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Otis R. Anthony African Americans in Florida Oral History Project
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Otis Anthony: Okay. Just that little bit again.

Augusta Thomas: Okay. I'm Augusta Thomas. I was born in Ocala, Florida. I attended the public schools there. Graduated in 1950 from the Harlem Academy High School. While I was in high school, I realized that I wanted to do something in the field of education—at least I thought so at the time. And I was anxious to get into the field of education, understanding that I did not have the financial means that would enable me to go to college.

I was very much interested in trying to explore possibilities for an education through a scholarship of some sort. At that time there was a competitive scholarship in the state of Florida known as the Lewis State Scholarship, and I saw that as a possibility. The scholarship was based on a competitive examination that was given to all of the students in that high school district, black and white. I took that scholarship examination and was fortunate enough to win a four year scholarship to Florida A & M [Agricultural & Mechanical] University. I had an option of going into Bethune-Cookman College or Florida A & M University, and I chose Florida A & M University. I was the valedictorian of my class of 1950.

OA: Wow.

AT: After I won the scholarship, I went to Florida A & M University during the fall of 1950 to pursue a degree, I thought, in journalism. I wanted—I thought that since I had to have an education orientation that I would major in English. And after I got there and made my wishes known, I was counseled out of the idea of going into English.

The rationale at that time was that the field of English within the high schools—public

high schools of the state of Florida—was rather closed and that people would accept jobs as English instructors and stay there until retirement because there were few other places to go at that time. And, therefore, if I wanted to have a job and if I wanted to meet my obligation to the scholarship, which indicated that I had to work for a comparable number of years in the public school system—the number of years is comparable to the number of years I used the scholarship. I had to work in the public school system. Not pay the money back, but actually render that amount of service.

So to meet that obligation, I listened to the counsel of those individuals who suggested that English was not the place to go. They indicated to me that the most logical choice I could make was the elementary education. And I think it's funny—years I think about the truth. So I did major in elementary education. I took as many courses as I could in English so that I would have a good background, a minor in English. And I did my internship in elementary education and decided by the end of my internship that that was not the field for me.

OA: Okay.

AT: I think I'm more inclined to teaching on a higher level than elementary education. I was fortunate enough to have made some contacts by attending professional meetings while I was in my senior year. And I was placed in contact with a Mrs. Providence Velasco, who was then the director personnel services for the Hillsborough County Public School System, who was then looking for a school social worker. And one of my instructors who was into social work and who had taught me some basic courses in social work—which I took as electives—recommended me to Mrs. Velasco for a position.

So I made an application prior to the end of my senior year in high school, and was accepted for the position here in Hillsborough County. That's really how I managed to come here. I had no vested interest in returning to Ocala, because during the four years I was in college both of my parents passed, so I was sort of open to work wherever I could work in the state of Florida to meet my commitment regarding the scholarship. So I came here in 1954 and began work as a school social worker with the Hillsborough County Public Schools.

OA: Okay.

AT: That was quite a challenging experience for me. I was pleased to have received a job with the degree of responsibility that was required by that job. It was a job that from the very beginning was a highly responsible job which required very little supervision and a great degree of planning and implementation on one's own. So I was very pleased to have that kind of a job.

My responsibility then was to work with several schools—I have had a maximum of eight schools—to serve as a liaison between the home and the home and the schools working with the principals and teachers regarding the problems faced by youth who had difficulty attending school regularly and those who were having academic problems

while they were in school. I found it a very rewarding kind of job, and yet it was frustrating in many ways, in that the early fifties [1950s] represented the time when the issues and concerns and needs of black children and their families did not seem to be quite paramount. And I had a real honest and sincere desire to see more resources available to the schools, more resources available to the parents, and it became difficult to reconcile the kinds of things that were going on in the other schools with the kinds of things that were going on in our schools.

In spite of that, I have some very happy memories about the kinds of assistance we were able to give to the young people during that time. I remember I drove a 1954 Chevrolet for at least ten years, and it was sort of a trademark, you know; I was called "the social worker" and, of course, I—and my trademark was my light blue 1954 Chevrolet. I used to keep that Chevrolet full of clothing and shoes and other supplies for needy families that I would gather up from people in the community that I knew to be ready to provide an the spot a couple of outfits for a kid who didn't have anything to wear or other necessities that the children of the families needed. I was always mindful, of course, to help the family to retain their dignity, so that the act of helping them did not become an embarrassment to the family at all.

