

California State University, San Bernardino

CSUSB ScholarWorks

Bridges Digital Archive: Audio and Video Recordings

Bridges That Carried Us Over Digital Archive

4-5-2016

Bronica Martindale-Taylor

Wilmer Amina Carter Foundation

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/bridges>

Recommended Citation

Interview conducted by Carolyn Tillman.

This Oral History is brought to you for free and open access by the Bridges That Carried Us Over Digital Archive at CSUSB ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Bridges Digital Archive: Audio and Video Recordings by an authorized administrator of CSUSB ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@csusb.edu.

Bridges that Carried Us Over Project

Interview Summary

Interviewee:

Bronica Martindale-Taylor

Interviewer:

Carolyn Tillman

Interview Date:

April 5, 2016

Interview Location:

San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools Office

Length:

00:58:18

Interview Summary completed by:

Mariana H. Parra, 2022.

Adalynn Salazar, 2022.

Delia Copeland, 2024.

Description:

Bronica Latasha Martindale-Taylor discusses her experiences growing up in Westside San Bernardino. During her time at San Bernardino High School, Bronica discovered segregation and felt that the solution was to create community and break barriers by enforcing teamwork, specifically through cheerleading and softball. After graduating high school, Bronica went to Loyola Marymount University where she used dance as an outlet to connect to her culture and felt empowered by its beauty. After graduating from college, her next step in life was opening a performing arts school called Cultures in the Mix, as well as creating the "My Hair, My Health" movement to promote self-acceptance. She concludes by discussing the inspiration of earlier leaders like Amina Carter and Frances Grice, and how she envisions how leaders can make San Bernardino thrive.

Subject Topic:

- San Bernardino (Calif.)
- Segregation
- Education
- Social participation
- Performing Arts

Spatial Coverage:

Name of Site	General Location/Address
St. Anthony's Catholic School	1510 W 16th St San Bernardino, CA 92411
San Bernardino High School	1850 North E Street, San Bernardino, CA 92405
Loyola Marymount University	1 LMU Drive Los Angeles, California 90045
Glen Helen Park	2555 Glen Helen Pkwy San Bernardino, CA 92407
Temple Missionary Baptist Church	1583 W. Union St. San Bernardino, CA 92411
California Theater	562 West Street, San Bernardino, CA 92401

Temporal Coverage:

Late 1970s to 1990s

Key Events:**Key Organizations:**

- St. Anthony's Catholic School
- San Bernardino High School
- Loyola Marymount University
- Inland Empire Conservancy
- Glen Helen Park
- Miss Black San Bernardino
- Cultures in the Mix, Performing Arts School

Interview Index:

Media Format	Time (hh:mm:ss)	Topics Discussed
Digital Video	00:01:46 – 00:02:58	St. Anthony's Catholic School & San Bernardino
Digital Video	00:03:53 – 00:04:15	Temple Missionary Baptist Church & her Discovery of Her Relationship with the Lord

Digital Video	00:04:20 – 00:07:27	First Miss Black San Bernardino Cousin, Sharon Reed, was first Miss Black History Queen in the Black History Parade and the change in the name
Digital Video	00:08:10 – 00:10:37	Growing up in Westside San Bernardino and memories of Amina Carter and Cheryl Brown
Digital Video	00:11:00 – 00:13:23	Fine Arts Commissioner for SB, President of California Gardens
Digital Video	00:19:19 – 00:24:37	She discusses jobs that African Americans her parents had, including memories of Kaiser Steel
Digital Video	00:24:47 – 00:28:00)	Integration at San Bernardino High School, Parent expectations of school, Cultures in the mix and Loyola Marymount
Digital Video	00:30:02 – 00:34:23	Story about her Brother started using drugs and the effects on her
Digital Video	00:37:23 – 00:00:45	Amina Carter and the wedding and how it allowed for appreciation of Black culture
Digital Video	00:40:36 – 00:47:32	My Hair, My Health movement, what it meant to take care of hair, and health will be impacted
Digital Video	00:47:58 – 00:48:45	Stories about Frances Grice
Digital Video	00:57:13 – 00:58:01	Vision for San Bernardino and final remarks

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]

Carolyn Tillman [00:00:09] Thank you. Good morning.

Bronica Martindale-Taylor [00:00:11] Good morning.

Carolyn Tillman [00:00:12] Today is April the 5th, 2016. My name is Carol Tillman and I am interviewing Reverend Bronica Martindale-Taylor, give me a minute, because this is going to take some spelling. Bronica, B R O N I C A. Martindale, M A R T I N D A L E. Hyphen Taylor, T-A-Y-L-O-R. This is for the archiving Black History in the Inland Empire Project. We are interviewing here at the San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools Office in the city of San Bernardino, California. Thank you, Bronica, for taking time out to conduct this interview with us. Bronica, as I'm reading through your bio, I discovered that you are a born home girl, San Bernardino.

Bronica Martindale-Taylor [00:01:23] Yes, very proud.

Carolyn Tillman [00:01:25] Citizen, born in San Bernardino proud. Tell me a little bit about your family history and background, your mother, your father, your youthful memories. And then we'll talk a little bit specifically about some other things related to San Bernardino as a whole.

