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### Denice and Otis Clopton

Wilmer Amina Carter Foundation

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# Bridges That Carried Us Over Project

## Interview Summary

**Interviewees:**

Denice Clopton  
Otis Clopton

**Interviewers:**

Leslie Estrada  
Denise Spencer

**Interview Date:**

March 18, 2021

**Interview Location:**

Remotely via Zoom

**Length:**

01:22:52

**Interview Summary completed by:**

Leslie Estrada, 2021.  
Delia Copeland, 2024.

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**Description:**

Denice Clopton described her childhood neighborhood and friends in the Valley Truck Farms along with her legal career working in downtown San Bernardino and the discrimination she faced growing up. Otis Clopton describes his experience moving to San Bernardino from the south, becoming a business owner, and working with the NAACP, the Masons and Black Future Leaders to support Black communities in the I.E.

**Subject Topic:**

- San Bernardino (Calif.)
- Valley Truck Farms
- Black Sororities
- Westside

**Spatial Coverage:**

Name of Site (if relevant)	General Location/Address
New Hope Baptist Church	1575 W 17th St, San Bernardino, CA 92411

Saint Mark's Missionary	259 E Central Ave, San Bernardino, CA 92408
Kaiser Steel	California Steel Way, Fontana, CA 92335
San Bernardino County District Attorney's office	303 W 3rd St, San Bernardino, CA 92415
Norton Air Force Base	1601 E 3rd St, San Bernardino, CA 92408

**Temporal Coverage:**

1950s-1980s

**Key Organizations:**

- California State University, San Bernardino
- University of Redlands
- San Bernardino City Unified School District (SBCUSD)
- Prince Hall Freemasonry
- Black Future Leaders, Inc.
- National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)
- New Hope Baptist Church
- St Mark's Missionary Baptist Church
- Inland Empire African American Historical Society
- Spelman Alumni Association
- National Council of Negro Women, Inc. (NCNW)
- Kaiser Steel
- Norton Air Force Base

**Interview Index:**

Media Format	Time (hh:mm:ss)	Topic Discussed
Digital Video	00:01:30 – 00:09:20	Growing up in the Valley Truck Farm & the tightly knit community there, Norton Air Force Base effect on the community and the Westside.
Digital Video	00:09:20 – 00:18:30	Community and friendships.
Digital Video	00:18:30 – 00:33:40	Community members/friends and current relationships with folks from San Bernardino including local churches.
Digital Video	00:33:40 – 00:43:25	Otis Clopton describes his job and volunteer work in San Bernardino.
Digital Video	00:43:25 – 00:43:38	Denice Clopton recalls community groups that were created to help students of color.

Digital Video	00:43:38 – 00:48:56	Denice Clopton describes her observations of Black student's experiences in her position as a member of New Hope's scholarship committee.
Digital Video	00:48:56 – 01:01:47	Denice and Otis discuss the changes they have seen in San Bernardino and the University of Redlands.

**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]

**Leslie Estrada** [00:00:06] Once again thank you for joining us this morning and for taking the time to share your stories with us. So we want to start with just getting to know you more, so if you could tell us about your neighborhood growing up and some of the differences you have seen over the years.

**Denice Clopton** [00:00:35] Well, Otis did not grow up in San Bernardino, I did. We moved to San Bernardino when I was three years old and I grew up in the area known as the Valley of Truck Farms. Which is an area out near the Orange Show, South Central Waterman area, not far from Norton Air Force base. That is where I stayed until I graduated from our Alma Mater, Leslie, San Gorgonio High school and went off to Spelman College. The second part of your question was "What changes have I seen?"

**Leslie Estrada** [00:01:30] Hmmhmm.

**Denice Clopton** [00:01:31] Ok.

**Denice Clopton** [00:01:36] When I was growing up, San Bernardino I guess was a small city I guess, I'll call it a town but it was a relatively small something, town, city. [cough] Excuse me, and our area was predominantly Black as was the Westside. Now, that community is basically non-existent. I was just there a month ago for my mother's funeral services and I was going to do a drive by of her home. Not her home was sold, but just the area. We went by there first. I'm glad I did, there are lots of warehouses there. Mom's house was sold and it was also torn down. So all the houses, on the, what is that, east side of the street, were torn down. [cough] Excuse me. The only way I knew where we lived, is because of house on the westside had not been torn down, and they were right across the street from where we lived. But some of the changes in San Bernardino, San Bernardino has gone up and down and up and down. We lived there of course when Norton Air Force Base was booming. My dad was in the Air Force, my mom worked at Norton for a period of time. So that became a part of our life, Norton Air Force Base. Then they closed Norton and it didn't really affect any of us because by that time my mom had gone back and gotten her degree at Cal State, and she was teaching. My dad had long since retired from the Air Force, but when Norton went down the economic base of San Bernardino went down as well. Many people didn't have jobs and it was obviously a major employer. And I suppose and attempted, on several occasions, to find ways to bring it back up, but I have not seen that economic boom. What I see now is more warehouses coming and I suppose if you do warehousing jobs that's okay. But when I was there two months ago. [cough] Excuse me, many of the areas that used to be thriving neighborhoods, family neighborhoods, are no longer there. And if they're there, they're run down, they're probably not owned by those original families, and it's just not the same. I was telling Leslie yesterday that there's a Facebook page on "Remember when in San Bernardino", and a lot of the memories I'm amazed of some of these people remember these things but, um, they talked about the different businesses and so forth that were there. And now those businesses are closed, not just because of the pandemic but because of San Bernardino's, I think, economic lack of economic development. That was a long answer for that one question but...

**Leslie Estrada** [00:05:02] Thank you, that was a great question, great answer. One thing that it said mentioned yesterday is that you attended Mills elementary school, which is, I believe, part of the Valley Truck Farms Community. Tell us a little bit more of what you remember.

