Grays Ferry Oral Histories

Interviewee: Charles Reeves (CR)
Interviewer: Maggie McNulty (MM)
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Transcribed by: Maggie McNulty

MM: This is Maggie McNulty. I'm a student and PPEH Penn Program in Environmental Humanities. And I'm speaking with Mr. Charles Reeves. Mr. Reeves, if you can say your name and then spell it, that'd be great.

CR: My name is Charles Reeves and its CHARLES REEVES JR.

MM: Great. Thank you so much for talking to me today, Mr. Reeves. So I'd like to start by asking how long you've lived in Philadelphia.

CR: 61 years. I've lived in Philadelphia for 61 years.

MM: And where in the city have you lived?

CR: South Philadelphia.

MM: How has South Philadelphia changed since you've lived there or in the time that you've lived there?

CR: South Philadelphia changed like three different times in my lifetime. I remember being young and it was just fun and free and everybody stuck together and everybody borrowed stuff. And I remember going through the drug ages when crack took over the community, I remember women on drugs and kids having to take care of themselves. And then lastly, I remember the violence that comes now with teenagers how they're killing each other. So I would say as a whole I've been through three different lifetimes, three different experiences.

MM: What do you want people to know about your neighborhood?

CR: I love it. First of all, I love the neighborhood. I've lived here, out of 61 years I think I've been here for 58 of them. I left for a couple years to go to a special college, but that's a different subject. But I love my neighborhood. I love my neighbors. My father taught me to appreciate the community. Yeah, I grew up here. I think it was nothing better. I remember a time I think South Philly was the best part of Philadelphia ever. And I still believe it. I just love South Philly.

MM: Are you involved in any community organizations, if so, what are they and how long have you been involved?

CR: Well, my father was a community organizer in the 70's and 80's, and the early 90's. So I've kind of learned from a father, but I kind of tried to fight it. I didn't want to do it. But the last five years, I have opened up my own organizations. And I'm the president of the Residential Committee, which is a nonprofit organization. Right, and we try to bring resources to the community. And I'm also president of Tasker Morris Neighborhood Association, which is the RCO which keep us up with new developments in our community, trying to make sure we save some of the originality. So I'm also the SAC president and the president of the school SAC, the School Advisory Council. I have a couple of different hats, but it's all for community development.

MM: Can you speak a little more about your father being as active in the community as he was and the impact that's had on you?

CR: My father in the 70's, when we was growing up was a lot of racial situations in Philadelphia. And my father was a strong black man who didn't feel like we was being treated equally in Philadelphia and Mayor Rizzo was around. I think Greene was around. He fought to make sure that we as a community was getting our equal rights. He even sued Washington for certain things. So he also wanted to make sure that we took care of our communities, and we develop our own neighborhoods. So I've kind of watched him all my life, kind of young, I didn't understand the whole situation. But as I got older I understood what he was trying to do, but he definitely made a mark in my life. Because I've seen him fight so much. I seen him get beat up by police. I see him do a lot of things to improve our community, they kind of stay with me. I'm kind of proud of that.

MM: That's great. So this is the 50th anniversary of the first Earth Day which was a really big movement in Philadelphia and elsewhere. I was just curious since your father was very active during that time if he had any involvement in environmental issues growing up or in the 70's?

CR: Back then we was too busy fighting for our rights period. We was fighting for civil rights wasn't thinking about…we was fighting to be able to catch the bus and be able to walk in the park, we couldn't even play in the park right on 33rd Street. So we was fighting for so many other things Earth Day was not one of them. But you know me, it was education of our kids. We had so many different fights. I mean, he might have been, but I don't remember that being one of my memories of him. I remember he more fought for equal rights, civil rights.

MM: What are some important places and/or memories that you have of growing up here?

CR: I remember growing up in the projects. I remember going to Audenreid, when it used to be a junior high school. So I remember that more so because you start turning to a teenager, you start meeting different people and the girls. So that was a part of my life. And I remember growing up in the projects because the projects was like its own little city. So everything was in the projects. You learnt a lot of different ways in the projects. I see a lot of different people and different lifestyles so as I as I think about what sticks in me most is growing up in the projects, they just evolved.

