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Bridges That Carried Us Over Project

Interview Summary

Interviewee:

Deborah Franklin

Interviewer:

Lea Michelle Cash

Interview Date:

June 27, 2016

Interview Location:

Rialto, California (Wilma Amina Carter's Home)

Length:

00:46:25

Interview Summary completed by:

Valerie Nguyen and Rossandra Martinez, 2022

Description:

Deborah Franklin shares stories of her early life in San Bernardino, her experiences with racism at the University of Redlands, and her journey as a councilwoman and Mayor of the City of Banning. She places a great emphasis on her role models, including her Grandmother Eula Saville, who was one of the first Black families to own land in The Valley Truck Farms. She expresses gratitude to her biggest supporters, talks about the lessons she learned in her political involvement, and her strong calling to serve her community.

Subject Topic:

- Transportation
- Black Political Leaders
- City Council
- San Bernardino High School

Spatial Coverage:

Name of Site (if relevant)	General Location/Address
Johnston College, University of Redlands	1200 East Colton Ave P.O. Box 3080 Redlands, CA 92373 United States
Carol's Kitchen	157 W Nicolet St, Banning, CA 92220
San Bernardino Westside	Childhood home and early education, Ramona Elementary School and Franklin Junior High School
City of Banning	Served as council woman and mayor
Banning	Lived in Banning for 31 years

Temporal Coverage:

1951-2016

Key Events:

- Community Involvement through Carol's Kitchen,
- Campaign for Mayor
- Becoming Mayor and serving for three years

Key Organizations:

- Allstate Insurance
- Johnston College
- Carol's Kitchen
- Parks and Rec
- Valley Truck Farms
- Boys and Girls Club

Interview Index:

Media Format	Time (hh:mm:ss)	Topic Discussed
Digital Video	00:00:00	Family, early childhood background, and schools attended

Digital Video	00:02:15	Johnston College, University of Redlands, experiencing racism
Digital Video	00:04:23	Franklin's grandmother, Eula Saville as a major inspiration
Digital Video	00:07:50	The college experience, what she wanted to do
Digital Video	00:11:08	Working in insurance and her retirement, racism in the workplace
Digital Video	00:13:53	Coming to the City of Banning
Digital Video	00:15:02	What inspired Franklin to run for Mayor, Carol's Kitchen, getting involved, Parks and Rec Committee
Digital Video	00:19:45	Running for and being Mayor, her platform, learning about politics, experiencing gender and racial discrimination within the political world, Marianne Johnson
Digital Video	00:45:21	What she will be focusing on in the future, her grandbabies

Related Materials:

Additional oral history interviews are available from the Wilmer Amina Carter Foundation's "Bridges that Carries Us Over Project" on CSUSB ScholarWorks, <https://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/bridges/>.

Full interview transcript can be found below.

Interview Transcript

Start of Interview:

[00:00:00]

Lea Michelle Cash [00:00:03] OK, today's date is June 27, 2016. My name is Lea Michelle Cash, and I'm interviewing Deborah Franklin for the Archiving Black History Project in the Inland Empire. Her name is spelled

Deborah Franklin [00:00:21] D-E-B-O-R-A-H F-R-A-N-K-L-I-N.

Lea Michelle Cash [00:00:28] OK, we are interviewing here in the home of Ratibu and Amina, Wilma Amina Carter, in the city of Rialto, California. Thank you, Miss Franklin, for taking out the time to conduct this interview with us.

Deborah Franklin [00:00:45] My pleasure.

Lea Michelle Cash [00:00:45] So, if you would look into the camera when you're asking- when I'm asking you these questions, OK. Tell us a little bit about your early childhood.

Deborah Franklin [00:00:57] Well, I grew up in San Bernardino. What we know as the West Side, one of eight children. I'm number five, six girls, two boys. And to be in the middle of such a large family, you kind of get lost in the shuffle. But we were a family. We have a very extended family. So most of my time was spent with my siblings going to my grandmother's house and going to school. And I truly enjoyed school. So it was no problem going to school and reading is one of my favorite hobbies. So I spent a lot of time with my siblings and other family and reading and dreaming.

Lea Michelle Cash [00:01:38] And what schools on the West Side did you attend?