Bronica Martindale-Taylor [00:01:46] OK, well, I was born and reared here in the city of San Bernardino. I was born in a community hospital. And my full name is Bronica Latasha Nettles. So as I was growing up, people called me and my middle name Latasha. It wasn't until I reached high school that I changed it as a teen to be different. There was some other Tashas running around and I needed to be different. But I went to St. Anthony's and I was a Christian, Christian, Christian, Catholic. I was raised Catholic in St. Anthony's and then I went to San Bernardino High School. However, I was called to in the ministry when I was around seven or eight and I and at St. Anthonys, they had a choir and I wanted to sing in the choir. And then from that point, they didn't meant that time, children couldn't participate in in in the services and they only had altar boys. And I couldn't be an altar girl. I was not happy with that. I said, the Lord is calling me. But, my mother, she was born and raised in Tallulah, Louisiana, and my father was born in Texas, Houston, Texas. And my mother is Reverend Barbara Nettles. And my father was Matthew. Matthew and her maiden name is Brown. She was a Brown. And my father is Matthew Nettles. He came from Houston, Texas, and he was retired in the Air Force and her church was Temple Missionary Baptist church. And, when she married my father, they of course, you took the religion in and the faith of the husband that you took the hand. And but when I ran into that as a toddler, I said, Mom, I want to sing for the Lord. She so she took me to the Temple Missionary Baptist Church and they had a tiny top choir. And then that's when I started singing. And, and discovering my relationship with the Lord at that time. And so it was very important to

listen to your children when they are trying to tell you about their relationship with the Lord.

Carolyn Tillman [00:04:17] You matriculated in from St. Anthony.

Bronica Martindale-Taylor [00:04:20] To San Bernardino High School. I was crowned the first Miss Black San Bernardino.

Carolyn Tillman [00:04:27] Congratulations.

Bronica Martindale-Taylor [00:04:29] I'm very proud of that. If my cousin when we talk about leaders, her name was Sharon Reed. She was the first one in our family. We had a we have a humongous family that was crowned the Miss Black History Queen. And that's where it was. That was the title. It was because we had a wonderful Black History parade. That what was the talk of the city and it was the first national that was implemented and our surrounding cities paid attention to the city of San Bernardino, and this took place on the west side of San Bernardino, and we the leaders at that time would get celebrities such as Muhammad Ali has you know, Debbie Allen, which was my major is dance and theater. And I went off to Loyola Marymount University to receive my degree. And Debbie Allen was very much a mentor in my mind and aspiration of success. And she came to be in the black history parade. So the black history parade was just wonderful, something that people came from miles around to come to the city of San Bernardino to witness our our drill team, pacesetters. And they and they would practice all year long to be able to demonstrate their, their style, charisma, energy, tenacity. We knew everyone was swarm in and we would swarm in. And to see what routine's was going to be done. The boys took extra time with their drumming in order to make sure that the different sounds and different rhythms that would permeate throughout the air was just awesome. And the kids and us as youth had something to look forward to. And so my 10 year coming, swinging back when I was crowned first Miss Black History, because that was the the title. However, at that time, we were still dealing with a lot of racism here in the city of San Bernardino. We still have that segregation. And just as we as proud to be African-Americans, we didn't just want, we just don't want Black History Month in February. We should be celebrating blackness through the whole year. And we didn't want just black history queen. We wanted to say that we are representative of our beautiful city.

Carolyn Tillman [00:07:28] Right.

Bronica Martindale-Taylor [00:07:29] As well. So that's one of the reasons why they win out to to retitle it Miss Black San Bernardino. I was very proud to be in to be crowned that because I love my city and I love the leaders and how they reared me as far as believing in ourselves, believing in our culture, believing that we could attain success through hard work.

Carolyn Tillman [00:08:03] And that picture of the West Side, because that's where you...

Bronica Martindale-Taylor [00:08:06] That's where I grew up on the west side of San Bernardino.

Carolyn Tillman [00:08:11] In the 70s. And and you're growing up and what you what what contrasts that you see from then to now.

Bronica Martindale-Taylor [00:08:22] To now? Well, my mother was always a community activist, along with the minister. And on the west side, she's always and her and and see with Cheryl Brown at that time was these are the running partners. Amina Carter.

Carolyn Tillman [00:08:46] So these characters would come into your house. And you would be in.

Bronica Martindale-Taylor [00:08:49] Yes.

Carolyn Tillman [00:08:50] Or you would be at various community events together with them. Tell me about the kind of camaraderie that you observe them.

Bronica Martindale-Taylor [00:08:59] The would have women functions, teas. We were brought to have our dresses to talent was displayed. He was a singer, dancer. My mother put me in the Inland Empire Conservancy in Highland. And so I started dancing at the age of seven and performing at the California theater. So my mother believed in, Barbara Nettles. She believed in giving back to the youth. I was reared that way and anything that I was blessed to learn. She made sure that I would teach my peers what I learned and we would have wonderful gospel concerts at Temple Missionary Baptist Church that that running crew that was another thing at that time. Bishop now Bishop Nathaniel White, he was the minute the pastor of Temple Missionary Baptist Church when I was coming up, and then after that it was, our now, Pastor Raymond Turner, which definitely he's a father to me as well in the ministry.

Carolyn Tillman [00:10:38] Right. Right. So the air on the West Side was very specific to grooming the next generation of African-American leadership. Yes. That you benefited from. Yeah. Because now you serve on.