MM: What do you think there is not enough of in South Philadelphia and what do you think there's too much of here?

CR: I think a South Philadelphia loss is moral, caring, it used to be more caring, we used to be more caring for each other. We used to have more respect for each other, right? I think we must have lost the respect and we got what we got now. We got what we got now. We have to go back to those days, I think we lost the respect. Yes, that's the thing we lost the most, respect. We don't respect our parents, we don't even respect our teachers. Maybe the people wasn't teaching, I don't know, I don't know what to all the reasons why, but I think respect is the big thing that's missing. And what'd you say, for the future?

MM: What is there too much of?

CR: Development. I think my neighborhood is gone. I think development just jumped on us and removed us from our environment, out priced us and I think it's too fast, and I think we lost everything. So I think if there's anything there's too much of its development.

MM: And what are some of your early memories that include the refinery?

CR: The refinery, to me it's funny because when I remember the refinery, I remember that place where I used to go across the railroad tracks to do stuff. Walk down there, ride my bike, going across this bridge that led right to the refinery space with my girlfriend and walking. So the refinery to me was never a bad place. It was an isolated place. So when I wanted to get away from the projects, or get away from, or me and my friends wanted to go on some missions, we would ride bikes down there, so it was just like

another escape route. We can leave the projects for a while. So we never thought about it as dying. Nobody never told us that was dying.

MM: What are some of your early memories that include the Schuylkill River?

CR: I was kind of scared. I remember being younger, my friends used to always want to go down there, right, and I ain't go down there because I don't play with water, like I was always scared, they used to call me all kinds of names like scaredy-cat, and you don't want to go. I remember my friend jumping off the river. I remember he killed himself. But mostly I remember that I wasn't too excited about that water. First of all, was no barriers so you could just walk there like a beach, and then I didn't trust my friends cuz they play too much so I really was the guy who stood there and watched ya'll. I didn't really mess with the water. They went fishing there, I had friends who went fishing there, that jumped in the water, they did a lot of things. My boys, their friends that I call my friends but not me. I ain't never trust that water. Then when my friend jumped off the bridge, it really became like a burial site, and there were only like, I don't even like to talk about it too much.

MM: We can move on from that. How is the climate and/or the weather changed in your lifetime, if you think that it has changed?

CR: We had good snowy winters. I remember growing up young when we had snowy winters and they took you all the way until late February, early March and used to run the house, get your little boots. I remember summertime being hot and we ain't had no air conditioner we had fans. I remember the water, again. Growing up not knowing where the water was, or where we had lead or so we just did everything during summer. We had a bottle of water, just drunk it and we just had fun. In the springtime, we caught bees and then we played in the grass and we cut the grass, and the grass smelled good. So growing up to me, it was just fun. It was just growing up, the environment, we didn't really pay attention to climate change. But as you got older you seen it, so as you got older you see the cold days, then you see in the late winter time it's still nice out. Then when you start seeing, I watch the news and I watch the icebergs, you know, watch the weather, I watch the rain, I watch the way the world is changing. And everybody who pays attention has got to see it. So we kind of, with the sun. I remember the sun not burning my skin. I remember walking around all days and playing and now I get blisters and I gotta get special medicine for rash. So it changed a lot. It changed a lot, but I've been here for awhile, you know what I'm saying, right? But it changed a lot. I actually remember playing basketball all day and never, ever had a rash. Right now I can't walk without putting some lotion on. So, climate changes is killing ya, and I feel sorry for the future.

MM: Growing up to you or anyone in your family experience any breathing problems, like asthma or allergies?