Deborah Franklin [00:01:42] I started off at Ramona Elementary School, went to Alesandro, Franklin Junior High School, and San Bernardino High School is where I graduated then I went on to the University of Redlands, to the Johnston College, which was the first- I was in the first graduating class from Johnston College with a four year term at the school.

Lea Michelle Cash [00:02:04] OK, so we have another San Bernardino High School alumni. So what year did you graduate from San Bernardino High School?

Deborah Franklin [00:02:12] 1969.

Lea Michelle Cash [00:02:13] 1969. OK, so then now we'll move into your college experience. And you said that you were at the University of Redlands. So tell us a little bit about that experience and- and how you felt during those early college days.

Deborah Franklin [00:02:32] College experience was just that, an experience. This was the first experimental class that they had where we started as freshmen and went all the way through as seniors. What was unique about the university experience was that we had no grades. So you went through your classes, you had very individualized curriculum and spent a lot of time doing a one-on-one type of environment. Classes were very small. They were very unstructured. But that didn't mean we didn't learn a lot because it was more individualized, you had more requirements of things to do. You had to write a journal, you had to go out and work on projects, did an experimental program where I went to Stanford for a month to do a project up there. And on the academic side, it was very stimulating because, like I said, you did it at your own pace and you were challenged to be able to find out a little bit more, dig into what things you're really trying to find out about. And then you were held accountable for what you were trying to do. You did a contract, so it was a one-on-one program with your professors. On the social side, it was a little daunting. Having grown up basically around my family, it was very strange to be in an environment where they made sure there were four African-American females, four African-American men. And we ranged over both freshman to- and sophomores and then juniors and being in an environment where people acted like they've never seen black people before, it was a little unique.

Lea Michelle Cash [00:04:23] Yeah. And I bet it was quite an experience. So you have stated that you- one of your hobbies was that you loved reading and in that reading, a lot of dreaming takes place. So who inspired you while you were dreaming? Who lit your fire to be the person that you wanted to be?

Deborah Franklin [00:04:46] My grandmother, without a doubt. My grandmother Eula Saville was she and my grandfather had our version of a paradise. That's the place you always wanted to go, whether it was the summertime, holidays, after school, grandma's house was the place to be and she encouraged us, never raised her voice to us, never told us what we were supposed to do, but she made you feel like you needed to be able to achieve whatever it was. And she was always there with that encouraging word, even when she was telling you you were doing wrong. She was still encouraging you. And she always made us feel like you can do the best you can. And she would tell us, you know, no matter what you want to be, be the best. If you're a garbage collector, be the best. If you're a thief, be the best, you know. So she encouraged you to really get out

there and do something. And she also taught us to care about our fellow man because she really told us that, you know, we're not here just to be here. We're not here for our own pleasure. We're here because we're supposed to serve man. And she also taught us, in a way, I like to put it is the three Rs, that you have the Right to do community service. You have the Responsibility to do community service, and you have the Reward of community service. So it was always to get back and there was good things to come out of doing that, to watch her in action and I think about when she for me, I was probably about 10 or 11 and she was in her 60s and she was a woman that was always on the go. She was always helping somebody doing something for somebody else. And even with an extended family and helping to watch us in the summertime and stuff, it was always it was somebody you could do something for. And she was my ideal. This is what you're supposed to be like. You know, I wanted to be like grandma when I grew up. You know, I didn't know exactly what I wanted to do as a job. I knew that I had to get out and I knew I had to get educated.

Lea Michelle Cash [00:06:54] You had to serve.

Deborah Franklin [00:06:55] But I knew that there was something I wanted to do. In fact, I first wanted to write school books, and then I found out you have to sell your school books. Then I wanted to be an oceanographer and realized since I don't care to spend a lot of time in water, that wasn't going to work. And I did wind up actually I really like doing social work and working with kids. And one of my projects when I was in college was to work with the probation office in Los Angeles and I thought, oh, this would be really good. This is dealing with teens that are having problems and working with them on a one-to-one basis. And it was a really good internship for me. But when I took the test and they told me that all the military people get ahead of you in the line, so out of a thousand, I wound up like at the eight hundreds. It's like, well, that's not gonna work.

Lea Michelle Cash [00:07:50] So in that process, in being inspired by your grandmother, who who no doubt has inspired you for your whole adult life, in that process, when you were in the college situation where you blatantly saw racism and as it raised its ugly head, what lesson did you learn during that process of being involved in that?

