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Interview with Rosetta Daylie

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1 INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTION WITH ROSETTA DAYLIE

2

3 Sarah Bonkowski: Uh, my name is Sarah Bonkowski. First name: S-A-R-A-H. Last name: B-O-N-K-O-
4 W-S-K-I. And I am interviewing Rosetta Daylie. If you could say your first name and last name and
5 spell them out.

6

7 Rosetta Daylie: Rosetta Daylie. Uh, Rosetta. R-O-S-E-T-T-A. Daylie. D-A-Y-L-I-E.

8

9 SB: This interview is taking place on November 27th at 1:25 p.m. and um it's a being done at St. James
10 Health and Wellness Center in Chicago Heights.

11

12 SB: Um, how many years were you involved in anti-apartheid activism?

13

14 RD: Approximately, ten years.

15

16 SB: Ten years? Ok. Um, where did your activism take place?

17

18 RD: In the Chicago area and I did a little something in Philadelphia. But basically in the Chicago area.

19

20 SB: Ok. What year were you born?

21

22 RD: 1939.

23

24 SB: What was your place of birth?

25

26 RD: Uh, Chicago, Illinois. Cook County Hospital.

27

28 SB: Uh, where were you raised?

29

30 RD: In Chicago, Illinois on the south side.

31

32 SB: Uh, what neighborhood, specifically?

33

34 RD: Basically, uh, the neighborhood around 53rd and Dearborn, which at that time was, um, a family, a
35 home we had there in that neighborhood.

36

37 SB: Uh, what was your father's name?

38

39 RD: My father's name was Mac Bell. The last name is B-E-L-L.

40

41 SB: Okay. Where was he born?

42

43 RD: He was born in Athens, Georgia.

44

45 SB: Uh, what was your mother's name?

46

47 RD: My mother's name was Righty. R-I-G-H-T-Y Bell, and she was born in Hawkinsville, Georgia.

48

49 SB: Okay. Uh, what is your earliest memory?

50

51 RD: Mmm. My earliest memory in life?

52

53 SB: Yes.

54

55 RD: Oh I guess my second birthday party (SB Giggles) when I was two years old. I remember that just
56 because there was a picture of me in the newspaper for that birthday. And all through my life I've seen
57 this picture in my mom's albums.

58

59 SB: Very cool. Umm. Who did you live with growing up?

60

61 RD: My mom and dad.

62

63 SB: Did you have any brothers and sisters?

64

65 RD: I was an old child for fourteen years. Um, my mother started having children again when I was
66 fourteen years old. So I'm fourteen years older than my brother and I'm eighteen years older than my
67 sister.

68

69 SB: Uh, what was the role of religion in your childhood?

70

71 RD: Several religions. I was raised a Catholic because my mother wanted me to have the discipline that
72 the Catholic schools offered. My mom was a what you would call sanctified and my father was Baptist
73 so any Sunday I may have been to three to four churches.

74

75 SB: Wow. Uh, what was your neighborhood like growing up?

76

77 RD: Like a community. It really was. I found out in the last couple of years that actually everyone that
78 came to Chicago from my mom's hometown, lived in that neighborhood. And so it was really like a
79 family. I mean, we never locked our doors. We never we could just go in and out of each other's houses.
80 Everybody in the neighborhood knew they could chastise or punish (Both laugh) anybody that got out of
81 order all the children in the neighborhood. So it was like a small community.

82

83 SB: Um, what were your favorite games to play as a child?

84

85 RD: I loved to jump rope and play hopscotch. (SB giggles)

86

87 SB: Um, let's see. Um, describe your bedroom. As a child.

88

89 RD: Uh, it was one bed. A dresser. A closet. And, that's about it. (SB giggles) Yep.

90

91 SB: Uh, what colors were the walls or---

92

93 RD: I can't remember. (Laughs)
94
95 SB: Can't remember? (Laughs)
96
97 RD: I can't. (Laughs)
98
99 SB: Um, how did you pick your prom date?
100
101 RD: I actually did not go to prom. I was a high school drop out.
102
103 SB: Okay.
104
105 RD: I dropped out in my junior year in high and got married that same year.
106
107 SB: Uh, let's see. What was your earliest involvement or interest in politics?
108
109 RD: Very early because my aunt---my mother's sister---so we lived in one house. It was a family house
110 and they were all there. My mother's sister was the precinct captain in the neighborhood where I lived.
111
112 SB: Oh wow.
113
114 RD: And so, we were, very early we would have to go out on election day and knock on doors and get
115 people out and pass out pamphlets and everything because my aunt was so. I know at the age of
116 fourteen, fifteen to sixteen, I probably knew election days and who was running and what (Chair
117 squeaks) have you.
118
119 SB: Wow. Um, let's see. What was your first job?
120
121 RD: My first job was at the Midwest uh, center on the west side of Chicago copywriting and doing
122 leaflets and things. Midwest center something. I can't think of the last name. It was Midwest center
123 somewhere on the west side of Chicago.
124
125 SB: Did you later use those skills um with your activism?
126
127 RD: Uh, no. (Laughs)
128
129 SB: No? (laughs) Okay. Uh, let's see uh. So you said you you left high school early to get married. How
130 old were you when you were married?
131
132 RD: Seventeen.
133
134 SB: Seventeen?
135
136 RD: Yea.
137
138 SB: Uh, what. When did you--- Sorry. Why did you decide to go into food service?

139
140 RD: (Tisks) Um, it was actually. I didn't really decide but we were having my husband and I were kind
141 of going through some difficult times because we were both high school drop outs, right? So, uh I would
142 go down and take several tests and um I passed the one for the state for food service and I uh. I uh went
143 for the interview for the job and I was interviewed and not that I particularly cared for food service. I
144 liked to cook though. And I was interviewed and I think what really made me get involved in it was, the
145 young lady that interviewed me explained to me that uh, she would not hire me because I had small
146 children and I people who had small children normally didn't come to work. And so I got sort of fired
147 up and like I said, I knew who to go to in my community politically to say here's a state job. I went for
148 an interview and they let me know they would not hire me. Just based on the fact that I had children and
149 so they got a letter and I got a call. And so, (Laughs) they actually said um we'll hire you but we only
150 need you for six months at that time it was like the home for the blind on nineteenth and Marshall and
151 six months we'll be moving into a new building and uh we we won't need you then. And so I says okay
152 fine. I figured, well that will work for me. By then we will caught up on the bills and so that's what
153 happened. But after the six months was over and they moved into the new building, they asked me,
154 could I stay? Because I was the youngest one on staff. Everybody that worked there was in their sixties
155 and seventies and fifties you know (Laughs). And they asked me if I would stay and help them get
156 settled in the new building and everything. And once that happened, my husband and I had separated so
157 I asked them if they could keep me. (Laughs) So that's how I ended up being active in the food service
158 arena.

