

The University of Baltimore is launching a two-year investigation called “Baltimore’68: Riots and Rebirth,” a project centered around the events that followed the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and their effects on the development of our city. UB administration and faculty members in the law school and in the undergraduate departments of history and community studies are planning a series of projects and events to commemorate the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this pivotal event. We are currently working with the Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African American History, The Jewish Museum of Maryland, Maryland Public Television and the Enoch Pratt Free Libraries to pursue funding for projects that may include conferences, a website and a library traveling exhibit.

Your potential participation in an oral history project would contribute to the very foundation of this project – the memories of Baltimoreans who lived through the riots and saw the changes that came about in response to them. Your life story can fill in the limited knowledge we learn from newspaper accounts and the television footage.

If you choose to participate in the project you would be interviewed by students from the University of Baltimore. They will ask you questions, but your memories will determine the direction of the interviews.

If you agree to serve as an oral history informant in this project, you will meet with a team of undergraduate students. The students will take a still photograph of you. In addition, if you have a photo of yourself in or around 1968, we would greatly appreciate it if we could borrow it, scan it, and return it. We would reserve the rights to reproduce those photos and use them on the website, conferences, exhibit or publications.

The students may conduct the interviews at a location of your choice, or you may meet them at the University of Baltimore Langsdale Library for your interviews. During the interviews, your recollections will be recorded in two forms: audio and video. The students will be responsible for operating the equipment. You can expect the interviews to last for a minimum of 30 minutes each.

Sometimes talking about events that occurred decades ago will unearth forgotten memories. Undoubtedly, some of those remembrances will be negative. We greatly appreciate your willingness to take the risk of exploring a potentially painful past so that your life experiences will be recorded.

After the interviews the students will transcribe your oral history. They will provide you with a copy of the transcription for your review before the transcription is published. The transcription, video and audio records will be archived in the Langsdale Library Special Collections and will be accessible to the public. Your name will be attached to these documents. The University of Baltimore may use your image and/or your words in any future documentaries, exhibits, conferences or publications. Participants in the oral history project agree to waive their confidentiality.

If at any time you are uncomfortable with participation in the study, you are free to drop out. Participation is strictly voluntary. While your participation is requested and highly valued, you are free to decide whether or not to continue participation at all times. You may decline to have your name published with your reminiscences

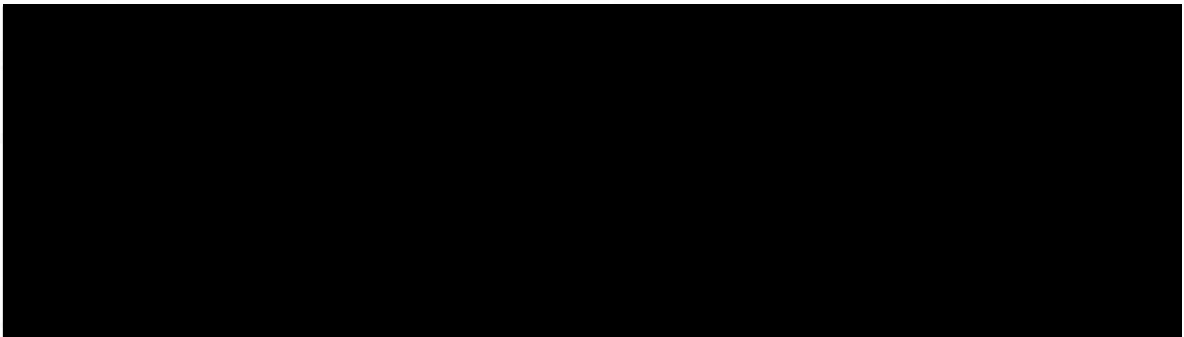
If you have any questions about this project, please feel free to contact me at 410-837-5296. Thank you for your participation.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth M. Nix, Ph.D.  
Visiting Assistant Professor  
History and Community Studies  
The University of Baltimore

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I have read and understand the information provided above, and consent to participate in the study. I have also been given a copy of the informed consent for my records.



Anne Perkins  
Interviewer: John Swallenberg  
Baltimore, MD

Interviewer: My name is John Swallenberg and I'm conducting this interview today. Just for the record, please state your full name.

Anne Perkins: Anne Perkins

Interviewer: In 1968, how old were you?