Deborah Franklin [00:08:16] Well, it didn't stop me from wanting to get out and get involved and took me in a different direction than I ever thought it would be in you know, growing up in San Bernardino, there wasn't a whole lot of emphasis placed on whether or not you were black or white. It just depended on what crowd you hung out with. And because we are very family oriented, all my friends came from large families, too. So

that's the way we interacted. And when you go off to college, you know, you don't have that same support system behind you. And it was a real shock. And I got a little militant because that's about the time I started reading the Stokely Carmichael books about the Black Panthers, Black on Ice. And, you know, I mean, the different books. And, you know, I was like, this isn't right. So I spent a lot of time trying to figure out just where am I and who am I, because I've never had people before want to touch my skin to see if it was real or touch your hair to feel what it was like and it was such a strange experience. And even though two of my sisters actually we were at the University of Redlands the same time I was going to Johnston College, it still wasn't quite that same experience because, you know, your classes are with a whole different set of people. And I got exposed to life in L.A. at this time because all the other students were from Los Angeles. There were only two of us from San Bernardino area. Everybody else was from L.A. And that's where I got exposed to Watts and going to Compton and going down to Crenshaw. And it wasn't a bad thing. It was just another exposure of things. And, you know, you come from more of a country style of living to people who were very involved in this city, in the ghetto. And, you know, just a lot of experiences that I really hadn't thought about before.

Lea Michelle Cash [00:10:19] So now as you graduate from college and then you do start to find your career profession, which way did that take you?

Deborah Franklin [00:10:30] Well, my first thought was- and I had majored in sociology, a minor in history- and I really wanted to get involved with young people. And I thought maybe, you know, sticking around a college campus would be a good thing. But I found that I really didn't have the right attitude for that. Thought about teaching, totally didn't like that. So I tried to get involved with doing different things and I had relocated to Los Angeles at this point. So I actually wound up doing teaching adults to learn for their GED until I started and I graduated in '73 and in '74 I went to work for Allstate Insurance, had no idea what insurance was. You know, it was just a word that you heard. But I needed a job and I needed to support myself. I was a very strong and still a strong believer that I should not have to have anybody take care of me. I want to take care of myself. So I went to work for Allstate Insurance, started as a customer service representative and learned about insurance. You know, it was always a word that you heard, and it wasn't the same as as growing up. We always heard about Golden Life Insurance, auto and homeowner insurance are nothing like that. So I worked my way up, started from a customer service rep to an inside adjuster to an outside adjuster, handling auto claims, bodily injury claims or casualties, then went on into management and took over homeowner's insurance, subrogation, different areas of it, and learned all the different aspects of handling insurance claims and stayed in that world for 28 years.

Lea Michelle Cash [00:12:19] I was going to say, how long? 28 years.

Deborah Franklin [00:12:21] And in fact, I retired earlier than I anticipated because our office, where I- through the time that I work for Allstate, I went from Los Angeles to San Diego and back out here to Riverside County. And the office that I was in relocated from Ontario to Diamond Bar, and living in Banning. It was a three hour drive every day. It was going to be an hour and a half each way if there was no accident, so I talked to my financial adviser and he said, "You know, you can retire." Because I was moaning and groaning about this time I would spend on the freeway every day. And the company was very interesting. The company said that there was no way I could work like a four day week and not be on the freeway because that's 15 hours, to me, equals two working days. And my manager said, no, you know, we need you there every day. So I took the early retirement package and then right after I retired, they let people get moved to other offices, work four days a week. And it was part of- you always wonder what was different. Here I am a manager. I've got 12 people working for me. But, you know, we're downsizing. And, you know, it's OK for you to leave early. And then you have other people that are adjusters and yeah we'll accommodate whatever their schedule is, but we can't accommodate yours.

Lea Michelle Cash [00:13:53] Here we go again. So you mentioned the City of Banning. So I was going to lead into how did you get to Banning?

Deborah Franklin [00:14:02] Well, I was working in San Diego when I was working in Los Angeles. I met a man, we got married, relocated to San Diego, where he was working. We divorced and I had one daughter and I have a sister. My oldest sister believes all of us should be married. So she introduced me to a man who was on the fire department in Banning and he, since he lived there, he was agreeable. After we had dated for a while, we decided to get married, that he would live wherever I wanted to. And I'm a little old school. And I thought, well, we'll I'll move where you are because I have the opportunity to transfer. He could not transfer. He actually worked for the city. And I didn't really believe in that 'you live in one place and he lives in another', and neither did he. He's even more old school than I am. So I relocated to Banning and that's where I've been for 31 years.

