

START OF TAPE 1, SIDE A

CAPT. STEVEN CHALMERS
FEBRUARY 24, 1999

ROUVEROL: This is Alicia Rouverol of the Southern Oral History Program and I'll be interviewing Steve Chalmers of the police department in Durham, North Carolina. And today's date is February 24th 1999. And this is my tape 22499SC.1. This is the New Immigrants projects and part of Listening for a Change.

Okay. Maybe we could start actually with your work here at the police department, Captain Chalmers, in northeast central Durham both with the Latino and African American communities there.

CHALMERS: Okay. Well my role on or about, I guess, 1991, 1992, involved community policing. I was actually assigned to the community policing division of the police department primarily to create a community policing initiative for the city of Durham.

Northeast central Durham was identified as, I guess, the most devastated area in the city of Durham as it relates, not only to crime, but also to all of the different elements, and ingredients that I think that allow crime to breed in inner-city neighborhoods. So we decided to target northeast central Durham as the area to develop and test a community policing initiative.

We called that Initiative Partners Against Crime. So was, I guess, born the Northeast Central Durham Partners Against Crime. Again, which was designed to be a model for community policing in the city of Durham. That actually started around

November 1992 through the efforts of the city of Durham government to include the police department as well as community residents from northeast central Durham.

We facilitated a meeting. Initially we had about fifty residents from different neighborhoods to come out. And the one thing that we wanted to do was to look at northeast central Durham and try to determine how it got to where it was. And from once a viable community with strong support from community, strong support from government and, basically, what happened. And how to actually reverse that and to make it again a viable community and productive and for the community as well as for the city in general.

And that was at that meeting, you know, just began planning and looking at what was going on. And also to commit to the community to actually provide the necessary services and commitment that it would take to reverse that trend and get it back to where it was.

There was some skepticism, I think, initially with that. But, at the same time, there were some there from the community that recognized this as an opportunity to actually reclaim their neighborhoods. And even the ones that would seem to be skeptics at the time agreed to go along with it and they had to do what they felt they could do to take a wait and see attitude to see how things worked out.

But the one thing—well, there were a couple of things that we promised at that meeting that we felt that was necessary in order to get the community involved and also to work towards that end. And that was, first of all, that the community be empowered.

And we had gotten a commitment from the city manager at that time who was over Powell that the community would be empowered to make credible decisions as to

how it relates to what's needed in the community. And exactly how city departments would budget and provide services to that community. And we decided to move ahead with that empowerment model. And over a period of time the community basically was organized.

We conducted these assessments with the community. Different city department heads came before the community and talked about their plans and what it was they were looking at as far as implementing new projects and improvements in the communities. The community was allowed to give some feedback and actually change plans that had already been developed--and actually, some were already in the process of being implemented--because they didn't feel that was what their neighborhoods needed and it was certainly not what they wanted. So that was the first test of empowerment. And with some reluctance and some hesitancy from different department heads we were able to exercise that empowerment with the assistance of the city manager.

So, and, again, things began to happen. Within those communities they were organized. Along with the empowerment we looked to bring about collaboration among all service providers to come together in a joint effort to look at what's going on in northeast central Durham. To bring together like organizations and agencies with the same mission, to kind of come to the table and share resources and work together as opposed to separately within the communities. And try to do away with turf issues and things like that. So that in itself also was a task. But we were able to bring, I think, over a period of the next eight to ten months, probably over fifty different agencies and organizations to work together collectively within northeast central Durham to include Duke and North Carolina Central Universities. We probably had a dozen churches or

more that were involved, city and county government, public schools and non-profits and things.

So, and again, basically what we ended up doing was to try to create a totally new service delivery model. And to determine this is the way services will be provided to the community for—in the future. So what we actually—instead of going—we went, I guess, beyond community policing to community () governance where we had total governments changing the way that they provide services to the community through an empowerment model.

AR: Interesting.

SC: And what we had actually found was the fact that these once viable communities involved-- First of all, and in many cases, you had multi-generational communities where you had people who had been in the community long. Who actually were responsible for the stability of those communities over a long period of time. And being able to pass, I guess, the leadership on, down to the next generation, to the next one, to the next one. And somewhere that stopped. And now the leaders were really the older people in the community.

And that leadership had not continued to be handed down. The communities were more transient. Now there had been a lot of flight from the inner city both by blacks and whites. So your inner-city communities, like northeast central Durham, had a few older people who had just committed to stay and live their life out in these communities. And then you had a drop down to very, very young residents in the community. A lot of single parent, female, head of household. Again, communities with high drop out, high unemployment.

And at the same time, the empowerment had left and government had started now taking the leadership role as far as deciding what services the community needed and how it would be served and so forth and so on. And a lot of times what we found is that instead of investing in a community a lot of resources were being divested from the community.

AR: Right, yeah.

SC: So, I mean, over a period of time it just actually sank into the devastated conditions that we found when we went back into northeast central Durham to kind of take a real, real close and critical look at it. So, again, we had a commitment to begin to reinvest and those things we had to do was really get the community up and to support and actually become involved in the communities. And, again, northeast central Durham has proven to be an effective model of community empowerment. And the way that our government operates right now had proven to be a good model for community () governance.

We have a city manager now, Mr. Ewell, who actually is a strong advocate of community () governance. As a matter of fact, that was his style that he brought, he came here with. And, again, interestingly enough, that was basically what we were involved in. So it was almost like a perfect marriage with he being selected as the city manager for the city of Durham.

And now we have representatives from all city departments that actually work hand-in-hand with the community. They attend community meetings to hear first hand from the community what they want as it relates to their different departments. And,

basically they work to fulfill the community needs through going back and developing plans to actually mirror what the community is looking for.

Again, we've seen a lot of change in the community especially with communities like northeast central Durham who seems to be, I think, perfect communities for the Latino community residents who are actually coming into this city in numbers like, you know, we never really expected initially.

And again, I think, due to the make up of the community the opportunity to get low-cost rental property has proven to be good on one hand and bad on the other hand because in many conditions when you start to look at low-cost you start to look at low quality. You start to look at opportunities for landlords to take advantage of people who may not have means or people who are not that familiar with how to go about to assess better services and demand services that they should be getting anyway.

So we've seen a lot of that take place in northeast central Durham. Some of the problems we have initially, basically-- First of all, how do we bring the Latino community to the table? There was some reluctance there. I guess a lack of trust also and awareness as to just exactly what was going on in northeast central Durham. And we had to work on that aspect of it.

But we began to look at the problem with Latino victimization. And as far as them being easy targets for the would-be robber with money [telephone rings] due to some cultural differences that that community [telephone rings] possessed as far as banks and different things like that. [Telephone rings.] So those who would actually take advantage of these opportunities were quick to do so. Not only from the landlords but also from the people who—criminal element within that community.

And that was a problem, again, because now we had to not only look at just service delivery, in general, but specifically the way police would provide services to the community. And how to actually overcome some of those areas as it relates to communication. How as it relates to trust and different things like that. So we began to look at that particular aspect of the problem. So it was a lot of different things. Even though we were moving ahead and making a lot of headway in some ways, as we began to look at the new residents within the city of Durham, we had to kind of come back to the table because traditional means of providing services were not working with these residents within this community.

So we had to—so all of a sudden we began also to see that now this was being billed as a racial problem. The problem in the community: blacks versus Hispanics and different things like that, which really we didn't see it so much as a lot of racial problems. We looked at it as it relates to some cultural problems that—differences that we were having to overcome. That it wasn't necessarily blacks versus Hispanics or Hispanics versus blacks. It was just that you now have the coming together of two different groups who basically have not been educated on the differences and what they need to do to kind of bend and live together peacefully within communities.

All of these things were things that were brought to the table with the city manager. And what we had to do then was to start looking at how to develop a comprehensive plan to address across the board problems and concerns that exist within these communities especially as it relates to the Hispanic community.

Out of that came a task force to actually investigate the crimes committed against the Hispanics, which included members from our criminal investigations division. We

had one Hispanic officer that was assigned to work with that particular group to work to bridge the gap as it relates to communication and also trust that we get in the community and with the community.