CR: We got all kinds of problems. So my brother had big problems. My grandchildren got asthma, our grandchildren got eczema. We have so many people in our family died from cancer, like we had a lot, a lot of issues with medical conditions. Cancer myself, my prostate gone. My mother died, my mom just recently died, so like my grandma died of cancer, we got like, everybody who grew up down here, all the older people, mostly dead. Most of them died from some time of cancer or asthma or they got pumps and all the grandkids got eczema. I don't think I've ever had eczema though, I really don't have eczema, but I have my prostate gone so I would say that, again, given the time spent that I've been living, I've seen a lot of different things with the refinery, along with other stuff. Also right now the actual expressway itself is a problem. Right there, and nobody never told us. So I learned a lot now as I got older, and growing up, too, until we start burying our people. And then they still kept on lying to us. Now, as I look back on it, I remember my father's first fight with Sunoco. I never forget. I remember him telling the mayor, I told the lady from *The Inquirer*, right, you call me now, but I remember *The Inquirer* told us that everything was alright too. So I remember, everybody in the government was all in cahoots. So when I look at things now, I'm kind of angry about it, but we questioned it, and we trusted people in charge to give us the right answers. We was like guinea pigs, right? So, you know what I mean, and one more thing I want to say

before we go on, I remember during the racial times I talked to you about, so I remember fighting these same white people and hating them, and then I remember as I got older, that we was in the hospital together, fighting the same cancer. And I looked at them, and they looked at me right, and we looked at each other like, the whole time we was fighting each other, they was killing us. You know what I mean, so, now we fighting for beds, we fighting for hospital pumps, the whole time though they had our minds thinking other things and kept us focused on that and the whole time we was dying. So now when I see them we kind of laugh and are friends cuz we old but that's the most interesting thing in my mind is that we fought hard hating each other and we all lived right here and was placed here, right, and all of us couldn't afford to go nowhere. And now we fighting for those same beds. That's my takeaway from this.

MM: Can you speak a little more about your father fighting Sunoco?

CR: My father went to Sunoco in the 70's, right before the Bicentennial, like 74. What happened was, it exploded, and it shook the ground. So it shook people's porches on 31st, this block, … but the whole block shook. So now Sunoco came to us with we're going to fix your place but then the question was what caused it and that was underground, it was something that happened in the ground, so there were questions about that so we started questioning, my father started asking questions about what was coming out of the air, how was it effecting our breathing and we smelt shit everyday, so the smell to us was like a normal "oh, it stinks", we kind of got used to the smell. But as my father fought it, they kept on saying we're gonna fix ya'll, give ya'll some money, question ya'll, but it's alright though, it's not that bad, ya'll gonna be alright, but never saying that, EPA and them wasn't around. Whatever they said, the city backed it up. A lot of this fight right, it's more than just Sunoco, cuz a lot of this fight was backed up by the government, cuz a lot of these questions that we asked was hid. It was like it's fine ya'll. So my father fought them kind of fights, and then he kept on fighting, and then he finally said it's gonna be alright and put up some documents to say we're gonna make sure we make it better, but we never understood that the quality we was breathing back then was way worse than it is now. I remember down here he was the first to fight them. And we still, with that fight, it was separation in white and black cuz I remember the Grays Ferry council got money, right from Sunoco, and wasn't sharing with us, cuz it was still racial so it was still a fight. We learned all these games. I thank God I grew up in this household so I got to watch and I got to be around, I got to listen, it got on my nerves, but I got to listen and learn and understand his fights and until I started fighting them fights, I didn't understand what he was saying. Like now when I fight the fight I'm like now I know the shit he was saying back then and they was lying to us and everybody think nah he told us the neighborhood was gonna change. Now as I see it, I see what we was talking about. That was the first one with Sunoco. Sunoco was promising us a lot of stuff. But then they sold the company… but was the first time.

MM: Have you ever had any experiences with flooding while you've lived in South Philly?

CR: I don't remember flooding, I mean a drain backed up a little bit, street might have flooded but we never had a major flood that I can remember.

