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Interview

of: Daniel Hayes

by: Ericka Gause
Sharnel Sneed

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Q Mr. Hayes how long have you or did you live or work in the Penn-North Community?

A I have lived in the neighborhood all my life — 50 some years.

Q What are some of your earliest memories of the neighborhood?

A One time the neighborhood had changed during the war and a lot of white people lived in the neighborhood from down south. This is what really made the neighborhood go down. A lot of landlords converted these houses into nice homes at the time and when they found out they could put more people into one dwelling than they actually thought they could, and after that the neighborhood just gradually started going down.

But we had quite a few black businessmen in the neighborhood and the majority of them didn't last very long. The reasons for, why, I don't know. We had a lot of other people come into the neighborhood for instance the drugstore been there for as long as I can remember. And we had quite a few colored fellows who came in and tried with this filling station, a couple of restaurants and what not that did not go over at that particular time. Lately over the years they got grants and it seemed as if they just couldn't get over with the grants. They fell through. I don't know if it was poor management or poor business or whatever. Right now you don't have too many black businessmen up here in this neighborhood. We have one just moved in he's up here at Whitelock and Druid Hill.

Q What kind of business is he in?

A Well he has a it's a—bar, lounge and confectionery all combined. He just moved into the neighborhood, but he has other things. He's coming into the neighborhood pretty good.

Q	What changes have you seen and those changes that are positive and/or negative?
A	<p>Well, it is a lot of negativeness because the young male is a problem around here. He doesn't have a job you know. So like a lot of things come into the neighborhood they won't employ the young men around here. For instance, you take this job they got out here now. They're putting in paving, but the majority of the people working there are from out of town which this isn't supposed to be. Mayor Schaefer promised us a lot of jobs, got a sign over across the street, but yet and still we don't get any jobs. The younger men said we don't get any jobs that's supposed to be budgeted by the City and grants we supposed to get. So you got them standing on the corner.</p> <p>See this is the problem. They got nothing else to do but stand on the corner, drink and get high and that creates a problem. You're going to have this as long they don't have anything to occupy their mind. Like the younger females they can get summer jobs which they have made openings for them in a lot of jobs. You know that yourself. But it's hard for the young black male simply because a lot of them never finished school, they don't know how to apply for a job, they don't know what a resume is. So they really don't know anything. They don't have a trade. The only thing they can do is construction.</p> <p>This isn't really what the people wanted. They want a good job, but they can't qualify. So they don't qualify and this is your problem, not only at North and Druid Hill, this is all over the City. Until they correct this you're going to have a lot of problems. For instance, at night you have a lot of loitering on the corner. You take for instance, go down to Shake and Bake they can't go in that area because it's a problem down there. You know those little gang wars and things like that. They just have to stand on the corner, drink wine and stay high and they stay in trouble all the time. In and out of jail.</p>

	<p>Until you really get some jobs created for them you're going to have big problems down there. As far as the neighborhood, it's a lot of things could be done like for the younger, younger people. More recreation. You know we don't have too much recreation around here.</p> <p>This one particular place across the street it seems to be a big waste. If you notice people don't even use it. Younger kids don't even use it. Kids and teenagers don't use it. So they spent a lot of money there. Put a fence around the lot there and it's nothing there. Really nothing over there for the kids to occupy their mind. They could at least had a basketball court or something like this and they should have more of the concrete base than that dirt. You see a lot of people won't let their kids go over there, the smaller kids, because they don't want them to get hurt and stuff in their hair and get there clothes dirty because then they have to take them back home and wash their clothes and their hair. They develop problems with their hair. You know a lot of little kids around here have hair diseases from that dirt because they like to play in dirt. And it shouldn't have been like that. Mayor Schaefer spent a lot of money on that particular project over there and I think it's worthless. Have you ever noticed it?</p>
Q	After you brought it to my attention it makes a lot of sense.
A	The fence cost more than anything over there.
Q	Is that right?
A	They got robbed on deals like this. This is what the State goes for. They trying to prove a point, maybe to the people in the neighborhood that they're doing something. This isn't the only one they got another one down at Presstman and Druid Hill that is the same thing. You got one over at Madison and Presstman and it's the same thing. More older people use it than younger people.