We began to—we did a lot of things. We wrote a grant to actually—which was called Hoist, H-O-I-S-T, Hispanic Outreach Intervention Strategy Team, where we were actually able to hire either bilingual or Hispanic employees to work within the police department to work specifically with victims of crimes. To educate them on what they needed to do as far as the investigative stage, the court stage and what to expect as far as the restitution and the whole nine yards, educating them on things such as their rights and basically how the system worked. And that particular grant was funded. We were able to do that.

We began to facilitate community meetings within the Hispanic community. And identifying leadership within the communities, create liaisons with the Hispanic center and different organizations, to newspapers and things like that to continue to get information out. Through the efforts of our crime prevention to include Eric Hester.

The crime prevention officers began to do a lot of educational programs, neighborhood watch programs within the area. We had festivals within the Hispanic communities to bring them out and to get them ~~move~~ involved in crime prevention and community policing and things like that.

A push was made to hire more Hispanic officers and Spanish-speaking officers not necessarily in the police department but in all aspects of city government. Because if you come in and you have questions about your water, you know, your water bill or

something like that you have to feel comfortable in coming in and knowing that there will be someone that can be able to communicate with you and help you understand.

So all these things were things that were starting to happen because we realized that there were a lot of cultural differences and things that we really had to address before we could effectively provide services to that community. And like I'm saying, the traditional means of just saying, "The services are here you just have to come to the services." We had to basically go into the community a little more and begin to involve them.

AR: Yeah, yeah, sounds great. A couple of things that I wanted to follow up on—actually, I wanted to double check. Is that—that's the air-conditioning I'm hearing, right?

SC: Yeah.

AR: There's probably—there's nothing I can do about that. I wasn't sure if it was a fan. We'll be okay, I think, if I keep the microphone close to you.

So with this model that y'all have set up, did PAC¹⁵ exist elsewhere in other cities? I mean did y'all look outside to try to get a sense of how to handle the situation? Or did you all, between the city manager, you know, having done work it sounds like that was similar to this, was that some of the impetus for his alternative approach?

SC: We really didn't look at any other models because we knew of some things that existed in other communities and other cities. We knew that what we wanted to create for the city of Durham far exceeded what we knew existed in the other places. So what we tried to do was to develop something that was different and something that would be specifically for Durham and meet Durham's needs.

And again, with the PACS and the empowerment and bringing the government—there was a strong involvement with government and communities working together as well as all the other service providers and agencies and organizations. That's something that a lot of communities had stayed away from because of the bureaucracy, because of the red tape and because of the "turfism" that existed when you began to look at bringing different groups and organizations together to collaborate. But again, you know, we got the support from the top.

We had the mayor at the time who committed to actually adopting that particular initiative as her own. Initially going in we had a mayor who was really on his way out. That was Harry ^{Rodenhizer} ~~Rodenheiser~~. And he was actually on his way out. And we got a new mayor later, Sylvia ^{Kerkhoff} ~~Kerkoff~~. And Mayor ^{Kerkhoff} ~~Kerkoff~~ she really adopted this and helped us to fight a lot of battles and overcome a lot of resistance for different agencies and organizations that really didn't want to come to the table.

AR: You had mentioned that about skepticism. I wondered if that was on the part of any northeast central Durham community members or some of these organizations, the agencies that you were trying to bring to the table.

SC: Well, on both really. From the community, one of the things that we understood and we expected, as far as the skepticism was concerned was because they had seen initiatives like this come and go. And as you said earlier, these are communities that have been studied to death and used to death as far as different agencies and organizations getting funding and resources and things like that. And many times they have fallen short from—as it relates to benefiting from a lot of these initiatives.

So again, here we are again saying we want your trust. We want your support. We want to do this. We want to do that. And they're saying, "Yeah, okay, you know, we've been there. We've done that, you know, we're no better for it." But, again, we knew that would be something we would be up against but we went.

And again, with the different agencies and organizations, again, you had the turf issues, you know, "This is our responsibility." We know what we're supposed to be doing. We don't need any one else coming in and telling us how we need to do it or whatever and things like that.

And one of the things that we had to do was to assure them that, first of all, you're not going to lose any autonomy as relates to your—you know, no one's looking to take control of your agency or organization. The only thing we're saying is, let's come together. Let's collaborate with those who are out there doing some of the same things.

There are youth organizations that are duplicating services in the community. Okay. As opposed to duplicating, let's come together and look at what's being provided by each and basically, let's take advantage of all our resources so we can be more efficient in serving more people as opposed to just continuing to do the same thing over and over.

And again, we had a lot who embraced it. They said it's a very good idea. That's something we've been needing. So really this was a means again of just bringing resources together under one umbrella as opposed to three dozen.

AR: Sort of a scatter shot approach.

SC: Right. And so, basically, when you go into a community you have a plan to totally stabilize the community. You know, you're going to be doing—you have the

police. You've got the youth organizations. You've got the universities. You've got the churches. You have other non-profits. So you basically have your health-related organizations coming together to, you know--. You have organizations coming in to look at unemployment, education, the teenage pregnancy. You actually bring in the total program of playing to the community that can stabilize it.

Law enforcement can't stabilize the community. You can go in there—you can basically blanket a community with police officers. But as long as you leave the social and economic problems to continue to fester and grow in the community, the only thing you're going to be assured of is the fact that you're going to need more and more police to try to police the community.

But this effort was to actually get to the root causes of the problems in the community. At the same time continue to strongly police the community through a community policing effort. But at the same time to do away with the root causes. And then come back in and invest the things in the community that's necessary to return it to its viable state. And that was the plan. That really was the plan for northeast central Durham.

The Eastway School was one of the things that we were able to bring about through the community policing efforts, through the empowerment of the community. You had two elementary schools within that northeast central Durham area that were being closed. The plan was to build a new elementary school. But the plan was to build it outside northeast central Durham. Again, you know, divesting, again an anchor, two anchors that had long existed in the community.

Now it would be non-existent and instead of putting something else in there to help to maintain stability they're going to put it--. The inner-city community is too crime ridden. There's no support in the community and this and that. All the reasons in the world to put it somewhere else. So we brought the community together again and they demanded that that school be placed there. They assured the school board that the support would be there. We assured the school board that certainly we would reduce the crime. That we had plans in place and through the community policing efforts with government involvement and school systems and everything, we'll make it a safe place for a school to exist. So we were able to actually facilitate the building of a \$9.3 million facility in that community that we met at the other evening.

So these are the kind of things that had to take place in order to save that community. And we are continuing to invest, you know, back into northeast central Durham. And the community support is strong there. Some of the meetings would not in themselves kind of illustrate the type of support that was in northeast central Durham. And that leadership there has changed over a period of time, too. And we still have to kind of stay in there with the community and not just leave them to fight this battle alone. So we've got to maintain some support also with the community as far as helping to provide leadership and make it certain that they have the necessary support.

AR: Right, which means sort of sustained involvement.

SC: That's right.

AR: I think which is probably hard sometimes to, you know, justify the need for it and that kind of thing. We were talking before about the decline of northeast central Durham and some of the factors in what had made it less viable. I've done some

reading about the mills moving out and that kind of thing. Yeah, what do you think are part of the, you know, part of the reasons behind northeast central Durham's decline? I realize that's a large question, you know, it seems kind of critical.

SC: Well, again, I think you touched on the blue collar aspect of the community where you have the tobacco factories, you have the mills and textiles mills, which provided a lot of employment opportunities and other opportunities for the folks that lived in these communities. And with the decline and the elimination of these types of opportunities, again, the community began to lose some of its stability, you know, within the community. Even as it relates to businesses in general they began to move out of the communities because the support was no longer there financially, you know, to keep them in business. So a lot of these closed. A lot of them moved from the community.

AR: So industries that were linked to the mills or in some way part of that economic structure, yeah—

SC: Right. That structure within those communities. I mean you had to () corner grocery stores. You had all the little shopping centers and different things like that where, again, had strong support from the community. And as the community began to decline, and as the financial support that began to kind of falter in the community they said, "Either we're going to have to close up or go somewhere else where we can actually be assured some stronger support."

So what we should have looked at then was trying to see how to get these folks to start coming back into these communities with businesses and pushing for more home ownership programs and things like that. To come into the community for home

ownership and things like that. Again, educational programs and more employment opportunities to get the community back on its feet.