And that was one of the concerns that I've always had and one of my philosophies, and that is that the charitable acts in which we engage that we feel so good about should be aimed at reducing the embarrassment to the recipient of those charitable acts. I believe that children should look to their parents to supply their necessities, and I did not feel that it was necessary for them to know that I was the supplier of whatever it was that they had, in the way of clothing, et cetera. I remember very vividly that one of these little organizations that we formed at that time was called the Society for Needy Children. We gathered up people who were monied, such as Mr. Leon Claxton, who was then with the showman's association, and others in Tampa who had sufficient means to contribute and we formed an organization that was designed to have a sort of perpetual fund available to provide for the needs of children on their parents.

OA: That's beautiful.

AT: One of the reasons for that fund was that we wanted to maintain—wanted people to be able to maintain their dignity. So the philosophy of that fund was to provide for the families not only things that had been used previously by other families but to provide them something new that was their very own. So our philosophy was that if a child needed clothing, we always made sure to supply at least two new outfits along with the older clothing.

OA: Oh...

AT: And our philosophy, further, was "one to wash and one to wear" in case they wanted to just use all the new clothes and really not use the hand-me-downs. We thought they ought to have that option. We established an account at the J.C. Penney store—

OA: What was the name of that fund again?

AT: The Society for Needy Children was the name of the fund. We established this fund at the J.C. Penney store. We made an arrangement so that when we identified a child who needed clothing, we would then provide—we would determine if the parent was willing to accept our offer, then we would provide a note for the parent indicating—from us—indicating the name of the parent, the sex and age of the child, and instructions to the clerk at J.C. Penney's store to provide two new dresses that were chosen by the mother, and new sets of underwear that were chosen by the mother. And it made it appear to the child that the mother was making the purchase. We had identified a salesperson on each shift who would handle our note so that we could indicate on—

We would say to the parent, "Take this to J.C. Penney's store; these are the names of people who will help you. Okay? You ask for one of these people and they will help you." And so those people knew that they would wait on the mother. They had a pretty good notion about the kind of price range that was reasonable. And they waited on the mother, and the child was there to try on the clothing, and they took of the transaction. The mother signed, you know, as if she was making a purchase on a charge account. And so that left the dignity of the family intact.

OA: Yeah.

AT: Okay, we also had a shoe account set up. The first one was set up at a store called Barker and Tully. I remember that on lower Franklin Street. It's been closed for years and years. But the name of that shoe store was Barker and Tully, and they had very substantial and sturdy shoes for the children and adults. So we set up an account at Barker and Tully for new shoes for the children. Our philosophy was that it demeans a child to have to wear somebody's shoes, a shoe that has been molded to some other child's foot.

So we would use that same note system. We'd give a note to the parent. The parent would take the child to Barker and Tully, fit the child—they would fit the child for a pair of shoes, the parent signed the bill, and it was sent to our account. And so I sort of grew up professionally with the idea of helping the people to maintain themselves in dignity and it really never left me.

OA: Wow.

AT: And so those are some of the highlights, I think, of my school social work days. I worked all over the county. I have some very fond memories of my days down in Sun City. The old Sun City School that's now the Wimauma School—which was segregated at that time—and it sort of crystallized in my mind the fact that parents are truly concerned about their children regardless of what circumstances they're in. And sometimes the behavior which they project does not appear to us to be representative of concern. But the concern is there, it's just that circumstances sometimes keep the concerns from coming to the fore where we can see them. I really do believe that.

OA: That's right.

AT: In 1966 I left the Hillsborough County Public School System and came to work for the Tampa Urban League. My first assignment with the Tampa Urban League was as a coordinator of parent education and community organization for Project Enable.

OA: Okay. Did you have your master's then?

AT: Oh, yes. Back to my education.

OA: Okay.

AT: When I came to work for the Hillsborough County School Board in 19—the fall of 1954—I decided immediately that I needed to further my education to make sure that I could serve in the capacity of consultant to the teachers and principals and parents, and so I wanted to make sure to get a good grounding in those issues that I was working with. So the summer of 1955, immediately following my first year of work, I returned. I went to Atlanta University.

OA: Okay.

AT: Now, incidentally, I graduated with honors from Florida A & M University, whatever that is, some kind of cum laude. (laughs) But anyway, I had—

OA: That's beautiful.

AT: —I had about—

OA: That's really beautiful.