159
160 SB: Okay. Um, let's see uh what other movements did you participate in? Was it only the anti-apartheid
161 movement, or was their anything else you got involved in?

162
163 RD: There's probably other things that I just can't think about right now. But if I---

164
165 SB: Civil Rights or anything like that?

166
167 RD: Not really because I was so I knew what was going on but I was raising children and I I had four
168 children by then and I was the head of a household. And so I knew what was going on but I just really
169 didn't have the time. I worked every day to be involved in the Civil Rights movement. I knew about it
170 just wasn't there.

171
172 SB: Did you later get remarried?

173
174 RD: No. Never been remarried.

175
176 SB: Um, how did you find out about the apartheid?

177
178 RD: Why? By the time I got involved in apartheid I was working full-time for AFSCME, which is a
179 union that represents state employees.

180
181 SB: Could you, just for the sake of the recording, can you say what that is?

182
183 RD: AFSCME is the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees. I became active
184 in my union under the food service department as a steward then the president of my local union. And

185 then the president of our statewide organization and then I got hired as a full-time worker. All these
186 other jobs were not full-time. And so, not full-time but paid positions. So in being involved in the labor
187 movement when this labor Illinois Labor Network Against Apartheid was put together, they were
188 looking for people out of each one of the labor unions to be involved. And uh that's how I got involved.
189 People started calling me. Cathy Devine for one who was sort of the organizer for this who couldn't
190 catch me because I was so busy. And she kept leaving me messages that I didn't know who she was so
191 she was one of those calls you return. I didn't know who she was so why does she keep calling me,
192 right? And finally, I ran into her at a dinner and she let me know who she was and that she was the
193 young lady who had trying to get me. And she would like me to be co-chair. One of the co-chairs of this
194 movement that they were starting. And that's basically the beginning of it.

195
196 SB: So your early involvement was just, handling a lot of phone calls and what other things did you do?
197

198 RD: Um, well I asked questions about it. I got involved and I'm trying to think. (Turns pages of her
199 notes and clears throat) We we did education once I got to understand what was beginning to understand
200 what it was all about and um. Educating the members in our union about what was going on in South
201 Africa and we why we needed to be involved and uh spreading the message around to members of
202 AFSCME and CBTU, which is the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists.

203
204 SB: Okay. Great. Um. Let's see. You answered a bunch of these questions. Um, were your children
205 supportive of your activism?
206

207 RD: Very much so until I got ready to go to South Africa. (Laughs)
208

209 SB: Oh no. (Laughs)
210

211 RD: They were very supportive. They uh. I was gone quite a bit with my job. They sort of understood
212 that but once we got ready to go to South Africa, and it was so much going on there. And you had to sort
213 of sign if your union okayed for you to go. You had to sort of sign papers that said they would not be
214 responsible for if anything happened to you. And so my children thought that was terrible and they
215 called a meeting---
216

217 SB: They were a little worried?
218

219 RD: All four of them had me come in, and had a meeting with me to tell me that I couldn't go.
220

221 SB: Wow.
222

223 RD: You know. And so we had a little chat. And I explained to them, I had to go. This was so important
224 to me and that if no one had ever went south, and fought for our freedom here, in the U.S., we wouldn't
225 be where we are then. And that's why I. It had to be me. And so they finally came around.
226

227 SB: When they were growing up, were they involved in it?
228

229 RD: Not really. Just ya knowing what I was doing. And reading. And I had one daughter that really read
230 everything. So she read anything that came in about South Africa. Want to turn this off for just a
231 second?

232
233 SB: Sure.

234
235 [Stopped tape. Resumed after five minutes]

236
237 SB: Okay. Um, starting over again, uh my name is Sarah Bonkowski. First name. S-A-R-A-H. Last
238 name. B-O-N-K-O-W-S-K-I. And I am interviewing Rosetta Daylie. If you could just again say your
239 first and last name.

240
241 RD: Rosetta Daylie. R-O-S-E-T-T-A. D-A-Y-L-I-E.

242
243 SB: Um, the again is 1:42. And it is November 27th 2009. And we're at the St. James Health and
244 Wellness Center. Just to go back a little but uh what year did you first get involved?

245
246 RD: 1987.

247
248 SB: 1987? Okay. Uh. Where did I leave off? Uh. What was the first activity you took part in?

249
250 RD: You know, I believe it was. We mobilized the and was most active in the Shell boycott. That might
251 have been the first one that I was actually involved in. And um, it was a very interesting boycott. Uh, I
252 wouldn't allow any of my children or any of my family go to Shell stations. In fact, to this day I do not
253 buy gas from a Shell station.

254
255 SB: Wow. What specifically did you do with that first event?

256
257 RD: Um, mobilized our people in my union and in my family and explained to them what they were
258 doing with Shell. And how the crude oil was used against the people in South Africa. And that is why
259 Shell was picked as the place we were going to boycott.

260
261 SB: Interesting. Um. Did you join any other groups or organizations you know to further get involved
262 than working with your union?

263
264 RD: Yes. There was a organization called the Coalition of Black Trade Labor Unionists. I was a member
265 I had been a member of that since 1972. And our leader there's name was Bill Lucy. And was actually
266 the secretary treasurer of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees but he
267 was the president of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists. Uh really kept our organization well
268 informed about what was going on in Africa and in South Africa. And that was always a topic that was
269 on the agenda for our yearly convention.

270
271 SB: So in your role as the assistant director of the union...I'm sorry what was the number of the union?
272 You said you were involved with your union. Um. And I just didn't catch the number when we first
273 interviewed you.

274

275 RD: Well, my union was AFSCME The American Federation of State, County and Municipal
276 Employees and I was an associate director. And the number was council number thirty-one.

277
278 SB: That's it. That's what I missed. Okay.

279
280 RD: And council number thirty-one represented the state of Illinois.

281
282 SB: Okay. Got cha. Um. So describe a little bit of the structure of the organization.

283
284 RD: Well, basically we recruited or tried to maintain people from all of the unions in Illinois and I guess
285 we had people like Johnny Jackson who was the president of the Coalition of Labor Union Women and
286 she was one of the chairs. Jack Pardon which was from the United Steel Workers and Bill Steward was a
287 United Auto Worker. Steve Cullen and myself, we both came from AFSCME and there were people
288 from the different unions. I remember those particular ones. Because we worked very close together.
289 There were other unions, the Chemistry Workers Union, um, service employees, the teamsters,
290 amalgamated transit workers so we had someone from all of the largest unions in Illinois to be a part of this
291 committee because all the unions could reach out to their members and get it on their get the subject on
292 the table.

