. Let's see, what did they say in the paper? She's been there four years, six years? And she has fed the neighborhood churches money. I think the year before last there was a lawsuit filed that the faith-based money could no longer go to the churches. It had to go to any organization, and that kind of backed off and killed it a little bit. But she's given several, several churches big bucks.

DC: Um-hmm. These are black churches.

AW: Um-hmm. Just for their vote.

DC: Um-hmm. So how do we get the next generation involved?

AW: That's a good question. You should answer that for me. [Laughter]

Because getting these new people—I call them new people—getting these new people on board, that is a headache. That is a headache, because I guess that's why they were tagged as the lost generation, because they had no education coming from their fore-parents down to them. So they're out here on their own, trying to make their own thing, do their own thing, and it's hard. It's going to be hard to turn these young people's heads and make them understand, because they didn't have parents that came down the line and brought things back to them. Because their parents were a younger set of parents, and maybe those parents didn't pass it down to them so that they could pass it down to these kids now.

It's going to be rough. It's going to be rough. It's a lot of history got to be told. It's a lot of film clips that needs to be seen to see how they got as far as they are now, because these kids have the idea that the way things are now has always been this way, when it hasn't been this way. There's been a movement that brought it thus far. There's

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a movement still going on. I guess like we are. We're trying to move it on, but it's hard to move it on. But there is a movement going on, whether it's under cover or what. There's a movement going on, and it's getting to the point, I think, that they're really in other states, not necessarily here, it's a lot of college kids getting involved. We need college kids to get involved, but we also need high school kids to get involved, because this is their life.

College kids are almost ready to get a job. Half of them go someplace else and get a job, but for the immediate area here, these high school kids, this is their job. They don't have any place to go but stand on a corner, gather at somebody's house. There's nothing for young people to do, and yet they're hollering about "Well, they're always standing on the corner." Well, where can they go? Especially in the west end. They closed down the movie theatre. There's no bowling alleys down here. There's no video game places down here. There's nothing for these kids to do.

Anything that's done is way out in the east end, and a lot of times they hardly have car fare to get around downtown. Or if their parents will take them way out there, a lot of times, with the price of gas, be riding way out somewhere in the east and then have to go all the way out there and pick them up and bring them home. You don't like to really even trust them way away from home, because a lot of things can happen. You can't keep your finger on the pulse of everything, but you keep your finger on the pulse of some things. If you know the area that your kid is running in, who your kid is running with, and try to keep your finger on the pulse that way. Other than that, it's going to be hard to keep these young people corralled in.

This is something that, you know, like Derby. They're going to stop cruising on

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Broadway, so there won't be any cruising, so you can't come down Broadway. But there will be plenty of things to do in Chickasaw and Shawnee Park. There will be cookouts, there's going to be games, there's going to be this, there's going to be that. And what do they do? It's down there, but they closed the park. You can't drive in, so how are you going to pack all your gear to get in the park? So that was to me a dumb move, but nevertheless they did. I said the city owns a bunch of golf carts; why couldn't they send some golf carts down there, have them posted up to help people get their gear into the park since you're going to close the park and I can't drive through and drop by stuff off. And where are you going to park anyway? You can't park on Broadway, so where are you going to park now?

DC: Right. And where are the kids going to go? That's the other thing I heard about the closing down of the so-called cruising and the woman I was talking to said, "So they can take their cars to the park or somewhere to gather?"

AW: Right. But you couldn't get in the park, so you couldn't—. If they don't do one stupid thing, they do twenty. It's really hard to figure out a way. But somebody's got to come up with a master plan, and I think it takes the community getting together to get the master plan. You're not going to—. And it has to start now. It can't wait until next April to start. It needs to start now. Get your plan together, get it ironclad, and then present it to somebody. And present it in a way: "If you don't do this, this is going to be the outcome. So you can take it or leave it."

But don't make their show so easy, because this year they sat back and let him soft-soak them in. He was going to make this the best Derby ever; we're going to close down Broadway and all this stuff was going to happen in the park. There would be a lot

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of things to do, but on the flip side, he didn't tell them he was going to close the parks off. You won't be able to drive through the park. I think it's a disgrace to the taxpayers that owns property on Broadway. They couldn't even park in front of their own house. They had to park on the side street. If you didn't have a back way to get into your property, you had to park on a side street and walk back. All that kind of stuff, that was just ridiculous.

DC: It feels from the outside, looking at this from the outside, that so much of this has to do with race, race relations.

AW: Definitely. Definitely.

DC: And that that, what happened in sort of closing off West Louisville, from an outsider's perspective, I think, reads as a racial, racist act.

AW: Exactly. Because the way they did it, closing Broadway off from up at the top of Broadway all the way down, it just—. Well, I call it, "They caged the West End in." They caged it in, so you're paralyzed. You can't move because Broadway runs east and west, and you couldn't even cross north and south of Broadway. They blocked off each street. You couldn't get through that. So you didn't have an alternative but stay at home or squeeze down some of these other streets. But I came to my son's, went to my son's, because he cooked. So I went to his house. I went from somewhere. Anyway, I came back by his house picking up some food. I was going to let him use my car, and he lives close to the corner, Twenty-First and Garland.

So by the time he got out into the traffic at Twenty-First and Garland, it was blocked. They were standing, sitting on top of the cars, hanging out the windows. They were just creeping, so I said, "Well, we don't want to go down—. I know down in

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Twenty-Eighth Street they got it blocked, so turn down Twenty-Second Street.” Twenty-Second Street is one way south. We went down to Dumensil, which Dumensil is one way west, which is Virginia Avenue at that point. Dumensil goes east, and they were cruising. I said, “I am so glad to see this. I am so glad that these young people took other streets and tied up the traffic.” Maybe if they did that to all the streets that goes cross town and cruised down those streets and hang up the traffic, then they’d have to pull all these police off Broadway and then see if you can get down Broadway. But you didn’t hear anything about blocking off Bardstown Road to stop them from cruising, or blocking off Preston Highway to keep them from cruising. I had hoped that they would all go that way and join in the cruising.

DC: Um-hmm. Right.

AW: But they didn’t. I guess—. I don’t know. They didn’t think of it, but that’s exactly what I would have done is just drive right on out and get in the middle of them. Dixie Highway, too.

DC: Well, I want to thank you for your time. Let me ask one last question, which is, was there a question I didn’t ask that I should have asked today?

AW: None that I can think of. [Laughter]

DC: So—.

AW: I hope I gave you the information you was looking for.

DC: You were very helpful. Any last thing that you want to say?

AW: No, I just—. It’s been a pleasure to be interviewed by you, and I’m going to stay in the struggle until the end. Even if I get handicapped where I have to get in a wheelchair, I’m going to get me a motor wheelchair so I can keep up with everybody.

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[Laughter]

DC: Excellent. We need you. Thank you.

AW: And thank you.

END OF TRANSCRIPT

Transcribed by Carrie Blackstock, December 2006