MM: When the refinery exploded in June 2019…

CR: I was asleep. And my wife woke me up. And she's talking about the refinery's blowing up. I turned on the news and I started seeing all the stuff and I started listening to the people and I started understanding what could have happened. But then I started getting angry again because this shit happened to us all them years back and the same problem could have happened, same thing they told us now, this could have blown up the whole neighborhood, they didn't tell us that shit back then. But they told us now. So I seen it and I was like another one, you know what I mean, this is an occurrence that happens right but again now there's more people that fight the fight so more people pay attention. I see that fire go up over 100 times in my lifetime. I see smoke come out of there, in my lifetime, we down here are used to it, we lived it so that one thing that happened in the middle of the night, if I did see it I wouldn't have paid attention, they never had an alarm, they never had anyone who sat down and said well if this happens, ya'll should react like that. I don't think that one I would've reacted any different. My

wife would've reacted different. Lot of people did. A lot of people started explaining to us what happened, what could have happened. And again I kept on thinking, that shit been happening and nobody told us. They told us it was alright and the fire department was there before, it was alright, you know what I'm saying, ya'll gonna be alright, but now it was like a big thing. I think I get kind of angry now cuz I think about all the shit they did to us for all them years and now with climate change, and all the different people that care about the Earth, right now they care right, but we dead so it kind of makes me mad….and that bus trip we did with the Penn students, I tried to explain to them that I'm not jealous and I don't want them not to care. My personal feeling is right, we already dead, so ya'll the future, so ya'll gotta pick up the fight. And ya'll gotta make sure you question because they just told us shit and we wasn't educated. That's another thing, so along with keeping us confined, you wasn't educating, we got a high school right there, that high school right across the street from the refinery, they could have taught us the work of the refinery, they never taught us because they didn't want us to know what was there so now the school district did this to us too. School district could've made that part of our curriculum where you lived about what the different fuels and smells are, nobody, nobody, and we're right across the street. I'm kind of caught in the middle, I kind of want to be happy for the future but I kind of don't care. I'm kind of, I got mixed emotions about and I know the fight wasn't the fight then. So I know during time, different fights made things better.

MM: So when the refinery exploded in June, and your wife woke you up, did you know that that's where the sound came from? Did you or did you automatically assume…

CR: I assumed, like when she, again we seen that fire over there so many times. When she said it to me, I was like, why are you waking me up? For something that we seen, then I watched the news, how they wanna say it, and benzene was all over and I was like this is the lowest benzene ever been over there, the lowest, right so compared to what we grew up in, you know what I'm saying, right, now ya'll telling us that benzene was so bad but we had way way high levels so I laugh at her cuz she kind of, that's my wife, and she's a mom, and she's a guardian of us, so her emotions is like, and for me, it's like we'll we ain't die, so let's move on, let's see how we can close this thing, let's see cuz we know now what it's doing, so let's be apart of the team that closes it, let's try that. It's time to do what we can to stop it.

MM: So you spoke a little bit about growing up and getting used to the air and the smell of the air that you were surrounded by, after the most recent explosion in June, did the air smell differently following that?

CR: I don't remember. I remember being mad about the explosion. I remember wanting to get more information. I was more "let's find out what this shit doing, let's finally get the answers to the refinery." I don't remember the smell. Could've happened though. I wanted to know why we didn't have monitors, why we ain't never had monitors across the street, right here. My concerns flip from the smell and in that too, okay, it's time to do something and it's time to demand certain things. Again, so being a community leader, I gotta kinda look for best ways to make sure we protected. Start worrying about monitors and stuff like that.

MM: So you spoke a bit about the lack of information and some information that you wish you had, like, why aren't there monitors? What's happening? Is there more information that you're looking for or that you wish you had?

