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Interviewee: Adrienne Bailey

Interviewer: Zaria Jones and Ozakh Ahmed

Location: Mrs. Bailey's residence, Memphis, TN

Collection: Civil Rights

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Zaria Jones: On behalf of Crossroads to Freedom Rhodes College, we want to thank you for taking the time to share your story with us today. My name is Zaria Jones and I am a junior at Rhodes College.

Ozakh Ahmed: I'm Ozakh Ahmed and I just graduated from Rhodes College.

Adrienne Bailey: Yaaay!

Jones: So we are honored to meet you and to learn about your work and life here in Memphis through the years and also your history of leadership in the community. It is July 28, 2017. We are currently at Mrs. Bailey's residence in Memphis, TN and today's interview will be archived on the crossroads to freedom website.

Jones: And to start off our interview we'll ask just some basic biographical questions, so could you please state your name for us?

Bailey: Adrienne Leslie Bailey.

Jones: Thank you and what year were you born?

Bailey: 1951

Jones: Thank you, umm and where were you born and raised?

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Bailey: I was born and raised in Chattanooga, Tennessee.

Jones: Awesome, where did you grow up? Could you please describe the community you grew up in or the neighborhood?

Bailey: I grew up in Chattanooga in the city of Chattanooga, a lot of people in the outskirts but I was right in the city. Um segregated community in Chattanooga. From the first grade all the way through the twelfth grade, I went to all black schools and had all black teachers which was a wonderful thing. Teaching during that time was a revered occupation. And I think I received one of the finest public school education that one could get. My family, I had a mom and dad so

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I feel very blessed to have been brought up in a home with both parents. I had three sisters so it was four girls in the family so of course in that household it was always something about doing hair and clothes and I had two older sisters, one was ten years older, one eleven years older and my baby sister was just seven years younger than me so we had a wide spance there. Actually with that much of a spance in difference of ages it was kind of like I was brought up a only child there for a while with my sisters being so much older. I remember them when they were in high school, they were very popular and they were always

doing things. Of course I was running around and they were going like, go over there but then my baby

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sister came along and a loving nurturing family. It was a very close net family. My dad worked at the steal meal, he was a Crain operator. My mom worked some domestic jobs then later in life she worked at a school called Orange Grove School with developed mentally challenged young people and that was very rewarding work for her. I was very active in the community. In my high school especially, well it started really with my older sister. My older sister was a sweetheart of 8the club*. Both of my sisters were very popular so when I came along it was an expectation that I

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would follow in that mode and I did and in the eleventh grade I was voted to be the queen of the high school in my twelfth grade year so I was Miss.Riverside also the sweetheart of boys social club, the duke social club and both of those were distinctive honors and I'm very very proud of them and many people even til this day which has been many many decades, they still look at me as being the queen. I just returned recently to see some of my classmates during the holiday season and it was good seeing everyone and well uh those of us that are still standing but very rich childhood that where I was exposed to as much as one could be exposed

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to in a segregated community. I was a girl scout and I remembered our parents instilled in all of us hard work and I remember starting to work when I was fifteen, just a little bitty job but that's how I learned value and money and how to manage money and how to be responsible.

Jones: Thank you, I was going to ask you about your upbringing and your family but you described a lot.

Ahmed: I'm curious what your first job was.

Bailey: My first job was I worked at the Y and I was the little helper, little gofer at the desk where people would check in, it was apart of my job to make sure people signed in and signed out.

Jones: That's nice. You have to be very charismatic for those types jobs so that seems to suit you well.

Bailey: I think that's where it all started.

Jones: Yeah maybe.

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Alright, so umm so we did see that you attended Stevens College in Missouri, so what brought you to your decision to attend that college and what was your experience like there?

Bailey: I remember being in my English class, Mrs.Bail that was her name just a dynamic woman. I'm telling you my teachers were just incredible and she went around the class sand she wanted to know what are your future plans, where are you going to college. I mean that was the kind of environment that I received and

other students received at Riverside. It was the expectation that you were going to college not are you going to college but where you're going to college and when she called on me I said well I guess I'll go to Tennessee State, that's where my sisters went and she said to me Leslie I want to see you after

[7:00]

class and she discussed with me, Tennessee State have you looked further and I was going like well no not really. She said let me work on this, let me work on this and she had been a graduate of Bennet College so she did get to work and it ended up that I ended up with three offers actually. Bennnet was one, Stevens was one and Vassar was the third one and I discussed this with my parents and for two reasons they said Stevens would be the best place. First of all because they felt that was a little closer and they looked at the literature on the campus and then also Stevens gave a full scholarship.