Lea Michelle Cash [00:15:01] 31 years. OK, so we know that you were previously the mayor.

Deborah Franklin [00:15:08] Yes.

Lea Michelle Cash [00:15:09] Of the City of Banning.

Deborah Franklin [00:15:11] Yes.

Lea Michelle Cash [00:15:11] So explain to us a little bit about that journey.

Deborah Franklin [00:15:16] That was an interesting journey. When I retired, I retired at the age of 50. My plan had been at that time to spend a little more time with my daughters, I have two girls, and I had really spent more time at work than I had with them. When you work in claims you do not have an eight to five job, you work every day, whatever it takes, which means leaving the house at six o'clock in the morning, not coming home to maybe six or seven, working weekends. So, retiring, I thought, well, one daughter was off in college, one was in high school, and this would be a good time to spend time with my girls to be able to go to some of their school events, to possibly clean the house, do the garden, do a little traveling. That didn't work out. I did get a chance to spend time with my younger daughter in terms of going to some of her sports events or school events. And with my older one being in college, getting a chance to go without having to worry about the fact that we were going to, she was in school in Colorado at the Air Force Academy. So making that trip out there every year during parents weekend. And it wasn't a problem to be able to say, you know, I'm going to take this time and go see her in school. So I was able to do that. And I really had wanted to still work in the community. So I started off at one of our food kitchens called Carol's Kitchen. And I worked there every week. And I worked in the kitchen and it was truly a wonderful experience. The head cook taught me a lot more about cooking. You know, I grew up in a big family, so I was used to cooking for ten people. Well, I learned how to cook for 200, 300 people and how to stretch that meal so that not only you're able to fix it, but you're fixing something they want to eat and how to do different things with food that I had never even thought about. And then not only did I help fix the meals, I was able to serve people. And so you come to one-on-one contact with people. I really enjoy that. And I was able to see more of the need in the community. My husband, I live on the east side of town, which is very similar to the west side of them, you know, and even though we live there and we go to church there, you still come in contact with people I had never seen because I was never there prior to retiring. I was gone all the time. So with dealing with people and seeing what was involved, I realized that there was a need to get more involved. Find out how we fix some of the problems that we have here.

Lea Michelle Cash [00:17:51] In the City of Banning.

Deborah Franklin [00:17:52] In the city. And our city is a small city and it's fairly disadvantaged. The median income is about \$38,000 in the state. It's well, actually in the county it's like \$58,000. So we're below the median for the County of Riverside. And

because I was talking to people and we were talking about what things were needed and how things were not really geared to be equal across the city, I had attended some council meetings and there were some women in the community that were much more active in the political world. So they would know when it was time to go to a council meeting and you didn't have to say anything, was just being there in force. So I was exposed to that and then realized that we did not have- we had some, two, Black council members previously. But when the second one had retired, we didn't have anybody for half the city to represent the community. All of our city council members lived on one half of the city. So some of us were talking about it. And I was trying to encourage other people like you guys ought to run for council. And I go talk to them and they're like, "Nah, I'm not doing that." And then it finally dawned on me. I'm asking them to do something I should be able to do. And why am I asking them if I'm able-bodied, I don't really have a commitment to my time other than one day a week that I cook. Get involved. So I started off with the Parks and Rec committee first and one of the council members I started talking to, and he was very helpful because, and his name was John Machisic, because he said, you know, there are things that you can find out about, but just start start with Parks and Rec. So I applied, had no idea what I was doing, and got on the Parks and Rec. And I talked to some other people in the community and they're like run for city council and it was like hell no. But I thought about it and, you know, being very naive about it, I ran the first time, had no idea what I was doing. And of course, I lost. I'm thinking that all you need to do is get your friends to vote. In a city of 30,000 people, 12,000 registered voters. There was one flaw in what I was doing. So we have a gated community of 6,000 residents. 84 percent of them vote, only 40 percent of the rest of the city votes. So I needed to have a way to get into that gated community. And one of the things that I supported when I first started running was that we needed districts. We needed to be able to have people represented across the city, not just in different parts of town. The gated community did not like that idea. They always had two to three council members on the council. Without their support, you do not win. So the second time I had talked about it and they knew I had talked about and we had talked about a petition and my name was on it and they wrote "no." Well, finally, got a little educated, got a little more knowledge and realized that you need to temper my stand a little bit. And even though I still believe in "we need citywide representation", I said our city might not be big enough at this time for districts, saying that, I won on the third time that I ran. And I have to thank Lois Carson as one of the people that encouraged me to keep running because after the first time, it's like "I don't know about this." She said "You've got to do it again." Second time I had gotten more votes but without winning it's like "I don't know about this." The doorknocking is not a problem. You know, when you go out, talk to people door to door, asking for money is tough because that's what it really takes. You have to have money for all of your street signs or your yard signs, your fliers in the mail, you know, all the things that you want to do,