AT: —a 3.8 [grade point] average at Florida A & M University. So I decided to [go to] Atlanta University in Atlanta, Georgia for my master's degree. I wanted to make sure to hurry up and become fully certified as a school social worker and I also wanted to pursue a degree, so I combined certification with the pursuit of a degree. So the summer of 1955 was my first year at Atlanta University and I took courses leading toward certification, and then I majored in guidance and counseling. So in 1959 I received my master's degree in guidance and counseling from Atlanta University.

OA: Okay.

AT: And that was representative of one of the goals I had set for myself. I decided that I wanted to study further, recognizing that one never really acquires all the knowledge that one needs when dealing with a very complex subject of working with human beings and trying to help them to work out their life roles and styles of—to their best interests. So I decided I wanted to do some further study toward a doctor of education degree or a

doctor of philosophy. So I went back to Atlanta University for three additional summers after I graduated and I studied psychometric testing and further guidance and counseling, and even before I left the school system I had worked on a part-time basis as a school psychologist.

OA: Okay.

AT: And I was nearing certification [as a] school psychologist, and decided that I really would like to change the focus of my social work from the school system and its perspective to the community on its perspective, and so that's the reason that I moved. Trying to get a quote?

OA: (laughs) You know, that's—

AT: I saw you light up.

OA: That's interesting. No. No. Go ahead. That's interesting. I didn't know about the school psychologist bit.

AT: Yeah, I did some psychometric testing. In fact—you don't want to record this, but the issues related to—

pause in recording

OA: Okay, go ahead, start.

AT: His orientation was toward being able— Well, first of all, being motivated to do something with your life that's meaningful. And he had another kind of orientation, a very special kind of orientation, toward being able to communicate your ideas.

OA: Okay.

AT: He felt that that was very important. He was really keyed into words. I remember I had some vocabulary building exercises when I was very, very small.

OA: It makes a difference in the world when you've got—in your home environment.

AT: Right. And he insisted on— You know, we'd have spelling games and all kinds of little—we had little thought games. He would scrounge flip charts, you know—reading charts from the local public schools. And we would memorize and learn words and sentences, etc. And it was just sort of part of the family structure.

My father was just very keyed into education and one of the reasons was that during his day—and I might say my father was eighty-one years old when he died—he was a very old person who had lived to see the country grow and change. His real conviction was that if a black person really wanted to get out of the mire of poverty, then he just had to

climb the educational ladder. That seemed to be the most concrete kind of effort, he thought, that could be mounted to get out of poverty. And so he was very keyed into the idea of education. I think that was really one of the reasons that I chose high goals for myself very early. One of the other reasons was that I had the kind of parents who were very supportive, and who really did believe that I was somebody. And they convinced me that I was somebody.

OA: There you go.

AT: They talked openly with their friends about how smart I was. They took very special pride in the kind of report card I'd bring home and any little honors that I would achieve. And I think that made—that sort of settled for me my self-concept.

OA: There you go.

AT: And I think that's very important for children now. I try very hard to pass that on to my children so that they will feel good about themselves, feel good about their capabilities. My parents thought that there was just absolutely nothing that I couldn't do. They really did.

OA: Okay.

AT: And I believe they convinced me that obstacles just ought to be laid aside and one should pursue one's goals. And I've always believed that. And I think that that's a very important part of the family structure. It's been a part of my whole orientation. And I'm sure you can see that even with my work at the Urban League I'm very keyed into what can be done for the family in our parent and remedial education programs, what can be done for the youth in our Youth Employment Program, our Save the Youth Program—that's sort of paramount to me because I do believe that the salvation of our youth is very high on the agenda for black people.

OA: I like that. I haven't gotten that family into the interviews like the way you're doing it now.

AT: Umm hmm.

OA: Okay. We would have missed that. Okay. Any other influences?

AT: Okay, now, I might add that the matter of economics did not play an important role in my life. We were poor by standards of that day, but we were so rich in values that I'd never felt the pinch of poverty. It never occurred to me that I was poor because I had the necessities. I had the support of my parents. We shared whatever we had. And I always felt good about myself to where I just didn't—I did not recognize poverty. I knew that we lived in the circumstances that we lived in. I knew no other circumstances so it was not something that caused me to feel unkindly about my circumstances of myself.

I think maybe one of the advantages was that I did not have television or many other exposures to say to me, you know, here's the way you ought to be living. I lived the way I lived and I enjoyed the way I lived. And I felt good about the way I lived and—

OA: That's sort of like Don Stickles. Don -Stickles say he didn't know he live in a ghetto until he got to college and they told him.

AT: Sure. Sure. You know, I hadn't been exposed—I had my first taste of broccoli and cauliflower and fancy vegetables when I went to Florida A & M University. I thought that this was a fantastic experience.