Jones: That helps.

Bailey: Yeah, helped a lot because even

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though as I look it was an astronomical amount back then when I went there what the college tuition is is just off the charts. So that prompted the decision to attend Stevens College in Columbia, Missouri.

Jones: What was it like leaving Chattanooga and shifting into a different culture?

Bailey: It was a real culture shock for me and I must be very honest, that first year I didn't think I was gonna make it. Besides being away from home for the first time and Chattanooga was the kind of place I mean even if it looked like it was getting ready to snow everything was closed well in Missouri they didn't care if it was snow up to your eyeballs, nothing would close. I mean everything, life went on and the other thing

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Being all women, that was extremely different. The other thing when I enrolled in 1969 it was the largest black enrollment in the history of the college and it was thirteen women of color and reflecting back, there's a good side and a bad side to everything. I had some hard knocks but evidently, I needed to because I felt like once I finished Stevens College I was prepared for the word. It was nothing else that anyone could say or do to me that would shake me at that point. I got a good education, I was involved, I made sure I was involved in a lot of

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activities on campus. I was just talking with my roommate from college last night, we're still very good friends and I do give her credit. She was the most organized person I've ever met in my entire life and I think a very good influence on me because if she had a paper that was due at the end of the month she was finished with it by the fifteenth so by the twentieth or twenty-fifth she was tweaking it so umm, but it was hard. I'll be very honest with you because going into that environment it's like they open up the doors but they did no preparation. There were no black faculty, no really black people on staff except

the people that did the domestic work on campus, so we became very very active and even though the thirteen

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women of color that were on campus a lot of the girls just kind of stayed to themselves so it was about a core group of eight and in that core group were started kind of setting the path of helping Stevens College to build a better infrastructure to be more inclusive and during that time we did get a black staff member on there, counselor that we could interact with, that could help us. A faculty member which they've never had before and then we also created the Martin Luther King scholarship committee. I'm very very proud of that because we wanted

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to do something to make sure that when we left that there will be a continual of people of color because the thing is yes, it was an eye-opening experience for us but it was also an eye-opening experience for white girls on that campus who had not had that engagement. If you're going to train women and teach women to grow and learn they have to have the exposure on both ends, it's a disservice to every student on campus if you're not inclusive and when I went back to Stevens last year, I'm proud to say that the Martin Luther King scholarship is still in existence and they're still doing that job. We had a yearly awareness kind of week, kind of a cultural week and a lot came from that. It

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helped flush out not only what we learned or what our culture was about but what their culture was about and it also helped us to also realize that we had far more in common than we had in differences so very rich curriculum. We had plays and just forums and engagement during that week so I'm proud of the experience now that I look back on it but it was difficult.

Ahmed: What did that activity, how did that manifest, what did that look like in action, did you meet with administrative figures, did you hold any protesting type actions on campus?

Bailey: All of the above. Yes we did, we believed in working

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with the administration because basically they've never been approached or never been asked. So when they were asked, of course they had to ponder it and figure out you know and there was some resistance on some levels. Then we wanted the engagement. What we were doing wasn't just for our good as I said it was the good of everyone so there were white students and Asian students that wanted to join in with us and outside the chapel at Stevens there was a banister and we used to sit out there and we called it the black block and that's where we would sit and that's where we would hold our demonstrations and that was also where the guys from the zoo, I remember they were the KA'S, they would come over on horseback

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with their confederate outfits on and then these girls will have on these antebellum like cop outfits and so we would protest, we would definitely protest that because we thought that that was just like looking back, that is not looking forward and that is not what we want to be about here on our campus.

Ahmed: And so clearly you sort of developed these skills that have helped you here in the future to be a leader. What are some of those specific skills that you think that led you along this path because I think leadership is definitely one of those skills that you have to work on and develop?

