

This is Claytee White it is February 11, 2004. And I'm with Julie Payne, this morning in her office. Julie if you could tell me your full name where your office is located and then your parents' names?

My name is Julia A. Payne and I am the executive director of the Nevada Treatment Center. We are located at 1721 E. Charleston. We've been in operation since 1973. I originally come from Santa Monica, California.

You were born in Santa Monica?

I was born in Santa Monica at St. John's hospital in Santa Monica. My father, is Oscar Charles Cunningham. My mother is Eleanor Bentley Cunningham. Both parents come from Ohio. Columbus, Ohio. My mom comes from Columbus and my dad came from Zenia.

Black people in Ohio, where did they migrate from, were they always in Ohio?

My father's, well my great-great grandparents came from Madagascar. They went to Virginia. My great-great grandparents were slaves with Catholic slave owners. My mother's family was all born in Columbus, Ohio. To be honest, I'm not too sure where they actually came from.

Now that was very interesting what you just said. It sounds like you've done some genealogy work?

We have done some, I have a brother that lives currently in Columbus, Ohio, that's still working on it. We had a distance cousin that started this process some 10 years ago, and she developed cancer and prior to her death, turned over what she had learned to my brother. And he has just started again trying to get a lot of information. We've lost a lot of family members over the last ten years. My mom passed away in 1961, just after I

graduated from high school. We moved here to Las Vegas when she died in sixty, excuse me, 63, my father moved our family to Columbus, Ohio and that was the first time we actually lived in Columbus. When we came here in '63 [1963], excuse me in '61 [1961], it was a very difficult city. It was hard to me to adjust to, because coming from California it was quite diverse and although we lived in Mar Vista, which is now called Marina Del Ray, I went to Catholic school in L.A. So I was around a lot of African Americans there. The diversity wasn't as great in those days.

Where did you attend catholic school in Los Angeles?

On Pico and Harvard, it was called Bishop Connelly in those days; an all girls school.

Ok great. Now I was so anxious to get started this morning that I did not ask you to sign our agreement, now this is an agreement that tells you that the information I'm collecting is going to be used for educational and research purposes. Also, in the last sentence it tells you we don't have any money to pay you for this. Ok. And if you just jot, put your signature on that I'd really appreciate that. Thank you so much.

You're welcome.

Now tell me why the family came to Las Vegas?

Well basically as I can remember, my mom and dad decided they wanted to come to an environment that was a little bit less hectic than California. The overall intent was to stay here for a few years then we would move to Columbus, Ohio. My dad always had this vision of having a farm. I'm the oldest of 10. I think he wanted to have a farm at least what I can remember. He used to say all the time that 'Eleanor' we need to have an area where these kids can learn how to milk cows (laughter) and do this and do that.' So that was the ultimate dream. When we moved here in '61 [1961], that was the whole intent

but unfortunately in 1963, August 22nd, my mother went in to have the 10th child and she died in child birth. The baby died as well. It was January or February of 1964 that our family physically moved to Columbus, Ohio. After staying there for a couple of years I decided I couldn't deal with Columbus, Ohio, I came back out here.

Now you came back to Las Vegas?

Yes.

You didn't go back to California?

No.

Why did you select coming back to Las Vegas rather than going to California?

Well to be honest with you I thought California would be a bit to painful for me by myself. Not that I didn't know, I knew everybody, however I really wanted to distance myself of that pain. Because that would have reminded me of mom and dad and the kids and all that. So I kind of wanted to venture out on my own and come back to an environment that I thought I might be able to blossom.

You had lived here for three years I believe?

Yes. Uh huh.

1961. How old were you when you first came to Las Vegas?

When I came here I was 17 ½ and got into a relationship, got pregnant and my daughter was born the fifth of August 1963 and my mother passed away on the 22nd of August 1963. So being a new mom and losing my mom was really, it was a difficult time but being the oldest. Being raised in that whole Catholic philosophy I had the responsibility, or felt that I had the responsibility to help raise the kids. So that was my primary reason

in going to Columbus to make sure I was there to help with the kids. Then after spending those few years in Columbus I said 'oh no.' It's time for me to come back.

Which year did you actually move back to Columbus?

I came back to Las Vegas in 1966.

What was Las Vegas like in 1966?

It was still to me, very discriminatory. There were still areas downtown that African-Americans could not even walk in the front door.

Places such as?

Well there were a lot of hotels, clubs that were on Fremont Street that African-Americans could not enter.

Now are you aware that March of 1960 supposedly this place was integrated?

You couldn't feel that. I didn't feel it. I know that when I talked to people that had lived here for years they talked about how it was supposed to be integrated. But you could certainly feel in various places that I would go that there was a deep bias. Deep bias. You could walk into Chic Hecht's on Fremont Street.

That was a clothing store?

That was a clothing store, absolutely. There were times, I remember as a kid, or as a young woman we would go in there and there was this feeling that you were being watched. It was the same at Penney's, it was Penney's, J.C. Penney's, right across the street from the El Cortez, right on the corner. The same sort of attitude was there. The same sort of attitude.

So if you would go in to buy something you were watched?

You were watched.

Now were any blacks employed there?

No.

Either of those places?

There was a black gentlemen employed at Chic Hecht's. I think he was the stockperson. I remember him. He was a brown skinned guy. I never knew his name but I do remember seeing him over the years. Of course, and I don't remember the year, that the mall opened, the Boulevard Mall, but then it was totally different as far as the environment was concerned. Then by that time, there were more African-Americans moving into the city. One of the things that stands out in my mind, at the time when they were talking about moving here. My dad was a skycap here in Las Vegas. Of course he knew all the skycaps, he was also a skycap in Los Angeles. He worked that among two other jobs because he was at Loyola University and he was a mailman. I remember them talking about having to be very careful because there were more girls in our family than there were boys and apparently other men in this city that worked with my dad thought that there was an assumption that military fellas, African-American military fellas, would use this as they were stopping over, temporally assigned to Nevada. Watch out for the girls because the guys would take advantage of them and all this. It was just a real crazy time. There was biases even from African-Americans in those days towards African-American military people. Oh yeah, very much so.

Because of the stigma attached to military?

Yes.

They were here for just a short time to have a good time and move on?

That along with the fact that, I always had the impression that some people thought that the military African-American people were better than, they meaning the ones that were here living in Vegas, looked at them as if they thought that the military people were better than. So there was, of course in those days, I was going out periodically, going to clubs and things like that. Naturally you could tell the military fellas coming in vs. the local fellas. There was an unwritten unspoken feeling by some women that they would be a better catch than the local folks, so there was animosity. Often times, some of the military fellas would get beat up. It got to a point that the military red lined the west Las Vegas area. In other words, when you would come in they would give you a list of appropriate, not appropriate, but housing areas that would be receptive to military people. Well they didn't, West Las Vegas wasn't one of those, was not like that in those days.

When you came back here in 1966, you were a young woman. Did you ever try to go into any of the casinos on the Strip or on Fremont Street?

I tried on Fremont Street. On those days I didn't go out to the Strip. There were a couple of places. I can't remember the names of them. At this one particular place there was a gentlemen at the door, who told me specifically that I wasn't welcomed. Not that I wasn't allowed, but I wasn't welcomed.

So that means then, even though on paper we had integration, that in fact, it was not true?

Yeah and I think too when I think about it. This would be, this was a small place so your larger areas, your larger facilities, your larger hotels, whatever, they would be more receptive. Because naturally, it's money. But for that smaller like the Mom and Pop, they have the right to say no and that's what they did.

Did you ever know of tours coming here at that time, African-American tours? Bus loads?

You know I wasn't real familiar, I remember people talking about it, but I never saw it myself. I wasn't involved with the gaming side. Because at that time I was working with, for a social service agency. I really wasn't into that. I do remember people talking about it.

Where did you live in 1966?

When I came back I lived on, what was called Sherman Gardens on Jay Street right off of Owens. I lived in a one-bedroom apartment with my daughter. Didn't have a vehicle, and walked from Jay and Owens to Operation Independence which was a daycare. There were two daycare centers. Operation Independence run by Bertha Johnson and there was the Catholic daycare center and I would walk my daughter to Operation Independence drop her off and walk back to EOB. Which was located there on Owens and the shopping center.

For someone who doesn't know the distance how far would you say you lived from Operation Independence?

I would say 2 ½ miles maybe.

Ok and back to the shopping center where EOB was located?

That was right around the corner from where I lived.

So you would walk about two miles one way then two miles the other direction?

Uh huh, everyday. Then when my sister moved out, she moved back here from Columbus, she had married a Las Vegas fella.

In Columbus?

No here. When we as a family moved back to Columbus Teresa and Frank were married at the time moved there too. But anyway she came back about 67-68 and by that time I could take my daughter to her house which was about three blocks from the shopping center. They lived on Jackson Street, I was able to take her over there and she was well taken care of.

