

Tiffani Smith: _____ the interview with you. And just to get started with a couple of questions-

Bradley Bledsoe: Okay. Just in general information; can you say your name and what year you were born?

Julia Allen: Julia **Welford** Allen. And I was born October 20, 1925.

Bradley Bledsoe: Were you born in Memphis?

Julia Allen: Yes.

Bradley Bledsoe: What's your occupation?

Julia Allen: Well, I guess I had several different positions but mainly it was social work. But I'm, of course, retired. And I didn't, a lot of the time when my children were young, I was at home.

Bradley Bledsoe: Can you tell us a little bit more about your social work?

Julia Allen: I worked at the Red Cross as a case worker for three years. No, two years. I worked at **MIFAy** _____ for five years. I was there when there were only two people, the director and me. I have done – I guess the only **other** work then that I've done **ishas thenbeen** when I came to the Kenney program and directed here, this here at Roads. And that was five years. And I did take a short stint just as a fill in at the library. But the rest of the time I was a homemaker.

Bradley Bledsoe: Can you tell us a little bit about your parents? What were their names? And where were they from?

Julia Allen: My parents were from Memphis, both born in Memphis of Memphis parents. My mother was Roberta **Prothfro** Welford. She was a teacher before she married. Then she was a homemaker. My father was Harry – I have to always think about this. Harry Alexander Welford. His son was Harry Walker Welford, my brother. And both of them were born in 1895. He was a lumberman. He was an avid tennis player. At one time he was runner up to the Memphis City champion.

He was a gardener. That was just his avocation. They were both strong Presbyterians. They belonged to **Adolawn**. And so we were reared with that background. They built a home, first, off of North Parkway – South Parkway, I guess it would be. And then they built a home on Stratsmore. And then they build a home on

West Drive, where I was born. And that's the only home I ever knew.

Bradley Bledsoe: Can you describe your home live during this era?

Julia Allen: It was – as I told Tiffani – very stable. I felt absolutely secure all the time. And it was a privileged life, I realize, looking back. There was one break in it. All the three of us children were ereas surprised to have a baby sister. When I was the baby and got replaced 10 years later. That was very unsettling. But the other break was – the real break before my little sister was born – my mother was ill for a year. She had depression. So each of us children were fawned out to a relative.

And I just went three doors down the street to live with my uncle. And far from unsettling to me, I've never had so much attention and coddling and spoiling in my whole life. Because they always wanted a little girl and never had one. And I could always go down the street and see my dad and the dog. And so that was just for a year. And then my mother recovered enough to be at home. She was always rather fragile and had to be sure that she didn't get under too much stress _____ to return.

Bradley Bledsoe: When you said your uncle lived three doors down; where you close to a lot of the people that lived around you? Relative wise or friends?

Julia Allen: Oh, yes. My brother went to live with Welford grandparents on McClain. We were all kept in the neighborhood. My older sister went to live with my aunt, my mother's sister, who had two daughters. And they were similar-~~in~~ ages. So none of us really felt that the family relationship was broken or that we were somehow adrift.

Bradley Bledsoe: What kinds of activities were you involved in when you there, besides school?

Julia Allen: Well, you know, I realize that they all centered in the neighborhood there in Heinunt Park. I did take dancing and I did take piano until the teacher told my mother it was pretty much a loss cause. But the rest of the time my activities were with friends, playmates. Sometime we came over here to Roads. And my brother especially loved to come over here. And then he went to daycare that they had here. But we rode bicycles. And our friends were centered here. You know I really didn't go far field growing up.

- Bradley Bledsoe:* And do you think that close knit relationship you had with the neighborhood, do you think that affected you later in life?
- Julia Allen:* I think it made me want to come back here.
- Bradley Bledsoe:* After you'd moved away?
- Julia Allen:* Um-hmm.
- Tiffani Smith:* Was the close relationship because of your family? Was it just your family or was it with the entire neighborhood or just ~~everybody~~ Evergreen in general?
- Julia Allen:* That's hard for me to decipher, for sure. Because at the time I just was living it and not evaluating it. I guess it was really both. It would be hard for me to say.
- Bradley Bledsoe:* And where did you go to ~~_____~~ ?elementary?
- Julia Allen:* Snowden.
- Bradley Bledsoe:* Snowden. And middle school and high school?
- Julia Allen:* Middle school was Snowden then. It went all the way through. I went to ~~Hutcherson-Hutchison~~ High School.
- Bradley Bledsoe:* That's a private school?
- Julia Allen:* Um-hmm.
- Bradley Bledsoe:* Okay. What made your parents decide to make that change?
- Julia Allen:* My grandfather believed in private education and had given it to his four boys growing up. And so he wanted his grandchildren to do that. And so all of the grandchildren went to private school.
- Bradley Bledsoe:* Were you friends with people that were going to the public school, high school?
- Julia Allen:* Oh, yeah.
- Bradley Bledsoe:* ~~So it would be~~ I guess that would be Central-
- Julia Allen:* I kept my Snowden friends. In fact, even now about once a month or maybe not quite that often we have, what we call, a Snowden