Bailey: Well of course sometimes you're pressed into it, I mean when you see that hey things are not going right here, when you feel uncomfortable

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I don't think you should be the only one that's uncomfortable. Other people should be uncomfortable too and it's the consciousness and the awareness of it all and until people are pushed you usually don't get any action and you know when I look back on it because during that time that's when my future husband was out on the west coast pushing and I was there a lonely freshman starting that same kind of, because we all felt the unrest. It was like things are like this and they're gonna be like this unless we're the ones to change it and we didn't have any riots or anything

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but we made our positions known as women in the society and women on that campus that this isn't right and this is what we need to do to make it right or even to make it better.

Jones: And so, you just alluded to judge Bailey in your last answer but how did you, did you meet judge Bailey while you were in college or did you meet him after college?

Bailey: O yes, long after college. After I finished at Stevens I, you know it was really funny going into a women's college does something to you and I never, it never would have been my natural choice. I never would of selected like O yeah I wanna go to a woman's college but the thing that it does expose

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you to is you know who is gonna be the president of the student council, you know who's gonna be on the debate team. It's a given so it gives you a broader scope. So when I left Stevens I was gonna be a business woman. I was in communications and I really liked the production part of it but I was always pressed to be in front of the camera for some reason. I was one of the student directors of the TV station there on campus. I produced, I wrote, I did scripts for different productions but then my first job was at WWL TV in New Orleans in front of the camera and that was a good education too because

It taught me that that's not what I wanted to do. So I left

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broadcasting. I think I stayed in it one year and then I went into sales, I guess I have a sales personality. First it was in insurance which that was challenging and then it in the cosmetics industry and I travel throughout mostly from New York

all the way down to New Orleans and from Missouri over to the east coast was my*eriaye* even though I would go beyond that sometimes but I met him on a, because Tennessee was one of my territories, I met him here in Memphis so I was in Memphis at least once a month and the funny thing is it's a job that seems so glamorous but it wasn't because

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basically you travel, you live out of a suitcase. Sometimes I will just make it home in time to pay my rent on my little apartment in Nashville that's where I was based out of in Nashville and it was such a lonely existence that I would try to connect with someone in the city that was going into otherwise I would live my life in a hotel room. I would live, and it was goldsmith then, goldsmiths and I would go to my hotel room and I'd have order in my room service and read a book or watch TV and then go at it the next day, not very exciting so I had a girl I met through one of my neighbors in Nashville. I met a girlfriend here that I at least would know and I had someone to eat dinner with so on this occasion

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and this is so hard to believe but her name is Lourice and Lourice said, you know I said well lets go to dinner and she said well I had lunch with this legal secretary but I left my jacket in her office and it was getting chilly because it was that time of year when it was hot in the day time then it would cool off at night so she said I need to pick up my jacket and I said ok you go pick up your jacket and she said well that doesn't make any sense, she said I can just pick up the jacket and we'll go to dinner from them and I was like O okay, so who's office was it?

Jones: Judge Bailey.

Bailey: Yes, yes, he was practicing law with his brother and Otis Higgs at that time and I remember walking in and I remember seeing the back of him

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down a long hallway and he turned around and looked at me and he did a double take and he got up and he asked me could he help me and I told him I'm just like here with my ** and he invited me back to the conference room where his brother Walter and Otis Higgs works, I said you all are discussing business, he said O no no no come in sit down so I sat down and they were asking what seemed like 20 questions, where you're from, you know what's your name and I was going like ugh and as we talked we were just talking and then out of the blue his brother says D army is not married and I'm going like ugh ok

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Jones: Good Information

Bailey: Yeah thanks, so I think D army was a little embarrassed at that time too so he asks he said you want to see my office, I'm like ok so he took me to his office which was a, it was a small office but you know how lawyers put all that stuff on all certificates and all that and I said O you graduated from Yale Law School and he went like yes, anyway he asked me out and I told him well I'm going out with my friend and he said well how long are you going to be here, anyway that's how we met.

Jones: Beautiful, so it's kind of like at first sight the first meeting you kind of had that connection in the beginning so how did you eventually

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how did you both know that that was the person you wanted to be with?

Bailey: You know that's very very interesting because as I said I had no intention of getting married, I mean like nun. I was going to be a business woman, travel the world all of that and I remember I just liked him a lot. I liked everything that I was seeing you know as time moved on. He was always very honest, hardworking, creative, he was a lot of fun. I don't think I've met anyone that has such balance in their life.