293
294 SB: Okay. Um, so your community was, would you say they were involved a lot in the anti-apartheid
295 movement? Uh, where you lived and everything. Or were you one of a few people or---

296
297 RD: Very few people where I lived. Those that you pulled in. There might have been a few I was able to
298 pull in but my community was not. (Laughs)

299
300 SB: Um, how much time did you devote to working for the movement during a week of the height of the
301 movement?

302
303 RD: It would all depend on what we had going on at that time. Maybe some weeks I devote maybe ten
304 hours. Other weeks, more. I remember travelling to Philadelphia, which involved almost three days of
305 that week. You know, doing a conference there. On coalition building. And so I think the average,
306 maybe would. If you averaged it out, maybe fourteen hours a week.

307
308 SB: Could you talk a little bit about what you did in Philadelphia with that conference?

309
310 RD: Oh, I just did a um. (Clears throat) I just spoke on the conference on how to build coalitions. How
311 we need to build coalitions between churches, uh community groups, unions and all of that. So uh, that
312 was my piece of the conference. (Giggles)

313
314 SB: How did you stay informed during the movement?

315
316 RD: Actually, Cathy Devine who was our coordinator made sure because we were all the kinds of work
317 we did we weren't able to just sit and dwell on this subject. But Cathy made sure we were faxed
318 important papers or anything that was changing or moving, she made sure we had that information.

319

320 SB: Tell me about the. Oh never mind. You answered that. Describe your relationships with other
321 activists. Um did you have a lot of friends that were involved in the movement or---

322
323 RD: Some of the people that were involved in the movement, I didn't know prior to us building this
324 coalition. About um maybe five or six of them I knew from other unions just based on what we did. I did
325 build quite a few relationships from being involved in the coalition. Yea.

326
327 SB: Okay.

328
329 RD: In fact, we still see each other. Some of us. Cathy always does some sort of cook out or something
330 once a year or twice a year to sort of bring us back together.

331
332 SB: That's fun. Did you go to any other rallies around the country?

333
334 RD: I didn't go to any other rallies but I did several times boycott the South African embassy here in
335 Chicago. Uh. When we had a sit in. I shouldn't say boycotted. When we had a sit in and I was arrested
336 and um stayed in jail for about twelve hours. On that particular occasion. But we were always having
337 rallies in the Chicago area either around the Federal Building. I can remember watching there with our
338 sign ya know and the South African Embassy.

339
340 RD: Could you talk a little more about being arrested? Like, how did that come about? What was it like
341 being in prison? Things like that.

342
343 RD: Well, it was really funny. Because I didn't plan on being arrested. (Both laugh) But the young man
344 that I told you about who was the president of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists was in town for
345 that particular rally. I don't remember exactly what day it was. And he was actually the one who was
346 supposed to be the person who was to be arrested. I think there was going to be. It was sort of an
347 arranged thing. It was going to be so many people from different unions arrested for the cause. But he.
348 Something happened and he had to leave town and he couldn't stay. And he assigned me to take his
349 place. (Both laugh) And I was going crazy because I said oh if my mother turns on the television and
350 sees it, she's going to die. So I did. Myself and I think five others. Father Flagher??? and I can't
351 remember what church Father Flagher??? is from in Chicago. Um and several other people; we got
352 arrested. Interesting enough we were supposed to be staying in jail for about an hour or so and they were
353 going to let us out on our own, whatever it is. Ya know but there was another group that was protesting
354 something else in Chicago area and they did not want to get out on their; they didn't want to be bailed
355 out. So we got confused with that group some kind of way and ended up being in there a lot more hours
356 than I had planed to be. (Laughs)

357
358 SB: Oh no!

359
360 RD: But fortunately enough, I actually represented the civilian workers at 11th and State Street Police
361 Station and so a lot of my members knew that I was in there. And so they made sure I had something to
362 eat in there and they came in checking on me and so but it was kind of cold of them to close the cell
363 door. For you to be locked and cant get out. It was. Yea.

364
365 SB: Do you remember what month that could have been in and what year maybe?

366
367 RD: I really no. I can't. I maybe. Maybe I can figure it out. If I can figure it (Looks through her notes)
368 out and go back and some books or something I might be able to. I'll let you know.
369

370 SB: Okay. Great. Uh, how did you experience apartheid first hand? Just with your experience with the
371 coalition and then so with the election and everything? Would that be; would you say that was---

372
373 RD: Yea. I guess the experience with the coalition and basically the election to see people um that were
374 so happy to be standing in a line to be able to vote for their president and not to be shoved aside because
375 they were black but actually treated like human beings. They were in line and it was their turn. That
376 brought tears to my eyes but to see that was just um enormous for me. To see people cry because they
377 never thought they would see Nelson be president or anybody black be president um. And to be able to
378 vote. It was just just very touching. I remember seeing little lady; an older lady I guess maybe in her
379 sixties and it was so hot standing in line. And we were offering them lemonade or something cool to
380 drink. And she refused to drink it because she didn't want to be killed before she cast her vote.

381
382 SB: Wow.

383
384 RD: And she stood there. And I actually worked in the prisons and in the hospitals so because we took
385 the vote to the hospitals and to the prisons and to see people in the hospitals, seniors just so excited
386 about the vote and being able to vote. And crying about it and to see the guys and political prisoners so
387 were locked up for their politics and being able to vote. It was. That was really the most touching part
388 for me of it all. Yea. And to hear what they had went through. Yea.

389
390 SB: Um, can you remember any specific stories? Of people you spoke with and. Other than the one
391 woman with the lemonade---

392
393 RD: Lemonade. I can remember her she stands out. She stands out in my memory. Right off the top of
394 my head, no. There are others but I just... Maybe before we finish something will come to me.

395
396 SB: Okay. Sure. Um. Let's see. I've asked. You answered a lot of these questions already. So you would
397 say your support of divestment was with the Shell Gas boycott. Was there anything else you were
398 involved in boycotting or anything?

399
400 RD: Yea. But the one thing I was involved in that was interesting to me. I think I showed you a picture
401 of is we used to house people that came from South Africa part of the coalition, we would house. There
402 was a young lady, Mary Intigainy??? who came from South Africa and she stayed with me several times
403 because she was coming back and forth and she was working on trying to get the city of Chicago to
404 make Alexander Township, in South Africa be a sister city. And so she lived with me for about two
405 weeks and whenever she would come in town so she really got to uh meet my family and my family just
406 loved her. And uh when I went to South Africa she came and got me and took me to see Alexander
407 Township which was not part of the trip but one day I had a few hours and so that was; and just just
408 being with her and having her in my home and learning so much about it and my children actually
409 learned a lot about South Africa with her being there. That was very interesting thing for me.

410
411 SB: What was your reaction to Ronald Regan's election in 1980?

412
413 RD: Boo! (Both laugh) I was not very happy but--- (Laughs again)

414
415 SB: Um, how did you feel about Regan's administration's policies towards South Africa?