group. And I get together with those friends who were friends of mine at Snowden. Those who are still alive.

Tiffani Smith: Are there any specific memories that stick out about Snowden or Hutchin~~son~~, when you were in school?

Julia Allen: I really can't think of anything. I always loved my teachers. Didn't have anything but positive experiences that I look back on. I was very shy. So I kept to a pretty small group of friends. And didn't really start thinking of doing well academically. I was just so so. My brother and sister ahead of me were excellent students. And I was just so so until the seventh grade. And I can just remember the day that I realized I didn't have to be just B's. I could make A's. And things just changed. I don't know. I guess it was a revelation.

Bradley Bledsoe: And after high school you came to R~~hodes~~oads? Is that right?

Julia Allen: Yes.

Bradley Bledsoe: Can you tell us a little bit about your experience here?

Julia Allen: I really wanted to go away but my parents had told, with my older sister, four years older, "We really can't afford to send you away all four years. But if you will go to Southwestern then for two years we'll let you go away to a school that we can afford." So my older sister took them at their word and went to the University of Illinois after her year, two years here.

My brother they treated differently. He went to Washington and~~in~~ Lee. He went away to prep school. Again, they thought a boy should get that very specialized education, I guess. I didn't question it. And so they told me the same thing. "We can't send you away." I was absolutely delighted to go to Southwestern. You could not have dragged me away after two years. And I attribute so much of my development to my four years here.

Bradley Bledsoe: You said your parents were strong Presbyterians. What church did you belong to?

Julia Allen: Adolawn Presbyterian.

Bradley Bledsoe: Can you describe church at the time that you were growing up?

Julia Allen: We had Paul Tudor Jones, who was really a cutting edge, at the time, Presbyterian minister on social issues, race relations. And he

incorporated that in his sermons. There were many people who didn't agree in the church but they loved him. And some left but many stayed even though they might not agree with him on some social stance that he took. But that was electrifying to me. And it carried over because Lawrence Kenney, who was, I guess, my mentor while I was here, the professor of religion and philosophy, was a member at Idlewild.

So I connected him in both places. And so it's hard for me to say. My development really centered on youth programs and things that happened at Idlewild, but much more at RoadsRhodes and the classes that I took and the professors I had. You know, then race relations were really in a primitive form. But for such as they were, it was the beginning of my following a more liberal path than what I grew up with. My parents were not bigoted. They always taught us to treat everyone with respect. And we couldn't just denigrating terms. And we didn't. But the status quo was acceptable to them.

Bradley Bledsoe: Now we're going to talk a little bit about your family. Were you married? And can you tell us a little bit about-

Julia Allen: Well, I married someone I met here, who graduated my freshman – he was a senior. I was a freshman. So while he was in seminary I was finishing RoadsRhodes, Southwestern. So we married the next year after his graduation and mine. And after a couple of years he thought —then that he wanted to be in – he was a Methodist, in the~~from a~~ Methodist pastorate. And I joined the Methodist church with him. So for a couple of years he was here at Saint Luke's United Methodist as a young associate and youth director.

As such, he started the Wesley Foundation at Memphis State because the church was right out there. And that really started a significant following ~~of~~ events in our lives. Because he decided he really would prefer to teach than to preach. But he never liked for me to say he left the ministry. He left the preaching ministry for the teaching ministry. So we went back to Duke, where he had done his seminary work for four years that he did his PhD work. And three of those four years, we directed the Methodist student fellowship at Duke with the Methodist students and all of their activities. And those were golden years. I just found it exciting to work with students, and he did too.