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He worked really hard and he played really hard. He was so intelligent, I mean he had such a command of the English language. He wrote beautifully and the funny thing is it was such a world win romance because we got married like approximately six months after we met.

Jones: Wow.

Bailey: And I just knew.

Jones: That's beautiful, really beautiful. So how did you choose to, after you got married, how did you choose to raise your children here in Memphis.

Bailey: Well this is my husband's home and even though it's at the opposite end of the state from where I was brought up it's still Tennessee.

Jones: Right

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D'Army had lived up East after he left Southern and he went up to Clark in Wister, Massachusetts then his first year of law school he went to Boston U and then he transferred over to Yael so and then he lived in New York, then he went to the west coast so he had been around and I think it was this thing of being back home and I'd always said I can live any place that has an airport so it seemed like natural place and at that time Memphis you know it was nice, it was a lovely, I remember well you, you were not even in existence but then it was like the cleanest

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city you know and it was lovely, it was lovely.

Jones: And we know you have two sons and we just want to know what values you saw necessary to instill in them as you were raising them here.

Bailey: We always wanted to live by example and I guess that's the reason why I got into the whole mentoring arena is because I had had so many wonderful mentors in my life and yes it's about what they say but it's also about how they act and how they move and what they do and our children observed very well as to what we did and how we lived our life. I'm very proud of my boys,

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they're men now but they'll always be my babies. I'm very proud of them because sometimes you'll learn as a parent and I hope that you live long enough to when you see and when that child comes back to you and says I got it, I got it.

That is probably the most rewarding thing that could ever happen to a parent in their life when that kid comes back and says you know, I know you thought I wasn't listening and I was acting silly and doing silly things but I got it and I thank you for it and my children have done that

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over and over again and they're decent, honest, hardworking men and they're going to be excellent husbands and fathers one day.

Jones: And both you and Judge Bailey were very active in civil rights as well as just empowering the community in general so how did this affect the way your sons grew up and are now active members in the society?

Bailey: Again that living by example, D'Army had so much more exposure and I feel you know commitment to civil rights. It was in his DNA. It was with his every breath. He analyzed every kind of situation

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And after he analyzed it he took some action and I remember our children when they were very young, I remember them coming down the steps in the morning and they'd go where is pop, working on a civil rights museum? And I mean they were small children and he took them you know to the Lorain and they knew all the back parts and it took him ten years of dedication, of hard work because there were a lot of may sairs, a lot of non-believers, a lot of people that thought it was a morbid place or it was a black eye for the city but D'Army

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Was such a child of history that he knew, he felt it, I said if I had a dollar for all the dates, well we were married but we would go to different receptions and stuff and we would end up right here looking at that balcony you know when it was still the Lorain motel and he would go we gatta do something, we can't let them tear this down this is too important because at any given day he would go by there and it'll be people from Japan or Russia or you name it, with their cameras you know capturing that balcony and he saw it as a vehicle or a way to turn that into that learning experience again that exposure, what precipitated all of this, why did

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it come to ahead in Memphis and what is supposed to be done to go forward from that point so I applaud him because being there and not so much being that one that was there on the ground with him but I was there as that partner that kept things going at home and kept things going in the community so it worked out beautifully. I think we were well paired and both had such a strong sense of feeling about who we were personally and to ourselves and who we were as a team and partners in life.

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Jones: And as partners how did you prepare your sons for the racial tensions still present and turmoil still present at the time as you were raising them?

Bailey: The children always had a sense of being and a sense of yes I'm black but yes I'm beautiful too so it was always in a very proactive way, it was always

encouraged for them too, well we exposed our children very very early. We believed in that and we also gave them a great sense of being and the lessons, you know the lessons that they learned at their father's knee and he would explain to them about in great detail about situations that he had been put in and how important

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decision making is. Also how important it is to speak up for yourself so they've always had that voice and they've always been encouraged just like recently my oldest son was saying I need to be more involved, I need to be doing more, I'm not doing enough and they have that sense of they have to be engaged in doing something and also lifting others up so again they were brought up in it. They were brought up in a home where on any given day anyone could be in our home and they would learn from them. I mean can you imagine being brought up in a home where Rosa Parks is in your living room sitting down