But I think, again, that was a very important reason that the community ended up getting to where it was. Again, because of that base. And again, the flight. You know, when the businesses started leaving and the older people who held the community together began to die out or move out and things like that, it only left the up and coming younger generations that really had not been a part of that structure. And didn't really have any idea of what they should be doing. So you had a big gap that was left in the community.

AR: And I've also wondered too about this impact of rental properties there and having fewer home ownership.

SC: And that's basically what happened. A lot of the properties, the properties where you actually had home owners now there are rental property because the owners in there are renting them or they're selling them to these rental companies and things like that. And with rental property comes that transient, you know, community because people are moving in this week and next month they're moving out and different things like that. And the pride as far as owning is not there.

The commitment by rental agents who live in other counties and not in the community, especially, is not there as far as maintaining the properties. They're more interested in what they're getting out of it as opposed to putting anything back in. So with that, certainly over a period of time, you know, even from an environmental standpoint, you begin to go in and you look at these communities. And they don't even look the same even though the same houses are there and have been there for forty, fifty

years and things like that. But, you know, the pride and, again, the maintenance is just not there.

So that was one of the things that we certainly had to look at when we began to develop () was the actual environment itself and cleaning up and painting. And a lot of grants were written to do painting programs and home improvement kind of things for a lot of the people who lived in those communities. A lot of the rental agents were brought to the table to basically explain to them the problem, as if they didn't know. And get some commitment, give them an opportunity to be a partner in this thing.

AR: How did they respond to that?

SC: Some responded very positively and some you get lip service and a lot of rhetoric. But it's not going to go a lot beyond that. But we were able to do a lot of things through this committee as far as creating an impact team that would go out and clean vacant lots, and weeded lots and different things like that. And work with the PACS to do a lot of these types of activities and things like that. So we were able to do a lot of things.

We were able to actually, again, through city government, to do home ownership initiatives in northeast central Durham around the Eastway School and (^{Few}) Gardens, a public housing community to identify dirty lots and/or properties that could be rehabbed or homes built for home ownership. We've been able to defeat some projects, which would actually continue to facilitate the rental kind of aspect of the community as opposed to bringing in home ownership opportunities.

So the community has been very involved and committed to returning northeast central Durham into a community where you would feel good and proud about living and

raising a family and working and so forth. What we just decided to do is to () to replicate that in other areas in inner city communities within the city of Durham.

AR: Because there are four PACS, right?

SC: There are four PACS. Northeast central Durham was the first. And now we've replicated that in the other three districts of the city right within their inner city areas.

AR: What are the other districts?

SC: Well you have four districts: one, two, three and four. And they're north, east, south and west. And northeast central Durham is really, like I said, that's northeast. So you have southwest, southeast and northwest. There again, denoted by districts. So—and they're all up and they're doing very well in actually reclaiming communities, being empowered and making decisions about the communities and things. And again, what we've actually done again is just to create a new service delivery log for—especially city government services.

AR: That's got to be tremendously costly in terms of actually having that kind of service model, I would think. I mean it sounds like it's a fabulous program. I wonder if it—has it been hard in some ways to get people to get behind that because of that kind of intensive resource demand or are people that eager to see change in these areas that they're really supportive of it?

SC: We have not really—I think the initiative itself as well as the model has been very cost effective. Because really it does not put a lot of additional demand as far as resources. Certainly, any time that you begin to provide a service to a community that

they begin to feel good about, they're going to demand more. As opposed to when things are not going that well and the city government's making all the decisions for them.

We just sit back, and we wait and whatever they bring we take it. But when things start to happen they get very, very energetic. They get very aggressive. They want more and more and more.

The one good thing about what we've done is that through being able to sit down at the table with different city department representatives and to understand what resources are available—and sometimes the only thing that you are doing is actually re-determining how these resources, and reprioritizing how, you know, your resources--. And with the understanding that this is the plan but we know we're going to have to wait for this. And by doing that and then getting the support of the community to really maintain and support a lot of the initiatives, you don't have a lot of wasted resources. So to me it has been very, very cost effective and in the long term it's going to be more so.

AR: And it sounds like it's a targeting of those resources, which makes good sense.

SC: And with grants being able to go out and levy grant opportunities. Because, you know, one of the things they're looking at is how involved is the community, you know, how involved is the partnership. And the more that you can show a partnership and work, not only with the community and the city government, but other agencies and organizations within the community the more apt you are to receive funding to actually come in and assist in doing some of these things. Here recently we received the Weed and Seed grant that has provided a lot of support to northeast central Durham with truancy, with the safe haven and—

AR: What does the Weed and Seed do? Can you tell me a little about that?

SC: Weed and Seed is actually an initiative that came out of the Bush administration. It's been around that long. And what it was is an initiative, which was designed to address crime in inner city neighborhoods. It's basically simple agriculture that before that you could actually have a field that's capable of producing good crops. You actually have to get rid of the weeds, you know.

And so what Weed and Seed is is actually a two-prong approach. This is enforcement through your weeding. And then you basically have your seeding aspect where you bring all of your other service providers together to go in together and actually provide the things that are needed, the ingredients that are needed to actually bring the community back to, you know, where it needs to be.

So you actually do the policing or you go in—and policing is actually just cleaning the surface. We're getting rid of a lot of the visible signs of problems in the community as far as crime is concerned. But the seeding comes—you actually get beneath the ground and begin to look at what the root causes are. And you get rid of those bad roots and then you come back and you re-seed with education, with employment opportunities, the different things we're doing like the safe haven and other types of programs that you're bringing into the community and the community supports.

And the policing is still maintaining and keeping it clean while that seeding, beneath the surface seeding, is being done and give that an opportunity to grow and not be destroyed before we could actually, you know, come up. So that's kind of the philosophy of Weed and Seed.

And we applied for Weed and Seed funding back in '93 but it was very competitive then and they were only identifying maybe a half dozen to maybe a dozen communities per year for funding. Here recently the funding has become more available to other cities. And we actually applied and were able to receive funding. And we're doing some very good things with the funding. Again, the things that are going on in northeast central Durham are evident.

AR: That's interesting. As you talk I'm thinking about on Native American reservations, which are often like really pretty economically depressed they've found that the more that you invest in the schools and health centers and all of these kinds of infrastructure, the more the economic level rises in the community. Have you found a connection either through studies or just what you're witnessing with the kinds of investment being made through PAC in northeast central Durham—are you seeing--? I mean Eastway is an example but are you seeing changes with all the hard work y'all have put in?

SC: Yeah, we've seen changes. And we actually brought Duke University and North Carolina Central University together to kind of study and do periodic evaluations and outcome reports on northeast central Durham to determine exactly what was working and what was not working from a perceptual standpoint, as well as from actually, you know, what is actually happening.

I mean, we've seen reductions in unemployment in northeast central Durham. And we're seeing now again more people beginning to look at northeast central Durham as a viable place to do business and to have a business and things like that. Again, and more and more people are becoming involved in the community.

So homeowner opportunity people are jumping at it to live in northeast central Durham. And most folks would say, "No. Nobody would want to buy a house here." And these are people who are not just coming in and buying homes and not being involved. They're actually taking very active roles in stabilizing those communities. So again, we've seen a tremendous change in attitudes. We've seen a tremendous change just as far as the way people act within these communities as far as the pride and feeling good and feeling safe in the communities.

AR: Yeah. It makes such a huge difference. When you talked about fifty different agencies coming together to—was that at that initial meeting?

SC: No, this was basically over a period of about eight to ten months. But myself and Carl Washington was identified by the city manager's office to work with this initiative. At that time he was an associate director of Parks and Recreation. And I think Carl and I over an eight to ten month period of time made some times two or three presentations a day almost to different CEOs and just to explain this philosophy, this concept of what we wanted to do in northeast central Durham. And to bring their agency or organization to the table or whatever. And this was the way that we brought those fifty different agencies and organizations together just going door to door.

AR: Sounds like a lot of hard work.

SC: Door to door with a little overhead projector, brief case type overhead projector and, you know, some overlays and different things like that and just giving them a picture of what it was. And also getting feedback and input from these different agencies as to how do you see yourself fitting in? What do you think we need to do to make this--? So they had an opportunity also to add their little parts, too.