The other day someone said to me that they didn't understand why everyone talks about, this was an African-American lady, that the prejudiceness was so severe in Las Vegas, she said 'wasn't it that way every place?' Tell me the difference between Columbus, the Los Angeles area, Marina Del Ray area, and Las Vegas during those 60s?

Well born in raised in L.A. Mar Vista, Marina Del Ray whatever. It was an integrated community. So I didn't feel the biases, I went to catholic school all my life, we were one of two African-American families from, in elementary school, I went to elementary school the first four years in Beverly Hills. Because that's where my mom and dad lived, excuse me the lived in Santa Monica, but my father was the athletic director for the school I went to in Beverly Hills. Plus he ran the boys and girls club in Beverley Hills. I didn't feel it there, one incident as a kid, I remember feeling and I was being confirmed this is all catholic being in a church and having a girl make a statement to me while in line going to the church. But other than that I never felt that. In Columbus, I didn't feel it because, my mom and my dad were well known in Columbus so I didn't feel any of that but coming here was a totally different experience there were the looks the comments, we lived on Washington, Washington Avenue. We had moved in to a house that had previously been owned by attorney Charles Keller. We were able to take vacations and

leave our doors open and all of that. But I do remember several times, two times not several, two different occasions when sitting in the living room with the family. Or sitting in the living room on one occasion sitting in the family room on another occasion. We all of the sudden you heard the glass break, someone threw a golf ball through the front window. Someone threw something I believe it was a rock at the door of the family room. We were the only black family west of Martin Luther King on Washington. Charles Keller, Mr. and Mrs. Keller lived in Bonanza Village. On another occasion here in Vegas one of my younger sisters went to Twin Lakes Elementary School. On an outing, class outing, they were, they went west of Rancho and there was a pool up there and the kids were taking on an outing to go swimming and when my sister Maria got in the pool the attendants came out and said, 'Oh no.' At the time she was the only black in the classroom. In that class and they made all the kids get out of that pool. Told the teacher, as long as you had her there, they could not swim.

Did your sister realize what had happened?

My sister was devastated. I remember my mother and father going to the school, talking to the teacher. My father, I remember them discussing it when they came back he said, in all the years that he had experienced. All the kinds of people that he had dealt with none of his children had been treated like this. It was a real eye opener. Because I remember and I can visualize her face, the pain that that child had. Here she was in the third grade, remembering people talking about various situations that occurred to them. People yelling the 'N' word as we would go by. It was, it's real strange in reminds me of being in Northern Nevada in 90-93 [1990 – 1993] after we got through all of that period things obviously got better. Things were not as blatant but when I moved from Las Vegas in

1990 to Northern Nevada, to a little rural community they way I was treated up there reminded me of what I experienced when I first moved there. Very blatant, much more so than ever experienced in my life. I had never had people treat me the way I was treated up there in Elko.

So it was Elko?

Uh hum.

Why did you leave Las Vegas to go to Elko?

I bought a farm.

Fulfilling your father's dream.

Absolutely. What I was thinking about I do not know. But I did learn how to ride horses, learned how to change oil in a generator. I built an underground place I could hang my meat. I did all that and it was a wonderful, wonderful, wonderful experience I had a niece and a nephew that came up I bought them each horses they both learned how to ride but that's the only positive. That was the only positive. There was a lot of biases.

I wanna get back to what kind of work did your father do when he was back here in '61 [1961]?

He was a skycap and he worked as a trainer for Bishop Gorman High School.

Athletic trainer?

Yes.

Wonderful, now tell me your father's background, your father's education?

My father did not graduate from high school, my father was a porter out of Columbus, excuse me out of Dayton, Ohio. He lived out of Dayton for a number of years, he was married to another woman prior to my mother, and they had three sons. He was the first

African-American trainer for a professional football team. He worked for the Cleveland Browns with Paul Brown. He was a trainer at Loyola in California. My dad's got an extensive background. I remember going to a movie theater in California one time and you know how they have the newsreel that comes on? We are all in this movie theater and they are talking about the first Negro that was a trainer for a professional football team. We've got all kinds of information relating to what he did. My dad also was the athletic director of the Catholic school I went to in Beverly Hills. He had all of Bing Crosby's kids, Danny Thomas', all the stars, he had a boys club down there in Beverly Hills and he had all these kids. I remember as a kid, my dad also was the janitor for this Catholic school that I went to in Beverly Hills. Because in the evening I would go with him and we would clean the floors. In the daytime, he was a mailman. Several days a week he was there as the athletic director. He has always been in sports, his real claim to fame was baseball but daddy coached basketball, he coached track teams. He was very, very well known.

Now tell me about your mother? What, did she work outside the home?

No.

Well with that many children she didn't have to.

My mom was the captain of the swim team for Ohio State, my dad at the time was the trainer at Ohio State when they met. My dad was like 30 years older than my mom. Was not a good mix as far as her family was concerned they were not happy about this relationship going on. My mom left Ohio State in her last year and she and my dad moved to California.

They had to move.

Cause she was the youngest of four and she had three older brothers.

I don't envy your father at all at that period of time.

No, no that was not a good mix. But they stayed together all those years. The only time my mom worked, she worked two weeks, dad got really sick. I don't know what it was that daddy had. But anyway daddy was really sick and mom worked part time at the post office for two weeks it's the only time she ever worked. She was very active in our schools, she was very well known in the schools. She and Dr. Ralph Bunche were very close, he used to come to our house in California. She sat on this committee because he asked her to and she was on this committee here and she was involved with the schools. She was very active, very socially active, and very conscious of what was going on.

It sounds almost like political action as well. You mentioned Jackson Street earlier I wanna know what Jackson Street was like in 1951 when the family came and then again when you came back in '66 [1966]. I wanna know what it was like?

It was very active. To me it was the Strip, there were a lot of clubs, a lot of action going on. People migrated. When people came from out of town that's where they went. They had a place called Mom's Kitchen. I had never eaten chitlins in my life. Till I came to Vegas. Some people convinced me to eat chitlins and I thought I was gonna die the first time. To answer your question it was hot. Every corner had things going on. It was just the Strip. It was that way in '66 [1966]. A couple of places closed down. The physical part of it seemed like it was not being taken care of like it was. I don't remember what year it was that Bob Bailey opened Sugar Hill. In those days, it was like a stroll. There were a couple places on Jackson Street that you went to, but then there was Sugar Hill

that you had to go to. That's where the action was. It was a whole different group of people that were going to Sugar Hill in those days.

Tell me the difference.

Well, to be honest, it was people that were more conscious of how to conduct themselves in essence. You had a different caliber of people. That was the place.

So we're talking about, Jackson Street had more the working class people and some of the middle class people would be at Sugar Hill?

Absolutely, absolutely. Of course you had the Cove Hotel opened.

I want to ask you about the Cove. Tell me about that place because I can't find that much information and it seems it was just here for a short time?

It did seem like that but it was a nice environment, in fact, I can't remember why, but I stayed there. Of course it was a hotel. But there were people that could stay there for weeks at a time you know what I mean? And I stayed there and I can't remember how long I stayed there but I stayed there for a couple weeks I know. It must have been because I was gonna transition somewhere else but I don't remember. But good food, a lot of entertainment they had a local group that came in. It was nice and I can't tell you how many years it stayed open but once it was over, it was over.

(End of side 1)

You were talking about the Cove Hotel?

Yes. I do remember once it closed it stayed closed for a long time before there was any activity. When they reopened it reopened under it was a medical center downstairs and I think welfare rights did that. That was run by Ruby Duncan. I remember it was a Dr. Cavanaugh that operated this medical center. Right at that opposite corner was Mr.

Edwards that ran Neighborhood Services. He was a community activist. If I'm not mistaken out of that came the breakfast program that the black panthers ran. If I remember correctly it started there in Neighborhood Services that was run by Mr. Edwards. Mr. Edwards was a wonderful man, he passed away a long time ago but there was the Jackson Hotel that set across the street. There wasn't any gambling in there that I can remember. When it closed, I believe it was closed for a couple years, when they reopened it reopened under Nevada Family and that was a residential treatment facility. It was operated by a guy that came from Arizona. In those days I was working with EOB [Equal Opportunity Board] and I was asked to be part of their board. At the time the Bureau of Alcohol and Drug Abuse had an African-American woman working for them, and I'm sorry I can't remember her name at this time. I remember going over there for a meeting and the residents around there, around Jackson Street and all that, generally speaking they were older people. They were not happy about the fact that there was going to be this facility with drug addicts in it. I think we had maybe four or five meetings before they actually opened it up. It was not good; people were very, very upset about it.

That's interesting. Now tell me about when the Cove Hotel closed did it reopen some point as the Carver House?

It was the Carver House first, then it reopened as the Cove. That's what it was. It was the Carver House first. That's when it was really jumpin.' That's when the whole Jackson Street was the bomb. Then it closed and it reopened as the Cove.