Anne Perkins: Well, I was born in 1937 so, what was I? 31

Interviewer: 31?

Anne Perkins: Yep.

Interviewer: What was, describe your situation in the sixties late 1968. Where you were? Where you went to school? Where you worked? Things like that. Where did you shop?

Anne Perkins: Okay. I've always lived in Baltimore. I grew up here. Married another Baltimorean in 1968. We had three young children. My youngest would have been in '68, four years old, so the others were probably around 9 and 11. And I was still a stay-at-home mother. Did a lot of community work and my husband was a lawyer working in one of the big law firms downtown and we lived in North Baltimore, kids went to Calvert School. I, growing up here, went to Calvert, Bryn Mawr, College of New England. I guess well after 1968 I went to law school here at UB.

Interviewer: Where did you do your shopping at that time?

Anne Perkins: I, lets see (laughter), I probably would have done my grocery shopping up on York Road near the where used to be that there was Stewarts, probably north of Belvedere Square.

Interviewer: What neighborhood did you live in?

Anne Perkins: Up in Guilford

Interviewer: Guilford, thank you.

Interviewer: Before the riots what types of interactions did you have with other races?

Anne Perkins: Growing up in Baltimore, of course everything was very segregated and I graduated from high school in 55. The suits that changed a lot of the segregated patterns, education, housing, of course did not happen during my childhood. So it was a very segregated existence. I don't think until after college I really knew any African Americans, and in fact where I lived very few Jews or there was no diversity almost. The school I went to was all girls, so it was like whoa, this is really different thinking about it. So the big cases that were won that blew up segregation to a great extent didn't happen till '54, '55, '56 and the civil rights act that

was passed in the late 50's early 60's. So I think as an adult when I came back here we lived in some the same neighborhoods, so who you know the same patterns were pretty much the same. I did, I did some volunteer work with the Baltimore tutorial project where we tutored kids in east Baltimore and I had been doing that before '68 for three or five years and it was kind of my first, growing up a gradually hit you as a white person what was going on with segregation. It was not that you felt segregated against, for instance I would go to Hopkins hospital for some medical reason or another and you'd see this separate drinking fountains or you uh, I remember going to the movies at the Senator theater once with a black women who worked for us and they turned us away so we went home. So there were things like that that hit you over the head as a child growing up as a white person in a you know economically privileged situation there were not things that I kept from doing it was more a gradual awareness of what was going on. And then of course as an adult with the civil rights movement and everything you read and saw you became very aware of it. But your question was my personal interaction and I would say my personal interaction growing up well into my twenties was really interacting with people who worked for my family, for my father's business and in our household And then I worked I did tutoring with the Baltimore tutorial project so I was working with kids from African American families in east Baltimore. I guess the first that I worked with I started with him when he was about 11. He lived with an elderly aunt and uncle the aunt was disabled because of obesity. There was no heat, only one room was heated when I would go there, um he didn't have any furniture in his room besides a mattress, so it was like whoa, what's going on here? He was maybe 11 when I started working with him, he didn't no his consonant sounds. I would go to his school, so for the first time it was in my face awareness of um, hmm government systems that in like schools that weren't working for families who really needed government to be doing something to make their lives have promise.

Interviewer: And this would have been in the late sixties at this time that you were working with this young man?

Anne Perkins: Probably, probably let's say around 1964

Interviewer: Did you see indications of segregation breaking down by the late sixties, '65, '66?

Anne Perkins: Yeah, not a lot, not a lot. I mean I remember, um I remember going to the Ford's Theater and sitting next to a black couple and thinking oh, I haven't seen this before and it wasn't like it was like this is different, um I don't remember how housing situations breaking down were I don't, no.

Interviewer: But it was still pretty entrenched by 1968?

Anne Perkins: Absolutely, in the election that Spiro Agnew won for governor the reason that happened was the Democratic candidate was ,was his thing was he was working with "your home is your castle", won of the most charged issues of the time was fair housing so that would have been around what, 19 I don't remember the date exactly, but it would have been around '64, '66. So it was real clear that you know fair housing as an issue was huge. I remember big community town meeting in the war memorial downtown, where some of the most prominent, most respected white and black community leaders, you know the place was overflowing with people because I remember Jim Rouse, Cardinal Sheehan a couple of the black ministers who were both highly regarded in both communities and talk about it and it was an audience in primarily white but a sprinkling, you know of African Americans there too, but it was I think it was an effort have the

community talk about this, and of course Agnew won because a lot of Democrats voted for and were supportive of fair housing supported him as a Republican as opposed to the Democratic nominee enlisted for that. So we were well aware of that they were big issues that were being talked about definitely.