So we didn't go to them with a pre-packaged and developed plan. We went with a concept, with an idea and we wanted to basically get your ideas on how your agency--. And by being involved and having a part in it they were able to take some ownership also. So when we actually brought it together it wasn't our initiative it was everybody's initiative and that really made a difference when you had these different agencies who--. And what we said, is that we want a representative from your agency or organization to be a part of this not just to attend a meeting, but this needs to be part of their job.

AR: That's great. I'm going to just quickly flip the tape over.

END OF TAPE 1, SIDE A

START OF TAPE 1, SIDE B

AR: I can really appreciate the kind of work that must have involved to make those kinds of presentations because that's how collaborations work when you go to people where the plan isn't already set up.

SC: That's correct. Right.

AR: So that they can have some ownership.

SC: They can have some ownership. And we had people from the community that were involved. ^{Callina} ~~Kalena~~ Smith, she was there at the PAC meeting. ^{Willard} ~~Will~~ Perry, who was a very strong community in northeast central Durham and who passed several years ago. Dorothy Kelly who was another community leader there. And, I'm thinking, they were basically the three most critical leaders within the community that really put in a lot of time and effort just sitting together planning and discussing and making certain it is a team.

And when we came before the community we had the city government represented, the police represented, the community represented. But we all represented one board. And we were all there as a team moving in the same direction. So the people from the community saw that unity. They saw that trust. And they saw that everyone was committed to the community. And there were no hidden agendas.

And as we indicated at one time that Carl and I were criticized as actually stepping outside of the realm of city government and policing and bringing about this type of collaboration. And that wasn't our job to do that. And we both agreed. That was not our job but nobody's doing it. So we had to make it our job to bring out that type of collaboration from the community—from all the service providers ().

Who better to do it? I mean we don't have anything to gain other than creating better communities. We can't benefit financially, you know. We don't have any other agendas. So—and by doing that a lot of folks saw that, you know, that that is true. And that, you know, so if you're committed or if you're going to commit to doing it we'll commit to working with you to make it happen.

And then again we had the support of Mayor ^{Kerkhoff} ~~Kerkoff~~. When she came to the table she adopted the northeast central Durham policy against crime as her initiative. So anyone who opposed that initiative opposed her.

AR: Was that sort of a strategy on her part to make sure it would be adopted and supported?

SC: Yeah, because we were meeting a lot of opposition because there were a lot of different agencies that—

AR: Where was that opposition coming from, you know, at least generally if you can't say specifically.

SC: I think one of it had to do with tradition, that a lot of folks just were not accustomed to operating like this. A lot of them resisted change, because this meant change. And we had to get the same support from the city manager and department heads that were resisting because of the empowerment aspect.

And now you don't have total control, you can't get behind the closed doors of city hall and make all of these decisions now. You've got to bring them out to the community and the community has got to support it. Or otherwise it's not going to happen.

So, I mean, you had a lot of resistance. Not just from outside of city government but within city government because, I mean, you know, this is a new way of doing business and I'm solidly into the way we've been doing it for years. It's almost on automatic pilot. We don't really have to do much, maybe tweak something every now and then. But otherwise it's good. Now we've got to dig in and disrupt everything. We've got to go back and make all these changes. And right now we don't know really what's going to happen. But by having that support from the top. And not only the support, the understanding of exactly how this thing is supposed to work. We're not saying, "Oh yeah, we'll support you. Go ahead." They knew exactly how it was supposed to work and they knew exactly what their roles were.

AR: That's great.

SC: So that really made a difference. You know, when you've got citizens across the board stepping up and saying, "Yes, we're committed." And we had to do a

lot of training. We had to train them as far as the philosophy was concerned. And we had to train them as far as how to be more effective in a team atmosphere and things like that. So we did a lot of that initially to get people on the board and understanding of how things needed to operate and what needed to happen and how.

And I think that's something we really need to revisit now because it's been so long since--. We really came in real hard and strong with all of these, you know, different training programs and orientating and getting support. And leadership has changed in a lot of these places and people really don't still remember or were even a part of what happened back six, seven years ago.

AR: Yeah, because we're talking like '92.

SC: Ninety-two or ninety-three we were doing that.

AR: And were these CEOs from like area businesses or RTP or you know--. When you're talking are you talking about people you were trying to bring to the table from the corporate world as well?

SC: Yeah, we brought folks from the corporate world some that--. And a lot of those basically more so for resources than anything else. Some of the folks who were regular service providers to the communities are the ones that we really tried to bring together for the partnership itself, again, the churches, the local area YMCAs, Boys and Girls' Clubs, the schools, individual schools within the communities, neighborhood organizations. Again the universities and the community colleges and different things—the United Way—

AR: So these were all part of like the fifty different agencies.

SC: Fifty, yeah, that we brought together. And then, you know, we would bring different ones together from outside of the community. A good example being the Kingdom Foundation that we brought to the table and made a presentation at North Carolina Central University. We had community there. We had some of the other partners there. And Frank Keenan himself was there as well William Friday. And we basically presented the northeast central Durham model.

And one of the things that happened that was really tremendous. And we really had no idea that we would get this kind of commitment and support. But Frank Keenan himself stood up at that meeting and he talked about how impressed he was with the model and the involvement of the community and the empowerment aspect of that. And that he was going to support this initiative. And he—they went back and they created what was known as the Durham Scholars program with, I think, \$3.6 million dollars, if I'm not mistaken. That was the amount that they committed.

And he indicated that that day that he felt that education was key and critical to a community like northeast central Durham. And he felt that with looking at the high drop out rate and the percentage of folks over the age of twenty-five who had not completed high school, that that number would not repeated if kids felt that when they graduated from high school the resources would be there to allow them to go to college. And he wanted to ensure that those resources would be there. And that a kid in northeast central Durham who had graduated from high school and applied to a college or university in the city of Durham and was accepted would go free. And they put that money aside through the University of North Carolina to kind of oversee, to come in and identify and target

youth from middle school and worked with them right on through high school right into the universities.

And this is the type of commitment, some of the types of commitments that we received for northeast central Durham. And again—and I think that the reason that we received that commitment is because of the way the actual initiative was designed with the community being the driving force.

AR: Which is how in some ways sustained change, I think anyway, happens. Because if it's from the outside then the outside comes and goes.

SC: And it can only be sustained as long as the outside remains on the inside. As soon as they move back out it actually goes down because the community—if not a part of it. If they don't have ownership they're not going to support it. And they're not going to sustain it and make it continue to work. And that's what we've done in there because we've explained that we can't always be there. We can provide maintenance but you're going to have to sustain, for the most part, all of these different initiatives. And the stability of the community is going to be in your hands.

And that's why I'm saying in long terms, especially how cost effective what we're doing is going to be because you're not going to have to continue to put resource after resource into the same hole. And once you put it there they're just going to work to stabilize and encourage it so that hole doesn't exist any more. You can move on and deal with other issues and other problems and concerns.

AR: Yeah it's interesting because it seemed like going back and looking at the history of the area and realizing how in times previously a lot of the tobacco money had found its way and supported a lot of the infrastructure stuff. And then it seems like

somewhere along the line that support seemed to dry up or--. I don't know what the story was maybe with the mill closing and the loss of resources there. But it seems like without that, as you're saying, without that outside support, you know, how do you build that infrastructure?

SC: And it's, again, sometimes, again, it requires doing some of the things that we've done. That's going out and getting that outside support to support things that are going on inside and just creating more opportunities. And sometimes those opportunities may be necessary to right within that community. But there's an opportunity for folks who live in these communities to be able to actually rise above a certain level to be able to provide for their families and for themselves and to reclaim some of the pride that goes along with, you know, making these neighborhoods--.

Now we're bringing in again initiatives. We created, for instance, the reinvestment center in northeast central Durham. It's out of Holloway Street School. Again, an opportunity there for people to—right within their community—come to a location where they can identify what kind of resources are available to them. And then, actually, be allowed to go from that location or be transported from that location out to wherever they need to go and brought back into the community.

So, you know, what we are looking at with this model was to actually bring resources within the community, governmental resources. We got a commitment from city and county government to come together to create the reinvestment center. The county actually funded a full-time position for that particular site. And we purchased two vans with volunteer drivers to actually transport residents from northeast central Durham

back and forth to different locations so they could access different services that are provided by city and county government.

