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Otis R. Anthony African Americans in Florida Oral History Project  
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**Debra Y. Anthony:** Where are your questions? You got them written down, or what?

**Naomi R. Williams:** Yeah, I have a few of them written down, but really I don't want to ask you direct questions, one after the other.

DA: Yeah, okay.

NW: I just have a little outline, so I don't have any specific questions written down, just an outline of the kind of things I want to talk about.

DA: All right. Okay, let's go.

NW: First, I want to say that we are here in your house, and you're Debra Anthony, and this is Naomi Williams and I do have your permission to record the interview.

DA: Yes.

NW: Okay, all right. Good. So, I really want to start at the beginning, if you can. Tell me about where you were born, what year.

DA: Okay, I was born in 1960, January 4, 1960, at, uh—stop it now. My mom had the oldest ones—

*Pause in recording*

NW: Okay. Now, where were you born?

DA: I was born January 4, 1960 at the Clara Frye Hospital in Tampa.

NW: Was that an all black hospital at that time?

DA: Yes, at that time, it was all black.

NW: Okay. Tell me a little bit about your family, about your parents and your siblings, if you had any.

DA: Well, my parents—my dad was born in Columbus, Georgia, and my mom was born here. And they met so long ago (laughs) and they were married—I can't tell you the date they were married. But my mom, they had four kids: two older ones in 1954 and 1955, and then she had two others, my brother and myself, in 1960 and 1961.

NW: Okay. Do you remember where they were living when you were born?

DA: We were living in Central Park.

NW: Really? Already, when you were born?

DA: When I was born we were already at Central Park. They moved into Central Park—I can't remember the date, but it was in the early fifties [1950s], like right after Central Park was built. They moved in, like—I want to say fifty-three [1953], like a year before Sharon was born.

NW: I think Central Park Village was fifty-four [1954].

DA: Fifty-four [1954]? Okay. Well, then, I want to say fifty-five [1955]. Yeah, I think fifty-five [1955] she moved in, 'cause it was a year or so after the projects had been built.

NW: They were new residents?

DA: They were new residents. Uh-huh.

NW: How long did y'all stay there in Central Park?

DA: Until 1978—seventy-nine [1979], seventy-nine [1979].

NW: Okay.

DA: In seventy-nine [1979], 'cause I was nineteen when we moved.

NW: So you had finished school already when you moved.

DA: I finished school, I finished high school. I finished school and had little jobs working and stuff, so I had already finished school, high school, then.

NW: What did your parents do, what kind of work did they do?

DA: My dad was self-employed. He was an entrepreneur, and he was into scrapping iron. And my mom, she was a short order cook, downtown. She worked downtown at the Flagship Bank, which was Marine Bank back then, and then it turned to Flagship and now it's TPD, Tampa Police Department.

NW: Oh, okay.

DA: (laughs) I caught you off guard. (laughs) Caught you off guard, didn't I? This is funny. Okay. You going to beep out some of this stuff? (both laugh)

NW: No, it's all okay. I'll let you see it when I'm finished. I'll type it up and it's going to say "laughter."

DA: (laughs) All right, Naomi.

NW: All right, so you spent all your childhood, then, in Central Park Village?

DA: All my childhood days were in Central Park Village. Right, exactly.

NW: Where did you go to school? Which schools did you go to?

DA: The first school was Meacham, Meacham Elementary School. That was right there in the projects there, from Head Start on to sixth grade. And after then it was Booker T. Washington, when I got to seventh grade; it was Booker T. Washington.

NW: And where is that located?

DA: Booker T. is on Estelle [Street], Estelle and—it's Estelle off of Nebraska [Avenue], Nebraska and Estelle.

NW: So that was still pretty close to the neighborhood?

DA: It was still pretty close. We still walked there. We still walked to school, 'cause it was still in the neighborhood.

NW: Did you—oh, high school. Where'd you go to high school?

DA: High school—well, junior high was Monroe, and from Monroe to Robinson High School. That's where I graduated from, so that was the high school. Tenth through twelfth was Robinson.

NW: Okay. And you said you were bused over there?

DA: Bused at Monroe, in eighth grade.

NW: Okay. Eighth grade.