They were just the best of the best. Then after he got his PhD we went to Walford College in Spartanburg, South Carolina, a

Methodist school. ~~A m~~Men's school, at the time. And he, again, we led the Methodist students at Saint Mary Methodist Church, which was the college church for Walford College. We were there for three years. And our daughter and son were born there. And the summer after our son was born we were called to Lamb~~utheth~~ College in Jackson, Tennessee, a Methodist school. In South Carolina we were sort of stunned by the racial attitudes. We just weren't prepared for that coming from a background at Duke. But we learned to swallow our thoughts and we went to Lamb~~utheth~~.

And that's where we really got involved in civil rights. And we were there for seven years. Ray was an associate in religion and led the student religious life of the campus. I was an at-home-mom. And then our third child was born there. And we began to get our students to meet with the students at Lane College and join activities. And those were not necessarily appreciated by the community. I was involved in Church Women United there. And we did some things that weren't appreciated. Jackson was really where the lunch counter was integrated in sort of a riotous way. And Lane students were really involved in pushing. And we were supportive of that. At that time, I was chair of the Tennessee Council on Human Relations, which included Memphians and Jacksonians in civil rights efforts.

So ~~the f~~First Methodist church, where we were attended, had some people who didn't appreciate us. But we stayed and we were active. And then the opportunity to come to ~~Roads-Rhodes~~ came. And that was, as you can imagine, a joyful – I never thought Ray, being a Methodist, would be invited to teach religion at a Presbyterian school. But he went back as registrar and as dean of admissions to teach part-time in the religion department. And as time went by his time to teach was increased. And he was no longer registrar but dean of admissions and financial aid. And he was more involved with the life of the college. And as he was, I began to reach out for areas of expression of my ideas and wanting to be involved in change through Church Women United and through the YWCA.

And so I really was doing, for both of us, kind of, while he was involved on the campus. And I was busy with my children and with PTA work and the church, always the church. And I had, after three or four years, gone back to Idlewild because Ray was preaching on Sundays in Presbyterian churches as a member of the religion department here. And was not with us. And I was sitting with the children in the Methodist church with no family. I had all my family at Idlewild, my extended family. And there was no

youth program. There was no sports program.

There was no gym. And my children's cousins were all involved in all these wonderful activities at Idlewild. So after trying to be the baseball coach for the boys and being one of the advisors to our new youth program at the Methodist church; we just finally, we went-left. Ray did not go. He stayed a Methodist. But with his blessing we went to Idlewild. And all the children are Presbyterians now. And my daughter is a Presbyterian minister. And as the children grew older I began to do other things.

And some of the things I didn't mention; I got involved in Healing Wings. I had been involved in Mid-South Peace and Justice Center. Still, I am. But not actively. I mainly just monetarily support it. And as such, I had met, right after the, or during the revolution in Nicaragua, I had met a young seminary student who said why don't you come down to see for yourself what's happening and the wrong policies of the United States and all that. And I had an opportunity to go through the church, on a women's mission. So I went to Nicaragua right after the revolution. And it was mind boggling to me. And I became just immersed in what I could do for Central America, especially Nicaragua.

And I heard about a program called Healing Wings, which would bring children up from Central America that were identified with medical life threatening medical problems that couldn't be handled down there. If we could provide the hospital, the doctor and the stay for the child and the parent or grand-parent. And so I started a chapter of Healing Wings here. And we brought up, I guess during the course of five years, I guess we brought up seven or eight children. One of them, unfortunately, died after he went home. Most of these had heart trouble, had heart surgeries.

But we were able to provide free care. And so after that experience in Healing Wings, which eventually melded with a larger group because we were a struggling little group, I went on several mission trips through the peace making division of our Presbyterian church to Central America. And my husband went on to building things in Central America. Right now and for a long time, we've been involved in supporting – well, it used to be called the living wage campaign for justice.

It's for justice from employers to employees, mainly immigrants and ethnic people. And then two things that were important to Ray and me were to work at the polls. And we did that for years at

Trinity Methodist Church, which was the Evergreen area polling place. And let's see – I think I mentioned the other things to you or maybe I've already said them. But most of my activities centered around civil rights and peace and supporting issues that supported them. And my children are interested in those issues, as much as they can be.

My children all went through Snowden and Central. And my son went to Princeton. One daughter went to ~~Roads~~Rhodes, as I mentioned. She's the one in the ministry. And then my youngest daughter went to Davidson, and is a lawyer. And they have produced eight wonderful grandchildren. But my son is the only one who lives here and lives in the Evergreen neighborhood. And married a girl that he knew at Central, who also grew up in the Evergreen neighborhood. So my life still centers around Evergreen. Is that enough about my family? Too much, probably.