Why did Jackson Street have such a decline? It sounds like the decline must have come maybe '68, '69 [1968, 1969] late '60s [1960s], am I right?

I think your right. I think that you could tell there was a physical deterioration beginning. Ok. I honestly think people were, I know people are going to think I'm crazy when I say this: there was a whole, thing around drugs going on. Because that place was where the action was naturally your going to have a different caliber of folks. As the city grew and we had more African-Americans coming in. People started gravitating away from that area. What replaced that element were people that, you know, you'd go once in awhile and you'd see things that you didn't particularly want to be involved with or didn't want to be around. Why would I spend my money here when I can go to Bob Bailey's place or I could go to Hank's Place or Colony Club. So that's basically, and I would say too people were probably beginning to make a little bit more money and they didn't have to go there they'd go spend there money somewhere else.

So they could go to the Strip now?

I'm sure they could.

You just mentioned Hank's Place and the Colony Club, I've never heard of those places.

Well Hank's Place was a block South of where Bob Bailey's place was. I can't remember Hank's last name now. He died a long time ago. That was another little club. When you did your thing you could go to Sugar Hill, scoot over there to the Colony Club and go over to Hank's and then you just made your rounds. Then you could go to the Penguin. Now the Penguin was on Las Vegas Boulevard and Lake Mead. That was owned by the Childs' family. Mr. and Mrs. Childs opened the Penguin Club and I can't tell you the year. Mrs. Childs also, eventually had a privately owned out-patient treatment program. Her daughter, Jean, was the woman that started the Head Start Program for EOB. Very

well known family, good family. The only one that's here now is the twin brother to Jean and that's Dean. He runs his mother's treatment program. There was the other club that we'd go down, down there on Las Vegas Boulevard to the Penguin.

Most of this you could do, you could walk and do most of this?

No, no, no. You had to drive. Now if you went to Sugar Hill you could walk to the Colony Club or could walk to Hank's but nobody did.

Do you know the owner's of places like Ma's Kitchen?

I didn't know her personally but I remember seeing her a lot.

But these were all African-American owned businesses along Jackson Street at that point in the 60s?

Yes, absolutely. Jackson Street isn't very long. But in the day, if you go down there now there is a lot of empty spaces. At the time, everything was full. There was Ma's Kitchen over there, Hick's Barbeque right across the street from what was the Cove Hotel. So you could go over there for barbeque and then you went to Ma's Kitchen and you had greens and chitlins and everything.

That's exciting. Did you attend a church on the Westside?

We attending St. James Catholic Church.

St. James is still there I believe?

Well they moved. St. James is now on Martin Luther King and near Lake Mead. They built a new church but at the time we went to St. James.

Did you have priests who very active in the African-American community?

Yeah, the priest that was most active was **Father Pitalli**.

I've heard that name before, tell me about that Father?

Father Pitalli, it wasn't unusual to see him walking through the community. He would show up at meetings, he would come to the EOB board meetings I mean he was all over the place. He was very conscious of what was going on, he was dedicated to really educated people both black and white.

Is he still around?

He is, I haven't seen him. I've heard that he's back. Being an activist, you're bound to go to jail when you picket this or you picket that. One of the other things he used to do was picket up at the test site. I believe that is why he finally went to jail, but anyway he's supposed to be out of jail and back in the community.

If you hear from him I would love to sit down and talk with him.

Ok.

I've just heard so many good things about him.

What I can do is just try and make an effort to see if I can get a hold of him.

That would be excellent we don't have anyone from the clergy, we have a couple of Baptist ministers so I should take that back, we've had a Baptist and Methodist minister. But we haven't had anybody from the Catholic Church or any of the other churches. That would be very interesting. Now I'm ready to get into your work background and what you did at certain times but because it is almost an hour, it is. I'd like to stop here. When I come back I wanna talk about your work life.

(End of session one)

This is Claytee White and I'm with Julie Payne in her home here in Las Vegas and it is March 7, 2004. The last time we had talked, you had returned to Las Vegas after moving to Ohio for awhile and you were telling me about those early days. I believe it was 1966, do I have that year right that you came back?

Uhhum.

Ok, now start by telling me again you had talked about the nightlife just a bit on the Westside, I'm interested in Jackson Street and some of the businesses on Jackson Street. Can you fill me in on some of that information?

As well as I can remember, there were quite a few clubs on Jackson Street and then there was a place called Mom's Kitchen and there was a barbeque, I don't remember the name of it but it was on Jackson Street. Then you had a hotel, Jackson Hotel and then there was the Cove Hotel. Barber Shop, Mr. Geran had a barber shop on Jackson Street his wife used to work for EOB. She was there, I don't know whether she's still alive but I know she took care of senior citizens till the end.

Is that Hazel Geran?

That is Hazel Geran, yes, exactly. Her husband, had a barber shop that's where my father used to get his haircut. There was a little gas station on the corner too, where people got their cars repaired. Overall it was more entertainment, clubs that kind of thing for a number of years.

Can you tell me anything about the social life other than clubs, what did people do for entertainment? You and your daughter, your neighbors?

For me, for our family, for my sister and I and our kids. We did a lot of things at the park. Our children were involved with school activities because I come from a family where it

was very athletically inclined. So all of our kids were involved with things at school. That kept us pretty busy. Then I was involved with NAACP the youth component of the NAACP. I did a lot of little things in there. I also worked in those early years I worked as a counselor for Neighborhood Youth Core. That was funded by the Department of Labor. That was under EOB. Then I did some things with Frank Hawkins' mother, Daisy Miller at the time worked for EOB as well, but she ran the family planning component.

Tell me how many components did EOB have?

EOB had numerous components, they had the job training component, they had family planning, neighborhood youth core, CEP, they didn't have Head Start at that point, it was later on when they created Head Start. It was a social action organization it was THE organization in Las Vegas. A lot of people in this community when through CEP, or went through EOB, either worked at EOB or got trained to, you know like the dealers. There was a whole component that taught individuals on how to be a dealer. A lot of people on that Strip came through EOB.

What does CEP stand for?

Comprehensive...

Employment Program?

I think so, I think that's what it stood for. Later on they changed it to CEDA [Community and Economic Development Agency], that was much later on in the years.

Yes, because I think CEDA was almost country wide. Now tell me Daisy Miller is the mother of...?

Frank Hawkins that played for the Raiders. When Daisy was working at EOB, I remember this so vividly. She decided she was going to go back to school and get a

degree. There were several people that were part of management, they told her she couldn't do that. I remember this, well we went nuts, there were about maybe, fifteen or eighteen of us, we had a fit. We went over there to management and said, 'you know you have a lot of nerve telling this woman that she can't go back to school.' They were afraid if she went to school, that her time off would interfere... Well, she had come up with all kinds of scenarios, in order to make it work for her. To make a long story short, eventually she did go back and now she's a principal for one of the schools.

Now who was management at that time?

Well we had, Mr. Hoggard, he was the executive director, we had Mr. Johnson, I can't think of his first name he was from, Trinidad or Jamaica. He's the one that ran the CEP program. Wonderful man. Then there was Art Grant, he died a few years after he retired or left EOB. He was another good guy. Then we had of course Donald Clark you had Mr. Perkins that was the board chair at one time. You had Mr. Cunningham from the housing authority as a chairman of the board. Even Senator Neal was chairman before he became Senator. A lot of good people, a lot of very influential people came through.

Did we have any women on the board?

Thalia Dondero, I wanna say **Lillian Luhan Hickey**, it seems to me Lillian, she's Cuban I think she was on the board at one time. There were other women on that board I was on the board after many years later.

Was Renee Diamond on that board?

Yes. Absolutely, that's right.

You mentioned the NAACP earlier, did Las Vegas have an active activity called ActSO? It was an activity they did to get children involved in all kinds of talents science, arts, dance, music, everything.

I don't remember that.

Did you ever participate in NAACP in any of there active community activism?

Well there was a lady named Mrs. Arrington. She handled the youth for a number of years. She and mother and father were friends and I would get involved with her doing some things with kids. It wasn't around academics it was more of a social activities type of thing.

Not the civil rights?

No.

Which park did you live near?

We lived near Twin Lakes Park which was West of what is now Martin Luther King, in those days it was called Highland. We also went to the park where now the state building sits on, on the corner of, right across the street from Cashman Field. There was a train there, I wanna say it was called Fantasy Park, I'm pretty sure it was called Fantasy Park. When my daughter was little that's where I would take her and get her on the train. Cause a huge train just sat there and they kept it up it was a really nice park. They got rid of that park and decided to put the state building in.

Tell me about your first job when you returned?

Well actually my first job when I came back, I worked as a maid for four days.

Where?

It was at the Rivera, I think it was. I never went back to get my check. The reason being, the supervisor told me that, she thought that I thought I was better than other maids. I remember saying, 'No I've never felt that way or I didn't feel that way.' I just kind of felt like people needed to stand up for what they believed in and not have people talk to them any kind of way. I would say, 'How can you let her talk to you like that?' So she reminded me what my function in life should be to make these beds. She says, 'you're gonna have to start making 15 beds per day.' Doing 15 rooms a day. I said, 'I don't think so.'