DA: Yes, when it started. Busing actually started in seventy-one [1971], but we had a chance that us that were over there in Central Park, we had a chance to go to Booker T., 'cause the others came and were bused to Booker T. but we went still in the neighborhood. And then, like, in seventy-two [1972], then we had to start riding the school bus. But actually—

NW: Booker T. was the seventh grade?

DA: Seventh grade center. It turned to seventh grade center. At the beginning it was seventh, eighth, and ninth. It was a junior high school from all before, long time. But seventy-one [1971], it became seventh grade center. And that's when they started bussing.

NW: But you were still able to go there?

DA: And I was still able to go to Booker T., right.

NW: And they bused the kids from the suburbs down, too?

DA: They had—they were bused in over to Booker T.

NW: Do you remember anything about that, how it was having the new students in the school?

DA: Yes, I remember. Yes, I do remember. It was quite an experience, because some of the kids didn't want to be there. When I say some of the kids—(whispers) I don't know whether I should say they were white. But it was the majority of the white kids that were there, that were bused in there, did not want to be there because their minds had been tainted already, before even getting there. So they already had their minds made up that they didn't want to be around us or be bothered with us at all.

And the most disturbing part about that is that they were already so much—so far advanced than we were, 'cause I can remember like in math, my math teacher, Ms. Anderson—never forget—she would be trying to explain problems, and you know, going through the lesson and breaking down the problems. And they will politely raise their hands and she asked, “Yes?” And they would say, “We already know that. We studied that, Ms. Anderson.” And she would politely tell them to just be quiet and just listen through if you already know, 'cause the others don't and they have to learn it. So, that was the problem.

NW: Yeah. And what was the ratio, do you remember? The neighborhood children were mostly black? Was it an all black school before?

DA: It was an all black school before, and it was predominantly black.

NW: And did it stay that way after they started busing in the white children?

DA: No, it was always—then, now it was mixed. It was always a mixture group, then, from that point on.

NW: But in your classrooms?

DA: The classrooms were mixed.

NW: It was completely mixed?

DA: Yeah, it was mixed. 'Cause there was a lot of whites bused in, and when I say it was predominately whites bused in, not as many blacks. 'Cause a lot of blacks were right around in the area and we walked to school there, so it was predominantly white.

NW: Did tensions die down, say toward the end of the school year there? Did you make any white friends or did you start hanging out with any of the white people?

DA: No, not at that point, not at Booker T. And it even—it kept going on when we got over at Monroe, in eighth grade. And I think it got even stronger in the junior high school, 'cause that's when they had the little school riots at the end of the school. When school would—

NW: Really? That was the eighth and ninth grade?

DA: Eighth and ninth grade, when schools let out. And it was like it was a problem there, because some of the kids were afraid to walk home—and some of the kids, too—it was not only just on the black kids' part, by being disruptive and misbehaving. The whites would make that because they did not want us around. They did not want to be—they didn't want to interact with us, they didn't want to go to school with us, they didn't want to mix with us. So we had to—a lot of the times, that would bring on the friction and the tension, 'cause that's when the black kids, they would fight. And that was their way of letting out steam that way, by fighting, you know, wanting to fight them, and jumping on them because they were rude, just flat out rude. Very rude.

So it was a tough time. Like I said, my group opened the doors, and we paved the way for the integration and the busing, because that's when it started. And we had to, like, make it, you know, pave the way for the other kids after us to learn how to adapt. And by the time that—I guess like the eighties [1980s], it changed a little. I think they had calmed down and they knew that this was how this was going to be and we had to—both races had to accept, hey, this is the way it is. This is what we're going to do here.

NW: Yeah. So even all through high school there was still tension?

DA: Yeah, there was still tension. Now, I would say that when I got at Robinson High School, it was kind of calming down a little bit. By the time in seventy-five [1975]—seventy-five [1975], seventy-six [1976], it was changing a little. That's why I say toward the eighties [1980s] I think it had really smoothed out. But by seventy-five [1975] and seventy-six [1976], I think it was kind of calming a little bit. 'Cause seventy-one [1971]—those first few years, seventy one [1971], seventy-two [1972], seventy-three [1973], I'm talking four or five years it was still kind of a little rough. But by seventy-five [1975], seventy-six [1976], we were able to adapt. We started adapting to one another. So that was a big deal, too.