416
417 RD: I really can't think of my reaction then to any particular policy or what was going on at that time I
418 just.

419
420 SB: A just overall feeling of boo? (Laughs)

421
422 RD: Yea. Boo. (Laughs)

423
424 SB: Uh. Where were you February 1990 when Nelson Mandela was freed from Robben Island?

425
426 RD: I was in Chicago. We may have been I'm sure we were together, the coalition somewhere but I just
427 can't don't but I know shortly after he was re released. And I don't remember if it's the same month or
428 not. Our union was having its convention. Our national union was having its convention in Miami. And
429 he was our guest there. So that's when I actually met him. And that's actually when I had an opportunity
430 to have a picture taken with him and Winnie.

431
432 SB: Oh wow!

433
434 RD: And um it was just it was just really something. I mean we had to go to the convention center at six
435 o'clock in the morning because the Cubans there were upset about him coming to Miami and uh so we
436 had to be in there and be screened to make sure there were no guns or anything in there. Uh in the
437 convention center, at six in the morning standing in the line outside but it was worth it. It was worth it.
438 Yea it was really worth it.

439
440 SB: What was your feeling of actually meeting him and Winnie?

441
442 RD: It was just. I don't know. It was just so touching; so deep, ya know? And when you stand there and
443 you're looking in this man's eyes who gave up twenty-seven years of his life for a cause, it just was
444 unbelievable. Ya know and you just want to just had to be so proud of him I was. I was just so proud of
445 him. I felt so good about what he had done and wondered, would I ever have the strength to do
446 something like that. (Laughs) Ya know? Yea.

447
448 SB: Were you able to have any sort of conversation with him or Winnie?

449
450 RD: Oh yes. Oh yes.

451
452 SB: What did you talk about?

453
454 RD: Just I dunno. Its been quite a few years. (Both laugh) Uh, just about the movement and what we
455 were doing in Illinois and ya know I think at the time I had my Illinois Labor Network Against
456 Apartheid t-shirt on and on my picture you can see Winnie looking at it. Winnie looking at it. And

457 somebody said, why is she looking at it? And I said she's reading my t-shirt. Yea. And it says Illinois
458 Labor Network Against Apartheid.

459
460 SB: So what was your overall feeling of his tour of the States after being freed?
461

462 RD: Well I was excited about it because actually I co-chaired a meeting in Chicago for the labor
463 movement at Plumber's Hall where he was. And I was really excited for where is he now? When is he
464 going to be? Following him all over the country in my mind and because I knew I was going to be the
465 chair of him coming to Illinois. Myself and at that time Jackie Vaughan who was the president of the
466 Teacher's Union in Chicago. Uh worked together on chairing that event and meeting with him and---

467
468 SB: Were you able to talk with him again?
469

470 RD: Oh yea. Oh yea. We were able. In fact we had a little reception where he was um backstage with us
471 and talked to us and was able explained to us ya know that he was happy about what we had been doing
472 in Chicago and that uh. He was so aware of everything that was going on around him that it was just
473 amazing.
474

475 SB: That's great. Um, how did you feel that uh that he didn't first stop in Chicago in his first tour of the
476 States?
477

478 RD: It didn't bother me. (Laughs)
479

480 SB: It didn't bother you? (Laughs)
481

482 RD: I mean, eventually he'd be here, right?
483

484 SB: Right.
485

486 RD: No it didn't bother me.
487

488 SB: Okay. Uh. What were you doing between 1990 and 1994? (Rosetta laughs and flips through her
489 notes) Were you working with that um with the visit to Chicago?
490

491 RD: I was probably so during that time. Working with that. Yea. (Rosetta continues to flip through
492 notes) Okay. Go ahead.
493

494 SB: Oh, okay. Um, so you---
495

496 RD: Oh, you know what? You were talking about. We did quite a few things. I think we I was looking at
497 something I'm sure we had a visitor in from South Africa prior to him coming. I think it was Moses. I
498 can't think of his name but anyway he came and visited with us. And then there was a young lady that
499 um what was it. Namundaye??? who was a singer from South Africa and spent quite a bit of time with
500 our group. Um, Moses ooh. I can't think of his name. We were figh---He he came in and spent quite a
501 bit of time with our with our group letting us know what was going on prior to Nelson coming here. And
502 ya know, what the fight was. Yea.

503

504 SB: Um. So, you spoke a little bit about um going to South Africa to work on the election. Can you talk
505 a little bit about a little more about that in detail? Um. You know, when it first came about? How you
506 got over there and what you did.

507

508 RD: I think it was uh there were 120 labor union delegates um making this trip. How we all got selected,
509 I'm not sure. But I knew know that my union knew I was part of the Illinois Labor Network Against
510 Apartheid plus CBTU Coalition of Black Trade Unionists um. Bill Lucy was very active in the
511 movement in the South Africa movement. In the apartheid movement so he knew that I was active and
512 he was the president of our national organization so I was think between him and um my activism in the
513 Illinois Labor Network and uh us being involved in all I was elected as the person one of the people to
514 be to represent my union. And I believe that is how it came about. (Laughs)

515

516 SB: And was that something that they paid for or is that something you had to pay for? The plane ticket
517 and all that?

518

519 RD: No. They paid for the plane ticket. They paid for the plane ticket. Ya know. They asked you and ya
520 know you had questionnaires you had to answer. Ya know if you were willing to make this trip and what
521 you responsible for and what they would be responsible for and how long we'd be there and what you'd
522 be doing so.

523

524 SB: What was the feeling of the flight on your way there?

525

526 RD: Everybody was so excited. Uh, we knew it was going to be a long flight so we had gotten together
527 our little exercise classes why how many hours if we flew like four hours we would four or five of us
528 would get up and walk around the plane. And it was a huge plane. Ya know and we were sort of like in
529 the business section and uh everyone was excited. We were all talking about it. We were all um just
530 elated to be one of the ones selected to uh. And I knew quite a few of em but some of them I didn't
531 know so you met new people and everyone was feeling the same way about it. This is this is history.
532 This is great to be part of this is wonderful because I it was just. When Harold Washington won as
533 mayor of the city of Chicago, I thought that was as high as I could get. Ya know that this. This was it.
534 And now I get a chance to go to South Africa and work for Nelson Mandela's election. That was. Those
535 two things in my life have been other than my children (Both laugh). Yea so.