CR: I remember, after the explosion going through the fire department. I went there and I said, "well, what's the plan? What's the evacuation plan if something happens." He said "shelter in place." I said, what, that's the plan, right? So that's the plan between you, the fire department, the police department, EPA, so the plan is to stay here and die. It's just a plan. So the kids in school, what's the plan? Like to this day that's the plan. I was trying to figure out like who said, come up with this, who's, if it could kill us all in the building, why stay in the building? Again, if there's some people that's not dead, when you gonna get them? You know what I'm saying, right? I remember growing up when we used to shut down the school or went to church like there were certain places you knew if you were walking down the street you

could go, now we got a group of kids that first don't know nothing about the refinery so they would have no idea what to do. And then when you ask them, the officials, it's shelter in place, and you the people that make the official response because you the fire department, so if you don't know, know what I'm saying. Again, that's a good reason for the refinery to be closed. So I guess I am kind of happy it's closed. But when you ask for questions and you get responses that sound totally ridiculous in 2020 and you're telling me the same shit you were telling me in 2070 but it's not, but the response is not for everybody in every neighborhood, right it's a different response for different neighborhoods you know what I mean and that's not good. I got a whole bunch of hangups. Through my life I've fought a whole bunch of wars. Now, right now, my major war is saving my kids. Like while are we breathing the air and we losing our houses, they killing each other. Right and I'm trying to get them to wake up and say everything going around here and y'all still don't get it, so I kind of, the refinery to me is always a second or third track to my other battles because again my kids don't know nothing about the refinery. If it wasn't for Philly THRIVE and Penn coming and Clear Air, right, and Clear Air just came in, and nobody paid attention we been fighting this fight, I tell all them organizations, I tell Philly THRIVE, I love ya'll, I love your work, but we been fighting this shit a long time. I tell Clean Air, I don't even know where ya'll come from, right y'all business minded, y'all never been on the street, there's a whole bunch of lawyers that probably knew the same shit before cuz they're the one's that got the information. Right, so it's difficult for me. University of Penn, I built a relationship with them for my own selfish reasons, so I can get some information, so I can pass some information along to my friends and my students but most importantly I like to be able to have my high school kids with the Penn kids so they can learn so you know I got a whole bunch of hangups. I told you my interview would be a little different cuz I got a whole bunch of different angles. I be angry, I remember my father coming in at night, telling me about Sunoco, listening to them talk, we couldn't even get no jobs over there.

MM: What have you learned in the past 5, or 10, or so years about climate change and weather changes?

CR: I learned that we already died…I see the waters rising, I see the forests burning, I see the weather is totally crazy. Earthquakes, hurricanes, this the stuff that me growing up, right, cuz I always been educated…I don't remember 12-13 hurricanes a year, tornadoes stopping in the middle of America. I mean, every now and then I don't remember the snow melting and the caps. I don't remember fires burning like that. I don't remember a lot of this stuff and then to watch it happen, to be part of it, you be wondering about your grandkids. I been wondering how long for my kids it's gonna be possible, is there a plan that somebody's got somewhere, I don't know, it's over. I remember growing up in the church cuz I'm a Christian. And I remember reading this stuff in the church and I remember what it said about the fires and kept on telling you and then I watch it and I'm like, well, why ever body else watching, why nobody not seeing what I'm seeing, like it's over. We used to just get away with a couple of volcanoes, every now and then. Growing up, yeah, earthquake every 5 years, now it's like earthquakes aren't even the problem, like they come but it's so much other stuff. We had an earthquake in Philadelphia a couple years ago, we never had an earthquake, never ever in my life worried about the buildings shaking. So now, I know climate change is real. I'm just mad that I'm older and then I worry about my grandkids, I love my grandkids, so I worry about them. I worry about if they're even paying attention. But they're young and they need to have fun and they don't need to worry. I want them, but, it's over.

MM: So, aside from the concerns you have for your grandchildren, do you have concerns for the greater of South Philly, and the future?

CR: I love my kids. I love my school kids. I'm a community baby watcher. So, I love my babies right, all of them, from first grade to high school, right. I talk to them everyday, I stay outside with them everyday, the basketball league, girl scouts…..I love them right. All of them. I love them more than grownups. Cuz they real, like they kind of ignorant, but I understand them. So I can relate to them. They understand me. So I love them and I worry about them. So no, it's not just my grandbabies. When I say my grandbabies, my grandbabies friends. We always been, me and my wife, always had kids in our house. So we always had the kids around us. And now I just I just took it to another level where they're my life. Right there. The little kids in that school I sit outside the school every day to see make sure they come out to school. I

make sure I'm talking to me, I don't like everything they say but I'm making sure I'm trying to make them understand so I worry about suffering and I know they're not gonna be here cuz the developments coming I have no idea where they're sending us to. That's another thing. Like where they gonna put us at. Cuz we not, $300,000 houses, that ain't for us. So, the answer to your question is I love them all. I worry about the adults a little bit but more about the kids. I think the kids, you gotta give them a chance and you know…is show them something different than, you gotta show them different, and if you don't show them differently, you show them the same shit, they're gonna be stuck with the same stuff.