NW: Now, when you were a kid there in Central Park Village, did you have a lot of friends there in the projects?

DA: Yes, I had my one girlfriend that I am still friends with her right now, I still see her. So I had one that I met right away, 'cause we were like five years old playing. So, we knew one another from five years old on up to now. So then, I had others that would come to us and play in the neighborhood, come and play our games and stuff on the

porch and stuff, sitting on the porch and we would play games and stuff. Of course we had a lot of games and stuff, and we would, like, share with the kids in the neighborhood and they'd all come and we'd play. My best friend was Carolyn; that was the one that we played at five years old on up.

NW: Y'all played outside a lot?

DA: We played outside. We were right there on the porch most of the time playing ball, playing games, playing jack stones and all, everything. (inaudible), you remember (inaudible)? You don't remember that.

NW: No, I don't know that one.

DA: We did all that kind of stuff. Hopscotch, you know, we played all that. Okay, so we just—basically, we had a nice little—it was a nice little community growing up. And the kids weren't—you had some kids that were kind of misbehaving and that was a little naughty. But then, for the most part, everybody kind of got along. The community was pretty nice and they just kind of went on about their business. If you didn't want to really be a part or be bothered with them, I mean, they went their way and you went yours. It was not like a problem. Everybody was very respectful.

NW: Were there different community centers back then that you could go to, like playgrounds, designated playgrounds?

DA: We had a playground right there. Right there was the playground, right there in the projects there, so we didn't have to go out of the community to go anywhere. We didn't have recreation centers that we went to, to go to play. We played right there, right there at the playground. And then we had Meacham, where we would go to Meacham School and we would play softball.

NW: So you were able to get into—?

DA: Yeah, we were able to get into and play on the school grounds. We could play softball and we could play kickball. We played that a lot when we'd go over there. But that was basically it for our, like, recreation center or whatever, because that was our center right there.

NW: Did you attend any churches when you were living there?

DA: Greater Bethel [Baptist Church] was one. It was right outside of the projects, too. It was right there across from the Morgan Street Jail, because Morgan Street Jail sat right there on Morgan and Scott Street, and the church sat behind it. So we would go over there 'cause my family—my dad, his side of the family, they were members of that church, which they still are. So we would go over there to that church.

NW: Okay. All right. And, um, probably when you were younger you already said there wasn't too much crime or violence or anything, you felt safe enough to play outside?

DA: Yeah, it was really nice. I mean, as far as, like—you know how the project has a name? They give projects names. All the time if you lived in the projects, you're labeled, you're labeled. It wasn't that way until we were bused to the schools, and then they were like, "Oh, they come from the 'hood," so automatically they're bad because they live in the projects. So they had—they stereotyped the projects: everybody in the projects were all bad. And of course that wasn't so, 'cause you have all good and bad no matter what. But it wasn't like that. It was a safe environment. You could, like, leave your doors open and stuff at night back then, in those days. The times were different, too. It was not like the way it is now; you're not safe anywhere in your own home now. But it wasn't like that back in those days, in the sixties [1960s], coming up.

NW: Now, were you in a house or, like, an apartment building?

DA: It was an apartment, apartment building. Central Park were all apartments. It was like our house, it was like our condo. (laughs) It was our townhome, 'cause we had upstairs. (laughs) So that was our townhome. (laughs)

NW: Did you go visit other people who weren't living in the projects?

DA: Yes, I did. I would go to some of the houses that were right, like, on Third Avenue—Third Street, was it Third Street? I think it's Third Street. Right behind the projects, like the projects right on Scott Street were those wood frame houses all back up in there. I had a couple of buddies that we went to school together, and I would go over there and visit over there with them sometimes after school. And a lot of the times, most of the kids wanted to come to the projects, 'cause we had more fun. (laughs) Okay, Naomi.

NW: So you had two reputations. (both laugh) You had the bad reputation at school.

DA: That's right. And we had the good reputation.

NW: In the neighborhood.

DA: That's right. Everybody wanted to come to our neighborhood and play.

NW: And how was your apartment back then? I know it's been a while, but do you remember the conditions of the building and everything?