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And right after Abernathy is eating catfish. I fixed him some catfish and Danny Glover and Muhammed Ali here entertaining in the home at 777. I mean any, any given day. I mean it didn't even have to be like we knew they were coming like O they were in town or some of them we did. I remember one time D'Army left to go somewhere to a reception or something and I didn't go, I don't know why I didn't go, O I know it was a league or something he was going to and about thirty minutes later, I heard the key in the front door and he had just left out the back door and I was going like mhh and he comes in the door and he's with Clarence Thomas and I'm going like so that kind of exposure that they had you know all of

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their lives and the people they were seeing, those were people that everybody recognized but the other ones you know civil rights people that they were exposed to some of those soldiers that they would have a chance to tie, and then you know two weeks in there they were on television and they would go ohh those two so

Jones: He was in the living room.

Bailey: Yeah.

Jones: Because I was going to ask how did you both balance your busy schedules along with family life, it seems like a lot of your work life kind of merged with your family life. Your sons were able to kind of see a little bit of what you were doing outside the community right here in their living room so that's pretty beautiful.

Bailey: I look back at it and I wonder, I really do wonder how did we do it and that's the reason for the huge void now because I feel like

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Woah, I always feel like I'm supposed to be doing something, I'm supposed to be doing something but it was such a rich and full life and I often say yes my heart is broken because I've lost my love but the forty years of richness that we had and shared with our families and friends. I couldn't have been more blessed, it's

beyond anything I've ever ever could imagine in my life. It's been a wonderful life with wonderful people.

Jones: Are both of your sons still in Memphis?

Bailey: Yes they are, yes they are.

Jones: It's nice they're close.

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Bailey: They're very close and they don't live far from here and the amazing thing about my children, about my sons, if you had taken D'Army and sliced him right down the center Merritt is one side of him and Justin is the other side of him and together they are him. Merritt has a creative and I won't say fun loving because Justin is very fun loving too but that very creative, exciting side of him, spontaneous just working kind of different side of him and Justin

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is the legal historian side of him, he's a lot of fun but it is just really amazing and once I realized I went like oh my goodness they're both him so that's the work hard, well they're both hardworking but it's really an interesting, interesting dynamic when you see them. Merritt will enter the room just like D'Army would enter the room and you know all eyes would be on him because of the personality and the sparks that fly and I call him the wizard and then Justin has that wit that quick wittiness, that wittiness that D'Army would have you know asking those hard questions, those hard-probing questions because D'Army would always have this habit of saying just like you. You said I like that chair,

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he won't let it go there, he would want to know what is it about that chair that you like. He would truly want to know, I mean he wasn't just asking just cause, after you told him he go like you know yea, you know I can see that, you know I can understand that.

Jones: Mhh, that's fascinating. So earlier you talked a little but about ending at the Loraine after a reception or a date or something like that and Judge Bailey saying we really have to do something about that. Could you talk a little bit about the process of acquiring the motel and then deciding to turn it into a museum, who all was involved in that decision, what was the process?

Bailey: Okay, there was, I remember the radio station had a drive to save the Loraine motel and they were going to do a

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benefit but I don't think that quite happened and it was anything you know that I can say about D'Army that holds true that anyone that knew him or knew anything about him never excepted no, I mean nothing was impossible and he was always going to figure out a way, you know if that door closed then how can I go around this way and so the challenge was and that was immediate on how do we keep it from being destroyed or becoming a parking lot and he knocked on a lot of doors. I mean and there were so many people involved that, and that was the big kind of deal when they were saying that

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he's the founder and he didn't do it by himself. No he didn't do it by himself but he was definitely that steadfast catalyst that year after year, week after week, day after day that was the agenda, the was on his agenda. He did not drop the ball at all, I mean just like when he went to the state and I remember he engaged people to help him to get money from the state. When he went to the city, so he had a lot of people along the way that he knew how to build that team you know and everything he was trying to do to get the results that he needed to get, so it was money raising and I remember