Tiffani Smith: Let's go back a little bit. You said you met your husband in college? Around what year was that?

Julia Allen: That was – we married in '48. So it would have been '47 when we were both – no. It would have been '43–~~44~~ that we were both in college. He graduated that year. I entered that year.

Tiffani Smith: Do you remember how you all met?

Julia Allen: ~~Through~~At freshman orientation. He was the big man on campus.

Tiffani Smith: Can you describe maybe not only what was going on on campus or in Memphis during that time period?

Julia Allen: Excuse me. Say that again?

Tiffani Smith: _____ that were going on in Memphis around that time, that you remember.

Julia Allen: Oh. I know that Billy Graham was a big movement. And he came and he had several big – they filled the stadium with the big campaigns or the evangelistic crusades. And a number of the friends that I knew really got caught up in that and left the established churches and went to more evangelical churches. Still are there, some of my best friends. And that was disturbing to us. And I remember Ray told me, I was not there, but he went to one of the crusades. And he was just never afraid to do this.

And he just stood up and asked a question that was sort of critical

of the approach. He didn't think it was deep enough. Other issues, on campus here and in the city, you know, we were not an integrated campus. Everything was still pretty tight shut. One day was opened to African Americans at the zoo. Students were not getting involved in that. By the time we came back to Roads Rhodes they very much were involved. And we were encouraged in whatever way we could. We were here during the period that they tried to integrate Second Presbyterian church.

And that was a big, big event in Memphis at the time. And Roads Rhodes, to its credit, never did back down from supporting the students and really being – I tribute that to Jamison Jones, who was dean. And he was one of Ray's real mentors. And then Jamison and Dot were with us and working at Central in the PTA, and encouraging us to make that a good integration and wholesome for everybody.

Tiffani Smith: I remember you talking about your views being different from your parent's views, versus politically. Did that stem from Roads?

Julia Allen: Probably more than any other place, and Ray. And I guess Ray got it from being at Roads Rhodes, too. My parents were always supportive. They were never, they never said don't you do that and that's really bad. But they didn't agree. Now, my brother has always disagreed. He's a very strong political Republican. And my sister was sort of in between somewhere. And my little sister is in Michigan. And she's probably the strongest Republican of all. So when I get with my immediate family we just don't talk politics.

Tiffani Smith: Can you remember what was it like getting married so young during that time period? Maybe some things that happened being a young wife?

Julia Allen: My husband ~~probably~~ probably tell you all the things that I did. But at the time I didn't see as unusual. That was when I was working at the Red Cross. I really can't remember. I remember being involved with his working with students at the University of Memphis, Memphis State, it was then. And he was good at that. He was really good at that. I just can't think of anything significant.

Tiffani Smith: When you all got married did you all still live in Evergreen?

Julia Allen: No. We lived out by the church. They had a parsonage for all the young associates and his wife. And they were very good to us. But I'm sure they realized that I had a lot to learn.

Tiffani Smith: Can you tell us the difference maybe about being in that neighborhood or environment compared to Evergreen? The transition for you?

Julia Allen: We lived on a street that has continued to declined. Then it was stable but it just has not been kept up. And the homes are now in – it's a pretty bad neighborhood, disrepair. It was a duplex and a member of the church owned it and gave it to the church for our use. We were surrounded by very nice neighbors. But I would not have felt comfortable. It was out, you call can probably identify, it's out on Park Avenue near Howell.

It's right off in that area. And I caught the bus everyday to go down to the Red Cross, which then was downtown. I would not have felt comfortable walking by myself at night in that neighborhood. But they had a little corner grocery where I could pick up what was for supper. And we were pretty involved with the activities of the church. –Very happy. Always were.

Tiffani Smith: Was this before you had your children, as well?

Julia Allen: Yeah. We didn't have our children until we went to Walford College.

Tiffani Smith: And that was in South Carolina?

Julia Allen: Um-hmm.

Tiffani Smith: What was the difference to you from Memphis going to South Carolina?

Julia Allen: Well, because we had been in a college atmosphere, a Duke atmosphere; Ray was working at that time with an interracial group on Chapel Hill, a collegiate group at North Carolina State. We had been in much more open thinking atmosphere. And in South Carolina there was none of that. To be involved with a black college that was in Spartanburg was really – well, as I told you – they had police patrolling when we had a joint effort to bring Cry The Beloved Country, a play, to a black church that our college and their college supported. Because they were afraid of trouble. But those were the only things. Except we did encounter some opposition in Jackson.