Q	Describe what living on North Avenue and Pennsylvania was like. What: years are you describing?
A	I'm just coming from the seventies on up until now. Going back further, it's a lot of things I've really forgot. We had, like I said, a lot of people who tried in this neighborhood. But now it's up to like the younger people coming along.
Q	What do you think could motivate it?
A	Like I said, it's got to be more recreation, more jobs, more training programs and something to get them interested in the future. It's like a lot of young people, you'd be surprised, do not know how to employ themselves. They need classes to teach them how to go out into the world or go into business or go out in the field. You have to sell yourself to get over. Not to get over, but to get ahead. This is the main thing. This is our main problem. It's not enough programs and training for them. This is the only thing I can see that can help this neighborhood.
Q	That makes a lot of sense what you're saying. They do a lot of interviews and a lot of the older people talk about the way it was, but you're the first person that ever really talked about a concrete thing. It makes a lot of sense of the reasons why it is going down. Not dealing with reality. But we can't keep living in the past that's done. The past is over and done and you have to start something new. That's our main mal thing.
A	Always talking about yesterday. You get on the corner with a bunch of older men my age they always talking about what they did yesterday. You have to keep yourself going along with what's happening today. You have to get in with the younger people, you got to know the neighborhood, you got to show them if you want respect out them you got to give it to them. Same vice a versa. If you don't have this you don't have nothing. You don't have no community.

Until we get this it's not going to be too much up here. It's really going down more and more because we got a lot of foreigners coming in and taking over everything. They got the stores, restaurants. Me particularly, I don't eat too tough from them. I don't like the food, I don't like their hygiene and then being a Korean War Veteran I've seen a lot of things. I for one, myself don't eat too tough from them. I don't advise many people to eat from them, but they do it anyhow. You can open up a restaurant right across the street. They'll go in there first before they fraternize you.

This is one thing they got to learn too. But, in some cases its hard. We got a fellow up the street, he's got a little candy store but he has an attitude. He's black. But see you can't have an attitude when you're dealing with the public. In these other instances, the stores, whites, Jews, they're trying to get you in there. They'll bend over backwards to get that business.

These are things we've got to learn. Particularly younger people. They've got to learn how to deal with what's going on. It's not a dream world no more and you can't keep on saying what happened yesterday, that's over. We want to go ahead. Like getting them interested in voting. In this neighborhood — they are — go back about 5 or 6 years a lot of young people were registering to vote. They took them all out and registered them as Republicans and they didn't know no better. I had to tell like my son you don't want to be a Republican. I had to sit down and explain to him . It is your choice to be either one or the other, but I always believed in being Democratic so that you can't tell them that they have to vote for who they want.

This is how a lot of Republicans got into office over top the Democrats in this neighborhood because they really didn't know what they were doing. They didn't know the difference. They had. the people who registered them tell them. I don't know if they were paid or whatever. It was a bad move for people who didn't know. These are things you have to show them. What group of people are doing the most for you.