Bronica Martindale-Taylor [00:11:00] Yes. I'm a commissioner of the Fine Arts Commissioner for the city of San Bernardino. I am a commissioner of the bureau franchise. I am a commissioner of Measure Z. I am the president of California Gardens, which is the area in which I was born. But even with all of the titles, this is nice. I have a lot of titles, but it's the work behind it that is the struggle. How does it change? And that was and I'm sorry I have. Let me go back. What was the difference? The difference that the elders took the time with us is youth then getting us involved in the political process. I remember I had to go door to door. I had to go door to door and learn how to engage individuals. And I wasn't Mayor Holtcomb, that was, you know, who the family was rallying behind at that time. And also John Hobbs was our sixth war council member.

Any time there was a six ward candidate, we had to do precinct walking. That's what it was. And and those elders that I aforementioned, they taught us how to go door to door and to speak on behalf of the candidate, but understand, well, why are we really voting for this candidate? Is that what what did they say that they were going to provide not only for the community, but for us as a people and residents? And so they taught us to look beyond the the the stand, the initial, you know, the initial candidate to really get into how they cared about the community. And so that was always instilled in us to really care about our community

Carolyn Tillman [00:13:24] And governance as a whole.

Bronica Martindale-Taylor [00:13:26] And governance as a whole. And and I'm sorry Carolyn. And just, you know, and today we have violence. The difference. Yeah, I was going to say. Yeah. The compare and contrast. It wasn't you black on black crime as it is when I, you know, and student kids killing kids.

Carolyn Tillman [00:13:55] OK.

Bronica Martindale-Taylor [00:14:00] Where you can't go outside without feeling free. When I was growing up, we, that's where we, we developed our scales of track and when I used to be into sports all and went into a championship with the city of San Bernardino softball track and Daleman Heights. Another one of the leaders is Andy Brown. He used to be the manager at Daleman Heights, which is he's my uncle, but that's where I received my first job working with the city of San Bernardino, teaching dance. But he made sure that the people had.

Carolyn Tillman [00:14:43] OK.

Bronica Martindale-Taylor [00:14:43] He helped that process that making sure there was the needs were met.

Carolyn Tillman [00:14:50] OK.

Carolyn Tillman [00:14:51] So did we. How did we lose that sense of community? Is it that families, our generation grew up and left and vacated that sense of community that was there, that we inherited individuals who moved in with different agendas? What happened?

Bronica Martindale-Taylor [00:15:13] I seen as. Ah. Ah. A pathway of selfishness.

Carolyn Tillman [00:15:23] Oh, ok.

Bronica Martindale-Taylor [00:15:23] That our leaders started taking and selfishness and a means of I've got mine and I don't care if you get yours or not as long as I have mine, I'm going to take care of my family and I really don't care if your family is taken care of or not. I got a chance to, I witnessed that. No matter how hard you try to say,

hey, you know, we're all in this together. But, if leaders are the ones that are doing that, then that's a trickle down attitude. And what happened is that the leaders were not allowing some youth to participate in the achievement process.

Carolyn Tillman [00:16:21] OK.

Bronica Martindale-Taylor [00:16:22] The self empowerment process.

Carolyn Tillman [00:16:25] OK.

Bronica Martindale-Taylor [00:16:25] So therefore they started self imploding. And so then they lost consciousness and then they lost respect. Why am I going to listen to you? You don't care about me. And so now when our leaders use the word respect, they haven't earned that with the generation.

Carolyn Tillman [00:16:53] OK, OK.

Bronica Martindale-Taylor [00:16:55] Respect comes from you given and showin' love. So you have to ask yourself what love and respect.

Carolyn Tillman [00:17:02] OK.

Bronica Martindale-Taylor [00:17:03] Have you given the children or the youth?

Carolyn Tillman [00:17:06] OK, you know, that's a period of time. The 70s was sort of like the whole civil rights process. Total integration became possible. We're talking about a time when the community is not converted to basically having their empowerment in the community to where down in America. You can live anywhere you want to live, you can, you're probably getting promoted to jobs you never once were being promoted into. That seems to me that it would contribute to the level of independence. Now, that says I can now just look after me myself and I. Rather than having an interdependence because we were all oppressed at the same level and we knew we could unify around that oppression and still lived among each other because there were very few places that would where we could live with any kind of comfort or sense of community. And perhaps that is a contribution. I'm not saying wholly and totally right into this attitude

Bronica Martindale-Taylor [00:18:30] Of self entitlement.

Carolyn Tillman [00:18:31] Self entitlement. Again, no longer a sense of community that we all, Yeah, we can go to a different church. We can go live in a you know, I, I live now if I was raised that in community I live too far.

Bronica Martindale-Taylor [00:18:47] Yeah. No I didn't moved up there like the Jeffersons. Yeah. Yeah. I'm moving on up and there's nothing wrong with moving on up.

Carolyn Tillman [00:18:56] Yes.

Bronica Martindale-Taylor [00:18:56] Nothing at all wrong with that is just a matter of your attitude once you move up.

Carolyn Tillman [00:19:01] Right.

Carolyn Tillman [00:19:01] Do you have a sense of going back and getting that which was left behind.

Bronica Martindale-Taylor [00:19:05] Even if you just help just even donating to just, you know, spending some time.