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they were going to call it the Martin Luther King center and there was some assistance that came from the family so that was the reason why they said they came away from the king name and he always had that vision too that yes Doctor King was here but it was all these people down the students that made sacrifices, the clergy that stepped in. Whites, blacks, Hispanics you know it was different people all that were engaged in this. That's the story he wanted to tell about Civil Rights. Yes it was a champion but it was the people on all spectrums that made things happen. So as he started he knew he needed help, he got with his team from the ciceronians

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And again convincing because this hadn't been really done before, telling the story of Civil Rights I mean it had almost been put back like this wasn't an issue, wanted again to resonate and I never shall forget it cause it was in 19 was it 91 I believe when it opened cause a lot of people didn't think it was going to happen, they thought he was just like.... and it was God's will that it did and when it opened and people began to really understand the importance of it and begin to learn

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That was the thing, he didn't want it to die and the amazing thing now is come all the way back around full circle and that again is the importance of the Civil Rights movement and its story because it's a teaching tool now as far as strategies that were used to precipitate those rights and it was a hard ten years because it was many pots boiling, I mean you know it was like we got deadlines over here and we got this over here but I would tell friends that his commitment, he would come home from work and

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he had a routine. He would come in and if it was a tough day he'd go and fix a drink and he'd go upstairs and he was a very very neat man. That's what I liked about him too, he was so organized and neat, I mean he had this routine. His

clothes were never laying around, he put his clothes in a hamper, he had this grooming he'd go through and I don't care if it was eight o'clock at night, he would never put on his pajamas, he'd always put on his casual clothes and he finished his cocktail, if he had not had a meal, I'd fix or have something for him. He wasn't a big eater, in fact he didn't like a lot of food on the plate that would spoil his appetite.

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He liked room on the plate. Then he would go to his study and there he was doing anything from working on his blog, looking up his information or following up on his information. For ten years he wrote an op-ed article from the commercial appeal every Monday morning. I don't know how he did that but it was always thought provoking and provocative and extending and always on point and sometimes it would get a lot of people rowed up and your question regarding you know, it was some phone calls and drive byes by the house that were very frightening at times because of what he wrote

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in his view but he always thought that was good because that change, that's what participates change. He was into social media a whole lot more than I was. He had six thousand friends; how do you have six thousand friends on Facebook? He had to defriend somebody so that I could be his friend but he was again putting information out there and I often think of if D'Army was still here his fingers would probably be sore at this time for putting out information on what's going on with politics as it is today. So,

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he was a change agent in every aspect, in everything he did and everything he said. Often times I would go to hear him speak and as many times as I've heard him speak every time was different because he made it appropriate to who his audience was. What was that key element that they would be interested in? Then he always being the historian that he was, I never knew how he could do that, I swear I don't even know what today's date is. He always linked back and it wasn't so much about what in history happened on that day, the story that he had to tell was what decision

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that person made or persons to bring about the change that occurred at that time and what was the dynamics that sparked that and that's what history is all about not so much about the date as it is about the occurrence of the dynamics that made things happen or change.

Jones: And just going through the papers and like you were kind of mentioning earlier, we saw all of these huge names present to celebrate the opening of the Civil Rights museum. We saw names like Stevie Wonder, Maxine Smith, Rosa Parks like you said earlier, even Coretta Scott King and we just started talking about how it just seems like there was just a strong sense of unity at the time in showing up for such a huge celebration and like you were saying one of the first times that Civil Rights was being

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celebrated but also showcased at this museum and it just seemed like a huge event that was uplifting Memphis in the community and I just wanted to know if you see similar things occurring now in the community like that and what it was like to just have so many incredible thinkers and artists just coming out to celebrate the Civil Rights museum.

Bailey: It was extraordinary and I remember one of my jobs was to write letters to invite all of these huge people and I learned a lot, I learned a lot from it. The main thing that I learned that there's a core of people that's

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truly it's like a family that's truly wedded to Civil Rights. I mean you got people out here that on the periphery but it was like when those core people received correspondents it was like hey I'm there, I'm on. And I remember one of the letters I wrote, I wrote to Oprah Winfery, I talked to some interns or somebody and they were going like well no but to the ones that had been in the trenches it was a no brainer, it was like I'm in, I'm there and a lot of them I mean they came at their own expense

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I mean they came by car, by plane, by anyway that they could get there and it was kind of like coming to Mecca, I mean I remember seeing 'army on the morning, he didn't come home that whole night because they were up all-night working. I mean working on scripts, working on media and then when I saw him that morning he just looked so worn out, I couldn't hug him. He just looked worn out and he was because he wanted everything to be perfect. He thought so well of the movement, of the people that have dedicated their lives and had lost

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their lives to Civil Rights that it had to be right, it had to be perfect and as you can imagine on that day, some people that had been naysayers, not engaged they were like wanting to be front and centered but it was interesting.