DA: Oh, yes. The conditions were excellent. They're nothing like they looked later on. And you know how times and things change, people change, and you have a younger set of people, another breed of people. It was totally different, because you mostly had older parents back then; it was not younger kids with kids. It was older parents with kids, and they kept the projects—you know, they kept their apartments looking nice. There were some that weren't—

NW: The families?

DA: The families. And they had the housing, they had the guys—the groundskeepers, the landscapers, they would come around and they mowed the grass, and they kept the outside looking really nice. And you could even call them; they were maintenance people, just like you have in any other apartments. They came around and they were groundskeepers, and they came inside and they fixed whatever you needed fixed, and you call them and put a work order in and they come in and fixed whatever was broken. So it was just like in any other apartments. And that went on for a very long time until—as time went on, like I said, things change, and I don't think they were even doing that. Whatever it was broke down; it was just broke down, and that's how they just gradually just went down. But they weren't like that at the beginning, no.

NW: You said you moved in seventy-eight [1978], seventy-nine [1979]?

DA: Seventy-nine [1979].

NW: Seventy-nine [1979].

DA: Seventy-nine [1979].

NW: Who made the decision to move, and why did you move?

DA: It was my mother's decision. She was ready to move. We moved from 1024 Burden Court over on to 1108 Harrison Street.

NW: That was still in Central Park?

DA: And that was still in Central Park. And that's where I spent my high school time, on Harrison Street. And that's when I was bused to—well, still you were going to be—it doesn't matter where you were in the projects, you still were going to be bused to that same particular school, wherever. But that's when—yeah, we had the second apartment. We had two apartments there, 1024 and 1108 Harrison Street; 1024 Burden Court, and 1108 Harrison. So we moved there, and then in seventy-nine [1979] my mom was ready to move. She was, like, really getting tired of just still being in housing and she wanted to like step up and step out. And my dad and her had already separated, and she was ready to make that move.

NW: You remember when they separated?

DA: Yeah, I remember exactly when they separated. They separated in, like, seventy [1970]—matter of fact, I think it was seventy-two [1972], because I started Booker T.—I had gone to Booker T. in seventy-one [1971], so I would say around seventy-two [1972].

NW: So do you know that when they first—I don't know how to word the question, but do you know how they felt when they first moved into the projects? Were they looking at this a stepping stone to stay for a few years and then move on to somewhere else, or did they move there—?

DA: That was the idea.

NW: That was the idea.

DA: That was the idea. That was the idea. That was the plan, to move in there, and we'll

stay here for a little bit until we get on our feet and we'll move on. But that didn't happen, so we stayed on.

NW: And then she was ready to move there in seventy-nine [1979]?

DA: Seventy-nine [1979].

NW: Where did y'all move to from there?

DA: Presbyterian Village. That's when we moved in West Tampa; they were apartments in West Tampa, apartments right there on Boulevard and Main Street.

NW: And did you still associate—I know you said you had your one best friend, but did you still associate with other people who were still friends in Central Park Village?

DA: Oh yeah, I had other friends. I had other buddies. In high school, when we left from Burden Court and went on Harrison Street, then I had other buddies that I had met, which I had already known because we were already going to Meacham. So we were all at the school there, so everybody knew one another. Basically, you knew one another. So when I moved in another area there, then I collected more associates. So, you know, there were a little group of us; we had our little group, our little posse. (laughs)

NW: Do you know anybody who was still living there up until last year, up until July when they started relocating people?

DA: Yes, I do. Berndoris, my friend Berndoris. She was still there. Now I don't know where she went; I think she is with her sister. And that's what I am trying to find out, where she is now, 'cause I think she's with her sister. She left and moved with her sister. But she was the only one still there.

NW: Only one of your friends who was still there?

DA: Only one of my friends still there, yep. Yeah, she just stayed on and stayed on, and she had her kids and stuff and so she stayed on there.

NW: Um, let me pause for a minute here. I want to ask you a couple more questions.

*Pause in recording*

NW: Okay Debbie, I want to ask you another question, too. You said that some people had the attitude that if you were from the projects you were bad, or you had a bad reputation just because you were living in the projects. Do you remember anything about city officials or the police department approaching anybody that you knew or anybody in the neighborhood, because they are from the projects, in a bad light?