the coffees you don't pay for. But you have to have some way to reach people and you don't reach people in just one way, you have to be able to do the door knocking, have the coffees, get out when you're having some kind of community event and go around and talk to people.

Lea Michelle Cash [00:22:12] And I let them get to know you.

Deborah Franklin [00:22:14] Exactly.

Lea Michelle Cash [00:22:15] And you, them.

Deborah Franklin [00:22:16] And and you have to sell yourself, which is kind of counter to what you learn as a Christian, because it's not about you, it's about God. So you're not supposed to put yourself out there. But to be a politician, you do. You're marketing yourself. So that was a little different to try to figure out how to do it. And I don't have the problem now. But then I had a problem talking.

Lea Michelle Cash [00:22:42] And what was your- what did- what was your platform?

Deborah Franklin [00:22:45] My platform at first was that we needed representation across the city, you know, we needed a balance, you know, we need people all over to come together to talk about what's good for our community, because I'll give you an example. One of the things that had come up was when I, in fact, it was while I was working, I had had the opportunity to see a couple of boys and girls clubs. We didn't have anything like that in Banning, we had very little for our young people. So I'd gone to the city council three times. I was involved with a youth program. And what I wanted to see was we would be able to take this youth program and make it into a boys and girls club. And in my naivete, I didn't realize that when you go to the city council and you speak during public comment, they can't respond to you. You know, they sit there and smile and say nothing. And it didn't dawn on me that, you know, you need to get somebody that's really willing to sponsor this program. And as it turned out, what happened was after I went three times to the city council, I got nothing because I kept talking about all these programs I'd seen and how they were really good for their communities and the cities had gotten behind them. A council member a year later took it and called it her program, that it was her idea to start the Boys and Girls Club. And I said, you know, "I took that to you three times." "I don't recall." So I learned a little bit more about politics. But I still believe that you need to have the voice of people throughout. You know, I remembered hearing Maxine Waters say, you know, those people who have money will always have representation. There's no doubt they will make sure they have representation, but your janitor, your waitress, the people that are doing the everyday jobs that are so important, they need to have representation too.

Lea Michelle Cash [00:24:40] As well.

Deborah Franklin [00:24:41] And I found that especially for the part of town that we lived in, a lot of those people felt that not only were they not represented, there was no voice speaking on their behalf.

Lea Michelle Cash [00:24:48] They were invisible.

Deborah Franklin [00:24:51] And everybody should have a voice. Everybody should have somebody speaking up. Not necessarily that I always agree, but at least bring it to the table, have something that people can make sure that they know somebody is representing them, and especially for young people. I want them to see me and say, "If you can do it, I can do it." My background's not that much different from many of our young people, but there is the opportunity to be able to get out there to make laws and to be on the city council now. And this is my 10th year. I'm in places now where I vote on millions of dollars of projects. I just came from a meeting today and it's for the Riverside Transportation Commission. And on that commission, I actually also represent Metrolink. So we talk about a project that 19 million dollars, one project. We talk about 250 million dollar projects. And my vote is one of the votes at the table. And when I sit in a room and there may be- there's twenty eight cities and all the cities are represented on the commission, my vote does count. So it's important to make sure that somebody that looks different from the majority of the group is still showing there is representation. And doing things like an example would be with Metrolink. And I sit on the board for Metrolink that brings the trains from Los Angeles out to Orange County, Ventura County, San Bernardino, Riverside counties, that when we're talking about things like the ticket machines, one of the things that's coming up right now is going to cashless machines. Well, there has to be a voice for those people that do not use credit cards, that there are still people that deal with cash. And there are some people that just don't get it because they have a credit card. They cannot imagine there are people that don't use credit cards or because you have a smartphone and you can download your ticket. Everybody doesn't do that. So we have to make sure we don't forget about those people that are still doing things that the person who's making a \$100,000 a year can do because we have a large population that's just not fair.