Jones: You said one of your jobs was to write the letters to all these high profile characters, could you talk a little but more about your involvement in the development of the museum and in making it a national point of interest.

Bailey: I was a good

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sous chef. D'Army was the master chef and wherever he needed me and whenever he needed me I tried to be there and it was fast moving I mean sometimes like moving on a dime because there were certain forms that were held to the buildup of the opening. There was a number of activists, one was at Rhodes, did you see that information? One was at Rhodes, another one, I think that was after the Civil Rights, was at Lemoyne but you have to realize that a lot of it happened so fast and so quick, it was just like it needed to happen, it had to happen.

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It was a blur and that's the reason why our house was always open. It maybe he may get in from the office at 5:30 or so and seven o'clock a group is coming over and you know I had to be ready so it was that kind of event and he would say Adrienne I need for you to... okay, whatever I could do and he had the vision and as I said I followed the lead and did whatever I needed to do as a wife and my part as trying to make things happen.

Jones: More than a full-time job.

Bailey: Yeah, and again I remember....

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Where were we? We were somewhere, I can't even remember where we were. Well first of all he would be gone sometimes because he would be traveling and he would go up north and he would go raise money then I think it was the Lorraine motel I think at that point. The Civil Rights museum thing came late on the back end. All the radio interviews, all of the TV, all of the correspondents he had to write, just think of that. Again, I'm that support person. Often times I was the one that was making the reservations and making the plans you know so I was the back-end person and I was proud to do that because that's what he needed. I've never you know if you look at any of those pictures

[58:00]

from the Civil Rights museum you don't see me do you because I was very comfortable in my role, I was very comfortable in my job, in what I needed to do to make things happen.

Jones: What's your involvement with the Civil Rights museum today?

Bailey: I haven't had a lot of involvement. I do know Terry Freeman and I have to say this because and I hope I can get through it because it is very emotional but as we were planning services for my husband, Barbara Andrews I talked with her [59:00]

and she had mentioned about my husband lying in state at the Civil Rights museum on the Friday before the services and she was going to try to make that happen and I did receive a call from Terry Freeman and when that call came it was just so fulfilling to my soul because he had put so much into the Civil Rights museum but it just felt right. It was like him going home and I know that as time goes on and these two years have been a healing

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Process for me. When you spend that much richness, forty years with someone it takes a long time to even find yourself again and I am moving on just as he would want me to do and I know that my involvement will grow and will be there because he loved that place so much and he put so much of himself in there. I remember when it was first done even working with people from the misunions and he would bring up oh in this *vent* we have to have this person and this person because of his personal engagement and involvement in it. So

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the key *ostace* there, I'm glad that *comcasas* again that puts him there, I was so thrilled when they put that piece in and that whole series that he did on legends in Civil Rights. That was his last project and again that's why it's so important and it's so important for it to be there. He told a story, some of the stories and when you listen to them nobody ever, some you know but it's a lot of them that you don't know on the sacrifices people made on behalf of Civil Rights so I know my children will be involved, they couldn't help but be.

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Again, they grew up with it so it's an important place, it's an important place and when D'army passed again I remember Bill Clinton coming over from Arkansas to help me with the Civil Rights museum and when he came into the church on the day of the funeral you know he said I had to come, he said I had to come, I loved that guy so I'm proud of everything that D'army did, what he stood for and

he stood for a lot, what he spoke up for, people that many who felt disenfranchised and unheard, changing

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thinking, putting it out there. I think on every panel and every board that he sat on he made a difference and that's what it's all about. I mean anybody can hit a chair but who can change lives? That's the important thing, for the better.

Jones: I saw that the Civil Rights museum has been through a lot of renovations in the past, I think it was like in the past five years there was a big renovation so I just wanted to know how you see people interacting now with the Civil Rights museum versus when you had first established it and were there any intended or unintended effects that you see as a result of how people have reacted to it in different ways.