How long did it take to do one room?

It took, I can't really remember how long it took but it took a long time. There was a lot to do. An awful lot to do in the room. I didn't like her attitude and I just felt like, 'you're the one that's going to be the maid the rest of your life. I don't intend to do this the rest of my life so I think you just take my little \$18 I had coming and you take it because you probably need it more than I do.' So I went on about my business. About two weeks later I got called by Centel. So I was an operator. I was an operator for about four years.

So was that downtown?

That was downtown right off of Fremont Street. There were no windows nothing like that and we had the console. We had these headsets and all that, I loved it. I really did, I was operator of the month several times, and I had a lot of fun at that job. I really did.

Was that long distance?

Long distance and local. It was just a fun, people were friendly. There were some biases, there were some openly racist kind of things going on. I decided to wear my hair in a fro. I came to work one day and my hair was in a fro and my supervisor on duty called me in

she told me I couldn't wear my hair like that and I said why? Why? I mean I'm not trying to be a fashion model, all I have is headset on top. 'It's unsafe.' I said, 'How...never mind.' I'm not gonna argue with you, so I got the union rep and the union rep was white and I said, this woman is telling me that I cannot wear a fro. The girl that sits next to me, is sitting on her hair. That's how long her hair was, so if we're talking about an unsafe environment, unsafe for whom? My hair has never been long so this had to be a very short fro. It ended up, of course the union sided with me, and they said, there's no way on Earth you can tell her she can't have a fro. That was the catalyst for me to start acting. Because that was my first time actually feeling discriminated against in Las Vegas. I was like, 'ahh so this is how y'all play this.' That was my catalyst to change.

Four years at the telephone company did you move up from one position to another?

No I stayed an operator. I got married probably the last year and a half I was there. Then I got pregnant, I had to take a leave when you get close to your due date. So I took a leave, I took that leave that was on a Friday and I was reading the paper and realized they had a position open at youth core under EOB and now this activism in my head is running so then I said, 'you know what I need to be with my people.' I went an applied. I was about 6 ½ months pregnant. I was showing but I wasn't big or anything. I go over and I apply and they told me it would take them about two weeks before they let me know.

Unfortunately, I lost the baby and about three or four days later I get this notice in the mail they wanted me to come in and do a second interview. Went down did the second interview and got hired. So it was on my way, started dealing with 16-17-year old dropouts.

Which section of EOB were you?

I was under the Neighborhood Youth Core, that's the component under EOB that dealt with kids that had dropped out. We provided education; we'd developed work sites for them. Those work sites consisted of working in the federal building like social security, boys and girls club, county, city -- as an example we had a number of people that worked in positions at the Clark County Health District. One of the individuals just retired from there about three years ago. About three years ago Regina retired. When I worked for the Bureau of Alcohol and Drug Abuse I hired her daughter as security over there.

Who was the manager of that component?

Of Neighborhood Youth Core?

Yes.

When I started there was a lady named Sharon Garrett was the manager. Sharon was there, Leon Smith, Reverend Leon Smith and Mitchell Sales. Billy Murphy, also worked with us. Billy moved on, Mitch moved on, and so that left Leon and I with Sharon.

Sharon was a part time investigator, private investigator. I think Sharon had been there with EOB maybe five years, from the inception of it. So when the time I got there, she had been there and was an established employee. We always felt like she had an ulterior motive for working with African-Americans. We never felt that she really enjoyed working with us. She did some things that really caused Mr. Hoggard a lot of embarrassment. Eventually she left, she left before I did.

You left that position?

I left that position. New careers was another component of EOB. What they did there, they took individuals out of the service. People coming straight out of the service the

guy's name was Webb Mangum. He was the director of New Careers. He went down to juvenile court and he created a program down there, for those individuals coming out of the service to work at juvenile court services. That's where my brother-in-law started in the career of juveniles. I had a couple of other partners that worked there and they all were New Careers enrollees. It was a wonderful program. Webb wanted me to take that program over because he was moving back to Montana or somewhere, I don't remember. I didn't want to. I wasn't really interested in that. I wanted to do something different. Around the same time I was exposed to Mahlon Brown, Mahlon was the attorney for EOB. I had many conversations with Mahlon and he asked me one day if I would consider being the Vista supervisor over Vista volunteers that would be assigned to Las Vegas.

Now Vista is a federal program?

Vista is like, it's on the same par as Peace Corps, but it's more localized than it is going across the waters. That's what Peace Corps does, that's how I got, I was a Vista volunteer I worked with Poor People Pulling Together.

Now you were a volunteer?

I wasn't a volunteer I was paid. But I oversaw Vista volunteers.

Tell me about what you did and how you worked?

After leaving EOB and going there. The mission was too educate low income people around housing issues. It was to deal with the Housing Authority, it was to put them in a position where they could be more self sufficient with the ultimate goal of being out of the Housing Authority and being able to change there whole lifestyle.

To be completely independent of any program.

Any program.

Tell me how Poor People Pulling Together fits into Vista?

How that happened, Mahlon decided what he wanted to do was to have, there were two things, he wanted those women that resided under the Housing Authority that had leadership qualities to be paid for interacting with others and really trying to pull them up. So he encouraged them to become Vista volunteers but he had a beautiful marriage. What he also wanted to do, he wanted someone to be able to go to San Francisco. In those days there would be a conference, a couple conferences a year, your Vista supervisors could go back intermingle with all of these people. These are people that want to move to another state. So you could go back there talk with these individuals, find out if their personalities their wishes their desires would match your particular project. That was my job to go out there. We had some fantastic people, but on the other hand see, most of these people were white, most of these people were very well educated but they were almost like hippies so to speak. They were an intricate part of the system yet they were the rebels. So it was a good marriage, because it gave the local Vista volunteers the opportunity to see things from a different perspective, but it also gave them an exposure to grass root people. So we had a wonderful marriage. This particular, Poor People Pulling Together, was a spin-off from welfare rights.

So now welfare rights was Ruby Duncan's group?

Uh huh. And back in the day, Erma O'Neil was part of that. Erma left welfare rights and she started this Poor People Pulling Together. The thing was welfare rights dealt with the welfare issue, Poor People Pulling Together dealt with housing, training and things like

that. So it was good, it was a good idea to separate. Because then you didn't have people stepping on each other's toes. Those were wonderful years, it educated me too.

When I ride through the historic Westside today, I still see, what I consider a lot of needs, housing that needs to be upgraded, streets that need to be cleaned more often. I just see so many things that need to be done, I see too many people on the streets not working. What happened, what do we have going on today within the historic Westside?

Well you know it's been my theory all along that almost every social service organization, law enforcement, anybody you can think of when they go and apply for monies. They always utilize the statistics out of West Las Vegas. A funny thing is nobody has a running tally of the amounts of money that have been obtained due to the stats they have on West Las Vegas. Obviously at one time money was being pumped in. The other part of my theory, you had a core group of people, certain people would only talk to them. So now, somebody got some money from somewhere now you've got, and your absolutely right, abandoned buildings. These large areas where it's vacant; a lot of these areas had homes, duplexes, whatever. They had something on that property. It could be that people moved away.

I'm sure of that.

People move away from that.

People upgrade financially and they move out. Then what concerns me is I ride around and I see a beautiful library, I see a beautiful senior citizens building, a new post office. I see these types of buildings but I don't see enough businesses. Black businesses, there is still the bookstore, there is Seven Seas on the corner. I think

there are a couple of liquor stores, where are the other businesses? What happened to the business community?

Again I think that goes back to the economics because your insurance is gonna be higher and folks are saying wait just a minute, I mean I'm sure there are a lot of people that would love to create a business right there on the Westside but when you get down to that money. You think about it as an example with the Moulin Rouge. I wish these gentlemen a lot of luck [The Moulin Rouge, located at Bonanza and H, opened in 1955 and burned to the ground in 2004 is being considered as a new development] but when you think about it, that's homeless row. I don't think too many people in a Lexus and this, this, this and this are gonna pull up in there.

Well I'm hoping that we can change that.

I agree.

People go to other hotel casinos in outlined areas in Summerlin, Green Valley what can we do to the Westside so that we can have that hotel casino right there, what can we do to pull the rest of the area along with the Moulin Rouge?

Well, honestly I haven't given it a lot of thought. It becomes emotionally frustrating to me when you see individuals just; I don't know what the answer could be. We've had programs in there, we've had opportunities laid right out there. Currently, you've got programs in there.

What is over there currently that you know of?

Nevada Business Service is one, the Nevada Partners is another. You've got state welfare right there and I'm not saying that... with the changes in the welfare department, it still allows individuals to be trained but I don't know whether the spirit is so severally broken

that nobody wants to make a change. It's hard for me to even imagine that. I do know individuals personally that have a feeling of defeat.