Lea Michelle Cash [00:27:16] Just not fair.

Deborah Franklin [00:27:16] It doesn't mean that they should they're less deserving. They don't deserve any less respect, doesn't mean they're not intelligent. It just means

circumstances and opportunities have not given them the same rights and the same privileges that other people have.

Lea Michelle Cash [00:27:34] So as the mayor and as a council person for the city of Banning, what do you feel has been your most rewarding and your most challenges? So it's actually a dual question. Start with most. Do you want to start with the most challenging or most rewarding?

Deborah Franklin [00:27:54] I'd say the challenge has been still to be able to walk into a room and still be accepted. You know, you're discounted and that's a double discount. One, as a female and second, as a female of color. And knowing that I go into rooms in this day and age and I may be the only female there, most likely I'm going to be the only person of color there that still happens quite a bit. And because I am that kind of pooh-pooh what you say, you know, there are still moments where I'll say something and I'll make a recommendation and it's totally ignored. And maybe a 5, 10 minutes later somebody else makes the same recommendation. "Oh, that's a good idea!" And it's like "I just- Didn't I just say that same thing?" You know, and realizing that you have to be a little harder. You have to be a little more forceful. And that's not my nature. And people say, well, you know, you don't get aggressive. You should not have to be aggressive. Everybody's voice should count. So dealing with that is very frustrating. I think the most rewarding is to be able to be exposed to so much knowledge and so many different things that are going on that I can take back to my community. And I see it as an opportunity to gain resources that I can share with people. One of the best things I think I can do as people come to you all the time, whether you're the mayor- generally as the mayor more as than a council member, but once they know who you are, they'll come to you because they have a problem. And the most rewarding thing is to be able to get them where they need to go. Doesn't mean that I've solved their problems, but because I have experience and exposure with different areas of knowledge and different banks of information and pools, that means I can give that to them. That means that when a person calls me and says, you know, "I don't know what to do, you know, my trash isn't being picked up the way it's supposed to be." I know who to call. I know how to take care of that. So, yes, they're frustrated but that doesn't have to continue. This is how we get this solved. Or I'm dealing with a young lady now that wants to go to music school. She's been accepted to school but now she needs to find out how to get money for it. It's like, OK, I was in a program Saturday and we just talked about scholarships. I'll get you that information. That kind of thing, I think is very rewarding. And to sit and try to make programs work, a lot of the things we're still working on in Banning, we have some challenges still. But to be a part of trying to make our city a better place for the people that live there.

Lea Michelle Cash [00:30:43] Goes back to the three R's. Very much so, yeah. So, what- if a young person views this, 10 years from now or even 20 years from now, what do you want your legacy to be? And follow through on that, that young person seeing this video will agree and said, well done.

Deborah Franklin [00:31:14] I think being able to be a role model and a mentor for young people, to be able to say that I can encourage young people to step out of the box and realize that they can do anything they really want to do if they're willing to put the effort and the energy into it. It may not be to take them exactly where they want to go, but if they have an overall goal to help people, to be a decision-maker in life, they can do that. We have too many ways today for people to feel like they don't have the opportunity or they don't have the right. Yes, you do have the right. And you can demand the respect at the same time. And if nothing more than to let other people see, yes, we do have African-Americans, we do have women who can sit at the table with you and we can make decisions just like you. And we can make this world a better place when we're willing to work together. I think that's one thing that as a female, I do and I've had a lot of experience now in trying to get people to work together. And I'll give you an example. I was called, oh, about two years ago, actually, three years ago now by our county supervisor because we had some problems with our water districts and we have 13 water districts in our area. And he asked me if I wanted to be a part of this alliance that was going to be started. It was a water task force. And I said, sure, you know, water is one of the things since a little girl we've always heard about, you know, water is an issue. My first meeting, I was elected chair, and when we first started having the meetings, everybody was on their own little space. You know, everybody's protecting my territory and I'm not budging. This is mine. We are at the point now, I'm still the chair, I get elected every year, but now people are talking to each other. Now people are talking about how do we form our own integrated regional water management plan? We are one of the one percent in the state that is not a part of one. And now people are sitting around the table saying, "We need to do this." This was actually brought up when we first got together three years ago and nobody wanted to talk about it. But through working with people and getting people to see, yes, we do need to communicate. Yes, we do need to put a little bit of ourselves out there, but put it out with the idea that you will be respected when you do, you're not going to be put down and everybody's voice matters. So when we do that and then we get people to come to meetings, in fact, we had one of the members, we had one member drop out after two meetings and he came back to a meeting two- about two months ago. And now he's calling me. He wants to talk about it now and it's like we've made progress because now we're willing to talk. And it just means that I believe if you show people respect, they will give it back.