**Denise Spencer** [00:05:21] I'm sorry, what was, what did you say?

**Leslie Estrada** [00:05:23] Can you tell us a little bit more of what you remember?

**Denise Clopton** [00:05:27] Oh, I remember going to elementary school as a kid. I enjoyed middle school because all my friends were there. It was a community school. Um, we walked to school. We didn't have to be bused. We walked from our homes, and my first couple years my uncle insisted on driving me to school. So it was more like Driving Miss Daisy and her friends to school, the little version of Miss Daisy. But I'm and I love my uncle dearly, but he was one of those he was going to make sure I was protected and so on today's market I guess that's worth its weight in gold. But at some point I guess my mother convinced him that me walking to school probably was a good thing. So I started walking with everyone else, and middle school as I said then, was predominantly black. There were one or two white families and a couple Hispanic families. At the time we didn't call them Hispanic families, we called Mexican families. So, as Black and colored and African American changes, so changes everybody else's vernacular, but we all got along, it wasn't a Mexican family, a white family, a black family. It was just families, we were all in the community together. We went to school together, we socialized together. And, as I was saying yesterday, our teachers were predominantly black as well, Mrs. Inghram from where the Dorothy Ingram Library is named. She was my principal and I have gotten it, I had a chance to reestablish a relationship with Mrs. Inghram when I came back. Actually I was practicing law at the time, but you know we talked about some of, some of her dear charges that she had, but it was, they did the best that they could to prepare us for the greater world, because when we left for middle school they, we were going to Richardson which is now prep high, prep school. It was Richardson Middle School on wherever that is, Mill Street. And we were going to be bused I believe to Richardson, yeah we're bused to Richardson, and they stressed that you know we had all the education foundation that we needed to go apply ourselves, and be diligent with the task at hand. And that's what we did. We had carnivals at Halloween and things like that, it was an elementary school experience, it was fine. Um, like I said in the church that most of us went to St Mark's Missionary Baptist Church is still standing. Um, we walked to the church, we walked to school. And those are basically the things that we did. We played at each other's houses and we walked there too. So we did a lot of walking. In fact, if I could walk like I did, then I would never have to worry about a weight loss program. But, alas, that is not the case, but it was a good experience.

**Leslie Estrada** [00:09:06] That seems like a really long time ago for a lot of memories. I can't really remember anything really from my elementary experience.

**Denise Clopton** [00:09:18] Oh no, I remember it like it was yesterday. I remember going to the principal's office, Mrs. Inghram and getting paddled for something we did, I forgot what we did, but during that time they paddled children, and they had the parents permission and when you got paddled at school, you went home and they told your parents about it. Then you got paddled again or punished or whatever but you did. It was the back in the day that they talk about on television. When a community, it took a community to raise a child or children. So if you got in trouble at school, you were in trouble at home. If you're walking home we had a lady on the corner of Central and Lincoln, where I lived, Miss Goodson. I'll

never forget her, bless her heart. She lived there by herself. She's a nice lady. But she had a corner house, so of course she could see everything that was going on. So as we walked home and we dilly dally or whatever we would do. And we had phones then. Before I got home, if it was something that we had done. She called down to my mother "Did you know I saw Denice and they were doing x, y, and z". I got home, and I didn't necessarily get spanked about it, but my mother was there waiting. "Miss Goodson called, she said x, y, & z" and I'm thinking, oh no, you know, but back in the day, that was another thing you didn't do. You didn't tell your parents number one the lady was lying or, you know, things like that you were respectful to your elders. So even though you said I wonder why that old, old lady didn't keep her nose, nose out of my business. You didn't say those kind of things. But my mother was pretty cool too, everything that she said she didn't act on. But it was also like I said a community and it took a community to raise us. And I think we're all better for having been a community.

**Leslie Estrada** Speaking of community. Are there like any families that you remember, or any connections they used to have to many of your friends or family, neighbors, today?

**Denice Clopton** Yes. I indicated that I was back there two weeks ago, a month ago, I guess. For my mother's services she passed in December, and the 27th of December and we couldn't have our services until the 11th of February, and that was because she wanted to be buried at Riverside National and they were backed up because of Coronavirus, and you know California's death rate is high. The person that did the eulogy was my best friend's sister's friend. That is now the senior pastor of that same church we all went to St. Mark's Missionary Baptist Church, Percy Harper. His sister, Carolyn, is my best friend. She and I became friends at three years old. And we've been friends ever since and we were partners in the caregiving of our mothers and our mothers passed away within two weeks of each other. [cough] Excuse me, her's first and then mine, and Percy's eulogy was an amazing eulogy. He did a wonderful job but he did a parallel of how our lives have intersected over the years, how our mothers raising us paralleled, and even though they were different. He talked about the sameness of things that they were going through. And then he talked about the parallel of my life and Carolyn's life over these many years. That's one family. The person who played the music, Michael Jackson, his family. He is the Minister of music at New Hope Missionary Baptist Church in San Bernardino, Michael and I grew up together. In fact, Michael's family lived next door to the church, St Marks. And so, Michael and I started out in kindergarten together. Carolyn and I started kindergarten together, Percy was already , he's a year older than us. So he was there, already in elementary school, and I'm trying to think of another lady that was there, her father and my mother grew up together in Los Angeles, and somehow they got to San Bernardino, she was there and we call each other cause, cause of course, we kind of grew up together as well. And I can't, for the sake of time I won't try to sit here and think, but I have several. A friend of mine that we grew up together. She lives in Riley, and we stay in touch. In fact the three of us, Carolyn and this other friend and myself, and we all started out in elementary school together. [cough] Excuse me. And there are other, there's another lady in San Jose that we grew up together. We started out in kindergarten and I can't believe this, we still are in contact with each other. There's another lady and her sister that we started out in elementary school together. I'm still in contact with them, in fact I just talked to her about a month ago. They live in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. So yes, there are people we still keep in contact with. There are others but for the sake of time, those are ones that I probably stay in closest contact to.

**Leslie Estrada** [00:15:08] It sounds like community, like the sense of community that was built, early in the Valley Truck Farms really affected your life and that of your neighbors in creating these great bonds and still staying in touch today.

**Denice Clopton** [00:15:23] Yes, that's true. Because Percy's mother, Pastor Harper's mother, as I said passed away two weeks before my mine. Of course I wasn't able to go to the services. But one of the ladies that they had speaking, and I laugh because I said "Lord, is she finished yet." Um, I was watching them streaming. And that lady went from Genesis to Revelation on all the things that we did when we grew up, and I sat there and I said "Oh my lord." And I hope she never sees this recording, but I'm gonna say it anyway. Everybody sitting there knew about the Valley, most of the people. And so help me, she went through the elementary school, all the connections and I said, "Oh no, please." But, yes, I think all of us were affected in a good way, by the community that we had. And growing up with some of the older people, and the wisdom that they had I remember when I was leaving for college. [cough] Excuse me, some of the older people you know how they give you gifts when you're, you know, card and goodbye and so forth. Um, I got handkerchiefs from them. I got money from them. But always what you got from them, this is gonna make me cry now, um, was a send off that said, "We didn't get a chance to go to college, but you do. Remember that and do well." And that was their, their send off. And so of course when you went, you were going to do well and come back and graduation they gave you money and different things. Mostly money. And I had enough money that I added it all together and I bought my first little junk car after graduation from college with the money that you know different people had given me, you know, little here little there. And yes, so those kind of experiences yeah they go into the rest of your life.