How long were you with Vista?

I was with Vista about six years, seven years, then I worked towards... the last year that I was with Vista I started working at the MGM in security.

Now before you tell me about that, because you have not identified who Mahlon Brown is? Could you tell us a little about him?

Mahlon as I stated earlier he was the attorney for EOB. He was also the director of Legal Services, Clark County Legal Services. Of course he moved up became the U.S. Attorney, he accomplished so much but he was really the catalyst for change.

(End of side 3)

Now you referred to him as the catalyst for change, Explain that to me?

He had a vision. He had some knowledge of old Las Vegas; the Old Westside. He knew the old-timers, but he was fresh enough he's dealing with Washington he knows this kind of thing. He had an audience that held onto almost anything he said. That was just the charisma that he had. He was educating us about how you play in the game of politics.

Did he have the same kind of relationship with Erma O'Neil, Poor People Pulling Together as he did with Ruby Duncan under what was Operation Life?

He wanted so badly to have that but that had nothing to do with his inability it had to do with there were certain individuals in Poor People Pulling Together that he had the same sort of relationship with. There were other individuals that were pretty closed but he wasn't favoring either group he wanted to educate both groups. That was his mission. He was a good man.

Tell me what you did after Vista?

I started working as a security guard at the MGM Hotel.

Is that the one that became Bally's?

In fact I replaced a lady that owned the Brown Derby. The Brown Derby was another club down there off of D and Jackson. I can't think of her name.

It's not D.D. Cotton is it?

It could be.

Short lady?

Uh huh. Dark?

Yes.

Yeah. I replaced her and that was a real experience.

How did you get from working as an activist in the inner city to becoming a security person?

Well it was something I wanted to do. I just had this interest and I went out and applied and got the job. That showed me a different side of Las Vegas. Of course it's going to show you the money, the glamour and the glitz and all that type of thing. But it also showed a little bit of the racism, not necessarily the people that I worked with but the people that came to visit Las Vegas.

Tell me about the racism from the tourists?

There were a number of incidents but one that sticks out in my mind. If you remember the series Mannix, remember Mannix's secretary?

Yes, what's her name Street?

No. I can't think of her name but you know who I'm talking about.

Yes exactly.

Well of course there was a big push on working girls and one of the reason's they had hired me was so I could spot working girls and get them off the premises. Things of that sort, search maid's purses and stuff like that.

About what year is this, 70s?

Yeah. So one evening the two plainclothesmen said, 'There is a woman at the bar, keep an eye on her, we're gonna go have dinner. If she makes a move you stop her.' I said, 'Yeah all right. Whatever.'

Were you armed?

No. We wore a red suit with a skirt and we had a blue pantsuit. No emblem, no nothing. You're not supposed to be noticed I guess. Of course we weren't armed. But anyway I go out to the Cub Bar and in those days Ruben Bullock, who owned Ruben's Supper Club, was still the bartender over there at Bally's. It just so happened that this particular evening Ruben was off. Had Ruben been there it would have been a different scenario. Anyway I walked out there and I recognize this African-American woman sitting between two white men. On the back of her chair hung a beautiful mink coat. I looked and said, 'I know who that is.' So I went on back to the security office, by this time the plainclothesman had come in and the guy says, 'So did you bust her? Did you bring her in take a picture and 86 her?' I said, 'ahh nah, I thought I'd wait until you guys got back. They said, 'Well we're gonna go get her.' I said, 'you are? She hasn't done anything.' They said, 'Well we're gonna go get her.' I said 'go right ahead.' So as we three leave the security office this woman is walking towards the ladies room, I walked into the ladies right behind her and I said, 'Excuse me ma'am, you don't know me, but I am security at

the hotel. I want you to be prepared for something. There is going to be two men approaching you very shortly and I really hope you go along with this whole thing because I'll watch you. Don't worry about anything negative any physical thing but something's gonna happen.' She said, 'alright thank you very much.' She was very, very nice, you know I didn't want to give too much information but I wanted her to be prepared. So she went back to her seat between these two men. These two officers walk up to her and they say, 'Get up. Get up.' One of the gentlemen said, 'Are you talking to this lady?' 'I'm not talking to you,' this one officer says. I'm just standing there. So she looks at me and I look at her and I winked. She stood up and the two men were just livid they said, 'You can't talk to this woman like this.' They said, 'Sir we're not talking to you.' So each one of the gentlemen grabbed her by the arms and walked her towards the security office while these two white men walked right behind her. They get inside the office the one gentlemen says to Annie, Annie was the secretary that was on duty in the evening. Little short Italian girl, the guy says to Annie, 'Is **Mr. Egglemeyer** here please?' The two officers, plainclothesmen looked at each other. Annie says, 'No he's not here right at the moment but I can certainly get a hold of him.' 'Ok would you call him,' and the gentlemen gave his name I don't remember his name. He gave his name, mind you this is probably about one-o'clock in the morning. Annie called Mr. Egglemeyer and within 15-20 minutes Mr. Egglemeyer was there at the hotel. (laughs) When he walked in he looks at this woman and he said, and of course he knew who the two men were, and he said, 'Oh my God.' He took the two plainclothesmen in the other room slammed the door and I looked at her and she fell out laughing, she says, 'I understood.'

Who was the woman?

She was the black actress that played the secretary to Mannix. And she received quite a bit of money because they sued. She got quite a bit of money. I had an incident too where a woman lost her purse and apparently a couple of African-Americans took the purse and when they called me to go in and search the women's bathroom she was just, she was not going to have a 'N' find her purse. I could have been in on it. Little silly things like that.

How many black people were working in the casino at that point?

There were quite a number of black people working in that hotel. You had bellmen, dealers, cocktail waitresses, maids, maintenance.

So in the 70s there was a real push to bring African-Americans in? How did that stop? I can walk into a hotel and I don't see that anymore.

In those days, even James Walker [One of the first black dealers on the Strip.] was working at Bally's at that time. When you think about it, those that were in there, I know this is probably going to sound a little bizarre, they carried themselves differently. They were vocal but they knew how to vocalize when it was appropriate, it was a different breed, I really believe it was a different breed. A lot of other kinds of dynamics have occurred since those days. You've got a larger population of people of color in town. I think for some individuals it was almost like an entitlement without understanding that people before you worked hard to get there. They worked hard at keeping that door open. You can't go in there raising cain over issues that really didn't mean anything. I'm talking about those that were not truly activists, they were unhappy people. So it was 'gimmie, gimmie, gimmie,' and it was no respect not even respecting themselves.

Do you know Jackie Brantley?

Yes.

So they went in the 70s part of this group you're talking about, when you were there as well. So it's really interesting.

You see now that's a generation that is retiring, that's an unfortunate thing. Those individuals would have been excellent role models for this bunch in the last 10 years. Excellent role models. I would venture to say a lot of folks are just saying we did a lot of work for what. We don't see it anymore. That's sad when you don't see it. When you talk to these other folks they don't even remember, the struggle.

After Bally's appeared; to your family is growing up at this point how old is your daughter?

My daughter is probably about 10 or 12. Something like that. Then I decided I wanted to get into the arena of substance abuse. I'd seen a lot of people at work, abusing substances. I was pretty apparent that they were and nobody was really dealing with it...it was almost and in those days people didn't believe cocaine was addictive. So it was like the elite. I was still working at Bally's and I decided to work part time at SNDAC. I started working there in the methadone clinic.

How is SNDAC spelled?

In those days it was SNDAC, Southern Nevada Drug Abuse Council. It was like the umbrella agency over the other treatment programs in the city.

So it's an EOB for treatment?

Sure was. It was combination of youth programs and adult programs. So the state would fund SNDAC and they dispersed the money to these other treatment programs. One of the programs was a methadone clinic. I started there as an intake counselor. I knew a lot

of people that came in there for treatment. Then Clonnie Gay, was also a counselor. She was the first black substance abuse counselor that I met.

Related to Jimmy Gay?

Yes that's his daughter.

What's her first name?

Clonnie. So Clonnie and I were there and we were there right across the street from where City Hall is now. You paid your [traffic] tickets down there. Anyway we moved from there to 8th and Ogden, which was the old Las Vegas Hospital. That was the first hospital in Las Vegas and we were on the second floor we had a methadone clinic and we had a regular outpatient. Further down we had starting point for detox [detoxification] facility for alcoholics and then beneath us was a residential program it was called 'Fit's House,' which is now Westcare.

That was all in one building?

All in one building; the old hospital. That old hospital was huge.

The residential, how did that work?

The residential program, you were admitted either court mandated or you self referred. You would stay for a certain length of time. Back then the average time was six months.

Tell me about methadone do you think it works?

Uh huh. I know, I've seen it work for folks.

Have you seen people get hooked on methadone?