DA: No. I don't remember that. I really can't say that I remember anything like that happening, unless it was—

NW: You didn't have any bad experiences with anything like that?

DA: No, never, never. And we had Central Avenue, where we used to go up on Central and go to the stores and go to the little dime stores and buy little candies and cookies and little goodies and stuff like that. And the police were around there all the time. They stayed around there all the time. But a bunch of—like I said, it was stuff going on there where you had your guys that were into all kind of different things up there. And they gambled up there and they did things, but that was all kept up on Central. It wasn't in the projects, like. And you had guys that would—you know, you had your drug addicts that would sometimes walk the alleys and walk the streets there. But basically they tried to keep that down, and they would be coming from the Central area because a lot of stuff was up on Central and that's where they were going to do whatever. And they kept that away from—they kept it out of the projects. And that's what changed a lot of the projects. When Central was torn down, then it all came into the projects. They brought it all inside.

NW: When they tore down all those businesses on Central?

DA: When they tore down all the businesses on Central, then all the other—all the stuff, all the bad stuff—it was just like a disease. It all went right smack in the 'hood there, and around the kids and stuff. So they were exposed to a whole lot more than we were, 'cause it was kept from us coming up.

NW: You remember when that was, when they tore down most of those buildings there?

DA: I'm trying to remember when they tore Central down. It was in the seventies [1970s]. In seventy-one [1971] I know it still was up, because I was going to Booker T. And I want to say by seventy-five [1975] it was all gone, 'cause that's when I started high school at Robinson and it was gone then. So it may have been seventy-three [1973] or seventy-four [1974] when Central—when they tore everything down on Central. And then they started bringing all the bad—all the stuff, it just kind of trickled on into the projects. And that's when you got all the—you know, ad you had your drugs and stuff and all, and all that came right into the projects. Then now you're getting residents to participate in all of that, and that's what caused a lot of the change over there. And that's where I saw it going down.

NW: That's a good point. I hadn't thought about that.

DA: That's when it started going, when they brought it in the 'hood and you got Ms. Mabel over here holding packages for somebody and you got this one, 'cause they're paying them to help them out, paying them to look out for their stuff, and everybody is trying to make a dollar here and a dollar there. So now that's when all the corruption—now there's the corruption. That's it. And from that point on it, then it was history, 'cause it never stopped. How is it going to stop? That is where it begin, right there, and then now you got younger ones coming in and they're coming in with it, and that just turned it. And that's exactly how it happened, when Central was torn down.

NW: Now, do you remember any instances of violence that resulted in riots in the neighborhood?

DA: Oh, yes, I do. When they shot—like I'm saying, I'm thinking it was Wade Collins was one. He was shot down at the New Lounge on Nebraska. He was shot and killed by a police officer. And another, Darby King, was shot and killed by a police officer. And both, they had big riots on Central. And they would go on Central: where we had to go to store at the next day and stuff, they would go and burn down those businesses and stuff on Central. Which—I never saw the sense in that, because they were burning down our businesses, 'cause there was a lot of black owned on Central at that time. And they were burning down our businesses, and I guess they were just so upset and didn't know what else to do. They wouldn't go downtown and burn downtown. They burned on Central, places that we needed to go to, go to the stores, 'cause we never really had to go outside too much of the vicinity there to go to the store, unless we were going to the big supermarket. And my dad would go out and go get groceries. But we had little corner stores all up and down Central. So we had everything there.

NW: So did y'all have a vehicle?

DA: Yes, my dad had a vehicle. My dad had a Cadillac. He was the Cadillac man, all Cadillacs, Coupe de Villes. (laughs)

NW: A big long car.

DA: Yes, yes, yes. He always had him a Coupe de Ville. (laughs) Oh, I'll never forget that. Yeah, we had fun there, I mean. You know, it's like, everybody respected you and stuff and they knew, like my mom didn't—we didn't roam the neighborhood. We stayed right there where she watched out for us and stuff, so we stayed right close. And at a certain time we were in before dark, and we couldn't stay out and play with some of the other kids, which some of the other kids would kind of pick on us and tease us because we couldn't hang out all night. But that was just Mom's rules and Dad's rules and those were the rules, and we abided by those rules. And some of the kids, they were able to do whatever because sometimes some of their parents weren't home. And then you know how it is, some families don't really look after their kids that much, and some of them don't really, like, pay that close enough attention to their kids, whereas you have another family that really try to see what's going on with the kids and care more about them and that was the deal.