Lea Michelle Cash [00:34:38] Give it back...

Deborah Franklin [00:34:39] Maybe grudgingly! But if you can get people to see, I respect you, I expect the same.

Lea Michelle Cash [00:34:47] And not only with that respect, it also has a measure of courage on your part as the leader to migrate through the bureaucracy and stay the course. So that is a feather in your hat. So you have said that your grandmother inspired you and then you mentioned Miss Lois Carson was telling you, you know, try it again, don't give up. Is there any other females or or male that you would like to give adage to?

Deborah Franklin [00:35:25] Recognition to? Yes. There's a lady that actually she passed away in March, Marianne Johnson. She had moved to Banning in the 1960s, and she was one of those women that, she didn't say anything out front, she'd never run for office, she'd never be the person that you would see representing people. But a world of wisdom and a person that was your supporter. When she passed away, and we had talked we had gotten to the point where we talked almost every day and whether it was by phone, in-person or just thinking, you know, like I would think sometimes "I need to call her." And I call her and she's all "Just getting ready to call you!" But she was a mother, a mentor, a confidante, a person who was willing to tell me, "Rethink your position on this or have you thought about this or yes, you're doing the right thing. Keep going." I mean a strong supporter, not just for me, but for many people in our community.

Lea Michelle Cash [00:36:35] Yeah, for the community.

Deborah Franklin [00:36:36] And a person that made you want to do your best. You know, she was going to be right behind you. She was a person who she would come to every council meeting. She said, "Because I want you to be able to look out and see I'm supporting you." We would talk before the council meetings and as she got older and she was 91 when she passed away and she would take a nap so she could be awake when I finished the council meeting so we could talk about what happened because she knew, I said, you know, I'm going to be a little live when this meeting is over because I've always been on the minority side on the council. So she would take her nap so that we could talk. We would talk before the meetings and we go over what some of the different topics were. And if I had any questions about what do you think is best for the community, she was a good person to bounce that off of because she knew everybody and then to be able to bounce off her. This is what happened. And when she was able to go to the meetings, she would tell me, you know, you know, you need to set up a little

straighter with your at the meetings, you know, watch what you're doing when you're there. But she was always encouraging

Lea Michelle Cash [00:37:49] Just like your grandmother.

Deborah Franklin [00:37:51] Mhm, yes.

Lea Michelle Cash [00:37:53] So in our final questions, your goal has been to give back to the community and on the website it lists two ways. Having a meaningful and effective manner and doing it and giving back to the community and helping Banning become, what is it, a thriving, healthy family atmosphere. Do you feel in your heart of hearts that you have actually done that over your period of being the mayor and today being the council member for the city?

Deborah Franklin [00:38:28] Unfortunately, I have to say we're not there yet. We've had a very troubling time in our city. We've gone through, just in the time that I've been on the council, six city managers. We've gone through, while I was mayor, we went through multiple city managers. We've almost completely redone our senior staff. One of the things you learn in politics is how to count to the number of three. And if you can't count to three in votes, you're not going to get what you want. When I first got on the council, there was a group of three that were very focused on Banning becoming an art town, very cultural focused. I told you, our median income is about \$37,000, \$37-\$38,000. So that's not a cultural art type of community. That's blue collar. There's nothing wrong with being blue collar. I mean, there are good solid jobs in blue collar. So I didn't agree with that. So I was always on the two. Sometimes on the one by myself voting. That's not where we need to be putting our money.

Lea Michelle Cash [00:39:44] That's not a three.