OA: I know. (laughs) I know. I know. (laughs) I know.

AT: I do remember. I remember when we used to dress up, you know. And then there was— There was also sensitivity on the part of the black universities.

OA: Okay.

AT: Florida A & M—its faculty was obviously was keyed in to the fact that they had to provide some additional experiences for those young people, because they had not had certain experiences, they had not had certain exposures. And so we had the ritual of dressing up for activities. They even made that easy so you wouldn't feel poor. Everybody had to come armed with a navy blue suit—

OA: There you go.

AT: —and whatever accessories went with that navy blue suit. So when dress-up time came, you knew you could dress up. You had your navy blue suit all ready, so you put on your navy blue suit. As I recall it, it's really kind of comical, but that was part of the mechanism. And they exposed us to many, many things that we had not been aware of. And they were also very keyed in to the need to keep our self concepts propped up. Keep us feeling good about ourselves and keep us moving forward toward a specific goal and I think that was very helpful to me.

OA: And that's what's missing now, too.

AT: I think the influence of my teachers was also good. I was fortunate enough to have the kind of teachers who took a personal interest in me, who recognized my potential, who sometimes probably imagined that I had potentials that I might not have had. But they really did push me to live up to the very highest potential that I could. And I think that's important for young people today, too, to have someone who believes that they can accomplish something and help them to move toward certain goals. And I really do feel that we need more of that in our school system today.

I remember certain teachers and the very personal kinds of things that they did. I remember one of my teachers when I was in elementary school prevailed with my parents

to let me spend a weekend and we just had all kinds of great experiences, reading books, and, you know, I was—it was just a great experience. Just the one-on-one kind of discussion, you know; a prolonged discussion so she could really see what I was thinking and how I was growing and developing mentally. And it was just a great experience, it really was.

OA: That's right.

AT: And I think that's important. It really is important for children, to have role models, someone to be like or someone to relate to.

OA: And, you know, something else, too, that happened—while I was doin' this history I just kept pickin' up on it. It just kept stickin' out. Black folks did things differently and we put more into it during segregation, for us, to boost us.

AT: Yes. We did. We did. I was in dramatic plays. I participated in comedies. I participated in essays on whatever the issue was, democracy, or capitalism, whatever—but I had an opportunity to participate in debates, to give impromptu speeches, extemporaneous speeches, planned speeches—just all kinds of exposures to really let me explore my potential. And I think that's—that was just very important to me. I think it's very important for all students. So I did not get to college, you know, with a necessity for beginning to explore my potential. I went there having some pretty good feelings about my potential—

OA: Okay.

AT: —of where I could go.

OA: All right.

AT: And that's very important. Community is very important.

OA: Okay. I think you may have even answered my last question with that, too. Let's sort of shift a little bit. Let's talk a little bit about lifestyle. What'd you do to relax? Hobbies? That kind of thing.

AT: One of my favorite hobbies is sewing.

OA: Okay.

AT: I often take refuge in a Simplicity pattern. And I cut out the pattern and do all kinds of creative things in choosing the material and mixing patterns together. I make dresses for myself sometimes. I make dresses for my children. It's a very, very relaxing kind of thing.

OA: Okay.

AT: I suppose my next love is reading. I like to read books. I like to read poems. Literature. Just general reading. I really do enjoy that. And I enjoy just relaxing, fooling around with my kids. Talking with them. All three of my younger children are taking piano lessons. Listen to them play, singing along while one of them plays, dancing together sometimes, going on little outings that might not be no more significant than McDonald's.

OA: Okay.

AT: Or going out to take a picnic basket to one of the houses that my husband is building to, you know, give him moral support and hangout over there. That's generally the kind of thing I do.

OA: Okay, that sounds good.

AT: I'm sort of home and family oriented after I finish the work at the Urban League, which is very demanding, then I'm ready for real relax—

Side 1 ends; side 2 begins.

AT: . —Really, that's one of the contributions that the Urban League has made to my growth. I had traveled very little when I came to the Tampa Urban League. I had been to Atlanta and—oh, Tallahassee, of course—Atlanta. I had been to Syracuse, New York, Miami, places in Florida. Just a few places. But since I've been with the Urban League, I've traveled very widely. I've been to Portland, Oregon; to Denver, Colorado; Kansas City, Missouri; San Francisco; Los Angeles; New York.

OA: Right on. (laughs)

AT: Chicago. I've really done a lot of traveling.