Interviewer: What was the racial mood in Baltimore right around the time of 1968, March, April at that time?

Anne Perkins: Uh, well you knew I think there always been different factions within the white community, I wasn't really talking to anyone besides the whites. My friends that I knew were all supportive of civil rights and integration, and a little bit intimidated by groups like the Black Panthers because this was like you know who...but somebody like Martin Luther King and what he was saying emotionally and intellectually made sense and people embraced it objectively. Now how far in their hearts and emotions they were really willing to go I don't know. Because it wasn't there wasn't anything there that would have been threatening to people where we lived. In other communities maybe where incomes were lower and it was more likely to be more integration within housing or competition for jobs it seems to be the feelings would not have been as receptive.. It just depends who you're talking to.

Interviewer: What do you remember about the assassination of Martin Luther King?

Anne Perkins: As with all the several assassinations they were on television almost immediately after it happened and you know he I think of the leaders of the civil rights movement he was the one who was perhaps most of us, talking about white friends who were most comfortable with and also most admiring of. I mean I think the non-violence idea is important and a number of us felt very bought into helping families who needed help economically deprived not getting good education, stuff like that. So, that part of his message was real important and he was a huge leader on that. And I think we definitely liked the nonviolence message that we had there was no question that he was an amazing inspiring figure and definitely eclipsed most of the other leaders in the country as far as his message.

Interviewer: What did you think did when you heard he had been assassinated?

Anne Perkins: Well it was terrible, I mean because he was such an important leader.

Interviewer: How did you hear about the... or did you get an inkling about when the riots started here in Baltimore?

Anne Perkins: I'm not quite sure of the exact moment. I mean I think there had been other riots in other cities so people were always, that had preceded the King riots. I can remember Newark, Los Angeles and couple other places that this had happened so it was on everybody's radar screen, so I'm not sure that people anticipated an assassination would then precipitated riots as opposed to mourning. And so, I don't know that, I just remember being caught up in the sadness in his assassination and the horror of it. We, so I don't remember hearing the stores been looted or but I do remember or that Saturday or Sunday, we went down to southern Maryland to visit friends and must have been aware of something because we did keep track to what was going on the radio and remember our friends say, "Do you want to stay over or should you go back to the city?" "No it's no problem." So coming north and looking at the city, I'm trying to remember, maybe Ritchie Highway, it was just, there were fires, smoke all over the place, so visually, it was you know, scary. So instead of just going through the city like we normally would have done, we

went around the beltway and came around from the north, and so we avoided it and by that time there was the radio a lot of talk about what was going on and it was quite scary.

Interviewer: When you got home did you put on the T.V. and see anything on there?

Anne Perkins: I don't remember that. I remember calling, I had been tutoring a child, her first name was Denita who was just a sweet little girl, she was about 10 years old, who lived on Oliver Street lived a couple blocks west of Broadway and I remember calling her to see if everything was ok and I remember they were kind of in a panic really. So, I called a number of times, but I do remember once asking if the family would like to come out and stay at our his if they felt you know, really that scared. It ended up that the father had spent the night on the roof with the hose because the house next store was on fire and another time they said no they couldn't leave their house because there was looting and if they left their house would be in trouble. And then as the days went on, um I think that both they and also my family were scared for me to go back so I actually never went back, so that was too bad. She was actually a pretty good student. She really didn't need me. Maybe that was just the rationalization. So, I think it came from both ways that maybe I shouldn't go back there and vice versa.

Interviewer: How do you feel after the riots the dynamics of the white and black population in this situation change?