Carolyn Tillman [00:19:14] Right.

Bronica Martindale-Taylor [00:19:14] You don't have to we can't save the world, but you can do something.

Carolyn Tillman [00:19:19] Yes. Yes. Yes. That's true. So let's talk about in the Inland Empire at that time, what were the most common jobs that African-Americans held?

Bronica Martindale-Taylor [00:19:33] The labor. Construction was a very big. My father went into construction.

Carolyn Tillman [00:19:40] Ok.

Bronica Martindale-Taylor [00:19:40] Yeah. Definitely under construction. Love the males also. And during my period, those coaches,.

Bronica Martindale-Taylor [00:19:50] They got a chance to be coaches and they just get some money. That wasn't even a major funding, but I've seen a lot of them take time to develop the youth.

Carolyn Tillman [00:20:02] OK. And fathers have significant roles, significant role. There were homes that had mothers and fathers. And that that, again, is a change of culture because of as we became more independent, not only in terms of other interpersonally.

Bronica Martindale-Taylor [00:20:24] Yes.

Carolyn Tillman [00:20:24] Where couples wouldn't remain together in a long term relationship. But you might

Bronica Martindale-Taylor [00:20:33] Kaiser was another.

Carolyn Tillman [00:20:33] OK.

Bronica Martindale-Taylor [00:20:36] Another thing, a place of work that people were working Kaiser the Norton.

Carolyn Tillman [00:20:43] Yes

Bronica Martindale-Taylor [00:20:43] You know, that was that was flourishing. J.C Penney's. I know a lot of.

Carolyn Tillman [00:20:49] Ah, that's true.

Bronica Martindale-Taylor [00:20:50] And it's coming back. I heard it is coming back, but working in the mall was definitely a working family. It was a working family in the community. My mother was an entrepreneur. She had the DMV pit barbecue. There was a lot of different individuals that would go into their own businesses. Then she opened up a Bible and gift supply store with my cousin, Bernice Evans.

Carolyn Tillman [00:21:20] Yes.

Bronica Martindale-Taylor [00:21:20] You know, I must mention my cousin Lisa Blackshear. She's an administrator right to do this day with the assemblywoman now Cheryl Brown. Twyla Carson.

Carolyn Tillman [00:21:33] Yes.

Bronica Martindale-Taylor [00:21:34] Working at Cal State University. And they have many resources. But I say those because, again, that was the generation that saw working women working hard.

Carolyn Tillman [00:21:44] That's right.

Bronica Martindale-Taylor [00:21:44] And the importance of the.

Carolyn Tillman [00:21:46] Working men and women.

Bronica Martindale-Taylor [00:21:48] Men and women.

Carolyn Tillman [00:21:49] At that time. Yes. Yes, very good. And that's something that we haven't seen with the loss of Kaiser or the loss of Norton. Jobs have gone. And it's very difficult for families to thrive in the community. Unless there is someone in place to work, what kind of city development was there at the time in terms of university? What freeways existed, military? We spoke a little bit about the military and we didn't speak much about the railroad.

Bronica Martindale-Taylor [00:22:25] The railroad. When I came in, there was an environment. I remember they were some environmental trouble for, you know, what went as far as with the railroad. There was an explosion that took place. That was in the

sixth ward. There was trouble again with leadership. We had funding that was allocated for the six ward where we had State Street that was supposed to cross baseline. And and and but they took the funding and redistributed somewhere else. And then that project never was finished. So there has been a lot of projects that were funded, but not finished.

Carolyn Tillman [00:23:17] I'm not sure what year the freeway was initially developed through the 215

Bronica Martindale-Taylor [00:23:26] The 215...

Carolyn Tillman [00:23:27] But there used to be an interchange that totally blocked access.

Bronica Martindale-Taylor [00:23:32] To come over the West Side. Yes, you couldn't do it.

Carolyn Tillman [00:23:37] You actually had exits.

Bronica Martindale-Taylor [00:23:37] That would bypass you from coming into the West Side and.

Carolyn Tillman [00:23:42] That have only recently been reversed.

Bronica Martindale-Taylor [00:23:45] Right. And we couldn't in my time, we couldn't go over the Western, Western and Highland one. We were always instructed to be on the west side of that. You really weren't welcome. Well, to be going further to Highland, but because of my my mother's interaction and her friends with all ethnicities, we did. But it still wasn't a thing that was welcomed as today you feel more comfortable. But with it, it was invisible boundaries that you couldn't pass or you would receive consequences by the police department or whatever.

Carolyn Tillman [00:24:41] Talk about San Bernardino high at the time you went to school. How integrated was it?

Bronica Martindale-Taylor [00:24:47] That was integrated. Definitely that was when I discovered segregation. But I've being reared in a parochial school, Catholic school, you know.

Carolyn Tillman [00:25:00] On the West Side.

Bronica Martindale-Taylor [00:25:01] Oh, yeah. On the west side. Even on the west side, we your develop a family. It doesn't matter what ethnicity you are, what it was. You are human. But when I went to San Bernardino High School, that's when I discovered, you know, you, uh, segregation, you know, the Asians is here and blacks are here and

but, but, as ah, as someone that was reared to bring people together, that was something that's athletics and pep I was over the rallies.

Carolyn Tillman [00:25:38] OK.