And like I say, you had some that roamed around the neighborhood and some didn't, and we were ones that didn't, but we still didn't—they picked at us somewhat. But it was still not—we still got respect, 'cause we didn't all have to do what one another did to get along in there. Everybody did their own thing and you looked at everybody in that way. And we can come together right now and we see each other and we could have been having problems. We could have had, like, little—you know, like, little petty little stuff from back in the day, where there was some you may not like so much. But let us come together when someone passes, we all get together. We're having a family reunion. It's just like a reunion again. We don't ever forget one another. It's a close kind of bond over there with all of us and we can all get together.

And we just experienced that when we had—Carmen Barton, he passed, like, some four or five months ago. And we had a reunion right there in front of the church at Mount Moriah [Baptist Church]. It was a bunch of us there—and I mean, it was a lot of people there from his age group, 'cause he was like in his late fifties, and my age group, and younger than me. We all were there. So it just—we all come together, like, and some of them you haven't seen for years, but we come together like it was yesterday. And that's the bond we all had, because that's the respect everybody had for one another. No matter how this family was, or this family was, or that family was, everybody respected one another at that time.

NW: So have you been following the story about all the different times that they've tried to do something new—

DA: Do something with Central Park?

NW: —with Central Park Village? This latest thing now, where they moved everybody out and they've torn it down now, do you have any thoughts about that? Have you been thinking about it at all personally?

DA: Yes, I have. I thought about it and I feel sad about it 'cause it's kind of emotional, kind of, because, you know, it's a place where you grew up and you have a lot of memories there and stuff. Now you see all your memories have been torn down. It's a sad kind of thing. That's why I can't hardly bring myself to go over there to really see it really in the daytime, because I kind of rode past there last weekend and it was night. And you could see clean through there, like it was very clean, but we could see a little bit. But I still haven't gone over there in the daytime to just see it, because it's really kind of sad. Because I'm just wondering now, what are the plans, what are they going to do with it? Like they've done with others, they've torn down and brought some of the residents back.

But my thing is I don't know, because I know they were talking about not wanting that project there long, long years ago, because it was close to downtown. And they never really wanted it there and they built it there, but I think they figured it out that they made a mistake by building it so close to downtown. So, I don't know what they're planning to do with that. But, you know—

NW: Do you think it will be hard for people who want to move back in there?

DA: I think it's going to be hard for people low—I'm hearing stories that they're going to have like a Section 8 part and then they're going to have a part for people based on their income. So, I'm not really understanding how they are going to do that. I'm not really understanding that, because if you're going to have Section 8, I don't see you wanting to have Section 8 mixed up with the people that are low income that are working. And you are basing it on their income; how are you putting Section 8 in there too? I mean, how are you mixing that? Because most of the time they don't bring back some low income—I mean people that are Section 8, that are not working at all. You need to have a job. And a lot of them that were in there before did not work. So, I don't know how they plan to mix it up now.

But I think it's a sad thing, 'cause I don't know where everybody went. I still knew people over there and everybody, like, has all scattered, all around. Just like I don't know where my friend is that I've been friends with since fourth grade. It's kind of sad, 'cause a lot of them, that's all they—that's all they knew. That's all they had, and they weren't—that was their little community right inside of there. They didn't know much outside of there. That was it. So I feel like it's a little sad, it's a little emotional, because that's where you grew up. I mean, that's where your memories are. That's where you learn from. That's how you learn to become who we are now today. That's how we learn from growing up.

And I feel like I learned a lot from growing up in the projects. See, the projects are not all bad, like people say. The projects are where you going to just do or die. You're going to learn, and you're going to learn to defend yourself and you're going to learn how to stand your own ground. And the projects are the number one place to learn that. So, you know, you either come out there—you can come out of there still standing for somebody and being somebody and making something of yourself; or you come out of there not, because if you don't want nothing or want to do nothing, you ain't going to have nothing and you won't do nothing.