AR: Well, great. So the people could actually get those needs met that they might not otherwise have been able to make, yeah.

SC: So this is a place you'd come by, first of all, to sit down and talk with someone who understands your situation or your position and be able to look at your situation and recommend and familiarize you with what's available and—

AR: It's almost like putting northeast central Durham back on the map in Durham, you know, in terms of people being able to be heard, you know. That's pretty critical. So how would you say that the Latino story has fit into this? You know during the early nineties there would have been a growing population. How have you seen the needs met?

SC: I think initially with that population, it was growing all the time, but it was almost like we didn't recognize it. You saw it but it just didn't really register what was going on. And it was not until I would think probably '95, '96 that we really realized that, "Man, we've got a real strong Latino population here. And we need to really start to look at how we're providing services." Especially with some of the things that we talked about earlier with the crime and the different things that were going on in the community.

And again, I think that kind of goes back to where we had actually started with northeast central Durham in '92 and things like that. That we had founded--we had developed a process that could take us really from a devastated stage of existence to really a more viable stage. And we had done that with those residents and those areas of northeast central Durham where we were working. Now we had to go back and do the

same thing again. But this time we had to actually begin working again involving the Hispanic community.

But see the only thing about that process was that that process must continue to actually go over and over again. You never stop. You have to go back again to reorganize the community, re-establishing priorities and needs, re-establishing partnerships. I mean once you get to where you think you've done everything that you can possible imagine that you can do you have to start over again. [Laughter] And that was one of the things that we had to come to the realization of is that when we got to the end we said, "Well we're at the end." And then you're saying—then things start to fall through the cracks again. And then it actually came to us, "Well we have to start over again."

So what we had to do then, we had to go back and start again but this time it, again, involved the Latino community, which means with some of the barriers we had to go outside and get, identify people outside the community to come in to serve as liaisons, support organizations, people they trust. The Hispanic Center was one. We had to go across the street over here to the Immaculate Conception Church here and meet with the father there to get his support as far as bringing our groups together. And just started to work again within the community to build some trust because if you don't have the trust and—you know: communication, trust and understanding. Those are three things that we've identified that you must have. And one kind of leads to the other, you know.

A good strong communication policy—communication leads to your understanding. Your understanding leads to your trust. So we had to actually start from scratch and work. And we've been able to do that. I mean we've been able to do a lot of

things in the communities. The officers began to spend more time. Now we've started to do a lot of crime prevention programs and community policing programs in the communities, festivals and things like that. Just positive interactions. It worked.

If you look at how we went from the crimes being perpetrated against the Latino and from the lack of assistance and cooperation to ultimately going to court and having them come to court and testify against—given information and identifying actually suspects and things like that. It wasn't easy but we were able to do these things because we actually went back through that process of developing trust with the community. And now the thing of it is is to keep them involved, and to recognize that it's one community. You don't have a black community and a Latino community. You only have one.

And when we went into this with northeast central Durham one of the walls we had to tear down was the wall that separated public housing residents from non-public housing residents. We tore those down. See? There's one community. Whether there's a public housing community here or a non-public housing community here, it's just—these are communities. And we don't label.

So once we began to take away those labels--this is a Hispanic community, this is a black community, this is a public housing community, and bringing people together because the more you begin to label people and put these labels up, the more people begin to identify with these labels. So we say we need to tear down the labels. Get rid of labels, tear down the walls and bring the total community together to work as a community hand-in-hand. And the same thing that we've had to do with the Latino residents in the communities. You know, you're part of this community.

AR: Yeah, which in some ways sounds like it's trying to find a point of connection and move away from the points of difference or, you know, de-emphasize those.

SC: That's true.

AR: Because that's interesting because I've talked with different people. You know, some people have talked about--some of the African Americans are concerned about, you know, job loss potentially. I mean there's issues like that that seem to polarize people a little bit. Other people have talked about simply differences in cultures and so it's hard to connect across those. What do you think are some of the strategies for how to—as you say—bring these communities together in to one community?

SC: Again, I think it goes back to just being able to come to the table and talk and air your differences, and concerns and things like that. Because once you do that, once you are able to do that, and not fear that it's going to be taken the wrong way or that you, again, once you recognize that you are warned you try and find out what the concerns are, that you are able to come to the realization that they are not really problems at all. They may be perceptual kind of things that once, you know, you begin to understand what's going on you realize, "Okay, I didn't, you know, see it like that initially."

And that's one of the things that we have worked towards making happen, is just being able to look at that. There are plenty of employment opportunities that are out there. And one of the things that we're finding is that the Latino brings a strong work ethic to the community. I mean, and they're going to be very aggressive as it relates to going out and getting jobs. And these are not jobs necessarily that they're taking from

anybody else. Nobody else has not taken the time to go out and get. So you have to kind of look at it the way that it actually is. And if--.

We've shown, again, that there are plenty of employment opportunities there. We brought different businesses and organizations to the table that—even on a given Saturday morning we've been able to put twenty, thirty people to work. Not just going out and doing minimum wage jobs, but actually jobs that they can go to and be trained and have a trade and being able to actually provide for their families with good benefits and things like that. But, again, it's just that the community needs to be able to not criticize but to come together and plan and develop means of addressing problems, and concerns and issues that exist within the community. And, like you're saying, instead of accentuating the negative things that you can identify begin to look more at the positive things and the benefits that can exist from those things that exist in the communities because there's nothing bad about diversity.

AR: Right, right.

SC: I mean that's a positive.

AR: That's a good word.

SC: That's a positive.

AR: Yeah, exactly. You know it's interesting about what you were saying before about perception and sort of perception around crime problems or situations, issues in general. You had--I think I mentioned to you about the series of newspaper articles that had come out about, I think it was El Centro. A meeting that had been held and it was hard to read from the newspaper articles what had really happened there. And I wondered if you could shed a little light from your perspective on what were the issues

there. It sounds like it was maybe right during that time as the police department was building these—trust in the community.

SC: And I think there were a lot of issues and a lot of them had to do with perception. And the police department, again, within the walls of the police department was actually developing plans and working very, very diligently to address crime within the communities where you had a large population of Hispanics. Investigate the crimes, identify suspects or whatever---. These actions were not being from within the communities where you had the crime being occurred, had the crimes occurring. So, in essence, there was the perception that nothing was actually being done.

AR: Oh, I see. That's interesting.

SC: Again, being able to come to the table to show basically what was being done at the same time being able to draw from the support organizations and the residents from the community as far as ideas and things that we could do better. And how to forge partnerships with them is really what got the ball to rolling.

Because, first of all, they began to look at us as, "Okay. Yes we do recognize that you are doing some things. And now we recognize what your concerns are because we can understand why you would feel that way because you didn't know what was going on." But being able to come together to create this partnership to share information, to work together hand-in-hand it eliminates that not knowing. You know, where the left hand is not knowing what the right hand is doing kind of thing. During the time I was in community policing I maintained on a daily basis [SC moves away from microphone] articles—

AR: Wow. Look at that.

SC: That came out—

AR: No kidding.

SC: Of—

AR: This is great.

SC: The newspapers () with those particular issues.

AR: Right. Look at these. [AR looks through articles.] News article notebooks, July 1, '97 and August 4, '96 through June 30, '97, wow.

SC: And for three months I was at the FBI National Academy from late September to the middle of December this year, last year. And I took a media course and I did a case study.

AR: Oh wow, look at this. This is great! "The Victimization of Durham's Hispanics", "Durham Hispanics: A Case Study". Yeah.

SC: But this was—and I included a lot of the articles and different things that—

AR: Interesting.

SC: But again the magic behind bringing all of this together and making things happen was dialogue.

AR: Yeah. So at that juncture what you're saying is that the dialogue hadn't yet started?

SC: It had not started. And I mean, Evon Pyra, from the Durham Hispanic Center--. But basically--. Hector ^BForges, the police officer that was placed on the task force to work in the community. But, you know, these are some of the things that really allowed us the opportunity to understand better what we needed to do to better serve the

community. But, I mean, we had meetings with the city manager. And I was looking for some of those articles. [SC leafs through articles.]

AR: It sounded from one of the articles as though that was supposed to be a public meeting or something and they weren't letting people—or whether there was some question about whether this was a Latino only meeting or--.