Bronica Martindale-Taylor [00:25:38] So I got a chance to break those barriers through being a cheerleader and being having that that position to be able to integrate, you know, to to to bring people together and for them to see the beauty of working together that that our outer color is truly just a shade.

Carolyn Tillman [00:26:07] What expectations did your family have for you as far as as far as education was concerned Bronica?

Bronica Martindale-Taylor [00:26:14] My mother and father expected me to go to go to college. I wanted to be a star. I start I like I said, I started dancing at seven. I got a chance to be on a different world. I, I was on the television, what they call putting on the hits I danced in the video with Janet Jackson. I choreograph for Tiffany. I was moving on and I said I was not coming back to the city of San Bernardino until I was a star. Yes. So I got a chance to choreograph for I opened up a performing arts school when I graduated from Loyola Marymount University. It's called Cultures in the Mix. And I worked with the sheriff's department and I taught in South Central and the kids and the husband that I met Ufonzo Martindale, he was a master of martial arts. He passed away with cancer. But when we were together, when we were together, we had our performing arts school and all dignitaries. Prince Charles, that was a moment in my life. Prince Charles came and I was blessed to allow my our children to perform for him and, you know, and all the other dignitaries at that time. But that was a that was a wonderful moment because our children was highlighted.

Carolyn Tillman [00:28:02] And, you know, your mom obviously knew that you had this star quality, this desire. So when she sent you to Loyola Marymount, she knew you were headed for performance and theater. And she was blessed that in your in your growing your dad, it was is that kind of his direction? How did he inspire you in terms of your...

Bronica Martindale-Taylor [00:28:26] He inspired me. He always encouraged me to be that he was the tough side. You know, you got to be tough. You can't be you got to be a big fish. You can't be a little fish, you know? So he he encouraged me to be that big fish and then my my great aunt to Herlene LeGrande She also was instrument and in the self empowerment in order for anyone to keep going forward. There were individuals in my life, my aunt Mercedes. And what does she do? She would bring me from San Bernardino and maybe we would go to Redondo Beach, you know, and where I would see the ocean and experience different things or or where she would have lavish parties with her friends. So that's when I did move to Los Angeles and I started going to the Academy Awards. So, you know, and being in the end. But I was. You do feel like a fish out of water. Exactly. I knew you feel I did. Yes.

Carolyn Tillman [00:29:49] Speaking at network and

Bronica Martindale-Taylor [00:29:52] And interact in.

Carolyn Tillman [00:29:54] That environment. Yes. It sounds as though you were just encircled by a womb of women who just made sure that coming up for you,

Bronica Martindale-Taylor [00:30:07] You know, I was going to say my brother, I had a brother, His name is Dupree he had two children, DeMaria, Nettle's and Dominic. And when I was it was in eighty seven before I graduated. However, that my brother is where we started seeing a little transition when drugs came into the West side.

Carolyn Tillman [00:30:37] Speak about that please.

Bronica Martindale-Taylor [00:30:38] Drugs, Weed it started off with, that was, that was the drug that, that the youth males. I am only speaking of the males that were around my brother because I remember just being a "looky loo" seeing them do the act. But they would always say to me, don't don't, [laughter] do as I say. And not as I do so.

Carolyn Tillman [00:31:07] They seem to know that wasn't a good pathway.

Bronica Martindale-Taylor [00:31:09] A that was a good thing and.

Carolyn Tillman [00:31:11] Yet, they chose it for themselves

Bronica Martindale-Taylor [00:31:12] But they chose it for themselves. But try to utilize words to stop someone else from experiencing it. And the question was, why? What what what made me not experience? Well, I I've always been an observer, so and my brother helped me to do that. But he started off with weed and then it progressed to harder narcotics. Yeah, it was. And he was not as tall as he wanted to be. He was about five three. And and the guys at that time knew that that was a pet peeve for him. So they would tease him. But he really took that to heart. Till, He became more dependent. I can see looking back, I can see that he became more dependent on on on drugs and being and getting and having an environment in individuals hanging around individuals that did not have goals. The way our parents reared us to have goals, to be successful, to to be all that we could be and he at Glen Helen, we don't know if it was foul play or what, but he was found drowned at Glen Helen and and that was very, very difficult.

Carolyn Tillman [00:32:56] How old was he?

Bronica Martindale-Taylor [00:32:57] He was twenty-three.

Carolyn Tillman [00:32:59] That's young.

Bronica Martindale-Taylor [00:32:59] Yeah, he was when that was that was the first death that well, my aunt, one of my aunts had passed away, Angie, but she was my first death death. But my brother being my sibling was.

Carolyn Tillman [00:33:17] Yes. And, you know, enjoyed him for twenty-three years.

Bronica Martindale-Taylor [00:33:21] And seeing that and seeing that, that's what that's what drugs that was the pathway. And I got a chance to witness that. And I observed how lack of self-esteem, how you allow someone to taunt you, to burden you, to make you self-destruct and it equals death. And I knew that my parents loved us and wanted more for us. Yes. And we were stronger than allowing the world to whisper those type of suppression. Yes. Yes. In our ear to take root in our heart we had to be better than that.