Tiffani Smith: Can you talk about that a little bit more?

Julia Allen: When we left to go to Southwestern from Lambuth, the president showed us letters that he'd gotten sent to him to say that he shouldn't have _____ communists on his faculty. And we were named. And I took great pleasure in telling people, when I would encounter people who differed with me. They would say, "Where are you from? Where are you troublemaker from?" And I would say, "Memphis." And it would just totally destroy them. They thought I was going to say Detroit or New York or something like that. But just so, they didn't have anything to say after that. We had neighbors that we knew didn't appreciate the fact that we had interracial groups at our house. But we had wonderful friends, too. So-

Bradley Bledsoe: Can you describe raising a family in sometimes hostile environment? How you taught your kids to ignore some of the things they saw, say in _____ South Carolina or in Jackson?

Julia Allen: Well, they were two little in South Carolina really to remember when we left South Carolina. But yes, again, a lot of what we did with the children concerned the campus. And we had students that felt as we did. So I think that they really – I don't remember sitting down and talking to them and yet, our discussions sometimes to each other, the children clearly overheard. And they were learning that integration in Jackson was having its problems. Some things happened at Snowden that were disconcerting. One year, weekendour _____, my parents were working in my sister's to put my youngest, who was the last one to go through Snowden, in Saint Mary's.

And I went over there to be one of the parents to help with a field trip. And I was real disturbed at the lack of control and bad language and the total isolation this little group of mainly Roads Rhodes faculty children, my child being one of them, sitting on a bus that they had chartered to go to the jail. That was very clearly organized. And these were eighth graders. And they were walking in front of the jail cells. And the inmates would reach out, "Aren't you scared of us," and stuff like that. That I thought was very – and it was no preparation or making it a learning experience. And the teacher was yelling at the kids. There was a little island of the white ones just here. And then the rest of the bus was filled with black students.

Nothing bad was going on between them but there was no interaction. Obviously two separate groups. And that disturbed me. And so I took Catherine over, my youngest, to get treated, you kow tested to go to Saint Mary's. And they told her that she would

have to go to summer school. She was a good student. I guess she was a ninth grader at that time. Because she was getting ready to go to high school. And she would have to go for math and she would probably have to go for English, maybe. And Catherine took the test. And now beginning to think about it now, real bad feelings. And my two older children just fussed that here I would do that after all that I had said and stood for and everything. And Catherine said she didn't want to go. She really didn't want to go. So I called and backed out of that.

But at Central, that was mostly a very positive experience. And they had great educations. They were in the advanced placement courses and they had good teachers. But there were some rough spots where the kids from Northside had to learn how to act, not be unruly in assemblies. Some assemblies just had to be adjourned, they were so unruly at first. That disappointed my children. And then we had to fight to have a senior prom. And at that time I was president of the PTA. And the principal said we couldn't have one. It was too dangerous and the school couldn't be responsible.

Tiffani Smith: Why was it too dangerous?

Julia Allen: Because they were afraid there would be some interracial incident. So we got the PTO, which they called in then instead of the PTA, got an insurance policy for one night with **Calyers**. He was a friend of our family's. And we were able to have it. Because we would be responsible, not the school. It went absolutely smoothly and we had an integrated group of parents down at the Peabody Skyway. And it was wonderful. And from then on they never had a break in their prom. And I keep up with parents whose children are at Central now, that I know, that go to Idlewild. And it's been such a good experience for them. And they think it's a great school. And I know some of the faculty. So it's still a good school.

Tiffani Smith: How did the prom, that going okay, did that affect the rest of Memphis? Did people know that was going on? Was that happening everywhere else as well?

Julia Allen: I don't think it was – I don't know if other schools had this. Central probably was one of the prominent schools to have, one of the first to be **fullyreally** integrated. And so I really only know what we did. I haven't heard what other – but I think the principal would have know if other schools were going through some decision making in this regard.

Tiffani Smith: Can you talk more about their relationship with Northside?