Deborah Franklin [00:39:46] Well, that council majority actually was so not in tune with what the community wanted that it changed. We had a new count to three. Well, for a little while we had three that we kind of thought alike in terms of let's get back on let's focus on economic development. And one of the men, John Machesic, who I mentioned earlier and I really liked him because we were able to disagree but respect each other and disagree and he decided not to run again. We still had three. But then we had another council member and I won't name him, but he left the council in the middle of me being mayor. Well our threesome changed and we had a threesome that felt like their role has been to find the corruption in our city so-

Lea Michelle Cash [00:40:52] The focus completely changed.

Deborah Franklin [00:40:52] I've been battling that for four years. There has not been any corruption, but that's the focus. So instead of focusing on how do we make Banning better, the focus has been 'How do we stop growth? How do we stop any kind of development coming in? How do we keep things the way they are?' And any city, any group, you have to move forward or you die. So we've been battling that this last couple of years to get back on track to how do we do more than just survive? How do we thrive? This is at the same time-.

Lea Michelle Cash [00:41:32] The power of the young people.

Deborah Franklin [00:41:34] Empowering. But one of the things that has really had an impact has been the recession. Every city was impacted. So your smaller cities that don't have any kind of industry, any kind of commercial development are hit harder because you don't have jobs. You need to have those sales tax. You need the property taxes to come in. So when you are more of a city with opportunity, it's lagging. We're not quite there yet.

Lea Michelle Cash [00:42:06] So is the police department and the fire department contracted out or they belong to the city again?

Deborah Franklin [00:42:12] Fire is contracted out, now. Police is still an in-house operation. In fact, our city is a little unique. I'll tell you a little bit about Banning. Even though we're 30,000 people, which is small, it's on the smaller side. We have not only our own police department, we have a hospital, our own library, our own airport, our own water and electric departments. Water, it's not unusual so much. There are water districts, but we have our own water authority, which means these are city employees. We also have our own electric, which is very unusual for a city our size. Most people have Edison. We do not. We have our own employees. So people are kind of surprised because we're pretty much a self serve city. We have most of our services right in the city. And with that, it brings some good things. It brings some bad things because we also offer all the social services. So people who need social services, whether it's mental health, public health, DPSS, they're coming to Banning because everything is there and everything is in walking distance. But we don't have that commercial development. We don't even have housing. We have not had any new houses in six years. That is almost totally unheard of in the Inland Empire. Most cities are building houses. They're bringing in families. That's been our struggle right now because we have some people that are totally against it. You need new housing because young people do not want houses that 50, 60 years old. They want new energy efficient houses and we're struggling to get that.

Lea Michelle Cash [00:43:54] So do you think that you're going to run to be mayor again?

Deborah Franklin [00:43:59] No. [laughter]

Lea Michelle Cash [00:43:59] No?

Deborah Franklin [00:44:02] I think that probably my best legacy as mayor was that I was able to keep the city still working together with all the disruptions that happened, with everything going on. We are still surviving. And I don't know that with a different personality, being in charge of that, would have happened. And I don't want to say it's just my personality because it takes five people to really run a city. But I think having a personality that allows people to know that I respect you, whether you're the person that's cutting the grass, you're the person that's cleaning, whether you're the city manager, I'm going to give you all equal respect. When you yell at me when we're in city council meetings and you don't like what we're doing and you're the person that's responsible and we're going to recall you. Thank you very much. I appreciate your comments. You know? So people knew, you could say anything. I'm going to treat you with the same respect. I'm going to treat everybody else. And because I disagree with what you're saying, doesn't make your comments any less valuable. And I think that that kind of helped us get through that.

Lea Michelle Cash [00:45:20] Yeah.

Deborah Franklin [00:45:21] Do I want to go through that again? I have a grandbaby. That's where I'm putting my energy and hopefully having some more. I have two girls I had mentioned earlier, one was in Chicago, one's in Virginia, the grandbaby is in Virginia. So she only has one Nana. And I wasn't able to spend a lot of time with my girls growing up. I don't want her to grow up and say, "Who's that lady?" You know, that I see her picture. "Who is that?" I want her to know who I am. I want my girls to feel like, yes, even if you're across the country, if you need me, I'm going to be there.

Lea Michelle Cash [00:46:09] OK, well, Miss Franklin, we are so grateful that you came and were interviewing with us today, so thank you very much for this interview.

Deborah Franklin [00:46:20] Thank you!

End of Interview:
[00:46:25]