Well, the whole idea is it's medically prescribed, its to get you to a particular level. Whatever your body requires, that it would block the effects of any opiates. I've known people to stay on meth for a number of years, for some people that's exactly what they

need to do. It's just like, if you're a diabetic there is certain kinds of things that you have to take. If your high blood pressure whatever it's medication to keep you from getting involved with the other. It works for some and then there are those that...

I want to get back to your career in a few seconds, where did your daughter go to school?

My daughter went to St. Christopher's for a couple of years. We lived in North Las Vegas she went to an elementary school out there and she went to St. Christopher's and she went to junior high then of course she graduated from Western. Western High School. Went to UNLV. Now she's in law enforcement.

Do you like that?

I like it for her, because she likes it. When she was working as an operator at the Flamingo-Hilton she worked there right after high school for seven years. One day she called me up and she says, 'Mom I just want you to know I quit my job.' I said, 'You did really? Well what are you gonna do?' She said, 'I'm gonna start working Monday at the prison.' I said, "What? What?" She says, "Yeah." I said, "Mani, no you didn't." I was really upset because she was working, she worked out at Indian Springs. It's a facility for men. I'm going "no Mani." I'm thinking she's very easy going, non-confrontational, very likeable, never shot a gun in her life. She gets out there at the prison she's shooting better than any man, she's throwing people down, she's handcuffing them throwing them against the wall, she's on this extraction team, I'm going, this isn't the kid I raised.

Isn't it great to see she can take care of herself that well?

Oh it's wonderful, it's wonderful. It's wonderful to see she still has the passion for the job and the compassion for the people. She's consistent and stern. I love listening to her

talk about what she does. When people that I know, say to me, 'you gotta see her work.' There is a gentlemen down there that I've known for years he didn't know I was her mother. We saw him at a concert and he says, 'I can't believe you're her mother. You need to see her work.' She's smooth.

So how do they get trained like that? How do they do this?

Well you have to go through, like a boot camp, but it's not a boot camp but it's...

An academy?

Yes and that's what she had to do while she was up there. Then she did a lateral transfer from Indian Springs to North town, so now she works in the detention center.

Downtown?

In North town. North Las Vegas Police Department. She works in the detention center but I compare it to this. I tell people that are coming into the field of substance abuse if you work in a methadone clinic you see everything. Anything and everything. Because if you look at the hierarchy as far as drugs are concerned, methadone, excuse me, heroin addicts people perceive totally differently than they do a person that is addicted to prescription drugs.

Yes they do.

Absolutely, there is no way.

Heroin is associated with the street.

That's right, and anything else negative. I used to say if you can work in a meth clinic you can work in the field of substance abuse anywhere in the world. Because this is a tough population, when Mani was working up at Indian Springs that to me is like working in a meth clinic. Because you got the tough ones. So working down here at the

detention center, that should really be easy. The frustrating part is that it's going to be a revolving door. Like it is for me. I see people that I had on the program that I've known for 30 years. I see their kids, the kids that they were carrying at the time. Now they've got children.

So are we saying it's generational, in a family?

Oh yeah that's the sad part. That's the sad part.

How do we stop this cycle?

It's through education and treatment and getting away from that stigma. Because you know you'll find a lot of people in recovery that they don't want anybody to know that's where they came from. And I can understand it, because there is such a stigma attached to it. Then you're looked at differently.

When someone in Hollywood, some big star gets on drugs, we don't look at it the same? Has that helped at all our public perception of it?

I think what it's done it's allowed people to understand that it makes no difference whether you live in the projects, if you are a mother that is a homemaker, whether you're a construction, a garbage man, a football player whatever. In other words it crosses all lines it used to be that you would hear people, if they talked about the drug they would talk about the kids or the African-Americans over there.

So who do you see now at your treatment program?

You see a diverse group of people, we see individuals that were one time fashion models.

So you've been in this field now, since the 70s up until today?

I worked at SNDAC, in 1980 I started working for the state of Nevada. 1980 I started working for the Bureau of Alcohol and Drug Abuse that is the agency that funds

treatment programs throughout the state. It's also the agency that oversees the standards for all counselors. I was the supervisor so my responsibility was to oversee all of the programs we had over here in Las Vegas.

That must have been interesting and exciting?

It was and I worked for a man by the name of Dick Ham. Who of course was another of the old timers, very political on a national and statewide level. Well known by Renee Diamond, Mahlon Brown, everybody knew Dick. He was a hands-on kind of a guy. He taught me a lot and he appreciated my views. It was a wonderful 10 years.

How did you get training for this kind of work?

I took a lot of classes at UNLV back then BADA had the responsibility of providing the training.

BADA?

Bureau of Alcohol and Drug Abuse we just called it BADA. We worked at identifying a professor out of Arizona State. His name was Wheeler, African-American, he started a whole series on counseling from a cultural perspective. It dealt with African-Americans, Hispanics and Native Americans. I trained under him. That was wonderful. But in addition to that, BADA had that responsibility of making sure everybody was up to par. You were required to get CEU's [Continuing Education Units] every year. It was interesting, very interesting. Then from there I retired. And decided to buy a farm and I did that. I stayed in Elko for a couple years and got a call from the Governor's office. 'Would you consider the drug czar position for the State of Nevada?'

So who was governor at that point?

At that time it was Bob Miller.

So he made that phone call at his office?

Uh huh. So I went to Reno.

So you must have had a great reputation?

I guess. I knew a lot of people. I never did a lot of politicking. I pretty much have this reputation of saying pretty much what I believe in and sticking by it. But if I have to eat crow I'll eat it but basically I'm not gonna stick my neck out unless I know what I'm talking about. Anyway I got this job. Mr. Ramadon had this position before me. So anyway the Governor's office asked me to come to Reno and I interviewed and he said 'there's only one drawback.' I said, 'What might that be?' He said, 'You're gonna have to move back to Vegas.' I said, 'My stuff's already packed.' I just wanted some excuse to get back to Vegas anyway. Cause you can't wear silk up there in Elko. You had to leave the high heels at home cause I wore jeans and cowboy boots that's all I wore.

Did you work in Elko?

Uh huh. I worked at a treatment facility.

Oh so you worked there?

Uh huh. I worked at a treatment facility and it was pretty interesting period. I was very pleased, happy and honored that they called me. I was very anxious to get to Vegas.

So tell me what a drug czar does?

Well my primary responsibility was to coordinate all the substance abuse efforts between treatment prevention and law enforcement.

So where was your office?

My office was on Maryland Parkway, we were on the professional building right off of Karen. I was there for three years, actually excuse me, I was there for two years and then

our office moved to 1830 East Sahara. That's when the governor decided to combine a lot of these programs. He decided to create what is now called the Department of Employment Training and Rehabilitation (DETR). So he had a director and Americorp the drug czar, bureau of alcohol and drug abuse, employment security and the director at the time was Carol Jackson.

(End of side)

Do you lose any power when you become part of this structure?

No. We're really, I just had myself and my assistant and we still had the same responsibilities governed by the department of public safety and the legislature. So we still had our own mission and we still had to do all the kinds of things, going to the DARE graduation and going to the schools, law enforcement and treatment. But of course I knew everybody in treatment. Doing a lot of prevention activities and becoming aware and acknowledging that yes we do have a problem, but it's not so overwhelming that we can't do something about it. And we need to do it as a team so it was a real interesting time. Of course when money is attached, you have turf wars. But that's all right and like I tell them hey, I'm not getting off the money. The money is for the community and we need to do what we need to do, so, it worked out. Then it was decided that most states wouldn't have a drug czar. After three years, they gave me the word that they're gonna phase out the drug czar and the office and all that. I said, 'Well whatever.' So a friend of mine, excuse me, Director Weller, who was over DMV he was also over Public Safety, but Director Weller and Richard Wyatt at the time was the chief of Parole and Probation, African-American based in Reno and then director Weller the two of them were pretty good partners. I get a call at home one night from Director Weller because I

normally had to get my approvals from him, through him sometimes. Anyway, I get this call and he said, 'Listen, I got an offer for you.' 'What's that?' 'We want to have a substance abuse coordinator for adult Parole and Probation. We can move your position right into P&P.' I said, 'Do it.' So they did and it was wonderful. I always wanted to work for Parole and Probation. I never saw myself as an officer but I've always worked with officers on various things. Anyway I became the substance abuse coordinator for them.

Did you see the need there, or did you see where you thought you could make a difference?