- Julia Allen:* Northside was one of the feeder schools of Central. I don't know exactly whether they drew a line that extended Central's domain further. I don't know how they did that. I should know but I don't. But a great many Northside students came, as well as from other. I and I think now it's opened some of those – where you stand in line and applied in the area. I don't know. But I would imagine they were following the mores of their school experience. And perhaps they didn't have assemblies or if they did, they didn't require order and décor, politeness. But they do now.
- Tiffani Smith:* And Northside was an African American school. Correct?
- Julia Allen:* That was after what?
- Tiffani Smith:* That was an African American school.
- Julia Allen:* Yes.
- Tiffani Smith:* So did they integrate with Central?
- Julia Allen:* Central was totally white. And then they integrated.
- Tiffani Smith:* Okay. So they became, kind of, one school in a sense?
- Julia Allen:* Um-huh. It took awhile for that to happen but it did.
- Tiffani Smith:* I remember you talking about maybe your experiences and how you became liberal because of RhodesRoads. How did you, kind of, instill that in your children? What kind of examples of thing that they experienced where you had to make that known?
- Julia Allen:* Well, they saw that we had black friends and black meetings. We were doing activities. My older daughter was part of a group that I did getting some high school students from the white community and the black community together through~~from the~~ church relations that I had through Church Women United. And these youth would get together and talk about black/white relations. And we tried to offer them opportunities for good experiences. And we certainly reacted~~were reacting~~ to any bad experiences that we saw. And they are just wonderful. We're still chained to the past sometimes whether we like it or not. And they are freed up, more freed up. And that's really good.

Tiffani Smith: Can you talk about, maybe, did they receive any backlash or any problems because you and your husband were so prevalent in these activities?

Julia Allen: I don't know that they did. But I do remember when Martin Luther King was assassinated. My older daughter was with some friends. She was a teenager then, maybe 13, 14. And they were people who had some real racial prejudice. And it came out on the TV. And so the girls whose home it was and her other friend began dancing around, "Hooray. Hooray." And my daughter just couldn't get over their reaction. She was so sickened by it. And the mother even joined in. And then the mother kind of caught herself. But Julie went home. She just was horrified. I really, I don't know that we taught in words as much as their just observing and listening and having opportunities to have friendships across racial lines.

Tiffani Smith: I also remember you telling me about a time when your husband was taking your daughter to school.

Julia Allen: Oh, that was back in Jackson. He was going to church. And this was a church member. And he was crossing a busy intersection. And this man was in his car and he just gunned his car right towards my husband, who was walking across the street with this little girl in his arms. And, of course, put on the brakes just right in front of him. It was just a scare tactic to unnerve him. But it revealed his feelings. There were some in that church. Jackson was a difficult place at the time.

Tiffani Smith: When you came back to Memphis, I remember you talking about your husband participating in marches and just being very involved in things that were going on in Memphis. Could you talk a little bit about that?

Julia Allen: He was apart of the minister's march when Rabbi Waxetz, who was the prominent Jewish rabbi here, very highly regarded by all members of the community. He taught here at Rhodesoads part-time. And he led that march. And they marched to the mayor's office to persuade him to let down his stand and listen to the sanitation workers and their cause. And back down on his just, adamant refusal. And there's a famous picture of Rabbi Waxetz shaking his finger at the mayor. But some ministers lost their positions with their congregations for taking part.

Ray had no congregation, of course. But that was quite an earth shaking thing. And then there were marches, demonstrations.

Some broke down in some violence, breaking store windows and looting. And I had wanted to be apart of one of those but my husband really didn't want me to be. And I guess if had – he wouldn't have forbidden me. And if I really, really, really wanted to I could have done it and would have done it. So maybe I just wanted a reason not to do it. I didn't do it. But I had a black friend who never forgave me for that. She just always thought I was a waffler when push came to shove.

Tiffani Smith:

I remember you saying how you were involved, like you continue your position in many organizations 'til today. Can you talk about how that transitioned until today?

Julia Allen:

Well, old age has caught up with me. I'm not in leadership positions anymore. I'm more in making pledges that take out automatic bank deposits that go to two organizations; the living wage and peace and justice. I participate on the board of the public issues forum. And I'm the unit chair of outreach from our church. And we're involved in More Than a Meal, which feeds street people every Thursday night. And I serve thereat a lot of times. And I tutor at Idlewild school, which is one of our outreach projects. We have about anywhere between 30 and 50 women who do that regularly every week.

And I used to be the main recruiter but I got tired of that. And I felt like people were running every time they saw me coming because I was asking for something. So I try not to do that anymore. I really think those are the only two. I'm going to be chair of my study club, which is strictly a social study group. And I'm in two book clubs. One is the Rhodesoads Retirees book club and the other is just a general, mainly from Idlewild church friends. And we have a book club. And really those are really my major activities. I have some widow friends that go to theater in Memphis, movies and have supper together and stuff like that.