**Leslie Estrada** [00:17:46] Something. That's really nice to hear how you grew up with many of your friends from Kinder, which I believe with Mills elementary and then have grown up together even today, even though you guys live in different locations, you guys make sure to keep them touch. Kinda moving forward with something that you mentioned. You mentioned St Mark's missionary and New Hope Baptist Church. Can you tell us a little bit about your experiences and how that also connects to the idea of community and the relationships that you've built?

**Denice Clopton** [00:18:28] Um, St. Marks, as I said, was the community church and that is where we all went until we didn't. My mother moved our membership. Well, our families membership, my dad was there too, but and my brothers and sisters, but to Greater Bethel Baptist Church in San Bernardino which is on Third and I can't remember that street. Anyway, so we met more people. And some of those people, in fact I was just talking to a daughter. Yesterday, who called to see how I was doing. Her mother and my mother had been friends for 50 years, god bless them, and they, her mother was here in Atlanta a couple years ago, probably, was it last year, year before last. And we all went out to lunch together. That's how I knew they had been, been friends for 50 years because she kept saying, "You know, you and I, Brue," talking to my mother, "been friends for 50 years," and I'm thinking, "Okay, how nice". You know there, you know, that kind of saw. The daughter and I are friends, she moved to Atlanta so you know we continued our friendship and laughing at our parents, mothers, actually. Um, but, so that friendship continues and relationship continues. And that started at Bethel, and then at New Hope, they moved to New Hope as well, their membership. [cough] Excuse me, and I met, we met other people at New Hope, and I just said to someone that New Hope Church showed up and showed out for mom. I wanted her to get as much



celebration as she could, in the midst of the pandemic. She was on the deaconess board, the chair of the deacon board, spoke several a deaconesses that she served with spoke. So, and I had shared one Subcommittee on the scholarship, and we have committee there. And mom wanted in lieu of flowers a scholarship, a Memorial Scholarship. So I started, we did that. And so the relationship continues even though I'm in Atlanta and I'm no longer part of the church per se. Mom was. We also had her here under watch care here so, associate member here at the Cascade United Methodist Church in Atlanta. Um, the relationships we developed, yes, they continue and the good ones obviously continue. And it makes for a richer existence, and a fond existence because you can look back over 20 years, 30 years, and I think I'll stop there, but time continuum of people in your life and knew you say, you say knew you when. So, yes, it makes for a very rich existence.

**Leslie Estrada** [00:21:50] I can see how much your community growing up in the Valley, Valley Truck Farms really has impacted your life and how much you've really kept your community in mind as you left off for college and have moved up to Atlanta.

**Denice Clopton** [00:22:10] Oh, yeah, but in between the off-to-colleges and moving to Atlanta. When I left, graduated from college. My mother, bless her heart, she said, and I was planning on staying in Atlanta and she said, "You have no job. Why don't you come home just for the summer?" Well, I was 21, who cares about a job, I'll find something, I'll find some place to live, no big deal so I listened to my mother. I came home for the summer and that was 30 years of home for the summer. I did not go back, but [22:50] being in California was good to me career wise. [cough] Excuse me, my first legal job after I passed the Bar was at the San Bernardino County District Attorney's office, right there on 3rd and whatever that, Arrowhead, Arrowhead. I can't remember the streets. Third and Arrowhead. And then I went over to work in the city attorney's office under James Penman, Jim Penman. In fact, he was at my mom's service. [cough] Excuse me, so I had a chance to see him and different other places. So, coming back to California, and the Inland Empire and San Bernardino career wise was very good. Sometimes socially it was not the best place to be. There were not the kinds of things to do. But we found things and we had to drive a little ways to Los Angeles to do something but you know it still was a positive experience career wise there were a lot of people that were there, very supportive of me and helped me along as I you know started and continued my career.

**Leslie Estrada** [00:24:06] So you kind of touched on the topic. Um, can you tell us a little bit more about some of the, let's say mom and pop shops that you remember. Or I remember you mentioned yesterday, how in downtown there was few black salesman or those restrictions as to who could eat inside the dinners or you also mentioned you couldn't try on a dress and in many of the stores in downtown.

**Denice Clopton** [00:24:36] Oh, okay. The transcript is was scrolling, so when I can't hear you I was reading the transcript. The, yeah, San Bernardino, we talked about the good growing up, because, like I said, the Valley was predominantly black, so we didn't have problems with discrimination. Um, but when you went downtown, [cough excuse me. People think discrimination and racism only happened in the deep, deep South. That is not the case. In the 50s and 60s and San Bernardino, when I was there. There was discrimination there too. And I was talking about it, I remember, F.W. Woolworths, I think that was on D street or E street, downtown. When downtown looked like downtown, when you could walk up and down.

**Otis Clopton** [00:25:38] Between Third and Fourth on E Street

**Denice Clopton** [00:25:40] Between Third and Fourth on E, okay. As a little kid, and I was a little kid then, you could buy hot dogs there. And I'd always want a hot dog like you know every little kid, but you couldn't eat them there. I didn't think anything of it. No, that's what you did, you bought the hot dog, you ate it in the store or you left. One day we were downtown, and some people were picketing. And I asked my mom, "What are those people doing?" Well, they were picketing F.W. Woolworth, just like here they did in the South, because Blacks couldn't eat at the lunch counter. And I, you know I was a little kid, I'm like, "Oh, okay." It didn't register there. And it was the NAACP, and the President of the NAACP was a husband of one of our family friends, well he was a friend too. And that made an impression on me later. I said, "Oh, they did that in San Bernardino too. Oh, okay." Otis and I, both was saying that my mother, um like, you know, every other parents you hear now talk about the, the talks with the boys on how to deal with the police when they go out. Okay, well, there were talks with us on how to act when you go out. And it was "Be on your best behavior, be um ...