Anne Perkins: Well, I remember, and I think I've got the timing right on this, there were lots of people, white people that I knew, you know the anger was so much at level so much than I think we had actually known that what it was. So, there was a feeling about well, what can we do? Well, you know, what can we do? And so, I think that a number of weeks after the riots there was huge community meeting at Grace Methodist in North Baltimore pulled together by a number of ministers up there and a number of the black leaders came and spoke. I came away from that and it was very good. There were lots of people who cared to come to something like that an to think about what could be done. The main message was to reform your own institutions. Which I think was a message that many of us couldn't have anticipated. Another thing on the TV, well my husband who was young lawyer in a firm at the time, a lot of this associates worked on a volunteer basis with, I guess it was the state's attorneys office or public defender's office because so many people were arrested and they needed to process those and needed to be defended so a number of people did that even though they were criminal defenders, but a number of people need that. I also remember personally um, you know seeing watching on television Agnew confrontation of the black ministers or black leaders who were awful. I mean all of them were highly respected a number of them well known to the white community in a high degree of comfort and recognition for what they had done to walk the streets to keep things quiet or safe is a better word. And I remember being appalled at the disrespect of the governor or the um, or the maybe it was just an insensitive, non-understanding of what the ministers had been through. It was really, well it ended up that it propelled Agnew politically and maybe that was what was behind it, I don't know.

Interviewer: Was that particular interaction with the ministers and Agnew run on television or did you just see snippets on the news?

Anne Perkins: I honestly don't know, but I know I saw pictures of it and I know that over the years there were snippets that were visual video. So whether it was something that came a year or two later and they showed him blasting the ministers or whether I actually saw it at the moment in time, but it was well recorded in the papers. Whether I actually saw it on television, I

don't know.

Interviewer: Do you remember the National Guard in your neighborhood?

Anne Perkins: Not in my neighborhood.

Interviewer: Do you remember seeing the Guard or military out in full force?

Anne Perkins: Oh yes.

Interviewer: How did that make you feel?

Anne Perkins: Again, again in my neighborhood it was very easy to avoid dangerous or things were happening. So I would see, or what I saw was from a distance. So, but I was probably aware I saw the mess of pictures in the paper or on TV.

Interviewer: So your neighborhood was virtually unaffected?

Anne Perkins: Right. And we where I lived in Guilford wasn't that far from Greenmount Avenue and there were numbers even in those days they were a number of black families. I mean those neighborhoods now are almost totally black but even then there was quite a few black families it didn't get up that far.

Interviewer: What neighborhoods do you recall that you know of were particularly hard hit by the riots?

Anne Perkins: Well, again it would have been neighborhoods that I would have gone to both before and after the riots. East Baltimore, around Hopkins, certainly Reservoir Hill just north of North Avenue. I worked with a group, actually it sounds sort of silly, but it was a really good one. We worked with groups of people who wanted to have window boxes, so we would help with flowers. I'm trying to figure it out today whether it was before or after the riots, anyway we were working in Reservoir Hill but my guess would be that it was after the riots, with some of the blocks in there to do window boxes, petunias and stuff. It was a great community organizing tool, because once they organized over flowers, they were organized with a leader to fight the bar or fight whatever they needed to make things better. Um, so it would have been Reservoir Hill and East Baltimore.

Interviewer: So you continued to do, even after the riots, community work?

Anne Perkins: Oh yeah.

Interviewer: Okay, and did you have any fears? I know you said there were certain neighborhoods that were more dangerous than others, about going into black communities in general after the riots.

Anne Perkins: No, I mean well maybe right after the riots, but well let's see, no. I think I can put some of this more in context, but I eventually ran for public office. I was in House of Delegates for a long time. The first time I won was in 1978. The district that I won in was maybe 40% African American. Eventually, the time I was in there the majority was African American. But we had, we had you know city neighborhoods that had been hard hit and I had worked in those

neighborhoods before. No.

Interviewer: After all this after the riots shook out and what not, what things did the city and community groups do to try to promote healing and recovery afterwards?