Tiffani Smith:

From your memory, looking back from now and then; can you compare Evergreen and how it has changed over time?

Julia Allen:

I think when I first lived in Evergreen there were fewer young people, young families and mainly middle aged and older families. At least on our street. But that certainly seems to have changed. And I think older people, from my perspective, are in the minority. And the more younger people who have come in and want to have their own home and fix it up. It's a very vital neighborhood and a very healthy neighborhood. To me, there's none of this keeping up with others. It's being your own self and accepting different kinds

of people who are your neighbors. And I like that. And I think it will come to East Memphis, where I now live. But it'll take some time.

Tiffani Smith: Where there a lot of people who once lived in Evergreen and moved to East Memphis? Can you describe that change or maybe why that happened or why the older people are not staying in Evergreen?

Julia Allen: I think on the part of some there's a sense of fear. But I think it's a false sense. I think there's crime everywhere and there's safety everywhere. But I think some people were afraid. Some people had gone into gated communities and a sense of being separated from traffic. And our community has just put in a gate, which kills my soul. But I got outvoted. So what can you do?

But I am going to move into **Tresvant** and I will work when I get in Tresvant. It's because I know there are only white people in Tresvant. And I'm going to try to work that out. And I don't like the fact that I will not be in an ethnically diverse community. I have lots of friends there. Lots of people from Idlewild there. I'll get along just fine but I'll probably have to get my social action things on the outside.

Tiffani Smith: Was there a specific event that inspired that fear in the Evergreen community?

Julia Allen: No. It's a perception that I'm sure you all have heard. That mid-town is dangerous and more crime, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. It happens wherever you live. And I think until we reorganize our economics you will continue to live among crime. And we can't hold others responsible for that, bad people or stuff. It's the way society has become because of our economics and our lack of concern that everybody have an opportunity.

Tiffani Smith: What made you move from Evergreen? Did you say that?

Julia Allen: We were looking for a house. We spent over a year looking for a – we ~~are were~~ ~~not in a~~ fixer upper~~s~~. So we didn't want another old house. We had bought an old house and there were always repairs that we didn't do ourselves. We were looking for a relatively new house and they were beginning to be built in the neighborhood. And we looked at all of them and none of them had downstairs bedrooms.

And we thought we had to have a downstairs bedroom at our ages.

And we just looked and looked until we finally ran out of options. And the realtor said, well, maybe you'll be interested in this. And it was exactly what we wanted. And at the time, if it had been gated we would not have moved there. But it was not gated when we moved there. Not gated for five years because we were part of the ones that voted against it.

Tiffani Smith: I forgot to you ask you. I remember you mentioning your relationship with Lemoyne Owen College and how that affected you. Could you talk just a little bit about that?

Julia Allen: There were people from the Lemoyne Owen faculty and staff who were active in Church Women United and I got to know the women. And then the Tennessee Council on Human Relations always, when we moved to Memphis, always met at Lemoyne Owen. And faculty members were involved there and we got to know them. Dr. Price, the president, was very active in that group. So I can to really appreciate the role that Lemoyne Owen, Lemoyne it was then, played in Memphis. Dr. Price was highly, highly respected. And that's-

Tiffani Smith: Do you think Memphis has changed a lot since that time period? Do you think things still need to be improved?

Julia Allen: Oh, without a doubt. We have a lot of work to do. But it has changed an awful lot. I think change seems very slow on the one hand. But when you measure it in the big picture it does happen and it has happened and it will happen. But it always has to kind of be forced, it seems. It doesn't just, out of the goodness of our hearts, we don't want to change. We don't like change.

Tiffani Smith: If you had any advice for us living in this time period right now; what would you say to us?

Julia Allen: Keep being involved. I would say keep positive. There's always something you can do. Never as much, you would like to accomplish more. But it's amazing what one person who cares can do. I've seen it happen.

Tiffani Smith: WasIs there anything that you would like to say that we haven't covered?

Julia Allen: I think I talked your arm off. I can't think of anything. I'd love to hear from you but that's not what this is about.

Tiffani Smith: Well, on behalf of Crossroads to Freedom, we would like to thank you for sharing your time with us and sharing your story.

Bradley Bledsoe: Thank you.

Julia Allen: Thank you.

[End of Audio]