SC: Well, yeah, that was one of the meetings. And, again, misunderstanding. Once we had an opportunity to come together, and sit down and talk about that, that was so--. This was one of the meetings that we had right here. [SC shows article to AR.] The city manager met with different leaders from the Hispanic community.

AR: October 25th '97, *Herald Sun*.

SC: Yeah, and again, even—this was October '97, we—

AR: I said the *Herald Sun*.

SC: Yeah. But we basically talked about how good it is for the police department and the community and the city manager and government to come together talking. To taking these steps and work with the community.

And again, this was what we had to do. We had to go back and do the same thing that we had done in northeast central Durham: empower the community, bring them together, begin to do some things to actually demonstrate that we are sincere, that we want to do a better job, and recognize and accept the fact that, first of all, we have not done the best job. Okay?

AR: Yeah. That's human nature.

SC: Yeah, yeah. Just, let's okay. Let's just go ahead on and cut to the chase. We have not done the very best job that we could have done. We've done what we

thought we were supposed to be doing. But we really have not done the things that we really needed to do.

AR: It sounded like you needed to educate yourselves, which is what you did basically.

SC: We did and the only way to do that is by coming together. And, I mean, the more that the two of us sit here and talk about different issues and life experiences and where we've been and how we got to where we are and our ideas, the more we're going to understand each other.

And again, those three words are something that I've used for years: communication, understanding and trust. And even during my criminal investigation days I—even with a suspect. You'd sit down and you'd talk to them long enough, he's going to understand you a little bit better and he's going to trust you a little bit better. And later on you'll be able to get him where you want him to be. You just can't go in there and start popping questions. You've got to get to know one another and get beyond a uniform or a badge or the color of your skin and different things like that.

We may look different but we have a lot of things in common. We feel—we want the same things. We want to have a safe community. We want to be able to provide for our families. We want to be treated with respect. And as you begin to talk to people and understand people a little bit better and as you begin to make headway into doing things and fulfilling promises and goals and things people begin to trust in you more and work with you a lot more. And these are the things that we've been able to do through northeast central Durham and now we're doing it again through the Hispanic community.

So next month, next year, if we have a different group that'll begin. We've got to realize automatically, we've got to go back and start to integrate and start doing some of the same things regardless of what group it is of what part of town they're living in or whatever the case may be.

AR: Right, exactly. That that's part of living in a multi-cultural world.

SC: It's part of it, yes.

AR: Now when you were talking about--. Let's see going back to just a moment ago about--. Oh yes, about sort of the efforts that you have made--. Obviously educating yourselves to sort of what the issues are, what the concerns are for the Latino community. What are—where's the police department stand now in terms of number of Spanish speaking officers? You know the types of services that you all are trying to provide?

SC: We basically have offered Spanish classes. But we've--actually people come in and teach Spanish. We've had some officers that have voluntarily gone back to school on their own to learn Spanish. We're doing strong recruitment now to identify and hire Spanish speaking officers. Right now I really don't know how many Spanish speaking officers we have now as opposed to back when we were doing this, which we had only about two. We lost one to a federal agency, which left Hector. But I know we had another officer that actually has gone back and taken Spanish as a—to get a B. S. degree.

AR: Interesting.

SC: And he already has a B. S. degree. So he's going all the way back through. And one of the other things that we did when I was in community policing was to start a

volunteer program. We have actually a list of Spanish speaking citizens that agree to attend meetings, translate documents, do whatever we need to help us to be able to better and more effectively communicate.

AR: That's a good idea.

SC: And I started that when I was down in community policing. And a great aid, real great aid to us as far as continuing to do the recruitment and things. And like I say, I don't have the numbers right now.

AR: The stats.

SC: The stats to be able to identify how many more we have now. But those are the efforts that have actually been continuous.

AR: And have you seen any impact as a result of the kind of changes that you all have made with reaching out to the Latino community? I guess you know the crime rate—it seems like we hear less about, you know, people being assaulted and—

SC: I think it has had some impact. I mean the education in itself as far as how to be safer in the community and how to make yourself less of a potential victim of crime has helped a lot. We've been able to do that through education and training and different programs and things like that. Also through working with the banks and helping to establish counseling and getting ways that they can actually access those institutions a lot more to keep all that money out of their pockets and out of their homes.

So, again, just being able to—it's been like I said. We've been educated. The Hispanic residents are being educated. And by doing that and coming together and working together we've actually reduced the potential for crime. And this last court case, I mean, can't help but have had an impact with the way that we rigorously prosecuted this

case and the outcome of it. So it lets folks know too that this is not something we're going to tolerate. We're certainly not going to turn our heads and sweep it under the rug.

AR: Right. Do you want to elaborate just briefly on that case just for the record here?

SC: Well certainly we were able to actually make several arrests on the home invasions which in many cases involved physical assault, sexual assaults and other types of threats and intimidation. These individuals were arrested. They were prosecuted through the courts. There was no plea bargain with these particular cases. And ended with substantial prison terms, which means it will be a very long time before these individuals are able to come out and victimize anybody.

And again, we wanted to send a clear message that we felt that these crimes were heinous. We felt that in many cases, to put it lightly, they were hate crimes because people were identified because of their race to be victimized. And with the different things like that is that we will not allow folks to look at any resident in any community as anything other than a valued citizen of part of that community.

We felt, and I have said before with different interviews and talking, that I feel that the Latino community actually is a very positive addition to our community. They've brought a lot of positive things into the community. Again, they bring diversity, high work ethic, very, very strong family oriented type community. These are things that we need to help stabilize the community.

Our quest is to go out and to integrate these communities and make them one instead of, in certain areas, get enough wall to separate them. And I think we sent a clear message with what happened with this last situation.

AR: Yeah, great. Maybe we could switch gears a little bit and talk a little bit about---unless there's more you want to add on that front. And maybe kind of switch gears a little bit to---you know, at least from what I understand from Jackie you grew up in---you're a long time Durham resident. And it might be nice to talk a little bit about your, you know, what you have sort of experienced seeing the changes in Durham. Did you grow up in northeast central Durham?

SC: No, I didn't grow up in northeast central Durham. I grew up, as a matter of fact, right close to downtown, which is on the outside of northeast central Durham on the south side of the city. And I grew up in an inner city community very closely related to some of the neighborhoods that we're working in.

As a matter of fact, the community I grew up in---they called it the bottom. And it doesn't exist anymore. But Dirk Street duplex houses. What they call shot gun houses. You know, you open the front door you look straight through to the back door. And I lived in a little three room duplex house in the bottom, is where I grew up at.

And like many during that time it was multi-generational where you had--. Sometimes you actually had three generations in the same household. A very strong support. And one of the things that I say about our community is that we had a lot of things that existed in northeast central Durham when we went in, but we had stronger support mechanisms within the community.

AR: Yeah. That's true.

SC: And sometimes it was not at the magnitude that existed. You had teenage pregnancy and some of the parents--. But you also had stronger support in the community that would actually bring them in and provide to them the educational support

to be and to raise children, a child or whatever. And as far as the employment opportunities were more so you had opportunities to do things. Again you had more stability within the community. And again, I look back at growing up. We didn't have a lot but—we had the same thing every one else had. You were poor but you didn't know you were poor.

AR: Exactly.

SC: And I laugh and—because I can remember. I can remember crying as a small kid when one of my friends moved out of the community into public housing. And we went to visit. And I saw that they didn't have to make fires anymore. We were still burning coal and cutting wood and making fires and things like that with the big, warm morning heat and things like that. And I cried because I wanted to move into public housing because public housing was something that was really looked upon as being something nice.

And it just shows how perceptions change as time goes by. How positive that aspect of public housing because it was a stepping stone. It got you from-- You ever heard the song "Moving on Up"? You were moving on up. You were moving out of the bottom into public housing then the next step was public housing on to the next step. So I wanted to start moving on up.

And but again, it was just the way it was viewed from that perspective. But again, when we went into northeast central Durham, again, from standing on the outside looking in you could see the same types of houses but the people were different. And I think that's really what makes the difference when you go into these different communities.

And what we're showing now that with northeast central Durham there are people becoming more and more involved. That that is what's happening.

But what's happening in my community again, a lot of things started to happen, urban renewal and different things like that. We were actually pushed out of the community. But you know we had to--.