MM: What are your hopes for the future of South Philly?

CR: I hope that we create some leaders. Like I hope that I can touch enough lives, right, that I can trust them to lead in whatever direction is because I don't know but I hope we create enough leaders, male and female, to be able to handle it, to be able to stand up for themselves, to be able to work together. I have faith that racism ain't like it used to be. So I kind of like that, I kind of see a more team together, and when it's a team it's better. So I kind of see that, I see some good spots. As long as I can raise leaders, long as I can get some leaders, and I teach them right, we'll be alright.

MM: What are your hopes for the future of the refinery space?

CR: I want it to be a cemetery. That thing should be a cemetery for everybody who can't afford to bury their family. That's the truth, in my heart. Put some flowers around there, some trees and shit, but bury people right there cuz it already killed people. Bury people in there for free, the ones who can't be, cuz people dying every day, we could fill it up because anything else you put there, it's been soaked, and I hear all these big dreams 10 years, 20 years, about mushrooms and all this stuff, but I remember growing up in Passyunk, you know Passyunk, I remember going to Passyunk and seeing the oil boil up out of that ground. I used to go across that bridge, used to come from Tasker, past Wilson, and sneak over that bridge cuz there used to be girls over there, so we used to go over walking down Passyunk, right, and I remember watching that oil come out of there, and then I seen they built on top of that and I have for the life of me don't know who buying houses over there but they crazy, you know what I'm saying right. so now I say about that I don't know maybe some updated stuff and maybe they can fix it, but I know what they did to people lives, right, and how much it cost to bury people, you might as well just them, and then it might not work with the burial thing cuz the water gonna flood, so now I find out as I get more information that its gonna flood. That's why I need to teach the leaders, my young ladies, and let them decide what they wanna see cuz I already seen what it was. I thought it was beautiful when I was growing up, and now it's dying, little green grass, they had the grass out there right, they just had us all fooled. We used to go over there and the grass was dead, walk your dog, I played fetch with my dog on the dirty ass grass, walked my little girlfriends out there, all that stuff I used to do back there and breathing and touching and walking so I don't know I would leave that to the kids, to the future, I think they got it, I think that the ones growing up now.

MM: So for this digital tour that we're creating based on our walking tour, something I want to do is have your story by its location. So if you don't mind…

CR: I've got two of them. So which one you want? Pick one. So I got the one right there by the school where the bridge is at, remember we talked about that, and then I got the end at the park. So now, both of them very important so how you wanna do it? You can have two.

MM: If you don't mind. My thinking with the two, the bridge story I find very powerful and I feel like we can't not have that be a part of the story, but what I like about the playground story is it's also Melissa location.

CR: It's Melissa's location but I just injected.

MM: But I like having two voices there because you and Melissa had such varying perspectives on it and different experiences and you grew up in different times. So I like having both stories, but if you just want to do the bridge, that's totally fine.