536

537 SB: Can you talk a little more about everything you did in South Africa? So, what were the different
538 places you went and ya know about how you helped with the election by going to the hospitals and the
539 prisons---

540

541 RD: Okay well I. We landed. We went to Johannesburg and that was where we got our training um and
542 we spent maybe two days there. To be trained. To see how the ballots were going to look to know what
543 was expected of us you know in the polling places and what we would be doing and what days we
544 would be doing what. So we spent a couple days in Johannesburg um amazingly before we went to Cape
545 Town, one Sunday morning, I guess it was a Sunday morning the first time we really got a chance to
546 sleep in because we hit the ground running as they say, and we were going to sleep in that day. And I
547 heard this loud noise that sounded like thunder and I was sleeping so hard because after the long flight
548 and the hours, and I said um. The sun is shining and its thundering out and I remembered to ask

549 somebody is this how amazing it is? Is it often happen here? And just as soon as I pull the covers over
 550 my head to go back to sleep, the phone rang. And they said you gotta get out of here. They just bombed
 551 the ANC office down the street (SB gasps) and that's what the noise was.

552
 553 SB: Oh my gosh.

554
 555 RD: It was very scary and so we got out of there. I don't remember exactly what we did but we
 556 eventually cam back to the hotel and everything was clear. And I guess the next day or the day after that
 557 I was to fly to Cape Town. That's were my assignment was, in Cape Town. Um, in Cape Town is so
 558 beautiful. Its like a resort there. Any resort that you would go to in the Caribbean or whatever. And it
 559 was so beautiful and got there and went and checked in the hotel, turn on the television, they had just
 560 blown up the airport we had just flown out of. (SB gasps) a portion of it.

561
 562 SB: Oh my gosh.

563
 564 RD: So I thought, oh my God. I hope my kids don't have TV on. (Both laugh) Ya know, uh but then in
 565 Cape Town is where I met, Barry who was a young guy who was going to be my protector and my
 566 driver. And I was teamed up with one of our members from AFSCME in Washington, D.C. and we were
 567 the team that would be working together. Because we were all teamed up all over South Africa. So this
 568 was my team: I had two young men and myself. Right? (Laughs) And uh we would debrief every
 569 evening after we went out to do whatever we had to do to find the polling places. Actually, I think two
 570 days before the election, elections were held in hospitals and jails and I was part of that in the Cape
 571 Town area.

572
 573 RD: So we travelled many, many miles because a lot of these places were separate. It was very very uh
 574 interesting to meet people in our travels. I met people that were considered colored. And they were a
 575 little bit treated a little bit better than the dark Africans or the Africans. And how they determined that
 576 we had learned, from visits from other Africans different ways they determined it. Ya know, maybe if
 577 the comb didn't go through your hair, you were considered black. But if it came straight through your
 578 hair without a snag or anything you were considered colored. The color of your skin, fair skin or light
 579 eyes, you were considered colored and you were treated on a different level than the other Africans. And
 580 so, in Cape Town that's basically what was there.

581
 582 RD: Mostly coloreds and Indians and what have you but several of the coloreds and we couldn't tell
 583 them how to vote or anything but they would come to you and say I would like to vote for Nelson
 584 Mandela. But I know if I do um I will no longer have this special arrangements I have. They might have
 585 running water in their house or if I was African, I wouldn't have it. Ya know. They might have
 586 electricity, where I wouldn't have it. Or they got the jobs in the front. In the hotel lobbies or in front. So
 587 they were afraid, a lot of them, that if Nelson won, that they would lose that. And uh to hear them say it
 588 was just amazing. I wanted to say so bad, honey (Both laugh) you're just as black as I am. (Laughs) You
 589 know and the rest of them. They and they. That was a challenge for me. And in the jails it was really
 590 interesting to see. We actually took the equipment into the jails. If you were not in jail for robbery,
 591 murder or sexual offenses, you could vote. And so we actually took the equipment in and we allowed
 592 people. It was a scary place to be in those jails. I think I was coming out one day, I just happened to look
 593 up one day and on the wall was it had, "Don't kill the dream. Assassinate it." I thought, oh Lord. Let me
 594 out of it. (Laughs) But um and those guys were very very excited about voting. And I think a majority of

595 them were just political prisoners. And then to go into the hospitals and take material and uh talk to
596 people to seniors who were never thought they'd ever get a chance to vote in an election uh be so
597 excited about it. Um it was just amazing.
598

599 RD: So we uh did several hospitals and several jails and so we were going from all over all over the area
600 there so. That was basically what we did in Cape Town until the actual Election Day. And ya know on
601 election day when you everybody when the public was allowed to vote, we monitored the voting sites to
602 make sure nothing was going on that would shouldn't be and that nobody was treated unfairly because
603 of the color of their skin. And we had tag teams. It was really um really something. When I was leaving
604 when we were leaving, my group, was leaving a polling place, we had a British tag team. They would
605 relieve us so when they would come in we would have a chance to explain to them, what had happened
606 at this polling place, what some of their irregularities were and what have you. And they would follow
607 up on um watching out for those kind of things. And it seemed like it was the same tag team. It seems
608 like anywhere we went, the British tag team was right behind us, (SB laughs) ya know. So but so uh---

609
610 SB: So how many hours did you work that day?

611
612 RD: Oh God. It was just like, it seemed like we worked all the time. It looked like you got. Because you
613 did a lot of travelling because you rode a lot getting to different polling places and it was an all day
614 thing. I don't know if we got two or three hours of sleep.

615
616 SB: Wow!

617
618 RD: Yea. Yea.

619
620 SB: So basically the tag teams were just for when you were going to different locations?

621
622 RD: Yea. From one location to another. You didn't stay. I might stay at two hours in one location to
623 make sure everything was working there. Two or three hours and then the British tag team would come
624 in and we would leave and go to the next polling place and stay two or three hours. And that same team
625 would hit us; relieve us at the next polling place. So it was uh...

626
627 SB: What was your feeling uh once Nelson Mandela won?

628
629 RD: Oh God! What was everybody's feeling? We were just. I was just. I was so happy. I was really
630 excited it was just. It was just wonderful. Wonderful. And ya know what amazed me, and I'm sure
631 someone out of our group that you're interviewing will have a the actually ballots because the ballots
632 actually had the pictures of the candidates.

633
634 SB: Wow.

635
636 RD: And there was one somebody some guy that just was not Nelson Mandela but the picture he looked
637 like him on it. So it did some Chicago politics and uh. People recognized Nelson Mandela because even
638 under his picture it was ANC and believe that and that was the key because the pictures were of
639 everyone that was running because a lot of the people were illiterate. And they did not couldn't read and

640 what have you and they and that was part of the training that we had to give. This is what you look for
641 and blah blah blah.

642
643 SB: What city were you in when the announcement came out and what was the feeling of. Outside of
644 you. What did it feel like in the area? Was there just a huge celebration?

645
646 RD: Oh yes. Yes. It was. And ya know I guess I didn't. I failed to mention, you asked me about other
647 rallies and I just failed to mention. I gotta put it in there. Before the election, there was a great rally in
648 Soweto.

649
650 SB: Yes, I remember you telling me a little bit about that.