Carolyn Tillman [00:34:24] Even so, you know, maybe it was an age of innocence in our community. Perhaps it wasn't. Although I know drugs have been around for a long time. They really became pervasive in the seventies and it was a age of innocence. I don't I think most parents were thinking, not my child, because, reared them you know, to to know better or we didn't understand the insecurities and how they would play and peer pressure, etc.. What makes the professor today we've learned all those lessons? You know, why are we still caught up in the same trap?

Bronica Martindale-Taylor [00:35:02] But what I've discovered working with youth all my life, even I don't care if I can have a child that is right by my side. It. Everybody has a pathway. Yeah, everybody has a free will of choice, and they are, as their own individual, want to experience for whatever reason. They want to do it their way. I love Frank Sinatra song I'm doing it my way That's what they want. They want to do that.

Carolyn Tillman [00:35:40] That's the temptation is to just and there's a certain strength in you because we don't think when we're young. that we're vulnerable as we are. And that even if we did, if anybody else can't control it, we can because we just got it like that. And that's the battle that we're also fighting as community. Taking back control of our community is. So we're waging somewhat of a political struggle and a social struggle, but a spiritual struggle as well.

Bronica Martindale-Taylor [00:36:18] So, yes, we definitely are doing that. And I guess I should say, I have two beautiful children, but they're not children anymore, they're not children or I have a daughter. Her name is Bronique Mirena Martindale, and she is 18 years old. She attends a Aquinas. And I have a son, Domani John. Domani checks and he attends Norton Space Aeronautics Academy. And my current husband is Douglas. And those are my my loves

Carolyn Tillman [00:37:05] That's who you are pouring into.

Bronica Martindale-Taylor [00:37:06] Yes who I am pouring into.

Carolyn Tillman [00:37:06] And help keep you energized while you do the work in the community. What would what would you taught about your connection to Africa coming up? Because, you know, I get that I get that sense from you. You have always had that confidence of the motherland in you. Somebody poured that into you.

Bronica Martindale-Taylor [00:37:23] Yes. You know who poured that actually into me? The start. It was a Amina Carter. Amina Carter. I remember her and Ratibu. Yes. Their wedding. Oh, I was just breath taken, by the regal ness, OK. Of and the culture of my people and seeing if that was the very first time that I really seen.

Carolyn Tillman [00:38:01] Described that just so that those who are listening understand what you're talking about.

Bronica Martindale-Taylor [00:38:05] And she is in was in gold. It was like Cleopatra, her head piece, and was a gold that came to the center of her forehead that shaped the contours of her shape.

Carolyn Tillman [00:38:22] And these are, this is African attire.

Bronica Martindale-Taylor [00:38:28] It was African attire. And Ratibu had African attire and compliment it tradition, rose petals, the beauty of rose petals placed at your feet because of the fact that you're walking like in righteousness.

Carolyn Tillman [00:38:45] OK.

Bronica Martindale-Taylor [00:38:46] But that was my my my eye-opening experience of appreciating blackness,

Carolyn Tillman [00:38:54] OK, and.

Bronica Martindale-Taylor [00:38:56] My history. And then I went deeper with Peter Abu Lulu. And when I went to Loyola Marymount University and got in more into dance at West African Dance and understood that that's where dance all came from and just the earth of the movement and how an African dance it it cultivates life starts from you know they'll they'll teach you from the heart beat is where the drum in the pattern comes from and how we can communicate and how I can make you happy. How I can I can I can pour into your emotions to the beauty of dance, and that was powerful.

Carolyn Tillman [00:39:47] So it's not like even as the African diaspora, although we were taken from the motherland, we kept a lot of traditions, a lot of the emotion, but we didn't understand it. We didn't have anything to tie it back to. And then an awareness period came for us where we could get our 'AHA' moment, the Lifebook, to come on again and say, that's what I do.

Bronica Martindale-Taylor [00:40:13] That's why I do this. That is why even even for my hair is something different, because I used to wear and there's nothing wrong with

wearing weaves or wigs. But what it taught me there was a deep that I wasn't happy with myself and that was very important. We have matter of fact, with the San Bernardino County, we have this movement called My Hair, My Health and it throughout the Inland Empire teaching, because if you don't take care of your hair, your health is impacted. And they've done studies with what we put on. Our hair also impacts our health and is bringing unnecessary diseases to us. And they've also went to another level. And we're still discovering even the coroners when they cut an African-American woman's hair and male. But specifically, this one was a woman, the the bruises on the brain and is from from the chemicals that we would burn and allowed to burn so bad in order to get a particular look for acceptance.

Carolyn Tillman [00:41:38] Yeah.

Bronica Martindale-Taylor [00:41:39] So that also is a sense of healing that also has to heal the community.

Carolyn Tillman [00:41:49] That's true.

Bronica Martindale-Taylor [00:41:49] Is self self acceptance.

Carolyn Tillman [00:41:53] And, you know, you said that you weren't happy with yourself, but I think that's more of the culture of the major culture saying (society) we don't want you to be happy with yourself.

Bronica Martindale-Taylor [00:42:06] And that was right. And I was a choreographer and I still am for Miss America and the Miss America program, Miss Black USA. And I say Miss America because I brought my my daughter along and I knew I was I was taught what would one need in order to be Miss America? And definitely as a woman of color, you had to have a weave, you know, of straight hair. And I'll never forget that my daughter, she said, mom, she was going to run in a contest. I want to wear my hair. And I said, you you can't wear your hair. You can't wear your hair. Do you want to win? And the Lord, I stepped out of myself and he allowed me to hear myself. tell her that who she is is not not good enough.