Anne Perkins: Well, again, I can't remember the exact dates of this, but one of the things that grew up around that time was the Baltimore City Fair. I think it was the idea of Bob Embry who was head of housing, let's see, I think he came in under D'Alesandro and then that progressed into the Schaeffer administration and Bob had Hope Quackenbush who worked with him had the idea that we would have a City Fair that would be like the County fair but it would focus on neighborhoods and that it was important to think of the city as a city of neighborhoods. So that was, the first city fair was I think the last year of the D'Alesandro Administration and there were a lot of city leaders who thought Oh my God, this is the worst bringing all these people together downtown, they'll just tear it all up. So even D'Alesandro kind of turned his back on it, but Schaeffer as City Council President was very supportive of it. Its kind of interesting that this dynamic, so Bob and Hope got a whole lot of people together to do this and this must have been D'Alesandro was mayor during '68 riots, it must have been '69 '70, something like that. And we were very aware of the Flower mart, a bunch of kids had stormed through the Flower Mart and upset everything and that there was tear gas and that was not so good. Well, the thinking was how do we have this huge fun thing in the middle of the city and not actually promote a riot, so we got to make sure it's for families and we have to have something for everyone in the family to do and something to eat, there will be a Ferris wheel, and games and there will be music that not just the teenagers but music that the whole family will like. So having the whole family there to keep it calm. We did a lot of things the County Fair would do. I and some friends co-chaired the award giving thing. So, we would have all these awards where they get blue ribbons and I remember going over to East Baltimore because somebody said that block was the cleanest looking block. So we went over there and asked who the leader of the block was and they said there was no leader of the block, we just keep our places looking clean. So we knocked on the doors and nobody would come to get the award. Finally said to go there because Mrs. So and So collects for cancer, she'll come get it you know (laughter). It was great and then the booths for the fair were such that every neighborhood was to show off what they did and what was special about their neighborhood. So you'd have the East Baltimore African American neighborhood next to the Guilford neighborhood booth and that would be next to the South Baltimore booth or whatever. And the first two years we chose the weekend of the year that was supposed to be the most beautiful, least amount of rain, best possible weekend of the year. I think it was the second weekend in September. Both years, there were huge, huge storms that knocked over everything, so in a way it was wonderful, because everyone had to work together to get it ready for the next day. So it worked as a pull everybody together, you're all part of one big community, city thing and they were very good that way. I remember going to over the first ten years, the fairs would move from place to place depending on the various construction sites that had been demolished for the next, Charles Center, or Inner Harbor so I remember I think it was the second City Fair, the, not Hopkins Plaza, but the one north of that between 1 Charles Center and so all the big high rise office building were surrounding this one square and they had a steel drum band and it was just fabulous and it was the whole diverse people. And diverse groups of people had not been together before so this was a terrific thing. So I think the fair was really a great idea and it was kind of weird an crazy idea at the time, but it worked, Yeah

Interviewer: When they had the fair was there an attempt to like keep security behind the scenes or to have a high presence of security to make people feel safe?



Anne Perkins: Both, both, there was high visibility of police, but there was also plenty of undercover police all over the place. We had very few incidents of any kind. The only ones were a couple pick pockets, that sort of thing that you would get in a huge crowd. It was really amazing. I think people were really amazed that it worked. I think some people stayed away because they thought it was going to be dangerous.

Interviewer: Was there anything else besides the City Fair that was done to try to?

Anne Perkins: Well, that meeting at Grace Methodist in North Baltimore. Um, not that I can remember.

Interviewer: From the City Fair where you had said,

Anne Perkins: Oh, I know, the Political Club I worked with. Um, we um, in the New Democratic Club second district, anyway. We had a coalition with the eastside Democratic organization and continued that coalition with successive East Baltimore African Americans, so I think there were efforts politically to work together. And that particular now was written up now, so it must have been one of the first. And we always ran tickets that were balanced and reflected the diversity of the district even though we didn't have to.

Interviewer: Did any of the national news media at the time when we were trying these things to heal the city, did any of them publicize that or any interest from other cities in what Baltimore was doing that they could use?

Anne Perkins: I don't remember. I know that at one point we got the guy from the *New Yorker* to come down about the fair, but he talked about the food. (laughter). It wasn't like he was writing about this is great.

Interviewer: Would you say that the City Fair was a success in doing what it set out to do?

Anne Perkins: Yes, it may have over time, outgrown its usefulness? Or I don't know what the original momentum or idea, I'm sure that many people had different vision of what the goal was, but maybe it did what it was supposed to do over the first ten, fifteen years.

Interviewer: I know you said there was interaction between like you would purposefully put a group from Guilford next to a group from say Sandtown or whatever and with the weather and what not they had to work together to, did you see anything between the groups that carried over after the fair? Like maybe two of the groups got to do things apart from the fair.