But you learn there, I think, faster, 'cause you learn—'cause so much comes, like, later on in life, a lot you were exposed to. Like I said, when they brought the drugs in the neighborhood. A lot we were exposed to, so you learned to say no or you learned to adapt to that situation. You learned how to, like, you know, just stand your ground and become strong. It's just like when you hang out in the streets and you learn the streets. You learn how to adjust and you learn a lot from it. So it makes you a better person or makes you a stronger person, or it could it make you the weakest person. Whichever way, it's going to make you something. It's going to make something out of you, you know, whether it's good or bad, so you're going to have to—it's up to you to be the one to take, to know which path you want to go and where you want to go with that.

And a lot of us have graduated from there. Lot of us graduated from there, and there were a lot that didn't, that failed. And I really feel good when I see my old homies that are still doing good and have good jobs. And some moved away, some moved away and got out of there early, and some that stayed on, like myself. We still all working and we still all doing good and we still holding our ground, you know, standing our ground, because we learned. That was enough to learn. That was a lot to learn and see, because we hung around in there. We partied, you know, we partied at our place. The New Lounge was the neighborhood—that was the neighborhood bar there where we went and hung out at. So that made you learn something there. And if you didn't learn from there, I don't know. 'Cause it taught you a lot of stuff, just like street life. I mean, it's street—it's street. It can be—like I said, it wasn't a bad place. I'm not saying it's like we were right on the street, living like it was some street. But some parts of it—it was a lot of

that.

And you had parents that were still trying to guide their kids and make them go the right way. And see, I come from a family that—my parents instilled in us the right thing to do and the right way to go. And you have to take it from there once you get a certain age, you know, you're going to go on wherever you're going, but you won't ever forget what you were taught and what was instilled in you. No matter whether this family over here was doing this or this family doing that, you remember what you were taught. And so you took that and you had that to guide you, 'cause it was a lot of influence, a lot of influence. It was a lot of learning, too, and I feel like I got a degree in that. You know? A lot of us, we talk about that, we got a degree in that mess. Because it was a lot stuff that later on—like it was a lot of B.S., you know.

NW: Is there—you said a lot just now.

DA: I said a lot, didn't I? (laughs)

NW: Is there anything else that you think is important to know about Central Park Village that you don't think is known right now in the greater Tampa community, or did you just sum it up really good right there?

DA: Well, I may have summed it up a little. I don't know. I hope that it's something that people might want to listen to or might want to recognize that, because it's like—a lot of kids there were—I don't know. Like at this point now how it was going, it wasn't the same as when I came along. And see, we had good and bad, and it changed, too; it went down. It went down a lot. So we had good and bad that kind of—we had the good to show us the right way, we had good people, and we had bad people that you saw the bad. Like I said, it all depends on how you were raised too, where you knew which way to go. So we had a lot to—we learned a lot.

And there are a lot of good people come from the 'hood. You have a lot of talent comes from the 'hood. You have a lot of strong black men and women that comes from the 'hood. You see them every day now. You see them on TV. You see them come from other 'hoods in other parts of the country here. You have—what about Motown? Half of Motown, most of them came from the 'hood. You have a lot—look at the talent in Motown. You see what I mean? Diana Ross and the Supremes and all of them, Marvin Gaye, all them grew up in the 'hood. They all were from the 'hood. So you have a lot of talent that's there. It's just that sometimes—they got lucky breaks, and some kids didn't get and don't get a lucky break. They get out from there that have talent—and they can't get away. They have to get recognized by someone and start from somewhere. So they

can't get that lucky break, because—I mean, they are there because their parents are low income. What else you going to do? But it's not the worst place in the world to raise a kid.

Nowadays things have changed, because the world has changed. It's not because "Oh, it's so bad, because it's just so bad." It's so bad because the world's so bad. And everything's changed. So what do you expect? And then you have a lot of younger girls now, they're having babies. So that makes a change, too, when the younger ones come and they are having kids and it is going on like that. And you didn't have as much of that when I was growing up in there; you had older parents. So, that made a difference.

NW: Well, okay. Well, thank you very much. I appreciate you doing this.

DA: Okay. You're welcome.

*End of interview*