CR: The bridge to me, we kind of we kind of touched back before. So we'll start with the bridge. I would say why the bridge was so important to me again because it was times in the projects when it get hectic, fight these group of boys. Fighting for the basketball court, cuz you couldn't go to the playground in those days. That was the place where I walked across that bridge. It was peaceful. So once I went across there, went outside and I felt like I was in a whole nother world. So I'd walk across there again I took my dog, played fetch with my dog, me and my friends threw stones at the cars, so we did so many different things on that side. I remember carrying my bike up all them steps, right to get to the other side to carry them down all them steps, just to ride the whole route and look at the refinery and just ride, looking, playing, talking. I remember riding down there by the railroad tracks. So that part to me, that was like a get away spot. The bridge took me out of my environment. I thought it was taking me away from the projects. Away from whatever. If I wanted to get away from my father, some of my friends ran away over there, I remember one of my friends ran away and we had to go chase him. I remember so many things over there where we felt secure and safe and now we realize that we wasn't safe. And it's amazing to me right that they didn't even take time away to close to expressway and take it down right you notice that it ain't down, so I be looking at it and just thinking to myself not only does it bring back good memories but why is it still here? Like why is it still there? What is it serving? I don't know what it's serving left there. Again, I remember walking across there, was never no gate that said "don't go" was never no gate that said "don't climb" was never no sign that said "hazard" right we ain't never seen that. And then I guess something maybe it was there when I was young and I was a boy and I'ma climb, and I'ma jump. I remember jumping on the railroad trains, I remember trying to bust them tankers, I remember I hit the rocks with it, I didn't know what was in there, we don't know, we were just being little boys and I remember when they had the one guard that used to walk the whole thing so we had times you know what I'm saying right so we had times then we had to be home at certain times. So I remember that, that to me is the most important thing plus it stood outside the high school. Like the high school was right there, so you know what I mean, boyfriends and girlfriends would walk home, cuz I remember my friends, if you liked a girl you would carry her book bag, you know what I'm saying and you walk with her, outside the high school the bridge led to the refinery which was over there contaminating the neighborhood and the bridge took you right there. Outside the high school. So that's always been a special place. Always kind of, I never really understood the purpose, but they told us it's to get on the other side of the expressway cuz we didn't belong over there right. So who was it serving? I never understood that part. And like we didn't have people working in our neighborhood that needed to get over there so I was trying to figure out, I never understood that. But that bridge…took them two days, been in high school, sat there all day and watched the bridge, and then you came out and walked across it, no one would go straight home, somebody took the wrong route, you know what I mean, that was a good one. Then as I go towards the park. The park to me was a barrier. I could never get in. So the racial thing was really really bad and the park was the separation line, so we had police protecting the park, right so we couldn't go in there, if we could go in there we had to run. I remember that I really wanted to play basketball and I was wondering why we couldn't go in there, all the different things. And I lived across the street from the park, I lived right across the street from the park and I went to Catholic school. So I went to school with the same white people that I was fighting. So at nighttime they used to throw rocks at my window, right, I never forget, and say "niggeries, niggeries, niggeries," and my mother, right, used to come beat me, right, cuz you did this right, cuz you …with them boys and you, I didn't do nothing but that's the kind of memories I remember and as I grew up, I went to school with them, So I was altar boy, right. So I had relationships with all these people, again, got blessed with good academics. So I was there then as I got older again I realized that they were so petty, like compared to now, where you're mother in the bed beside, we in the same, so you in the other side of the thing right, your mom over here and she can't breathe and then I remember your mom cuz I went to Catholic school so I remember your mom and then your mom said leave him alone. I remember all these things, and that park to me has always been the dividing park. And then when they tore it down, they just recently tore it down and rebuilt it. That's a good thing. Tore it down and they took the gate down and they got all ways you can get in cuz before you could only get in

one way in the middle of the thing so now I look at it and I'm like ok, again, the future, it's the future for ya'll, it's the future for young people, it might be alright, but that mostly is that we fought each other so hard and we both was poor. We was in the projects, and we was poor. So we all was poor and we fought, we met at the welfare office with our moms. I remember, you know what's so funny, I remember going to get surplus cheese and shit, right, and I remember the same white people be in line, right, know what I'm saying right, I remember things like that so the park to me is special. Them two places to me are real special to my youth, like growing up.

MM: Thank you so much Mr. Reeves for taking the time to talk with me and share your stories. You've answered all my questions, is there anything that I've overlooked, or do you have any questions for me.

CR: I think we did good. I just want you to commit to one day come talk to my kids.