651
652 RD: Seventy thousand people attended. And it was and everybody was involved. The children were
653 involved. Everybody was involved. And I mean when you went into the arena, the children searched
654 you. To make sure you didn't carry guns or anything. So the kids, the teenagers were part of this
655 movement. It just goes to show you how much everybody was involved in it. At first it was a little bit of
656 fear when you saw all these people and I think it was from Encontha???, I think there was a tribe that
657 was dressed like in their war type gear and you wanted to go, oh God. Do I want to go in here? What's
658 going to happen in here, ya know? But then when you looked into the eyes of the people going into
659 there, you looked at them, you couldn't feel anything but love and peace. And then my fears just went
660 away. And I just walked right in there in that crowd and sat down and watched all these people be so
661 excited. And Nelson spoke at that rally. And it was the most amazing place I had ever been. Yea.

662
663 SB: Just going back um. So what city were you in when he was elected when the announcement came
664 out?

665
666 RD: Uh, I was in Cape Town.

667
668 SB: Cape Town.

669
670 RD: And we uh actually lost in Cape Town.

671
672 SB: Oh really?

673
674 RD: Yea because like I told you there were a lot of coloreds there. And a lot of Indians.

675
676 SB: What was the feeling like at in Cape Town where people---

677
678 RD: I think I was back in Johannesburg. Yea. I think I was back in Johannesburg. I'm not sure but
679 anyway, wherever I was everybody was happy. Where I was. (Laughs)

680
681 SB: Were there people dancing or throwing up signs---

682
683 RD: Throwing up signs and smiling and happy and sort of like, hey! We did it. And ya know. It was yea.
684

685 SB: Wow. Um. I'm trying to think, what else can I ask you about um about South Africa? So were you
686 able to meet Nelson—you met him twice by this point. Correct?

687
688 RD: Yea.

689
690 SB: Were you able to meet him again?

691
692 RD: No. I wasn't actually there for the parties and what have you. Once the election was over, we were
693 out of there ya know.

694
695 SB: Okay. And then you showed me a couple pictures before we started the interview. Um and you said
696 you went to a party after the elections?

697
698 RD: Yea and he wasn't there. It was like a. And I'm thinking. I can't think of the name of the little city.
699 I think it was Pretoria???. It was a capitol. I don't want to say the capital of Johannesburg or what. I
700 don't remember where. It was a capitol city and I think it was Pretoria???. and they gave a little
701 celebration. (clears throat) It was not just for the labor people but for the religious people the labor
702 people. All the people that were involved in the in the movement. And in this. So it was a little party. It
703 was real nice.

704
705 SB: Very nice. Um. Just to go back a little bit. You were talking about Barry who was your driver and
706 your protector. Before the interview again you showed me a few pictures of him and you talked about
707 him a little bit. Can you talk about him a little bit more?

708
709 RD: He was a young man. Very uh very nice young man. He uh drove real fast. (Laughs) Because I
710 didn't realize until I got there that there were no speed limits in South Africa and um. We had to go to
711 quite a few places. And when were debriefing the first night, after I rode with him all day, I asked him. I
712 asked everybody at the debriefing, was Barry studying to be a pilot because that wanted to know why.
713 Why would you say that about Barry? And I said its because he drives so fast. So that got to be the joke
714 but after that, he kind of slowed down for me because he was moving. (Both laugh) He was moving.
715 And also he took us. One time, we were on our way to a polling place and they had blown out a side of
716 the mountain that we were supposed to go through. And he asked me if it was okay if we went the back
717 roads. And I said, yea. And you know he. I didn't know the back road was built back before they built
718 automobiles. And it used to be for one lane. Now it was for two-lane traffic going down there. So the
719 side we were riding on was on the edge of the mountain and I was looking down and I was about to die.
720 It was interesting. He took very good care of me. (Laughs) I had a pillow up to the window so I didn't
721 have to look out. (Both laugh) But uh. And he would he was prepared to give his life for his team and
722 there were two of us on that team. And he let us know that. We even saw one incident where Africans
723 just had to throw themselves over (Chokes up) someone to protect them they thought was in danger.
724 Yea.

725
726 SB: Were there any people in particular that, um, other than Barry that uh you met when you went to
727 South Africa that you still remember clear as day today?

728
729 RD: You you know we were involved with the its like the AFLOICO???. its called Cosato???. Cosato???.
730 And it's the their group like the AFLOICO???. and I met several people because that's who our

731 connection was with. And uh they were the people that came in every night and talked to us and
 732 debriefed and told us what to be careful of. Where to eat where to not to eat. Ya know. And and what to
 733 do. And um how to stay out of danger and Cosato??? was the union there. And I'm trying to think what
 734 actually union. I can't remember right off of. But Cosato??? was actually the group that greeted us when
 735 we got there. That showed us around and what have you. And I met several people in the group. I don't
 736 remember their names right off but they were people, if I ever saw their faces again I would remember.
 737 Because it was very warm. Very friendly. So happy for us to be there in this struggle with them.
 738

739 SB: Would you say generally, most people you worked with um that were from South Africa were just
 740 so excited for everybody to come over and help?
 741

742 RD: Oh yea. They were. And not nothing like I expected but they were just ya know excited. Pleased
 743 with us being there so grateful and there was such a gracious people. They really were. It was just a. For
 744 me, it just felt like being home.
 745

746 SB: Really?
 747

748 RD: Yea. It really did. I had a feeling within myself that ya know. This is home. This the motherland.
 749 (Both laugh) This is it. Yea.
 750

751 SB: Wow. Um, so just to go back a little bit. What was your very first impression of South Africa?
 752 When you first got off the plane and were just seeing everything?
 753

754 RD: When I first got off the plane was that the airport looked just like Chicago and New York. (Both
 755 laugh) I'm telling you. It was nothing like what I had in my mind. It looked like uh a city here in the
 756 U.S. Ya know? And I didn't go into uh basically I was in the cities. I never went into rural areas. Except
 757 for I never went into the rural areas. I had other friends that were assigned to the rural areas. That were
 758 on the trip with us because we were assigned all over. And I had a girlfriend who was a very close friend
 759 if mine. And we have been friends for years that lived in Detroit and she was telling me about the rural
 760 areas. Now, in talking about the rural areas, and I think I might have went through some. I think Barry
 761 might have taken us, drove us through some. It was amazing that it reminded me so much of slavery.
 762 Because these people worked on these sort of farms or whatever. And whoever owned them basically
 763 owned the people and actually taught them told them how to vote. And it. I must have went in some
 764 areas because I remember them someone bringing a whole wagonload of people to vote. And it was very
 765 clear to us, they were voting whatever this young man who brought them there were. So it was um it
 766 reminded me in watching that group. I had to be there because in watching all I could think about this is
 767 so much like slavery in the south. You know.
 768