**Otis Clopton** [00:27:22] I can talk a little bit if you want?

**Denice Clopton** [00:27:23] And, it's Harris's, um, we couldn't try on. Mom always told us Harris department store was one of the major department stores there. And you couldn't try on hats. I don't think you could try on clothes, either. Don't touch anything. When you went through this door, you went through respectfully, if you're gonna buy something, you picked it up and purchased it, and left. You didn't tarry, you didn't go to the lunch counter. You didn't go upstairs. I think it was upstairs where the restaurant was, um, you left, and as a kid I didn't think anything of it. I thought, "Okay this is what you do." It wasn't until later that I realized that that was part of the discriminatory actions against Black people. To say I live through it, sorta, sorta yes, sorta no. It was there. But my mom shielded me basically from it, in the sense that you don't do this and you don't do that. And as long as I didn't do this and I didn't do that. I didn't get in trouble with her, I didn't get in trouble with the store, I didn't embarrass her in the store so, if, I went back home. And as I said earlier, I played with friends, so okay, so you can't try on a dress, I didn't want one anyway. Um, so it's just, those kind of things. I remember when I had my first jury trial in the early 80s in San Bernardino, I was helping with the murder case. One of the jurors was an older white man, and he was supposed to be asking questions, answering questions, you know when you're voir dire or asking the jury questions, you know. Well this man was supposed to be answering these questions. You know what he says? He says, and to this day he didn't say it in a mean way. He just said it more in a surprise way, "Oh, I didn't know they had any colored attorneys around here." I'm going. Okay, well here's one, it's things like that, that people, the ingrained prejudice, prejudices and biases and lack of awareness that you run into and you did run into it in San Bernardino, but to say that it affected me greatly? Um no, I never heard the N-word in San Bernardino used against me, maybe against somebody else. The only first time I heard the N word, I was in Sacramento at a job working, and I was walking down the street, next to my building where I worked. And this little station wagon had these two little white children in it. And I passed them. And you could hear one of those say "Oh look, there's one of those N people." And did I turn around? No. Um, it wasn't necessary. I had a job gainfully employed, in fact making pretty decent salary, that I'm sure their parents weren't. So, you know, you just keep going, but it's, it's things like that that you run into, you know, experiences that you have. So grateful to say I've never had experience of discrimination. You know I look askance at that but you know it's okay, it didn't, color, yea color, it didn't make me bitter, I'll say that, bitter. I just, it was part of America fabric. And what I was always taught, is that you rise above people and situations. So, my mother said, "Well, you're not going to be in this town forever,

you're planning on going to school." Now she didn't expect me to go to Spelman, she expected me to go to UCR, um, thank you, but no thank you. I don't want to go to UCR, but her premise was you are on an upward trajectory. So why look back at things that are negative, that would bring you down. So that's kind of how my upbringing informed my, I guess, thinking.

**Leslie Estrada** [00:32:07] You mentioned the presence of the NAACP in San Bernardino. Did, if you guys have ever any relationships or any involvement on membership?

**Denice Clopton** [00:32:22] Um, I mentioned it then, And then a certain somebody sitting next to me, decided that he wanted to be president of the NAACP. And I don't think at the time that, he and I were married at this time. So I guess I was being nice and supportive of him. So he was President, I was sec, second Vice President, and chair of the legal redress committee. I think that was in, it was in the 90s, mid 90s. The San Bernardino NAACP, so yes we had a connection with them. And the legal redress committee, [cough] excuse me, was the one that would hear the various complaints of discrimination and so forth and try to come up with solutions or whatever.

**Leslie Estrada** [00:33:18] I believe also, correct me if I'm wrong, Mr. Clopton also had membership with the Masonics?

**Denice Clopton** [00:33:26] Still does.

**Leslie Estrada** [00:33:30] Would you mind telling us about your experience?

**Otis Clopton** [00:33:36] Ah, yes. I will, I don't mind. I guess just before that if I could say this, just add into what Denice has said. I was born in Alabama, and I grew up there in high school, through high school and and out there and came to San Bernardino, and for discriminatory practices I've seen that when I was coming up. So when I came to California, I thought, "Oh boy I'm out of that," but when I got to San Bernardino I was confront with the same thing, just a little bit different and as far as economics in San Bernardino. At that time there was Kaiser Steel, which was a major industry for employment for people, employed a lot of people than ever, to foundry in Colton, and of course that was Norton Air Force Base to provide a lot of people. So when, after a while the, the Kaiser Steel was no longer competitive in labor and pouring steel was coming into the United States cheaper than Kaiser could produce it, and it meantime Kaiser had a hospital for employees so they kind of tone down, their steel producing, and then they discover how profitable medical could be so they open it up for everybody and that's you see what happened to Kaiser, and we have a Kaiser down here in Atlanta, Georgia as well. But that was one of the employment sources. So after one of the major employment sources, Excuse me, no longer existed in San Bernardino, the whole economy had a tendency to go down, and then people had a tendency to leave here and go elsewhere for employment and, and do their lives. [35:45] As for discriminatory practices, I was confronted with a lot of things there, and most black people were too. And what they did, there were programs that we only bought houses in certain areas that they had set aside for us. They didn't say that. But if you came into town and you wanted to buy a house. If you were black, they sold you a house in a black community and out in Del Rosa was like forbidden from blacks, they just automatically didn't take me out there. You couldn't even rent a property out there, an apartment or anything. So that's how San Bernardino, kinda, how the living conditions and the social activities were there. And, ah, but go back to the Masonic. First of all the NAACP, I think it's, it's kind of humorous, it says but that's what happened on,

they had an election. And the person that had been president for years, didn't want to have it anymore. So they end up, and this person that was elected. He was hesitant about being installed president because he was expecting a job which he did, did get in another month in South Carolina so he didn't want to take to position, and then have to change it to somebody else. So he just said he wouldn't take it. So then the powers-to-be in the organization got together. Somehow drafted me to be the president. So I said, "Well, kind of, on one condition. I would take it if you put Denice as one of the Vice Presidents for me, that way I'll be getting some help." Because we really needed some help and the leadership at that time in the NAACP didn't have a good image of being productive and doing something, so they agreed to that. And from that we really did some things. So Denice says in the metadata, I mean in the legal area. She knew a lot of people, so she was able to put together a team. We had about 15 different people that got involved. And I remember we had a retreat at the Hilton hotel there on Hospitality and went through kind of an outline of restructure of the NAACP, so they can be productive and one of those things was membership. So at that time I was a member of a New Hope Baptist Church here in San Bernardino and I knew the pastor, and several other members. So I made an appeal for membership, in church during the service, which they, they allowed me to do. And I remember that Wilbur Brown who knew everybody, everybody liked. So I appointed him as membership chair. So within a few months, we recruited about 150, 160 new members so it got it off the ground.

But then I end up getting elected as the leader of the state, or the Masonic in our organization. And that required me to spend much time throughout the year, in the state various cities in the state. And I didn't have time to do all that. So I've kind of resigned. The NAACP that position back at my membership, I'm a life member. Anyway, but in the Masonic, then from there, we started doing this service for the community to help people all over the state. And long story, short story. Then we belonged to another national organization in that same organization that was headquartered in DC so I ended up being drafted there, their leader, and stayed in leadership for 20 years. I was elected in Troy, Michigan for that, in 1998. And I refused another term except in 2018. That gave me 20 years in that position. But during that time we have done a lot of things for scholarship, communities. For example, the American Diabetes Association, down here, we were able to give them a \$20,000 donation to help with what they're trying to do to find a cure for diabetes or help develop something in there. So that's kind of been my Masonic life, and in the Masons, even though I took a long time to get there. That's right. Okay.

**Leslie Estrada** [00:40:50] Thank you. Did any or both have any other relationships or memberships in any other organizations in the I.E.?