Q	What do you think the political climate was like in the past and today?
A	<p>Well, I think in the past we had some good people, we had a few good people came up who really worked. I think Parren Mitchell worked hard for us and there were quite a few others. Right now we got a lot of people we don't know anything about. Really, people don't know them, you don't know anything they — like they had this guy — Phillips, Rev. Phillips was out here campaigning the other day. There's not too much he has put in the neighborhood. But yet and still he wants to come out and get a vote. I feel like when I vote I'm going to see something you did or something you're going to do. I mean all of them promise, but you just don't put a man in there behind promises.</p> <p>I still like the Mitchells for their background and what they have done. At least we know they did do some things. Ms Quille, she's very active in our neighborhood. But, I think she might be getting too old. I think she needs to step down and let somebody younger get in her place or train somebody. I'm not taking anything from her. We get along fair We argue about the alleys, and keeping them clean. It's certain things they don't enforce.</p> <p>We got the worse alleys in the City anywhere. We call downtown to get this trash cleaned out this alley, they come out but they're not allowed to take but three pieces. As long as the guy's got a truck and he doesn't want to go to the dump he going to dump where ever he sees trash. And there is no enforcement. The police patrols, he don't pay no attention to it. So it's just money, revenue, that the State's really losing. And it makes it bad. It draws rats and everything else in the area. But there is nothing you can do about it. This is a City job and this is the way they operate. They'll only take three pieces of bulk and leave the rest. As long as you've got bulk trash out there people will continue to add to it. This makes our neighborhood bad. You got about four or five alleys around here and they are always right out to trash day, cluttered up again. This doesn't make sense. Then you have the problem with the bags. Plastic bags. People put their trash in bags out, I thought cans was much better.</p>

Q	Well, they are. Dogs rip the bags open, and then the rats.
A	The dogs rip them open and tear them up. It's not too good, it's not too healthy either. These alleys could be clean. If you could keep them clean and enforce it, and that would eliminate some problems.
Q	How has transportation changed over the years and how has it affected the community?
A	Transportation, are you speaking of the metro?
Q	Yes.
A	<p>Well, I think it was a good move and bad move. It really didn't do anything for people at North because it takes a lot of traffic out of the community. People here in this neighborhood, which is a commercial neighborhood, had a lot of business coming in, school kids coming in, they were spending more money. But now, this takes you straight through. If you are going to Mondawmin Plaza, you've got these other people making that money.</p> <p>And most: of these are operated by Koreans and whites, but very few black businessmen. Even in Lafayette Market. You got about what, you got five black businesses down there. I'd be surprised. And this is where the metro really goes. And the buses, they had to put 19 back on the line. They used to run that down here on Saturdays and Sundays. But now they do, for purposes of the Inner Harbor. That's the only reason they put it back on. It's not for the convenience of the neighborhood. Very few people use the 19 on Sundays.</p>
Q	What are your memories for entertainment in the community? The Met Theatre, Wilson's, Charles Theatre, Nate's & Leon's?
A	<p>Nate's & Leon's was a very nice place. They sold the best of foods. I can tell you. And for entertainment we had this theatre we used to go, it wasn't really a theatre, it was a hall up there and it was owned by a bunch of blacks, it was a private club. And, as far as entertainment, you got most of the private clubs, are the only thing that you really could go in and enjoy yourself. Because you don't have too many clubs that you can go in enjoy yourself and sit down, because you knew a group of people which really don't respect the other people.</p> <p>You know when you go in a place and spend some money to have a nice time, you want to sit down and enjoy yourself. You don't want to have somebody walk up and pull on you or pull on your girlfriend, and then you'd be fighting. You walk into other places, and you don't have this kind of traffic, you know. See, you got to have a better class of people. People who respect themselves. But most of your places have carry out service, in and out, you don't have too many places around this neighborhood.</p>
Q	Why do you think there are more carryout. Do you think that's a carryback to the old segregated days?