769 SB: So it seemed that their vote was more or less picked for them?
 770

771 RD: Yea. Yea. And they had to be back. You couldn't vote in. If you worked in um Cape Town (RD
 772 taps on desk) you had to go back to vote wherever you lived at. You could not vote in Cape Town so
 773 there were a lot of people that had to leave their jobs to go back to their home. To vote. Yea.
 774

775 SB: Did they did they risk losing their job to go back home and vote or---
 776

777 RD: I don't think so. I don't think so. But I some people worked a long way from where they lived so.
778
779 SB: Um, what do you feel was your most important take away from being involved in the election?
780
781 RD: Is being part of history. (Laughs) And being part of the process to help create this this this history
782 was just. Just just took my heart.
783
784 SB: Um, can are there any other stories that you haven't already told me about your experience in South
785 Africa that are just your favorites? It seemed like you really liked Barry a lot and you like talking about
786 him. Was there anything else that you haven't mentioned yet?
787
788 RD: Not that I can think of.
789
790 SB: Okay. Um, how did you react to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report and Conclusions?
791
792 RD: I don't even remember.
793
794 SB: You don't remember? (RD laughs)
795
796 RD: Its been quite awhile.
797
798 SB: Okay. Um, just to go back and ask a few questions I didn't ask before, how many children do you
799 have?
800
801 RD: I had four children. My son passed in 2002.
802
803 SB: I'm sorry to hear that.
804
805 RD: He had non-Hodgkin's disease. So I have three daughters left. Um hum.
806
807 SB: My grandpa actually had that too so---
808
809 RD: Oh okay.
810
811 SB: Um, how what have you taught your children about life through your activism?
812
813 RD: Its amazing. It seems like you're not getting through to your children but I do really begin to
814 believe children watch what you do more than what you say. I know I have. All of my kids know from
815 back there are certain things that they have to do. Elections they must vote. They all had to bring me,
816 once they got of age, they all had to bring me whatever they got from the polling place to let me know
817 that you voted. And we talked a little bit about who to voted for and why you should and how you
818 should. You know. You don't have to do it because I do it. If you have questions you should ya know go
819 look for the answers. And they uh I have one daughter who I could never get involved. All of my kids
820 got involved in elections. Worked the polls. Um, I actually had one who became a steward in the union.
821 But I have one daughter who just just nothing. (SB laughs) And this year for our president's election.
822 She she lives now in Minneapolis. Right outside of Minneapolis in Robbinsdale???. And I always talked

823 about ya know President Obama running and I knew him and that I had done some work with him on
 824 organizing in Resurrection Hospital. And that what a good person he was and everything. And ya know
 825 they should take a good look at him. And my daughter in Minnesota was uh I don't wanna. You know
 826 its politics. But she works for a law firm in Minnesota. And its it's a there's not many African
 827 Americans that work in that law firm but in the building there is a law firm with several African
 828 Americans. And they sort of meet up at lunch and they had gotten tickets because Michelle Obama was
 829 going to be in Minnesota and they offered her one. And when she went to see Michelle Obama. (SB
 830 laughs) After all those years of me trying to get her involved in something. She got involved in the
 831 campaign. She worked in the campaign. She went to all the rallies she was oh boy calling me for. Mama,
 832 I'm so close to him I could touch him. I'm at this rally and so is so is why I'm here and I'm just. It just
 833 amazed me so. I guess it was just what they do. At some point it clicks in.

834
 835 RD: I have like I said my son, before he passed was very involved in activism. He um was a people
 836 movement person and getting young people to use the computer. He worked with state senators to get
 837 money to do different programs. In fact he just ran a program called, Middle Passages where he taught
 838 you kids who couldn't afford computers could use em and taught them how to use them. So he was.
 839 They say he was always more like me than any of them.

840
 841 RD: I have one daughter who is in management for Amtrak who I was very proud of because. But taking
 842 a management job. But I was on the Amtrak train going from Philly to Washington or something and a
 843 young guy came back and said, you Miss Shannon's mother? I just want to tell you she's such a good
 844 supervisor. She saved my job and blah blah blah. And so I said, yea I did teach her something. (Both
 845 laugh) Even though she's in management so. They all actively involved either in their unions or in their
 846 communities now and what have you. And I think they're at the age now where they understood what
 847 was going on back then when I was moving around all over the place.

848
 849 SB: Its slightly off topic but you said you know uh President Obama?

850
 851 RD: Yea. I have a great picture with him too. He was part of a. We were organizing a well before
 852 organizing people. When he was running for Senate in Illinois. Let's see. I worked with him then. I was
 853 part of that campaign and then my unions organizing people in Resurrection Hospital and he came out to
 854 the organizing drive with us. And before he announced he was running for president he was the keynote
 855 speaker at our convention in Chicago, the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists. So uh yea. I knew him.
 856 And but everyone says, you think you going to see the president again? And I said I doubt it. (Both
 857 laugh) But I got my picture blown up on my wall. (Laughs) I sent all my kids a picture in May of 07. I
 858 took a picture with him. And so I sent my kids then all a picture on the computer and just emailed them
 859 all. My youngest. My oldest granddaughter had it put on canvas and gave it to me for my birthday on
 860 canvas. And my sister in law was in Atlanta. That's where my granddaughter is and she says, do you
 861 know you're on display in an art museum in Atlanta? I'm on display? See a picture of you and President
 862 Obama is on display. And I said, how did that happen? And then my granddaughter said, well he asked
 863 me if when he took one of you, if he could keep one for himself? But I was just I had no idea that he was
 864 going to put it you know on display there. My sister in law came from Memphis but was in Atlanta
 865 doing something else and happened to go into this art. And she said, you know that lady up there? And
 866 he said, no but her granddaughter is a client of mine. (Both laugh) So yea. So that. Was yea. I had some
 867 really wonderful blessings in my life.

868

869 SB: Definitely.

870

871 RD: To get involved---

872

873 SB: Definitely. Was there a any did you see any relation in to how Obama is versus Nelson Mandela?

874 Um, just personality wise or anything you think---

875

876 RD: You know, I had never thought about it. But when you do think about it he is sort of laid back like

877 Nelson Mandela was and cool. (Laughs) Yea, there are some similarities. I never really made that

878 connection but when you think about it, there are some similarities there. Both deep thinkers. You can

879 look at both of them and tell they're thinking. (Both laugh) Because I always liked that about President

880 Obama. He uh you can look at him and tell he's thinking before he says anything. And I thought, why

881 can't I do that? It just comes out of my mouth. (Both laugh) Yea.

882

883 SB: Um, so these are a couple of questions just asking about you know just reflection questions. They're

884 asking what you think about things. Um, so what of your childhood experience do you feel um was

885 important to your development as an activist?