Anne Perkins: I don't remember that. We, my husband and I did work with the citizens Planning and Housing Association and mmm, that was a group that a non-profit that had always made an effort to have broad involvement from diverse people. And I think that the City Fair, the leaders that uh, sort of popped up through the City Fair, were then incorporated in some of those organizations. Nobody had known each other before. So, things that I, lets see a lot of the those volunteer things that I worked on, were primarily white organizations, but there was a real effort to meet and know and involve black leaders in them, and of course if you didn't know anybody it was hard to know who to call on the phone. So I think the City Fair was helpful in that way in introducing people to one another, so I saw a little of that in the groups that I worked with. The City still is different communities and race is one of the things that separates, so it's very hard to um, even if you want to be um more broadly representative you often don't know who to call,

you don't know the names.

Interviewer: Can you think of the names of any of the individual that through the city fair popped up as leaders?

Anne Perkins: I'm seventy years old now, remembering names is not the easiest thing and I know there were many (laughter).. This is not what you want, but I remember from the City Fair we always there were restaurants we would go to over to east Baltimore we would go to Icarus, so we were introduced to a lot of things. Um, let's see, um, I can't remember, but I know there were a number. And were really talking black and white here and yes, and I'm trying to figure out if some of the folks that I worked with were from the City Fair or maybe something else. A lot of the leaders, neighborhood leaders I knew through CPHA.

Interviewer: Did CPHA, did that come out of the late sixties too?

Anne Perkins: No, no that was there before.

Interviewer: Is there anything else you can think of maybe that I haven't touched on that would be good for people to know, maybe researchers twenty years from now?

Anne Perkins: Uh, well, um it was funny before I came down here today, I was talking to a friend and I said you know we still have race relations in Baltimore that we do not talk about on the leadership level enough or as a huge broad community enough. And there have been in the last couple weeks particularly on the MTA a number of incidents that people, whether the possibility that race was one of the precipitating factors it's there. People are saying that's it, it was race. And I think as a community, the two meetings that I talked about the one at the War Memorial with fair housing issues and sort of an outpouring of people saying hey, were all here together, what do we do? We don't know what to do and we need to do something about this? Um, the same one after the riots at the Grace Methodist um, I don't see our you know, it hadn't happened yet, but I would hope that leadership in the City would promote that kind of large community feeling of talking together about things that we need to work through together as opposed to just talking to one group or just talking to the other group and I think the city would be stronger for it if that happened. We've gotten away from that and I think that in some ways we may have gone back to or maybe I don't know maybe we've gone back to or continued along the path of being too separate.

Interviewer: Well, thank you for your time, and like I said we're going to put this on line and your ok with that.

Anne Perkins: Yeah.

Interviewer: Thank you, it was a real pleasure.

## **Anne Perkins Part II**

Interviewer: We are continuing with the interview part II.

Anne Perkins: Okay, there's one thing I've been thinking about a lot. I went into the legislature

I was elected in 1978 and so the first year was '79 and then the year that I went in, Peter Rawlings, who was an African American legislator from West Baltimore it was his first year. And we were, he had almost finished his, I was a lawyer by that time and he had almost finished getting his doctorate in Math and we got along really well. And we became co- chairs of the Cindy Geller delegations, educations of communities, so we worked together on a number of things and we worked together, um this was maybe for the first ten years, on housing and education issues, we cosponsored a lot of bills together, anyway.

Interviewer: This would have been in the mid 70's?

Anne Perkins: Um, it would have been, no early 80's. And um, uh, it was a very good partnership because we each had known people in different communities and when we wanted to get something done, we could pull all of our contacts from different areas and became quite effective in getting a lot housing stuff and education stuff that we wanted done. But I think also we you know, we talked and were friends and did lots. And his kids were growing up and my kids were growing up the same time and they were all about the same age. We were exactly the same age, you know born in 1937, so I found it really fascinating taking stepping back and looking at us as good friends objectively to seeing how far we come as a community, as a society. Both our, two of our daughters were a year apart and they both were at Princeton and one, I think my daughter was a year ahead of Lisa. But you know, when we had been that age neither of us could have gone to Princeton and certainly his daughter would not have gone to Princeton, so it's a really interesting thing, the two of us who grew up in a totally segregated world, our paths would never had crossed never mind known each other, that our daughters were a year apart at a selective university situation and that to me was very hopeful. So you know it was when I look back on that, there was progress, I'm not sure that we have moved upon that amount of progress, but I always thought that was good. And we were good friends and we would have never been friends, except the fact that we worked together and were pushed together and as a team putting the two backgrounds and the two community contacts together we were able to accomplish a lot, so I think there are a lot of lessons that I hope people can get.

Interviewer: Great, great story