**Otis Clopton** [00:41:00] [laugh] Oh, you shouldn't have asked that. Well, let's see. I don't talk long so I'll tell you mine. So after that, well down here, I joined the honored Blackman of Atlanta. And they are doing all kinds of things for boys' education and young people and getting them involved from the, out of the low end of life into the top of the, top of the list when it comes to being successful. There have been kids, all kinds of subjects coming in school Math, English, Science ...

**Denice Clopton** [00:41:37] That is down here. Why don't you explain what you did at Cal State with the...

**Otis Clopton** [00:41:42] Oh, Cal State, the people out there, there was a group of us. And I guess Lois Carson is still involved in there, but Danny Tillman who lives there, and Danny

Tillman, I think he's still a member of the San Bernardino School Board

**Denice Clopton** [00:42:00] And Orage Corals

**Otis Clopton** [00:41:01] and Orage Corals, Lois Carson. Anyway, we got together and established an organization called Black Future Leaders, and that was established at Cal State San Bernardino on their campuses, so I was a member of that team. And, Orage, this one of Denice's friends. Orage worked for me, and now we're all friends, they live in South Carolina, North Carolina, South Carolina...

**Denice Clopton** [00:42:29] North Carolina. That's was, that's the lady that I talked about that the three of us went to elementary school. He's talking about her husband now. I was in her, their wedding as well. And they've been married, uh, I forgot she told me 40 something 50 something, so anyway. A long time.

**Otis Clopton** [00:42:50] Yeah. But anyway, that's kind of a bit about me, it's just that I don't talk much and Denice can take it from there.

**Denice Clopton** [00:42:56] Okay. In the Inland Empire, other organizations. When I came back to the Inland Empire after college, I joined up with, participate, worked in and participate with the National Council Negro of Women in San Bernardino, and I enjoyed that, that was a good experience. They did a lot of different things in and for the community. I'm also a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, and I participated with the Eta Nu Omega chapter Riverside and San Bernardino.

**Otis Clopton** [00:43:38] Tell them about the church membership.

**Denice Clopton** [00:43:40] Well, I'm trying to think, they said organizations.

**Otis Clopton** [00:43:42] Yea, the scholarships.

**Denice Clopton** [00:43:44] And then at the New Hope I like I said, I was for a while, a member of the Deaconess Board, um. I also was a chair of one of the subcommittees as I said before on the scholarship committee, and I worked on that quite a long time with, you may know her Ms Spencer, Lily Motley. She was a teacher at San Bernardino High school I think an English teacher. She's also a sorority sister of mine but that wasn't the reason I was on that committee. But that committee we work to teach the young people when to apply for scholarships, when to apply for college. The kinds of things I needed to do to successfully get into college. We found interestingly enough that our young people and I say, our young people I mean black kids at least there. Did not apply for scholarships and financial aid in a timely fashion. They would wait until, if they said the deadline was March, they're applying in March. Well, you both probably already know that by March, whatever funds they had are depleted. Um, the other thing is applying for college. Um, colleges have rolling admissions. I remember when I applied to Spelman I got an early acceptance when everybody else was sitting around waiting to see where they were going. I already knew I had gotten an early acceptance. And those are the kinds of things that we try to instill in them. That you don't have to wait till the last minute, that you take your exams at this particular time in your career, and in college, in high school. If you're start going to apply for college if you're going to take, let's say the LSAT, they're not taking not taking the LSAT, it was the SAT that they're taking the ACT, whatever the exam was, you take it early so that if you want to take it again, you can take it again, and not wait until almost a springtime of the time that you want to apply for

college. And those are some of the kinds of things that you all already know but some of them didn't know. And, or they knew what they didn't know I'll put it that way, parents didn't know, and their parents didn't know to help them direct their children on how to make out these applications, how to write essays and things like that. And our first year we had had a very good turnout, we required the parents to be involved with them and we found that when we required the parents to be involved. The kids did better. We had one year when the parents weren't involved and I remember a young lady walked in, it was in the evening, of course, and she walked in with rollers in her hair and I'll never forget this, these fluffy pink house shoes. [laugh] And I looked at her and said "Where are you going?" She says, "Well, I've come to this." I said "No, ma'am." We didn't send her home that day, but you don't come here with rollers and fluffy, nothing. Anyway, it was things like that that we tried to instill in them that when you're coming here to like it's a job interview or an interview with a college recruiter and you're not coming with rollers and floppy pink... That just as you can see that stuck in my mind those little pink fluffy shoes was like, "Oh no," so I was involved in that I was involved in several committees with the sorority scholarship, housing committee, our birthday committee and do it, and the bylaws committee, always managed to get to the bylaws committee. Somebody is either volunteering or voluntolding me for the bylaws committee but that's okay. And I also participated in the Los Angeles Chapter, The Spelman Alumni Association for a while until I got tired of driving back and forth to Los Angeles. And for a while I was on the board of the Inland Empire African American Historical Society in Riverside, Riverside, and I'm trying to think of other organizations because a lot of the time, I was busy with work and I didn't have. Well I guess that's enough organizations right? Well, committees. Anyway...

**Otis Clopton** [00:48:56] Well let me say this before you think of another. And I was also involved Deacon in New Hope Missionary Baptist Church, and I was a trustee there for a while. And, oh for the city, I worked for the workforce investment board, and for the county, I was appointed there also a workforce investment board.

**Denice Clopton** [00:49:22] Oh, speaking of that, and in Rialto I was on the commission for Cable Commission, Cable Commission. At New Hope I was also a teacher, new member orientation for the young people. Um, what else, I did other things but you know, I just couldn't do it and now

**Otis Clopton** [00:49:41] Did you do Jack and Jill?

**Denice Clopton** [00:49:42] No, I didn't do Jack and Jill, I didn't have kids for Jack and Jill. But um, things like that. I remember what we do something at Cal State San Bernardino, but I don't remember we were doing something, but in any of it because there are enough people that were connected with Cal State in fact my mom is a graduate of Cal State San Bernardino and my sister was a graduate of Cal State, so.

**Leslie Estrada** [00:50:16] I see that you have both really embedded your life here in San Bernardino, at least in your earlier years when you lived here. And you also mentioned that you sometimes come and visit here back to San Bernardino, what are some of the changes that you see? Just in general.