Carolyn Tillman [00:43:12] Coming from her mommy

Bronica Martindale-Taylor [00:43:14] Yes coming from Mama. And that's when I started to to change my first of all, my speech to my daughter. Second, to change my speech to myself. And and and that's still rolling because of the fact when we look at our society and media. Now, recently they've been showing women of natural hair. They're in their natural state. Right. But I couldn't get jobs. I remember when I was in the art, either I had my weave on or I couldn't I couldn't do the video or I couldn't do the television. It wasn't it wasn't acceptable.

Carolyn Tillman [00:44:07] You're right. You're right. And you're dancing and sweating, and your beautiful hair underneath is not getting a chance to breathe.

Bronica Martindale-Taylor [00:44:15] But it's not breathing. It's not breathing. We're not we're not allowing the sun and its natural vitamins to go into the scalps of our hair. And we actually we actually stop taking care of ourselves. You really don't know the power of taking care of your hair, Because you actually you lose power. Because you're not, you're not you're not feeding it, you're not feeding yourself.

Carolyn Tillman [00:44:44] Yes, you're right.

Bronica Martindale-Taylor [00:44:45] You're not. You're massaging, you stop, you stop. You know, back in the day, that was quality time with the parents. Mother and daughter. Because with and that was her time to love in the hair. And love.

Carolyn Tillman [00:45:06] You don't want anybody touching the hair because you gonna mess it up.

Bronica Martindale-Taylor [00:45:09] That's right. That was.

Carolyn Tillman [00:45:11] Or you want exercise because

Bronica Martindale-Taylor [00:45:13] You sweat it out. Yeah that's it. And we are dealing with the obesity problem because of that.

Carolyn Tillman [00:45:20] Absolutely. And you know, as far as women's independence, I've seen that we kind of we hit a high and then we go back down to a valley. When I was in the 70s or early 60s, we had permission to wear on your natural hair. I love to watch the movie. And if you get a chance to go see What's that and I didn't think it was as significant, not necessarily because of the musical part of it, but I watched it with my daughters and my daughters. Notice a few things about us in the 70s that we somehow lost. And they reminded me of that when they looked at What's that they said. Black men and women were couples. because you saw black, they saw black love.

Bronica Martindale-Taylor [00:46:15] Right. They got a chance to see it. When did that happen?

Carolyn Tillman [00:46:21] When did that happen? Like it's something that doesn't occur anymore. And then they were looking at the styles. Almost every black person in Los Angeles, I mean, filled that whole arena was wearing their hair in a natural style, proudly wearing their hair in a natural style. And if you have to look hard for a [unclear] or weave in that movie. And I thought to myself, wow, When did that change happen?

Bronica Martindale-Taylor [00:46:54] Well, you know, I Carolyn as well. There is a time when our employers also dictated to us how our hair styles could be. So it wasn't just our natural move to to change,

Carolyn Tillman [00:47:14] But there again I go is where you were not allowed to love yourself.

Bronica Martindale-Taylor [00:47:18] Yes, I'm not allowed to. And that and and that was also a contribution to the decline to the decline of our generation, younger generation.

Carolyn Tillman [00:47:33] Popular culture. It hasn't been good for us necessarily, has it?

Bronica Martindale-Taylor [00:47:38] Well yeah.

Carolyn Tillman [00:47:41] Who stands out most in your mind in the struggle for civil rights and what did they do to make them stand out? And I'm just I'm not I'm going to assume that they're not talking about this on the national page, the local civil rights. Do you remember the issue? I don't know. Were you around when Frances Grice?

Bronica Martindale-Taylor [00:47:59] Yeah, sorry, I wasn't. I was young, but my mother I remember my mother definitely talking about Frances Grice and her movement. She was definitely an activist in order to get the building over on the west side. I remember that. I wasn't I didn't I wasn't the one that, you know, was running with her. But I remember my mother. .

Carolyn Tillman [00:48:21] Was operation second chance around still by the time you were a young.

Bronica Martindale-Taylor [00:48:26] Not in and then the means where I was participating, where I was participating or had knowledge of of of it in my was I noticed that it moved in a different area or maybe the social justice action was happening differently

Carolyn Tillman [00:48:45] When you went to you went to St. Anthony. So you wouldn't have seen the what it was like in the public school now in the public schools community school system where there was an all black combination or whether you get St. Anthony as you were more integrated.

Bronica Martindale-Taylor [00:48:59] I was integrated. I was integrated, and I was integrated until San Bernardino High School.

Carolyn Tillman [00:49:06]

OK, very good. But you were very much aware of it. Yeah. By the time you were born, they had assassinated Dr. Martin Luther King.

Bronica Martindale-Taylor [00:49:17] I was born in nineteen sixty nine and he died in sixty eight.

Carolyn Tillman [00:49:23] So you, you kind of didn't get to see all that struggle, you know. Did your parents talk about it?

Bronica Martindale-Taylor [00:49:29] I remember, I remember the Crest movie theater. I don't know off 5th street. I remember this is segregation. Right. I just came on. And because we used to have to sit in the balcony. Oh, as African-American. Yeah, I remember that. And Woolworth there was that was that was that. I was just coming in to the fight of of tearing those racial bars down

Carolyn Tillman [00:50:03] Because although that the civil rights legislation was written in the mid 60s. No one was actually implement implementing it in the 70s, which would be about you.