And my parents, I came from a home, which had both parents there. My father was a plasterer by trade and basically that's what he did. Sometimes when work was light or he didn't have a lot of work in Durham he'd have to go to work in Washington, D. C., New York and come home on weekends where he could find the work. My mother, after I was born, went back to school to be a nurse. And as a matter of fact, she's actually retired now but she still does some nursing () to the nursing now. And they worked very, very hard. And I had cousins next door. I had an aunt across the street. My grandmother lived one block down. And even in between that you had your extended family because everybody kind of looked out for everybody during those times.

And that's another thing that you didn't see even though the community looked the same. People didn't know each other like they did when--. I mean when I was a kid I could go out in the community and run and play all day all around the next block and over and my parents didn't worry about me because they knew where ever I was I would be taken care of. People have gotten more into themselves. When we went into northeast central Durham into these neighborhoods weren't nothing like they were when I was growing up.

AR: So that in some ways with some of the housing developments then kind of the fabric of the community would have been dislocated--

SC: Absolutely.

AR: Because you wouldn't have the same configuration in those houses.

SC: Right. And you know with the displacement things started to happen and people were going off in many different directions. And again, like I'm saying, some of these communities had been sustained for decades, you know, just by the different generations that grew up and lived in the community. And once that started to happen, I mean, you know, that was kind of like the beginning of the end for a lot of these communities, people being displaced.

AR: And you would have been in what year so just to figure out the—

SC: Fifty-three.

AR: Fifty-three. So you would have been coming up--. Like didn't ~~Fugue~~ ^{Few} Gardens and a lot of those developments go in in the late fifties?

SC: In the late fifties. ~~Fugue~~ ^{Few} Gardens was the first public housing community that was built. And it was built, I think, sometime in the late fifties.

AR: So you really would have grown up with seeing that going on.

SC: And I can remember going into ~~Fugue~~ ^{Few} Gardens at an early age because--. As a matter of fact, there were a lot of whites that were in ~~Fugue~~ ^{Few} Gardens initially until later it started to move the black families in there. But I can remember going to visit some relatives in ~~Fugue~~ ^{Few} Gardens and I can remember how beautiful it was.

And again, just saying that in the community that I referred to when I was growing up and my friend moved to was McDougall Terrace. And I can remember going and visiting. There was a family that was very close to my family on ~~Arthur Drive~~ ^{Doggins}. I'll never forget. And they lived there for years. They eventually moved out. But to go in

and, I mean, hardwood floors and an upstairs and a downstairs and different things like that. And here I'm looking at a three-room house.

But again, as that began to continue to happen and folks began to move on out of these communities—and again, your older people staying. The younger people as they began to go into working and raising a family began to move out. Then, again, the ones that started to come in later on were the ones that were really not attached to the community, that had no ideas as far as the history and, you know, of the community and things like that. So you lost a lot.

AR: Right. Well and a lot of people now call that sort of urban removal.

SC: Urban removal.

AR: Not urban renewal.

SC: That's exactly what it was.

AR: And, you know, it just seems really ironic that the costs were so much higher than people anticipated. And so growing up in that time period then you would have seen a lot of changes, I would think, with schooling and, you know, integration.

SC: Well certainly, you know, we had the neighborhood schools. In that day you walked to school. And there was a strong sense of community even in the schools. There was even a strong sense of partnership between the parents and teachers in the school.

One of the things I can remember is how strong the PTAs were and the different things that we were involved in in schools and things like that. But now with, again, the way the schools are structured with busing and different things like that you still don't have that identity. When your kid goes to school all the way across town and things that

happen in and around the school pretty much does not really impact your neighborhood that much. So it's been a lot of changes. And some, I guess, you could say good and bad. As you begin to look at what the benefits are you don't anticipate a lot of the negative things that go along with that.

AR: Yeah. People have talked a lot about how the loss of the black schools actually ended up really costing communities. So would you have experienced some of the black schooling early on. Black schools before going into integrated schools.

SC: My school was integrated my senior year in high school.

AR: So you really did—

SC: So I grew up pretty much in neighborhood schools with predominantly black schools. Again I graduated in 1971 from Hillside High School. And my graduating class was the first integrated class at Hillside.

END OF TAPE 1, SIDE B

START OF TAPE 2, SIDE A

AR: This is Alicia Rouverol at the Southern Oral History Program and this is a continuation with the interview with Steve Chalmers of the Durham Police Department here in Durham, North Carolina. Today's date is February 24th 1999 and this is my tape number 22499SC.2. And this is the New Immigrants project with Listening for a Change.

So you were saying that yours was the first class at Hillside—.

SC: At Hillside High School, yeah.

AR: What was your experience with integration?

SC: Again, it went surprisingly smooth. And I think our school administrators had prepared Hillside being a predominantly—well, being a black school for all these years with the background and heritage that it had that they anticipated a lot of problems with this integration.

And one thing, again, going back to what I said earlier that any time that you put people together regardless of how different they seem, once they have an opportunity to actually be forced to share the same environment and forced to interact and communicate. Again, that process starts the communication, the trust.

Before probably the school year was half way over you saw blacks and whites walking together, forging friendships, visiting one another. I mean the whole nine yards. And I played in the band in high school and the same thing happened there. I mean, we found that, you know, when you put a sheet of music there you play the same way I do. You know, it's no different. I mean it was a very, very positive experience for everyone involved. And we went through that school year with no major--.

AR: That's amazing because you hear in some schools real horror stories of what children experience.

SC: No major problems at all. I tell you. And a lot of the students I still see now that went to school with () on top of everything. But it was felt there would be a lot of problems. But again--. And we were very, very cautious. I think everyone was kind of on guard initially not knowing what to say, not knowing, you know, kind of staying to yourself because early on you could tell it was two groups. Even if you couldn't see their color you could see that this group stayed together, this group stayed together. But again, being forced to sit beside different ones in different classes, eat in the same cafeteria,

march side by side and start to laugh and joking. And before long the walls came tumbling down. And again, that's what can happen if you allow it to happen.

AR: Yeah. It's great that that was a positive experience for you. So then after high school you would have gone on. Somehow landed here at the police department. What led you here?

SC: Yeah. After high school I went to a historically black university. I went to North Carolina A&T State University in Greensboro where I was actually there for four years. And got a degree in political science and graduated in May of 1975. And always had plans to go to law school. That was what I had planned to do and become an attorney. After four years I made the mistake of my life. I said, "I'm going to take a break." And when I came home my parents said, "Well, if you take a break you're going to be working." [Laughter] So I said, "Well I can work for a year or two and then I can go back to law school." Then I was going to go to North Carolina Central University law school. And I put in an application down here at the police department. At that time we had public safety where we did police and fire fighting. And in July, about two months later, I was here.

AR: Wow.

SC: And so I was out of school for two months and I started working here. I've been here it'll be twenty-four years, I think, in July. And, you know, I came on the police department and went through rookie school for four and a half months. And once I got on patrol I enjoyed—I enjoyed police work but I never enjoyed uniform patrol. And in fourteen months I made detective. And I think that was really what kind of moved me away from going to law school. I began to work investigations and I really felt it was

real challenging. I enjoyed it. And I did that for seven years working in criminal investigations and did that for a while.

Then I was--. Durham, in 1983, Durham started its Crime Stoppers program. And I was selected to actually help develop and coordinate that program. And I helped develop the Crime Stoppers program and I coordinated for four years. And really enjoyed that. And that's when I really started to work more with different organizations and things like that because Crime Stoppers had a citizens' board of directors. And I worked with citizens on a regular basis doing fund raising and working with the program.

I helped develop a southeastern Crime Stoppers association. And I served as president and vice-president of that association during those four years. And in 1987 I spent from '87 to '88 I spent one year in crime prevention.

AR: Interesting.

SC: And again, working with the community and developing programs: Neighborhood Watch and programs like that. And that was actually when we—I introduced the community to National Night Out. That's when we started celebrating National Night Out was in 1987. And—

AR: What is National Night Out?

SC: It's a national program for communities. Neighborhoods come together to demonstrate neighborhood solidarity and to turn the light on on crime. [Telephone rings.] You know, everybody can turn their [telephone rings] porch lights on. They have community festivals and different things. [Telephone rings.] And on the first Tuesday in August of every year, the country [telephone rings] celebrates National Night Out. [Telephone rings.] So neighborhoods all across the country come out.