A	More so, yes. It's because they are having so much problems with people coming here and sitting down. Like I say, you have a different breed of people coming in the area. It's always a problem. It's like Shake & Bake. They've had a lot of incidents down there since it opened. And it's a nice place, but you've always got somebody who is going to over indulge come in and mess up the whole thing. I think, I always said you need more places where you can learn something. Something like the Y, the YMCA that moved down to the. . .they had a YWCA and I don't know whether that's open or closed. But all the Y's are downtown.
Q	Did you attend school in this area?
A	Yes, I went to Douglas High. Douglas, Carver. Schools in the neighborhood. Colored schools.
Q	What can you say about the quality of education in the area?
A	Well, I think we have some good teachers. We had some good teachers in the past like Ms. Verda Welcome taught me. I consider her one of the best. And you have, you know, the Spanish teachers up at Douglas and Mr. Nelson, who was very good, and you have quite a few teachers. But you have some offsprings of theirs that are in the field, which are good. It's not the quality of the teacher, it's the person who's learning. If you don't want to learn, well, there's nothing they can do about it. A lot of them won't go to school. They be start out wanting to go to school, but they be on the street all day long getting involved in something else. But you do have some good teachers.
Q	Do you attend church in the area?
A	Yes, Baptist.
Q	What impact did the churches have?
A	The impact has a lot of, the church has a lot of impact for those who grow. For instances, if you go back to when I was growing up, going to church, our parents saw to it that we went. It was a must. And it was hard then but, you learned to enjoy. You come up around the right type of people and this gives you a different quality, you know, this is what church does for people. There are a lot of things you can get involved in. Help you out in the community and what not. So, I think the church has a good impact. It's up to the individual to go to church, to want to believe.
Q	How long have you attended the church?
A	Since I was 8 years old.
Q	What was some of your favorite places that you wish hadn't left the area.
A	Well, I didn't want to see the Royale Theatre leave. And it was a lot of places. There were several theaters around here and they moved them out so the ones downtown, they are too far, and you run into that same problem I was telling you before, you run into a different breed of people. You're not known in that neighborhood. It's always a problem. And movies downtown are getting just as bad, raggedy. You can't enjoy your picture. You have to go out of the area. Maybe out to the Plaza or somewhere like this just to see a good picture.

Q	Do you prefer Penn/North of yesteryear or today?
A	<p>Well, yes and no. It's a moving, but yesterday it was more to offer. Today we have a lot of people like I said, they can't go in business, they don't have the money. But those who tried and got grants lost out. We really don't have anything around here to occupy us, you know. The older men they have nothing to do but sit on the corner. This is, I'll tell you, a day by day thing and there's nothing out there for them. They say they have programs for 50—60, but you don't get into them, you know, just like giving out food in here. In the white neighborhoods, they get more, different types of things than you do here. You understand that?</p>
Q	If you had the power to change things what would you change?
A	<p>Well, like I said, I'd like to see more people, blacks in business and I'd like to see some more recreation for younger people. To keep them out of the streets. As long as they don't have anywhere to go to do something different, particularly in this area, you got a building up there at North and Pennsylvania going to waste. Take those old buildings, the funeral home, it used to be all white.</p> <p>It was like it used to be owned by a white man, but we had to stand out front in the front part of the building to get waited on you weren't allowed to go back. We had a lot of prejudices around here in this neighborhood for a long time. And it didn't change.</p>
Q	What was it like, Jim Crow, segregation?
A	<p>That's what really made people get together. See, if you never been segregated you don't know what it is like. Understand? When I was in the service I was in Savannah. I had on a uniform but I had to sit on the back of the bus. This takes a lot from you. You live in this area, why should you have to stand out front and then a white man could come by, be a cripple, be a drunk, and he can go in the back and sit down and get a coffee. See, that takes a lot out of you in your own community. You didn't have a lot of black restaurants in the area at that particular time, this area, you had the Greeks, the whites, what have you. It really wasn't too much you could do about it.</p>
Q	How did the change occur? Suddenly one day we are allowed in there?
A	<p>Well, a lot of it came along, I don't know if you remember Rap Brown. Radicals, they started a lot of things, and a lot of other people opened doors. Like, he got locked up. With all respect to him, they took a lot from him. This man did a lot to support other people in the movements and picketing places, to get things started in all areas, particularly in this neighborhood.</p> <p>And then as Martin Luther King came back, the changes really started. The riots and what not. Some people say the riots didn't do any good, but in some instances they did. They made a few changes. And got a lot of the whites out of the neighborhood. The Jews moved out after they were picketed. They sold the places out to quite a few females. At first they gave blacks an opportunity, but like I said, the neighborhood started changing, and now it's changing again. Every so often your neighborhood will change, I'd say every twenty years, every fifteen years.</p>