**Otis Clopton** [00:50:39] Well, I can see one change, and that Blacks are, can get more reputable jobs than they did when I was there. For example, I got a job as an engineering trainee for CalTrans. And at that time, it was named Division of Powers, and was located where the courthouse is now isn't it. But anyway, Caltrans is now located 4th and E. Before it

was 3rd and Arrowhead, now there is another building there, I can't remember the name of it. But anyway, uh, in that facility, Caltrans had about 1,900 employees and they had two blacks. One was engineering and design, and I was an engineer trainee. And now there's many many more Black people that work there now. But those were the types of environments that we were confronted with. And what we had to do when you go in a place like that, then you try to put forth a good image display of quality, good people, so that others can come after you because if you don't, then you are stereotyped to extend that they don't want to hire any additional Blacks in the future. That's the thing that most of us, when we go in and be like pioneers. Those are things you have to do, many times you have to bite your tongue, close your mouth, in order to earn that respectability, whether you like it or not. And we're looking at the future. So those are the main things, and I'm sure even Denice being an attorney there in San Bernardino with the city. There was, of all the attorneys there, that worked for the city. I would imagine that you only had one Black?

**Denice Clopton** [00:52:59] No, we had, there was two of us.

**Otis Clopton** [00:53:01] Two of you, out of what?

**Denice Clopton** [00:53:03] Well, there was two of us in the department. What's his name, Wilson was an attorney before I got there. and then the district attorney, but...

**Otis Clopton** [00:53:12] Did the district attorney...

**Denice Clopton** [00:53:14] They didn't have any managers because when I went over there, I was second in command in the city attorney's office and I got promoted. I was third command then I got promoted second, I was a co-senior assistant City Attorney for the municipal side, the governmental side, and then the litigation, which is what I did. But in City Hall, he mentioned City Hall, there were Black people that worked for the city of San Bernardino, but, you know, in the higher level echelon, uh-uh, not so much. Um, in the DA's office, not so much when I was there. I think they had one Black male attorney before I got there, and I don't think he was there. That was Grover, whatever it can't think of his name.

**Otis Clopton** [00:54:05] What about judges?

**Denice Clopton** [00:54:07] Well til maybe 10 years ago, before I left, the two, they picked two females for judges, and those two females were two of the people that were on my legal redress committee when I was working with the NAACP. But contrary to Otis and what he said, unfortunately I don't represent well as a black person, in first. And I know we're recording this, but I will say it that way because I don't, um, I represent me. And when I went, I went to Sacramento, I got a job as a program analyst with the engineer, State Engineer's Board. Those are the folks that license, all the state engineers and surveyors. They had never had a Black female, they had never had a Black person on the professional staff. There were Blacks working in the clerical staff. So I go to work. And it was a good experience, I had a wonderful experience there, our executive director was great. But I was never known to be quiet. If I didn't like something, I told them. There were nothing but men, you know on the staff, and they'd come to my office and they have these great hypotheses about this or that. And, you know, I guess I could have been nice and, and said, "Well, that's nice." No. Um, and when, when I left there. I had a wonderful relationship with all of them. Not because I was mean to them, but because we all had a job to do. And they came to respect me because of the same reason that Otis was saying, I did my job. I didn't back down from some of whatever they were talking about. I didn't mind arguing with them, on whatever the subject was, and we

got along, and we had a good camaraderie. The same thing in the city attorney's office with some of the city heads. Um, I was never quiet. That was not my job to be quiet. My job was to represent my client which was the city of San Bernardino, and if you happen to be running afoul of that, then not quiet. And I understand what he's saying but I had a different role at various times. So when I say I didn't represent well, I was not the quiet one, but I always tried to do the best that I could do in any job that I had. I tried to be respectful of others and I expected them to be respectful of me. Um, I did not expect them to come up with nicknames and cutesy stuff with me. I am a professional and so are you. That's how we are going to roll along this road, at work. If we become friends, then that's another thing, but we probably will be colleagues, more than friends. So that's why I said, I didn't represent well. I guess I represented the way I did

**Otis Clopton** [00:57:39] You just represented a lil different.

**Denice Clopton** [00:57:40] Yeah we did it differently, but I think sometimes we talk about the burden of being the first and I never felt the burden of being the first. I felt the burden of having a job and keeping a job, so that I could feed myself because I wasn't married to Otis at that time. I was a single female. I was a professional, I was either a lawyer or a professional with the state of California. And so as a female, we talked about discrimination. And we talked about race. [cough] Excuse me, but I just mentioned, another form of discrimination and that's gender discrimination. There are times when you're the only female black or white, sitting at the table. And I got over that. I was telling Leslie yesterday that in law school there was two of us who graduated in our class of 300, two blacks, one female and one male, the female is here [raises hand]. There were a couple classes that I was the only black female or male in that class. In my MBA courses, I was the only female for a while, and I look around the class and I go, "Where's everybody?" But when I interacted with them, I interacted with them like, number one, I paid my money to be here like you. I took the same exams that you did. I got accepted like you did. And so I'm here so deal with it, moving along down the road. I actually can, thankfully say, I didn't have any problems in law school with being the, excuse me, the only you know female, Black not female, Black in the class at the time, and I didn't have any problems in graduate school, but you still have to look at that. As I was saying Leslie, yesterday, that in some instances uncomfortable you would like a little diversity. It does feel pretty good.

**Leslie Estrada** [01:00:02] I think we kind of touched on this. On how we still see this problem today at least for myself at the University of Redlands. I still see most students on the political science department being predominantly white males, and how he also mentioned how you felt that the work that you did during your early years was so that we could see a change today.

**Denice Clopton** [01:00:30] Did I see that? No, I didn't. Um, I didn't because I didn't have feel the burden of blackness. I didn't feel the burden of womanhood. I felt the burden of a professional, either as a professional program analyst, budget analyst, or as an attorney. That was a burden I failed to do the best job I can do in that profession at that time. I happen to be black and I happen to be a woman, but please don't let that get in your way of understanding that I am competent, and I can do a budget. I had a job where I was doing budgets in was the highest one was \$65 million. I'm competent to add two and two. Um, I may not now be competent to do my checkbook, but I can add two. But my burden was to do the best job as a professional who happened to have these characteristics.



**Leslie Estrada** [01:01:47] Yeah, I totally understand where you're, where you're coming from. But now I'm, I guess I kind of want to move forward on to a different topic, and you could call me nosy for asking this question. So if you don't want to answer it, that's completely fine. You kind of touched on your relationship with Mr. Otis and kind of working together here in San Bernardino. If you don't mind me asking, how did both come to meet and was this that this happened in San Bernardino, because I think you mentioned that Mr. Otis was not, is not a San Bernardino native. So, was there any connection here in San Bernardino that, that, that this happened.

**Denice Clopton** [01:02:35] You don't want me to call you nosy, do you? I'm trying to think, I'm trying to make it short answer for you to know. No, he and I met. You want to tell him how we met?