886

887 RD: I have to say, my aunt. Being an activist in the community which I really didn't know back then

888 how important it was. Uh and I always thought my mother's baby sister and she was one of my

889 favorites. She was my favorite aunt. And just just her being involved in politics. Just being involved in

890 the community. And then I learned from um my mother that her mother was an activist. In the

891 community. Just by accident she was like a precinct captain or active in politics in that area. At that time

892 when my grandmother was living, I never. I don't remember. She passed when I was about two years

893 old. But um. A lot of the people talk about it but that time the whole community were Republicans and

894 so there was some change somewhere in the area and I found out later that it was basically because

895 Abraham Lincoln freed the slaves and most African Americans were Republican during those years.

896

897 SB: Um, I'm trying to see. You answered a lot of these questions. Um---

898

899 RD: You know, that last question you asked, I think my aunt was instrumental but also I had an uncle

900 who was an activist in a different kind of way. My mother's baby brother. He owned like the

901 neighborhood ma and pa grocery store in the neighborhood. And my uncle was so into looking out for

902 people. I think the combination of both of them. And my mother wasn't so much of an activist but they

903 were. I mean uncle was everybody in the neighborhood has a little grocer card. They paid them and I

904 guess probably half of them he probably died and half the people owed him. Ya know? (Laughs) He

905 believed all of the children in the neighborhood should be fed and they should not go to school without.

906 And he would make us get up and open the store if miss so and so didn't have no milk or cereal for the

907 kids and she'd call him and we'd come by. We would have to go open the store and make sure miss so

908 and so got milk and cereal. And I think that part of his the community part of my family and and the

909 political part, when you put that all together, I I think that's probably what made me more active in

910 caring about people and what's going on in life.

911

912 SB: Okay. Um, so you talk a little bit about how Harold Washington's election meant so much to you.

913 Um, could you talk a little more about that?

914

915 RD: Yea. It was. Harold Washington was really really very very special to me. I um was active in my
916 local union. I may have been. I wasn't president at the time. There had never been a lay off in civil
917 service in the state of Illinois. There was no such thing. That's why most African Americans took state
918 jobs because you got vacation, you got sick time and there was never a layoff. And in nineteen sixty. I
919 dunno maybe late sixties, there was the first layoff ever in the state of Illinois uh civil service jobs. They
920 called them that back then. And um Harold Washington was a, I guess a senator in the state or
921 something and the president of my local at that time, took us to meet with him. I think they were going
922 to lay off 140 people out there on the job where I worked. And I wasn't one of them. But I guess, part of
923 my activism, right? (Laughs) I was going to fight for the ones who was going to get laid off. And we
924 met with Harold Washington and that was my first meeting. And he did everything he could to save
925 those jobs. He saved over half of those jobs. And so that from then on he was my my person in life. I
926 had no idea he was ever going to run for mayor of the city of Chicago. So I got to know him personally
927 because we had been to his office. And my president, she knew him very well so I got to know him and
928 um. He then at some point, when he was running for election for the city of Chicago said that if he ever,
929 if he got elected the mayor of the city of Chicago, he would give collective bargaining to city employees
930 which they did not have at that point. They had some sweetheart deals for the laborers and those kinds of
931 groups. But the people that I represented were like housekeepers, and janitors and um people that
932 worked in hospitals and clerks. Ya know and those kinds of people. That he would give us collective
933 bargaining so hey. I was on it. (Laughs) We started working on with Harold we endorsed him. We were
934 one of the first unions I think to endorse him. Um we had a big breakfast and what have you. And then
935 we started organizing city employees but I was part of from the beginning of his election I was part of it.
936 It was just it was just and that. When that happened, I mean going through that whole process,
937 organizing city employees, him getting elected. Him giving us collective bargaining, our first contract
938 with the city. You know all of that was just so. He was one of my favorite people. (Laughs) In this
939 whole wide world.

940
941 SB: It sounds like you were really blessed to know so many---

942
943 RD: Oh yea. Yea.

944
945 SB: And just to have that experience.

946
947 RD: And basically it came through my labor union. Ya know and my involvement in it. And in the labor
948 unions and yea.

949
950 SB: Um, how did you feel about the Truth and Reconciliation Process?

951
952 RD: Now, you know. That's the one I couldn't remember right. I couldn't even remember where I was.
953 Of that I'm sure.

954
955 SB: Um okay. Who are you still in contact with of the friends you made during the anti-apartheid
956 movement? You said that you---

957
958 RD: Who am I?

959
960 SB: Yes.

961

962 RD: Uh, Cathy Devine. Who was one of our coordinators. Harold Rogers who was also one of our
963 coordinators. Who is was out of the uh Teacher's Union but not out of the Chicago Teacher's Union.
964 Uh, adult teachers out of the junior colleges and what have you. Um, he still belongs to the Coalition of
965 Black Trade Labor Unionists. Several of the other people that I showed you pictures of that were part of
966 unions that I. That were part of our movement. Yea.

967

968 SB: Um, how often do you see them?

969

970 RD: Harold, I see at least once a month. Cathy, we don't see often but we talk on the phone. Other
971 people I see at meetings or at um dinners or things that I still do. I still get involved in a lot of those
972 kinds of things. Social events.

973

974 SB: Um, how would you say being active in the movement changed your life?

975

976 RD: It made me take a real look at myself and uh made me very conscious of how people are treated and
977 what we must do to be part of helping people change their lives. And how they feel about it. And just be
978 active in things on a daily basis to make sure people are living the best life that they can.

979

980 SB: So, what what sort of activism do you still do?

981

982 RD: Well, right now, I'm active in my health club. (Both laugh) I'm very um active in my church now
983 more than I was when I was working. Um I do volunteer work there once a week. Um, and I take a class
984 there. I'm active in the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists still. I also still sit on the uh Chicago
985 Federation of Labor executive board. So I um whatever's going on in the labor movement I'm very
986 much aware of. And some kind of ways involved in it just based on how it is rallies and what have you.
987 For different things.

988

989 SB: Okay, um. Let's see, is there anything that you feel is important for me to cover that I haven't
990 already asked you about?

991

992 RD: I don't think so.

993

994 SB: Okay.

995

996 RD: You made me think.

997

998 SB: (Laughs)

999

1000 RD: You know. I'm retired. I don't think this much anymore. (Laughs)

1001

1002 SB: When did you retire?

1003

1004 RD: 2005.

1005

1006 SB: Okay. Um, is there any stories you thought of from South Africa or anything at all?

1007

1008 RD: No.

1009

1010 SB: Okay.

1011

1012 RD: I know its something back there. Its just not clicking but if you think of it. But if it should come up,
1013 can I give you a call?

1014

1015 SB: Yes. Go ahead. Thank you so much.

1016

1017 RD: And thank you.