OA: Right on. (laughs)

AT: From one end of the country to the other. And I have appreciated that kind of experience. In fact, this travel that is afforded by the Urban League, I think—why, I'm positive that it's much more than I could have afforded. So I'm getting to the point in my personal life, and in my professional career, where I'm going to begin planning to take my children on some of the trips that I make—

OA: That's right. It makes all the difference in the world.

AT: —because I think it will make a difference to them. I'd just like to see them exposed to other parts of the world while they're young and impressionable. So that's one of my goals for myself—

OA: Okay.

AT: —is to begin to get them to travel more.

OA: Any favorite spot? Anything really scenic stands out? Any favorite place that you really liked, whether it was the—you know, the environment or the people? Any particular place?

AT: Well, I absolutely loved the Bahamas.

OA: Okay.

AT: I've been to Port Antonio, Jamaica; to Kingston, Jamaica.

OA: Okay.

AT: And I've been to— What's that first stop down there? Nassau.

OA: Umm hmm.

AT: And I liked the leisurely kind of lifestyle there. It sort of stands out for me. I suppose, though, that one of the things that bothered me was the very different kind of structure they have. They have the very rich and then the very, very poor.

OA: Yeah, you could sense it.

AT: I would suspect that I would get down there and get involved in causes of the poor.

OA: Umm hmm.

AT: But I do like the serenity of the atmosphere.

OA: Okay.

AT: And its proximity to the water. It's the kind of place where I'd like to go and write, sometime. You know, if I could just take some time to do some creative writing to try to capture some of the experiences that I've had working as a social worker on behalf of black peoples, that's the city that I'd choose.

OA: Okay. I believe that's right. (laughs) All right. Okay.

AT: I'd like to say, also, that I consider my husband as a very accomplished person. He is a person who learned how to build homes with a very limited formal training. He worked in construction, and then when he went into the armed forces he was in the building corps and he learned blueprints and this kind of thing and sort of grew up in construction, almost as a self-taught person. And I think we have many, many people in the black

community who have that kind of ability and talent. And I'd just like to see us create further opportunities for expression of that kind of—

OA: That's right. That's right.

AT: Because we do have it. Many are very creative, and circumstances cause some not to explore their potential, and I'd like to see us continue to work toward removin' those circumstances that limit individual creativity. Because individual creativity is what makes this country go, and if we limit the creativity within a certain ethnic group, that means we limit the creative potential of our whole society.

OA: That's right.

AT: And I'd like to see that changed.

OA: Nothing's worse than the waste of human resources. Okay, one other thing an your community service. We talked about the Society for Needy Children. What are some of the contemporary things—contemporary highlights? I know you've had a lot of frustrations. What are some of the contemporary highlights that you really got some satisfaction from?

AT: Well, I choose not to publish them all.

OA: Okay. (laughs) All right. Okay.

AT: I'm especially please about the effort that the Tampa Urban League mounted, under my leadership, to try to further involve black parents in helping their children to make satisfactory adjustments within an integrated school setting. I'm especially pleased about that. And I believe we're making a difference in that arena.

I'm very pleased about the efforts the Tampa Urban League is undertaking to help to employ our youth, because we have such a disproportionately high unemployment rate among black youth. So I'm pleased with our Save the Youth, Summer Employment Program. And about the recently initiated On-the-Job Training Program that will expose young blacks to the world of work in a very meaningful way, and hopefully help to break the cycle of unemployment and poverty that we face.

OA: And you got the Leave Program with the nontraditional things going?

AT: Yes, the Leave Program focuses on non-traditional jobs for women. It's another of our prideful efforts. We are attempting to help women to further explore employment possibilities, to the end that they would not feel consigned to jobs that have a sort of feminine connotation such as secretarial work or nursing or this kind of—you know, that kind of work.

We're trying to help them to understand that whatever work is available, if they have the

inclination and the physical stamina and the qualifications, they should explore the possibility of getting into those jobs. Because for many black heads of household, the job that is non-traditional could make the difference between whether they're consigned to the welfare rolls. Or whether or not they can raise their family in dignity and independence. And I would say—I would opt to be a truck driver making five or six dollars an hour than to be a clerk/typist making minimum wage any day.

So that's the kind of thing we're trying to help women to do. Trying to help them to look at career's as electricians, plumbers—whatever, truck drivers, other machine operators. There's careers in data processing that women have not had before. So that they can begin to change the image that women have had, and hopefully as young people begin to see those whom they relate to get into different kinds of jobs, then we'll have more and more changes brought as a result.