Yeah, there was a definite need, because of the high incidents of substance abuse among the criminal element. Many of the people that I've worked with over the years were part of Parole and Probation on the criminal side. I knew that the P&P officers needed to be really educated about programs, good programs, good counselors, treatment philosophies, modes of treatment; all those kinds of things. That was a fun period, it was really fun, one of the things that they really enjoyed was the fact that if they had a client that either mandated by the board, the parole board to seek treatment or they had been abusing drugs to where their UA's were positive. All they had to do what refer that person to me. Then I farmed them out to the various treatment programs, I got the monthly report, the monthly progress reports and I fed that back to the officer. It kept them from having to figure out is this a good program. All those kinds of things. So they were able to do their job more efficiently and they relied on me to make sure that this person did what they were supposed to do. It was interesting. I did that for five years. Probably the last couple years working for P&P. I sat on the board for Nevada Treatment Center. The board approached

me. The officers asked me to come and meet them for dinner one evening which I did. They said, 'Listen we gotta make a change.' 'Ok, let's make a change.' 'No, we want you to take over as the Director of Nevada Treatment Center.' I said, 'Wait hold it now. I don't mind being a board member but I do not need a headache as old as I'm getting. No we need to go in a different direction. They didn't feel that, that particular director was going to take them in that direction. I said, 'Give me a week or two.' It took me about two weeks. I wrestled with it and I talked to a couple friends of mine. I really wrestled, with it and I said oh what the devil, I might as well try it.

But you were coming out of a job that you really liked?

Uh huh. I did the Weed and seed thing with Parole and Probation.

Explain the Weed and Seed.

Well this program was designed for those reentering the community from prison. The whole idea was to provide them with supportive services, education, treatment, mental health, job training, and housing. The whole thing funded through the department of justice. I was only doing that part time, because they were only looking at 150 people. You know under those kinds of programs you can't guarantee the number of people that will be released each month, so from the very beginning it was just from the first five or six months, nobody was eligible for that program. So it didn't require a full time person, but I did have case managers. I had case manager on the outside, meaning in a facility on Owens and BS. Then there was a case manager that was housed in the prison. So that they were able to interact with those, get them ID, all that kind of thing. When I decided to go with Nevada Treatment Center, I knew that it was time for me to back off the reentry program. So I talked to Amy Wright, who was the administrator of Parole and

Probation. I said, 'Look your going to need to be thinking about getting somebody else because I need to get out of there and focus all my energies over here at Nevada Treatment Center.' And she and I had been friends for a long time and she understood so we worked that out and ultimately they closed the program anyway. The reason was they had two others they were cultivating. One was through the city, the Evolve Program and then the other was the going home prepared was a new program under the Department of Corrections. Both programs are doing relatively well. Lisa Morris is the one that runs the Evolve Program for the city. I called her up and I said, 'I heard your getting a lot of heat. I tell you what, I would be more than willing to give you every single thing I've got from the reentry project so you don't have to reinvent the wheel. All you've gotta do is cut and paste and figure out what you wanna do.' And they got a pretty decent program.

It's wonderful that you would help someone else.

You know it's always been my philosophy that somebody helped me and I don't have a problem, why do I need to hold on to it? If it benefits somebody else take it, take it and run.

So now tell me about Nevada Treatment Center, how big of a place are we talking about? Is it a single location? When did you take this position?

It's a single location and I took this August of 2000. Took that program over, actually Nevada Treatment Center (NTC) has been operating since 1973. It started on 8th and Ogden because then it became both the Methadone clinic and the outpatient program. They changed their name from SNDAC to Nevada Treatment Center. NTC is a very well respected program, I must give credit where it's due, my predecessor worked for that agency about 17 years. She started in as a secretary to Charlie Getts, Charlie was my boss

when I worked for the program. When he passed away, the board at that time asked her to take it over. She did a lot of work, she did a lot of good things with the program had a lot of good people. Serviced a lot of folks in the community, anyway where we are today, we wanna do so much more. I really wanna see this program get to a point that we can deal with women's issues. That's my goal. One of the things, I wanted to back up a little bit. If you are a methadone program in this country now, you have to be accredited through JCO or CARF.

JCO?

JCO is the Joint Commission on Rehabilitation. I can't tell you what CARF [Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities] is but anyway. We had been struggling with this CARF for the last couple of years. It's a very intense, very involved process. You really have to have people that have the same sort of vision, that understand whether you like it or not, you must be CARF accredited. They want to set standards across the board for all providers to do what they're supposed to do. No more shooting from the hip you better know what your doing or you're not going to be able to survive. Because it is getting to be a cutthroat business. So anyway, we tried last year and almost two years ago and we didn't get it. I wasn't really devastated behind it because I knew that I didn't feel comfortable with the staff that we had, I had to do some more cleaning. Well we did the cleaning, we also did a lot of training, and we went to a lot of CARF sponsored training. Got a different crew in there. Last Wednesday we got the letter we were accredited. When I opened the letter I just started crying. I am so grateful. Now we don't have a three-year, we've got a year. But my feeling is hey the door is open and we worked hard

enough that we got a year. So now it's time for us to really fine tune and get busy and do what we need to do to accomplish a three-year accreditation. That's the goal.

Tell me at a treatment center like yours who is it composed of? Who else makes up a staff of a treatment center like this?

I have program assistants, I have an executive secretary, I have a COO and I have a combination of license counselors and counselor interns. Now the sad part...I got my maintenance crew, I've got my two guys boy they're good folks. But anyway we're not the kind of treatment facility that's afraid to get our hands dirty. When I first went in there, I was so surprised with how the facility was not kept up. I was really surprised because on the surface you would have thought it was different. I looked at the executive secretary and I said, "You know what Carolyn? I don't know about you but I get crazy when there is a lot of dirt." She looked at me she says, "You're kidding." I said, "No." She said, "Well what do you wanna do?" I said, "Well, tomorrow morning I'm wearing my jeans because we got some cleaning to do." She says, "Alright, but your predecessor would never have done that." I said, "Well you know what, this is my house." It got to the point that even patients we're coming to me, "Are you really the director?" "Yeah." "Well what are you doing on the floor?" I said, "Well what does it look like, doesn't it look like I'm cleaning." "Well yeah, do you need some help?" I said, "Yeah I would love to have another set of hands." So we had people coming in, they got dosed, "Can you give me just a half an hour so I can have a cup of coffee then I'll help you?" "Sure." I had patients bringing in buckets and rags.

So they're now taking ownership.

Taking ownership. Complimenting us on how well kept the building is. One of the things that done when CARF does an accreditation is that they interview board members, staff people and patients. The section that described the surveyor's interaction with the patients had us all crying. Because they were all saying, well one person said, "That woman with the gray hair...she's crazy and we love her. If she said, 'Hit the floor.' We'd all drop and hit the floor." "She speaks, she wants to know how your doing." There were three or four others, they named us. They really act like they care about us. Which is a good feeling. It's good, the survey said, you've got some people that really take ownership of this. They would protect you if anything came up.

Who's this funded by the State of Nevada?

A lot of our monies come from the State of Nevada, we're on a grant. We've got monies through the state welfare, TANIFF, VOC rehab, Going Home Prepared and now we've got some monies from community block grants; which is a real good thing because our foot is in the city. That's what we are looking to do. And of course we have client fees.

Oh I didn't realize that.

Oh clients have to pay. Oh yeah. I know people say well you know they're not working. I've been doing this for so long and I'm like, "Come on now. I know you know that if you keep going to the dope man and you keep asking him to give you a freebee, something's gonna happen." So you consider me the dope man. The only way that you're going to really buy into it, is you've got to give up something. Money is important. I'm not asking you to pay top dollar. I'm asking you to pay what you can afford to pay. We're mandated to do a sliding fee scale. We cannot deny services to their inability to pay. Come on now, you can afford to give up something. I'm not gonna pressure them. If I'm

providing coffee and donuts and stuff every so often put a little change in that can. Come on now, shoot. Then they go, boy you're hard.

I like this idea so much. I know that sometimes you see a whole family that it seems that there's no end to the services they're going to need in years to come. But tell me about some of the successes?

We've had a number of people over the years. In fact a guy that I have known at least 28 years just recently got off. He's been back and forth, back and forth, but he got married a couple of years ago and he's got two kids. He'd been trying to detox for a long time. But he wanted to make sure he was comfortable with everything. It's about the immediate gratification. They think they can handle it until something bad happens. So we are constantly saying take your time. You need to take your time. You need to take advantage of this particular class. You know sometimes you go off for no reason so you really need to think about taking this anger management. You need to take that kind of thing, so that the first time somebody blows up and then the next thing you do you go back and shoot up. We've had a number of people that have contacted us and said they're doing well. We've had some people that have died while on it. Not related to that, but other medical kinds of things had developed. They might have stayed clean but from a medical standpoint they couldn't hang on. Of course you know with this population we have a lot of HIV and AIDS so there is a lot of that. A lot of Hepatitis C.

Because they share needles at some point?

Um uh. What we do though is we've got a contract with the county health so they're out twice a week. They do the HIV testing, the hepatitis, the TB, they do all that onsite. We have support groups for them. We try to make available to them those kinds of things that

they need to support them through whatever. The one other thing that we really want to get into is the domestic violence. We do a domestic violence education, but if you're gonna be a domestic violence counselors then you have to be certified so-to-speak from the Domestic Violence Prevention Task Force, which I am a member. That's one of the reasons we want to do this thing about the women.