**Otis Clopton** [01:02:56] I don't mind.

**Denice Clopton** [01:02:57] We met though my mom really.

**Otis Clopton** [01:02:59] Yeah. First of all, uh, we met, the first time we met, we still didn't know each other. And we were, her mom was chair of the committee for uh travel. And I think it was more for seniors in a sense. But anyway, others could attend on their outings. So I went over to her house, when she was going, she had a kind of open house farm on a ship she was going to seven days ship to the on a cruise to the Caribbean. And so I went and I listened to it. And I said, "Oh" so I decided that I wanted to go. So we went and I saw Denice in passing, I didn't even know that was her daughter, nor knew her name anything. She didn't recognize or see me either, I saw her that's it. So then fast forward in, a few years later, I had senior different places, and somebody within San Bernardino was forming an organization, and I won't call it a name to protect the innocent. And they were going to do things and they wanted me to work on with one of the committees to help in the community and I said all right. So, we already have an attorney that is committed. I said "Okay, who's that?" They said her name is Denice Brue. "Oh, okay." So then we know, and talk. So I said, "Well, I'll let you know." So I looked and found her number and I called her, I said, "You don't know anything about me but I just want to pass this on for whatever it's worth." I said, "I would be really cautious about joining his organization because I'm not sure if their reputation is going to be equal to what she's expecting of what I would think of her, even though I don't know you." So we talked a lot and I said "I don't think I'm going to be a member of it for those same reasons." So then, that generated a conversation so I would see her every once in a while in passing, during church, what have you. So then, someone was running for office and Beverly?

**Denice Clopton** [01:05:39] Her sister, it was a fundraiser for somebody in Rialto.

**Otis Clopton** [01:05:43] Yeah.

**Denice Clopton** [01:05:44] And he happened to be there, and.

**Otis Clopton** [01:05:49] Not really happened.

**Denice Clopton** [01:04:50] Well, you were there, you were kind of the co-chair

**Otis Clopton** [01:05:57] [inaudible] Me and Otis Charles were kind of co-sponsors of that.

**Denice Clopton** [01:06:02] Oh, Otis co-sponsored one with me? He co-sponsored one with you too?

**Otis Clopton** [01:06:04] Yeah.

**Denice Clopton** [01:06:05] Oh well, okay, well it was a political function. And he was the co chair, along with a couple other people. And it was, oh I know it was, it was for the city councilor of Rialto. I went, and that's how we got together. Cuz we had, he thought he walked me out to the car when I was leaving and he asked me if I wanted to go to dinner and I said "Oh yeah, sometime." And I don't think we made a date that time because I think he's, I don't remember, I you know I can't remember. We didn't make a date that time but I think he called me up later or something. We end up anyway. Long story short, we did make a date, we did started dating. We ended up, we started dating for three and a half years before he asked me to marry him on Christmas, Christmas Day, was it Christmas Day? It was Christmas Day because our minister when we went to church, we went we were both going to New Hope, and when we went to church. I had talked to the Minister already. I had, he had already talked to me. Speaking of nosy, never will you fall into that category like he did. But anyway, I was sitting at church and I was sitting in the back of the church. And I guess I was smiling, of course, and I held up my hand like that. And he smiled and I knew, he knew, you know, and then after church you know how you walk around. And I told him, I said, "He asked me to marry him." He says "Well, are we gonna have a wedding?" And so, he was the one that married us. We just celebrated our 25th anniversary in February 17th of this year. So.

**Otis Clopton** [01:08:04] And the thing to add to that. The pastor, we got along very well, and we can be human in church. So, and he came down with cancer and he was a young man.

**Denice Clopton** [01:08:21] He wasn't that young?

**Otis Clopton** [01:08:23] Yeah, he was around 50. Something like that.

**Denice Clopton** [01:08:36] Okay well.

**Otis Clopton** [01:08:26] Yeah, and anyway so he's taking chemo, and all of that.

**Denice Clopton** [01:08:35] And now that was Dr. Lamar Foster.

**Otis Clopton** [01:08:38] And we were not married that time, we was still engaged. So, Denice went to see him in the hospital, and she goes, "No no no no, you're not gonna die here. You got to marry us."

**Denice Clopton** [01:08:52] That is not what I said.

**Otis Clopton** [01:08:53] That's what he told me.

**Denice Clopton** [01:08:55] He told you a tale. I did not say that to him. I alluded to that.

**Otis Clopton** [01:09:01] Yeah, yeah. Well that something to say about reading between the lines. But anyway, and we were having the church rebuilt. So when the church was rebuilt, the pastor was out of the hospital and the first major function in there, was our wedding.

**Denice Clopton** [01:09:20] Well, the first major functional was the week before, was the

**Otis Clopton** [01:09:25] The open?

**Denice Clopton** [01:09:29] No, the rededication, the rededication. Then the next weekend was our wedding. We had the first wedding after the rededication.

**Otis Clopton** [01:09:39] Yeah, that's the first event after.

**Denice Clopton** [01:09:40] And then, speaking of connections, we were talking to a couple at my mom's viewing, who had the last wedding that he performed before he passed. So, you know, and I didn't realize that they've been married the same, they got married same year we got married.

**Otis Clopton** [01:10:03] Who?

**Denice Clopton** [01:10:04] I am not going to tell, we are being recorded.

**Otis Clopton** [01:10:06] Oh, ok.

**Denice Clopton** [01:10:08] Well, anyway. So sometimes you talk about connections and over a period of time you forget about some of these things. But that's how we met. And you ask a question here that you haven't gotten to about, well, let me let you go ahead, ask the next question.

**Leslie Estrada** [01:10:33] Well, actually the last question was for me to ask if there was any missing, cuz I know, we kind of jumped around. And I didn't really follow the script that I sent you but if there's anything else you would like to add please feel free.

**Denice Clopton** [01:10:46] Oh, that's okay. I know we didn't follow the script but that was kind of my fault because we went off script too and we went here and there but anyway.