OA: Okay. All right, last, but not least, for those people like myself who are success-oriented, making big transitions in their professional life, what kind of advice do you have for people who want to be successful, who want to make it in life and get the best out of their own potential.

AT: Well, I really do believe that people who would be oriented toward success must realize that success is a factor of effort. It's a factor of hard work. I would also say that success results from having a sense of direction about what one wants to do and results from working toward a specific goal. Recognizing that goals might change. But for each goal that we establish for ourselves, we must recognize that we've got to give sufficient output to attain that goal. I think that young people who would succeed also need to understand that the only parameters that are drawn around them are those which they draw for themselves, regardless of what color they are.

OA: That is so true.

AT: If they choose to do something that's different that does not appear to have been tried, they have to realize that there is nobody who can keep them from attempting to reach that goal, and just move forward and plan strategies and put forth the effort to reach that goal.

OA: Yeah. You know, I'm reading these sales books on success and they've got a fact thing they call intelligent ignorance. They say—you know, like the bumblebee. Nobody told the bumblebee he couldn't fly, so he flies every day. You know?

AT: Right. Right.

OA: And it's believing, you know, that you can do it.

AT: Right. You have to believe.

OA: That makes all the sense in the world, because I know I did and I know there's got to

be a thousand other young people doin' it. You sit down and you say, Well, it's racism. You know: Well, the unemployment rate is this, there ain't nowhere for me to go. This world don't want me. You draw it around yourself. When you start that doubt, it's just a failure pattern there.

AT: Right.

OA: You know.

AT: Well, I've always known—

OA: You have to believe that you can get out of it.

AT: I've always known that I wanted to have success, and I wanted to have all the trappings of success—

OA: There you go.

AT: —such as a good home. You know, a very comfortable home, a family life that was happy, and a economic level that would allow me to do the things that I wanted to do. I've always had that kind of goal, so I just worked toward it.

OA: And that's something all of us deserve.

AT: It is. It is.

OA: Yeah. Do you know, part of my job pitch, I go to this thing about I'm thorough, conscientious, I bring a conscientious attitude in my work. I don't expect any free lunches in life. And they eat it up every time I go on an interview and say that. You know?

AT: That's right.

OA: Because that's what people want to hear. They want to hear you're willing to work and go at it. You know.

AT: Right. And that you don't expect anybody—

OA: And pay you for your performance.

AT: —to hand you anything on a silver platter.

OA: Umm hmm.

AT: You work for it. And one must also understand that the goals that one sets are not permanent goals, they are temporary benchmarks to reach—

OA: Yeah. Because that's (inaudible) to do.

AT: —so that as you reach one goal then you begin to set others to work for. At my age, I still have some goals.

OA: Okay. Yeah, that's one of the things I've been asking people. Like, what is one of those things if you just had an ideal time where you had the time, you were free to do it, what was one of those things that you would do?

AT: I'd write.

OA: Write. Okay.

AT: I think I can produce several books.

OA: I know you can.

AT: I spend my time writing. And I do intend to do that. That's one of my goals, to spend some time writing. I believe that the experiences I have had, if they were captured in writing, could mean something to others, young people—

OA: That's right.

AT: —to young people as they grow. I also believe that the kinds of experiences I've had working in social services agency settings and in the public school system could be meaningful if they were written and shared with others, I really do.

OA: Why not ever— Why didn't you ever get hoodwinked by the corporate structure? You know, for the family and that whole bit?

AT: No.

OA: Everybody I talked with, they were either sorry that they did it, or when they got into the corporate structure they were very happy that they did it. Some were ambivalent about it.

AT: My appeal has been the elevation of the black family and the black community. I feel that one has to be in an atmosphere of relative freedom in order to do that. I'm not inclined to want to climb over several layers of bureaucracy to get to the decision-making level. I'm inclined to want to make the decision.

OA: Yeah, okay. (laughs) No problem with that. There ain't nothin' wrong with that.

AT: I doubt that I could make decisions in a corporate structure unless I owned it. If I went into a corporate structure, it would be one in which I am at a very high decision-making level, no lower than a vice president.

OA: Okay.

AT: And, because no one has offered me that possibility— And I really have not sought it, because I have some questions about whether or not I am inclined towards that kind of mechanism. That just hasn't—I haven't been involved in it.

OA: Okay. Well, that's it. Is there anything else that you'd like to add?

AT: No.

OA: All right. I want to thank you.

AT: You can offer me a presidency.

OA: (laughs)

AT: Vice presidency?

OA: That was nice.

end of interview