Tell me what you see for women? What kind of services to you want to target for women?

You know daycare. Making sure that that does not become a barrier for them coming into treatment and any other of those kinds of barriers, focusing in on that self-esteem, empowerment, getting away from that stigma. So many of these women were sexually abused. Its issues that they don't want to talk about. They're in abusive relationships. Really beginning to empower women; getting them to see and bringing back women that have made it so they can see they can do this.

Healthy women have problems with the self esteem issue. So I can imagine that there problems would be compounded?

Absolutely. The other thing is really becoming aware of your body. We have that mammon bill that comes over. Some of these women have never had a mammogram. You think with the kind of lifestyle that they're living. You know abusing these drugs, year after year after year it stops your normal functioning. It's amazing. The STDs and things like that but fine and dandy. That's the problem we have out there, what we have to do is empower them to take charge of their lives. That's what we have to do. That's the part that makes me, when I see a girl that has came in there, you see them the first few weeks they're not used to...you know they are trying to get there body adjusted to the

meth and all that. All of the sudden you seem them one day and you say, "Wait a minute do you know how much better you look today?" "What, what?" "I wish I had a camera. So you could see what you looked like when you came in and what you look like now." And some of them go, "Are you serious?" "Yes." Its what's rewarding about it is to see the difference in folks and to see them trying. Cause it's not a guarantee that they'll make it the first time around.

What do they do over the weekend your closed right?

We're closed on Sunday. We give them a takeout on Sunday, we're open on Saturday's, half a day. They get a takeout when they come in to get dosed on Saturday they get a takeout so they come back in on Monday. You know we've got quite a few that are physically challenged. We accommodate them as well.

This is just so interesting. Now the other parts of your life. With this kind of work that your doing, I know that sometimes it must be stressful and all of that, how do you relax?

Who said I relax? When I was a bit younger I used to play tennis a lot. Anymore I've got the dogs that I deal with, I might go to a concert. I don't have the same desire to get out. I really don't. The folks that I know they're either married or not married and don't wanna be married and don't have any conversation so your social life is like pfff. Unless I go to a concert, like I said, or some function.

When we do these interviews we are looking for people who have been in Las Vegas for a long time and you fit that bill. So I wanna know a little bit about, because you work, your work is related to county government, city government and all that, how

do you see this city compared to other cities that you've lived in, when it comes to the city being involved helping the community and that kind of thing?

Well I came here really as a young woman and I've been back to Columbus and Los Angeles. What I see about our city it's a lot of lip service. I think there is a lot of lip service. The same kinds of issues people have been talking about for 20 years, 30 years, I mean there outta be some kind of change. I think we are contradicting ourselves. On one side we pretend that we are about the people, about meeting the needs of the people but I don't think we do a very good job of doing that.

So where do you see the power base in this Las Vegas Valley? The county commissioners or the city government, who really holds the power and could do something?

I think the city and county. I think under the leadership we have now, I think there is a stronger effort to understand and try to meet the needs of folks. I think on the State level it sucks. That's my personal feeling. I'm involved with various service departments under the State and to sit across from these people and listen to what they feel is either their policy or collectively feel that it is a position they have taken, I can't figure out where they came from. A good example is this whole thing around welfare and that TANF [Temporary Assistance for Needy Families], I'm just amazed at this initiative that is encouraging welfare recipients to marry. I am so upset about this. I can't believe that nobody knows about it. I got mine through the internet, it was emailed to me, but there is a big push on a national level.

Because we have become so moral under this administration.

Ahh...and then you take a look at it from people of color. Now I'm just saying people of color because of what I am. Here I get pregnant for whatever reason, I'm on welfare. You want me to marry this man? More than likely he's unemployed, he's beating me up, whatever the case is. Now what the government is gonna do they're gonna dangle a little bit more money in my face. When I talk about empowering women I would love to get a hold of them.

Now at one point in our welfare history if there was a man in the house, then you couldn't get any help because the man had to leave. So now they're gonna reverse that?

Uh huh. They want you to get married. They want the case workers to encourage you to get married and when you take a look at the number of African-American men in prison and then you take a look at what we've got out here. Those that are functioning fine. You know there is a large population out there that are uneducated, they're not working, two or three women HIV positive, full blown AIDS and druggies. So you want this young girl to marry something like that just for the sake of getting a few more dollars? I don't think so.

Do you have a sense that our city is different from other cities in the Southwest? We are the gambling capital. Even though gambling has spread across the country. Are we different than Phoenix, Los Angeles and Fresno?

I think that we in a sense we are. It's the haves and haves-not, it's trying to get to a community sense. It depends on which part of the community you live. I think that there is an effort, but we still have a long way to go because we are still a little bit non-trusting.

What do you see as the major changes in Las Vegas since you've been here? Since 1966?

Major changes. Certainly we have developed a more sophisticated culture it's really wonderful to see the level of educated African-American. I'm not just saying educated but seriously educated people. The amount of wealth among African-Americans it's a lot more visible than it used to be. The mixing of the races that's another big thing that has happened; I mean it's not unusual to see an African-American young girl with a white male. That you didn't see.

And with our history or racism here, it surprises me that I see that here more than other cities?

And I can't put my finger on it. At one point I used to think it had to do with the military. I mean you can go anywhere. It doesn't necessarily young folks you can see older couples that are, if you just look at them you would think they are pretty affluent. They had to have come from somewhere else.

Why do they come here? I don't understand that.

I don't know. Well you know you have a lot of people that come from California because of the tax structure here and all this kind of thing. That's brought a different kind of people around here.

What do you see as the future for our city? Especially for the African-American community?

I'm hopeful that with this influx of people that there will be a new drive from those of us that have been here a long time. A new level of enthusiasm to either create businesses in the community. You know stress, the educational piece, I think when Agassi came in and

developed that school [Andre Agassi College Preparatory Academy] I think that was the best thing I'd love to see several more of those go up. And people really get behind this whole thing. Because without it we are doomed. I shouldn't say we're doomed because we're not going to be doomed but without it there is going to be a whole segment of our community that will be totally left behind. Something's got to happen because we're losing people. Just looking at some folks you feel the despair. So how do you get them in there? That should be the goal.

Does our business center have a responsibility or for some reason here it seems that since gaming is our number one industry or almost our sole industry, because gaming can have a negative influence on family does that business sector have a greater responsibility then if we were an automobile capital of the world? Does gaming have a larger responsibility?

I don't think gaming has anymore of a responsibility than anybody else and you know why I said that? Because see gaming, they have contributed to that state fund. A lot of times people will say well gaming needs to that, the hotels need to do that. Well the hotels do a lot. It would seem to me they need to attract other pieces of business in here that would employ large numbers of folks. Train and employ. Not everybody is cut out for that environment there. As we can see, there are fewer and fewer African-Americans; there is another group of people that are taking over. So that leaves African-American people who would have normally been there, out there somewhere. What are they doing? Where do they go? There was a period of time, you found African-American civilians working out at the base, and you don't see that much anymore. Yeah, they employed a lot of African-Americans. There was a lady, I can't think of her name, but she was over

personnel out there, for years. Because some of my Neighborhood Youth Core people were assigned to Nellis. They went through her. There is not another industry where people, where they can get trained. Then the whole thing around technology. I don't profess to be the most literate when it comes to a computer, but all the agencies, city and state agencies, city and county agencies we are dealing with, we're going to a paperless system. Well then that further puts certain aspects of the community way behind.

Something's got to happen, something definitely has to happen. I think that the hotels and gaming have put in a lot of money. I would say that maybe if something materialized, you might find them wanting to put more money in, but they're putting money in but what's coming out? That culinary school [probably referring to Nevada Partners] is a good example I mean ok, yeah you've got hotels and you need cooks and all this kind of thing. You need people to serve and all this. There is more to life and all that, that's like teaching people how to make beds. I'm not trying to be derogatory. There has got to be other kinds of businesses that could come in here and take on a mass number of people and train them for the new era.

I just want to know some about your community affiliations? Are you still active in the NAACP and are you part of any other organizations?

Well no I'm not active currently with NAACP. I do sit on the state Domestic Violence Prevention Task Force. I sit on the Going Home Prepared with the Department of Corrections, very much involved with Parole and Probation. The Democratic Women's Group and several other things I do. I think there are a lot of advantages of being around a long time and some disadvantages too. It's like I find myself sometimes getting too impatient and I'm thinking I've been down that road and I can tell you that ain't gonna

work but we can try it if you want to. I would love to more involved with organizations focused on African-Americans. I just really haven't found my thing here.

Your niche?

Yeah. I just haven't.

Anything else you would like to share, this is going to be used by historians in the future for education and research purposes, so are there any other things you'd like to share?

You know I really can't think of anything right now but if it's ok with you if I come up with something, I'd love to share it with you.

Thank You.

END OF INTERVIEW