Bronica Martindale-Taylor [00:50:14] And I remember going to the movies. We called it the crest. I remember the Crest theater and we had to sit upstairs and I remember asking my mother, Mom, I'm tired of sitting up at the top. Can we, can we go to? You got "No Tash ,We can't can't go." And and I looked and I and I'm like, and that's when she was saying, you know, we have to sit. And that's when more of something was poured into me about injustice. InJustice. Why is that? Why is it that we pay? I mean, that's why as a child, those are the things. Aren't we paying? Why can't we sit up? Why can't we sit where we want to if we pay? Why? Because I'm black. I can't I can't sit by her because I'm black. I mean, that was one of those questions were were unacceptable to me as a child. And that's, again, as a teacher today. I know racism is taught. it is taught it is nothing that is innate in us at all.

Carolyn Tillman [00:51:28] No, I agree with you. What do you do in your free time? And who were your friends and what did you do together?

Bronica Martindale-Taylor [00:51:36] My free time? I danced, I did dancing, and I said I taught in the Parks and Recreation Center.

Carolyn Tillman [00:51:45] Now tell me a little bit more about the Inland Conservancy that your mother enrolled. And that was that were you know.

Bronica Martindale-Taylor [00:51:53] It used to be known as Dance Academy. and where they do The Nutcracker every year. here.

Carolyn Tillman [00:52:02] How old were you?

Bronica Martindale-Taylor [00:52:03] Seven.

Carolyn Tillman [00:52:04] OK, so she knew early. That's what you want to do.

Bronica Martindale-Taylor [00:52:08] I definitely give my my God sister. I have two God sisters, Kim Banks you know, and I have Tammy, Tammy Stokley Johnson now and

Kim started us out. She was the one that enrolled first in dance. And I went to the California theater to see her recital, And there was she there was the number that she was in and there was this African-American male, though, and he was cut like a chiseled rock and he was as angelic and and moved like a gazelle in the air. And I'll never forget, I was sitting in the theater and I was just mesmerized by his style and his energy. And all of a sudden it's just like this wind hitting me. And I said, that is what I want to do. I got to do that. I got to do that. I cried. I cried. When I left, I was still crying. I said sign me up. Sign me up.

Carolyn Tillman [00:53:28] So. And it was for African-American students or just was it abroad in the dance the the Inland conservancy. You know who was owned by?

Bronica Martindale-Taylor [00:53:40] Or he had what it was Nora's Dance Academy at that time Nora was the one that owns that. It still is an operation today in Highland.

Carolyn Tillman [00:53:50] Yes, I know where you're talking about.

Bronica Martindale-Taylor [00:53:51] In Highland across across from Artim. Yes. Yes. On the left hand side the dance dance theater and and so it would be around 5:00. It wasn't like a lot of people of color. Yes, she did. Every day I really when I look back and say I would finish school, I would run track after track, I would go to dance. But I was so invested in I love softball. I love teamwork. I think that that was a beautiful thing that that all kids should be into a sport. That's where I learned working together that, well, we worked together. We become as one. I love this statement. It says teamwork. It is. It makes championships really, you know, becoming as one. It's not about just being just self good. It's team good. Yeah. And we were just at a council meeting last night. The city of San Bernardino and Cajun girls won the championship. I thought that was outstanding. They looked beautiful. They looked beautiful.

Carolyn Tillman [00:55:15] I think it speaks again to the issue of how keeping our kids engaged in talents can dispel some of them. The social ills that we face.

Bronica Martindale-Taylor [00:55:30] And the coach, I have to say how all of of of that team, female Howdy her last name. I can't think of it, but she grew up with us bowling and San Hi we used to bowl and her father and his and her father helps her coach the the Cajon the Cajon players. So I just thought again that that was successful.

Carolyn Tillman [00:56:06] We're coming real close to end of our interview and I hate it. We can just keep going on forever. But did we capture all your friends and what you would do together.

Bronica Martindale-Taylor [00:56:20] My my good friend is Gaylene Gaylene was a cheerleader with me and we would do cheerleading together and cheerleading. I learned how to encourage others and that is very important. I try I try to do that now in my community meetings that I had, I try to cheer them, let them know to be to that. They can be encouraged, you know.

Carolyn Tillman [00:56:57] Well, let's close with just talking about what is your vision. You obviously have bought into San Bernardino, you're here. You stay and I don't see you going anywhere unless somebody swooped you off. What is your vision for San Bernardino?

Bronica Martindale-Taylor [00:57:13] My vision for San Bernardino is truly getting leaders and encouraging leaders, modeling leaders to care enough about San Bernardino to to develop outcomes that are visually beautiful for the community to see. My vision is to move it where they don't just say they're going to do something, but they actually visually show it by the policies that are changed, by completing the freeways that that were on the books. So actually seeing the dream to fruition, that's my dream for San Bernardino.

Carolyn Tillman [00:58:01] Well I want to thank you again, Bronica, for this very informative interview. It has been a pleasure. And I am so blessed to know you. Thank you.

Bronica Martindale-Taylor [00:58:16] Thank you.

End of Interview:
[00:58:18]