	<p>There is a change. And in this neighborhood, it's turning out to be operated by a . And the Jews own most of the properties around here. And they won't do too much to them, and they are not going to do it until the city gets on their back. This is the main thing, if they don't get more housing, you know.</p>
Q	<p>What about the new high-rise for senior citizens? Is it good or bad?</p>
A	<p>Well, that's good. All of that is good. At Washington & Madison. Robbins, they got a big building there and they got a big building at North and Pennsylvania Avenues. If they do it. They said they would. I think money has been appropriated for it. But like I say, they waste a lot of money doing things that really is not a necessity. And it costs a lot.</p> <p>This street contract here. It's alright, it's nice. But there is no necessity for the money it's costing. Just for a straight shot down to Druid Park or Howard Street, just to mess up the rush hour which is mostly used by whites and blacks who live out in that area. They don't use Charles Street. The street has always been just. . .</p>
Q	<p>What year did you start working as a painter?</p>
A	<p>Well, an emergency painting for my father. The majority of people who came through this neighborhood were odd painters. This was one of the onlyest things we could do, you know. You could always find a job painting. You learned painting around the house. Used to have to paint down the steps, you had wooden steps. And all steps were white, it was what you called a clean block, an Afro clean block. You had to get out and paint and fix the fences and you learned as the elders paid you. And then you come up and that's all you know, that's like I say.</p> <p>The young men today don't have too much of an occupation. When I was coming up, you learned how to paint, or your father was an auto mechanic and he might take you out and teach you this is how we do it. Then the service came along and I went into the service. Plus we had a vocational school here where we had training – at Carey, right behind Douglas.</p>
Q	<p>Are you still a painter?</p>
A	<p>Yeah, when I find work to do.</p>
Q	<p>We would like to thank you for allowing us to interview you.</p>
A	<p>I was happy to give you some information, I hope I gave you some.</p>
Q	<p>It was a whole lot. A lot to think about, really, especially somebody that has really thought out what they think could help the community. Everybody always talks about the good and bad. And we always say well, what can we do, what can we do. I think it is important for young people to hear. Someone who really verbalizes in what they think.</p>
A	<p>It's really up to them. Because they are tomorrow's world, understand? If you don't learn anything while you are a youthful age, you all are in trouble, you know.</p>

	<p>Because they are going to open up a door where industry is putting in robots, machines. If you don't go out and do anything besides digging earth, you're in trouble because they got two machines out there doing 20 men's work. Year's back, you would have had to had 15 man gangs to do what 2 machines are doing. Plus, they are doing it quicker. You have to learn to be a machine operator.</p> <p>These are the things I want to get to you. Construction will be in the future for the average male. And women are getting into it. You got quite a few white women out there on the job. I don't know whether any of you all have seen them or not. They got one up there on Reisterstown Road operating one of those big cranes. So, this right now, you start trying to get into your future. It is your all's world. I tell these 25—30 years old, you're in big trouble, don't know anything, time is passing you by. Once you get past 25, time goes fast. Time goes real fast. It's up to you all, you all are real smart. You're the future. I wish you a lot of luck.</p>
Q	Do you have any pictures of back in those days?
A	<p>Yes, I have papers. My mother and father had a store, I had a store, right here. At Baker and Division. I had this little place across the street that I turned into a television repair place. So, I have been in and out. I run my own trucking outfit. But small, nothing large. Like I said, it's hard when you get old. I got a couple friends around here that are working for themselves, they are self-employed, so this is all you can do at my age.</p> <p>Even the younger people if they want, even the younger people, you got to hustle. There's a lot of young men out here now, they got pick up trucks, they are arabs, they do small light hauling, they are making money. But you got to be out there. Cause nobody is going to give you nothing. Nobody is going to give you a ticket to get to the other side. I hate to say it, I hate to be prejudice, but: they aren't going to give you nothing. You got to open that door for yourself.</p> <p>It's been nice talking to you.</p>