**Otis Clopton** [01:10:56] Well, we gave them more than we asked for.

**Denice Clopton** [01:10:57] Yeah, well, that's okay. Um, one of the things you asked, or you have a question, and I've checked off all the areas where we did discuss, "What made you move to Atlanta?" Remember that 30 years time that I said that I did, I left, Atlanta and stayed in California. After my mom, okay well, a friend of mine, was it 15 or 16 years ago now, 2005. That I knew in the Inland Empire, she moved to Atlanta and sent an email out saying oh I got this great house and so forth in Atlanta. And I said to Otis, and I told him before that I would love to go back to Atlanta, because I liked Atlanta. Well, I, our offices and we lived in Canyon Crest, and we had a two story house, and our offices were right next door to each other. And so I ran around to his office I said "Otis, guess what?" Anyway, so I told him about this house and about this move from one of, he knew, I think he knew her and I said "I was sure I wouldn't mind going to Atlanta." He says to me, "Fine. If you can find a house, we can move." What a challenge. Needless to say, you see, see us sitting in our house right. Um, I came down one weekend, and went out looking for a house with a sorority sister of mine, because she was referred to me by the same lady. And I didn't find a house, I came back, I found houses that I liked but every time I described it to him, he'd say "Well I don't want this or I don't like that." I finally got annoyed and I said, "Look, if you don't like all these things that I like. And I'm looking at the stuff, why don't you come down here and help me pick this house, okay?" So the following weekend, following week or something, it was close in proximity. He, we came down and we looked through quite a few houses and I had looked at one on the internet and this was it. And the lady had shown me all these houses, I didn't like any of them and I was tired, I was annoyed, and I see it, you know, I had enough of this. I'm going back to California and regroup and I was thinking regroup with another real estate agent. So what happened with the house that I sent you that I wanted to see. And he said, Well, we can go see that and I'm thinking, "Well, duh." Um, and we came to see this house and I fell in love

with it, and we bought the house. That's how we move back and so we bought the house in November. It closed on November 10 which is my birthday. It closed on November 10 which is my birthday. January whatever day that was 2006.

**Otis Clopton** [01:14:04] The 17th.

**Denise Clopton** [01:14:05] Was it the 17th again?

**Otis Clopton** [01:14:06] No, it was the 17th of February.

**Denise Clopton** [01:14:08] No, no, no, it was January we moved down here. We got a mover, we moved down here, met the mover, we had our car ship down. And Otis had a business, his, the one he was talking about, his construction management business. And he had to close his business down. So he didn't get down here full time for three years later, which was a challenge in itself to have to come down to a new home and argue with the builder, about the punch list and things that he needed to do and Otis was still in California, but I guess. Thank God, we made it through and I made it through without killing the builder in the process. So that's how we moved back to Atlanta. And yes we do come back because my mom, and friends were still in, in, in California, in the Inland Empire. Um, my mom didn't come to live with us. It was like four years ago that she came down here when her health started declining to live with us and even then we would go back from time to time because she had her house there. And it was 2017 when our house closed. And we went back there with a couple sorority sisters and some friends and helped us clean out the house. My brother was staying here but some of the stuff I wanted to get for my mom, her stuff. We did that so, yeah, we come back from time to time and someone said at the services well we probably won't see you anymore. And I'm so well. Okay, good. Um, and I thought to myself, well, you may not see me but I probably will be back in this area. And I'll probably see that person as well but the point was that now that mom had passed, we probably wouldn't but. So I have friends and I have two brothers that are still in the San Bernardino area. And we have friends, you know, and I still go to Sacramento, but I am waiting on the pandemic for Sacramento. I have friends there, in fact, last time I was there, we had a dinner at Season's 52 and we all gathered. It was really nice. It was people from, you know, friend's friends that I had when I lived there.

**Leslie Estrada** [01:16:35] Thank you for sharing this story and I can see you have done so many things in San Bernardino and in Atlanta. I don't know if Mrs. Spencer has any questions.

**Denise Spencer** [01:16:47] I do, it's been just such a pleasure to meet you both. My parents are Barbara and Walter Spencer from Rialto. We're military and we've been here since the 60s so it was great to sort of relive that time through your experiences. One of the things, so the last thing I'd like to ask you is, what advice would you give when you look back over your life, when you look at past and current racial struggles. What is the piece of advice you would give to the future generations about how to thrive as you've done in your lives?

**Denise Clopton** [01:17:36] Leslie, you can answer that one. Um, I was talking to her yesterday about her upcoming travels and so forth. And I asked her if she read the book Jonathan Livingston *Seagull*, and it apparently is out of print now. So you see how old it is but I was telling her what the story was. And I guess the advice that I would give is to be a Jonathan Livingston Seagull. To believe in your dreams, to believe that, unlike your relatives, family, friends, or whoever it is telling you "no you can't do it." Who are still scratching around in the sand, because they haven't the nerve to fly, like they're supposed to, like seagulls fly. To

follow your dream, you know, to be Don Quixote to follow your dream, wherever it may take you. And when I say dream, I don't mean to be, you know, going off into Never Never Land. I mean have a plan of action. Have a dream, have something, a goal that you want to achieve and work towards that goal even against the odds. And don't let naysayers tell you what you can't do because usually the naysayers are the ones who haven't achieved anything. And the reason they haven't achieved anything is because they have refused to do anything. And so that would be the advice that I would give to anybody in the next generation, to have a dream. Put that dream into action by having a plan of action. You have to do some work, you can't just have a dream, wake up and say I had a vision. And, you know, and it's going to happen and it does. Um, I was talking to someone, some few years ago. And they said "Well, Denice. You're an attorney. And I didn't go to college." And they was saying something about the advantages that I had, or have or something. And I was annoyed. And I told him I was annoyed. "Whoa, what does that have to do with anything?" "Well you had an opportunity to go to college." And my retort was "So did you. You chose not to. You know we all grew up in the same time period. And if I chose to go. It wasn't an easy road. They didn't hand me this degree, I had to work for. I had to sit in classes and listen to the professor's, excuse me, nothing personal, professors tell me you know what they were going to tell me and, and I probably wasn't happy with it. But you listen to it, this [inaudible] is how you listen to it. You take note, you regurgitate the information that they tell you to do, you do the work that they're telling you right? Whether you are happy with it or not, you do it, and it's work. It is not something you wake up and get. So if I were telling someone I would tell them: have a plan, work your plan, and don't let other people deter you. The road is not going to be easy, it's not going to be straight, but that's the joy of living. It's not about the destination, you know, as corny as it sounds. It's not about the destination, it's about the journey you take and all the people you meet along the journey, all the experiences you get along the journey and by all means, if you have an opportunity to do something beyond what you're used to, do it. If you haven't been outside of the state of California or outside the United States. Why? Go! People do things differently. It's not that they're different, but they may do things differently so take every opportunity, good opportunity that you can in life, and go for it. I am at the age I am at, and you would think that you know I'm kind of ready to retire? I told someone the other day, "I don't think so. I'm not ready, my brain has not told me I am ready to retire. I have miles to go before I sleep and the miles to go maybe still practicing law, maybe doing something else." But it is definitely traveling because I shared with Leslie yesterday. My girlfriend and I are planning a trip to Dubai next year when the pandemic lifts. Those are the sort of things I would say to a young person.

**Denise Spencer** [01:22:37] That is excellent advice. Thank you so much, it's been such a pleasure to meet you both. I am so grateful for this opportunity, and thank you so much for participation in this important project.

**Otis Clopton** [01:22:51] Your welcome

**Denise Clopton** [01:22:52] Your welcome, it was a pleasure talking to you both.

**End of Interview:**  
[01:22:52]