And we began, we started to celebrate National Night Out back in '87 while I was in crime prevention. And then I spent a year as community relations. I developed the community relations program in 1988 to start to bring, again, the police and the community closer together to dispel rumors and just to kind of enhance understanding and communication and things like that.

And that was the year we started the citizen police academy. We've done about twenty-one of those now since that time. But we bring people from neighborhoods together, from different communities, on two nights a week for six weeks to educate them about the police department. They'll able to ride along in police cars and things like that.

AR: How interesting.

SC: So we do two of those a year now. And also we started a summer youth academy that we're still doing that we--. Four times a month for four weeks a month we bring about thirty, thirty-five kids in and provide a free week's camp where we provide them with educational programs and recreational programs and things like that at no cost.

AR: Wow. That's great.

SC: So I did that for--. And then in '89, I think that's when I was promoted sergeant I had to finally go back to the streets after about fourteen years. So you know that was kind of a culture shock for me going back on the streets after about thirteen, fourteen years. So I went back out for about two and a half years and came back in. And back in the community policing. And started to work to develop the Partners Against Crime initiative and promote () encounter.

AR: Yeah. It's like all of that would have really kind of completely paved the way or sort of prepared you for the work with the PAC.

SC: And that's one thing that—and I think it really was an advantage for me that from probably 1983 on I was really outside of the box. I was way outside of the box with the things that I was doing because then I began to get more on the cutting edge of law enforcement where I at least knew community policing initiatives were being developed and the partnerships and things like that. And it kind of helped me better understand really what needed to happen in order for us to be successful in reaching our goals as far as law enforcement and protecting the community was concerned.

We couldn't operate within a vacuum. It really had to get out, and collaborate and bring a lot of folks to the table, especially the community. And how--actually, you know, by having the community involved can make things so much easier. And long term—and especially as it relates to long term sustainment.

AR: Yeah. No kidding. With Crime Stoppers, just to make sure I understand that because I think that the neighborhood meeting that I went to on Barnes Street--was that part of Crime Stoppers?

SC: That was Neighborhood Watch.

AR: Neighborhood Watch? Okay are those--?

SC: They're separate.

AR: Separate programs.

SC: Neighborhood Watch is really a crime prevention program where they bring the community together to actually look out for the community. Crime Stoppers is a program where you actually advertise information about unsolved crimes and you pay rewards to people who actually provide information that leads to an arrest of—and arrest and clearance of these different cases.

AR: So kind of two different—

SC: Yes.

AR: Yeah. Wow. So just to kind of come back here—I know we've taken a lot of your time here--. Just to kind of wrap up a little bit. I'm kind of wondering about-- we've talked a lot about PAC and the PAC and NECD and also about the Latino/African American relations and questions about that and community. And kind of where I've been landing on some of these interviews is to talk a little bit about what someone sees as a good strong community. Like what defines a good, healthy community because in some ways if that's what all of us are trying to create in different ways—whether it's the crime, or through oral history projects or whatever—

SC: I think there are a number of things that define a nice strong healthy community. I think one has to be the attitude and how the people in the community feel about themselves as well as the community that they're in. Another has to be the involvement.

And what you actually see going on in the community not from outside in but from the inside. What's actually going on and what the people are involved in and what they're doing as far as the taking the ownership and empowerment to actually make things happen in the community. Another thing, I think if you can imagine is actually being able to take a series of snap shots and see what type of transformation is actually taking place.

AR: That's interesting.

SC: You know within those communities. And see that's one of the things that I do when I go into communities and start doing problem solving. I've done leadership

development training and things like that in public housing communities and different other communities. And that's one of the things that we always do is to take a couple of snap shots initially. A snap shot of your community as it exists now.

And also, what it is that you would like your community for like five years. And then determine what needs to happen to get it from here to here. So these snap shots that you have taken over the last three or four years are you seeing start to happen that you, you know, the goals that you set.

So as you—so if you've got a community with a strong active group of people with a good viable plan to move in. And that's what's needed: a plan. That's another thing that must exist. A plan and an ideal of where it is that you're trying to go and you're just not moving aimlessly around. You've got a set place that you're trying to go.

Also the support from outside the community. All of these support organizations: your city government, the county government, the universities, your churches, all the folks that provide services to the community and how they're working with the community. And again, those snap shots as far as being the reinvestment of businesses and different things, homes and environmental things that are starting to happen. And I think all of these things help you identify a healthy and viable community. And maybe what's not.

AR: Yeah, yeah, exactly. Well you know people have talked for a long time—and people even on this interview and these processing interviews about race relations in Durham. And, of course, the Latino thing I think just sort of breaks that issue. And in some ways brings it to the table. I mean, what's your feeling on where Durham stands—

Durham's temperature on that, you know. And how do you think this Latino story can in some ways help us collectively as a community to address those issues?

SC: I think Durham is on solid ground. I really do. I'm not just saying that. I think these last experiences that we had over the last four or five years have really helped us to get a firm grip on reality.

And I'm not—not that we really didn't have good intentions. Not that we really weren't doing what we thought were the best things to do. It's that out of ignorance and out of segregation, you know, we didn't allow ourselves to be more involved and to actually take advantage of the resources and the expertise that even existed in the Latino community.

And by opening ourselves up and making ourselves available and by doing that, I think it really has at least got us to ground zero where we can actually begin to now start laying a solid foundation. So I think the foundation is there.

We have people all over the communities who have committed to actually building on that and developing some of the things that need to happen to kind of move us in that direction. But again, I think that some of the negative things that happened served as learning experiences. And we were able to take positive things from those negative experiences and those negative situations to convert it into moving us forward.

AR: To have it be toward a positive end. Yeah, exactly. Because it's not a perfect process--[laughter]—by any stretch of the imagination. Is there anything that we haven't covered that you think is important that you'd kind of like to add either about your own story and, you know, and why it matters to you to do this kind of work or, you know, or issues around, you know, building communities here in Durham.

SC: I guess, too, that I have a strong commitment to the city of Durham I guess because this is where my roots are. I think the era during which I was born and raised gave me a very strong sense of community. And I think that helps me to understand community—a lot more than what my kids understand because, I mean--. They don't see things the way I see things.

And I guess that fact that I know that especially within a city of communities there has to be that inter-dependence and support in order to survive. More so than when you move to the suburbs where, you know, pretty much when you come home and close your doors and stay inside it doesn't make a difference because for the most part you have the means to kind of sustain your family. You don't have strong community. But basically, you can maintain what it takes for you.

Inner city communities, which are more open to outside negative sources to come in and take advantage and control requires a stronger community, you know, stronger community support and organization. And even from my responsibility in law enforcement, I know that in order for us to be able to do what it is that we're supposed to do in the community, it's going to take bringing communities closer together and working stronger together in order to actually be able to push these elements out.

AR: Yeah. It's interesting because it's almost as though you got the best of community on one level it sounds like, growing up, you know, with when you did. With the community networks that you're talking about and even getting probably maybe some of the best of the, you know, black school system and that kind of thing. And now it seems like you're on the other side of the coin trying to look at how do you create that now with what is a different configuration, you know.

SC: And again, the one thing that we have to be able-- We can't—we can't make the communities look like they looked then. The one thing that we should, we need to do and take advantage of is actually just bringing the philosophy and the understanding of the people back to where it was then. The understanding and the practice of supporting and being one and working together, collaborating () kind of the things that we did a lot when we () communities. You give me a couple of eggs for some sugar or something like that. But being able to actually learn that within every community there are enough resources when brought together to actually sustain that community. Okay? Even though we may have to sometimes go outside and bring it in.

But Durham has enough communities, I mean enough resources to sustain all of our communities. We just have to learn how to work together. But the community has to be empowered and take control of the power that's given to them.

AR: So in some ways it's really like coming up with a new notion of what is a sustainable community, or how you sustain a community.

SC: Right.

AR: Yeah. That's great. That's really good. Well, I think maybe on that note, should we close it off?

SC: I think it's a good time to do so.

AR: That's great. I appreciate that. Thank you for staying so long with this.

SC: Ah. That's fine. That's fine.

AR: This is the end of the interview with Captain Steve Chalmers.

END OF INTERVIEW