Bailey: The reaction has been incredible, it really has been

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And I know because now everyone's talking about the museum. I've been to Washington D.C., the African American museum. That what happened here in Memphis helped to precipitate that which is wonderful and I was at a social engagement a few months back and I was standing having my cocktail, I'd been talking to this lady beside me when someone else walked up and started talking to her and they started talking about the Civil Rights museum and the lady was saying yes, I'm a lifetime member and yes isn't it wonderful and they were just talking and I was going like wow and then when I see young people going in, that's so totally about what D'Army wanted

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young people having, when you're exposed to that kind of thinking early on it made such a huge impact and difference in society, in how you think, in how you relate. It does need to change; one thing it did not accomplish while D'Army was there is he always wanted the opportunity to have forums, meetings, think tanks, and creative minds coming together so just like with the black lives matter, that movement, it could've had an incubator, a groove from the museum if it had been programmed in that direction and that

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was probably one thing that has not been done at this point and that maybe what I may need to do and the children because we've been thinking about how to keep his legacy alive and it probably needs to be annual forum where young

people, old people, white, black, Asian come together and discuss Civil Rights, human rights and have some action steps, you know to be proactive and not to just react to stuff that's happening but to think ahead and lay the foundation and ground work, so I'll understand, that's where I would like to see it going.

Jones: And on that note just talking about

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Civil Rights Activism today as you mentioned in the black lives matter movement and as well as processing the death of Martin Luther king here and his assassination, do you feel like Memphis has really grabbed with Martin Luther King's assassination and how do you see the Memphis community moving forward as far as paying homage to all of the Civil Rights history that has happened in Memphis and moving forward learning from the history that the National Civil Rights museum so beautifully illustrates to us.

Bailey: Well one thing that makes the movement or a movement stronger is the communication piece

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And the planning piece too and with a group like black lives matter I think if again it was that piece or place where the organization and the growth and the thinking and planning could take place then they would be stronger and broader and bigger. That was the thing that, and you know again it grew out of something that happened not a proactive piece where something can change so again I think I want to regenerate what I said before about the historical

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Piece is important, it's a great learning too but there's these other pieces over here which is the action piece that keeps it going, that has an agenda, that has a roll out, that gives it death, width, and life and if you don't have the infrastructure down there to grow a movement like the black lives matter then it will die on the van. It'll only be a reactionary piece not a proactive piece, so I would like to see the proactive I mean because you can only keep reacting to stuff and you're worn out, nothing's going to get ahead of it

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instead of being behind it so the Civil Rights museum crucial piece important piece and is holding on to that piece but we need to move beyond that.

Jones: Right, and how do you see cause you're talking a lot about the foundation in ways in order to gather the community and be able to discuss issues so that

you're just not being reactionary and I was also thinking if you've heard of the Clayborn Temple movies and discussions the film series are having this summer

Bailey: Yes.

Jones: because it sounds very similar to what you're describing and while it's not happening at the Civil Rights museum it is happening in a space where so many, where the sanitation strikers and where a lot of Civil Rights organizers met and planned and were very proactive and I feel like now the space is kind of becoming a way for our community

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to do the same so I just wanted to hear your thoughts on that.

Bailey: I think that's a wonderful idea and in fact D'army had a plan for that and it was going to be, I saw the proposal not too long ago but it never happened and I'm glad that Clayborn Temple is doing that. It was going to be a museum based around religious music or something and it was becoming to be embraced but yes that kind of dialogue needs to be there. I think that during the time that D'army religious music, museum or whatever but they were talking about selling it for like, it was a astronomical amount of money and

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To know it was bought for very little money but yes, I understand. I have not participated in it but I know some of my friends that have gone to some of them so I think that's a very good use of that site.

Jones: So, our good friend Dr. Ress Wigginton told us that he met you through Rhodes actually and that you work there in several different capabilities so sort of to shift topics a little bit could you talk about how you arrived at Rhodes and what positions you held.

Bailey: That was way back in seventy-six, yeah seventy-six I think.

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I just had got married and we didn't live far from the campus. We lived over on Monticello and I remember one day I just walked over there and walked in Palmer hall and just asked them do you need any help. It reminded me so much of Stevens the campus and it looked like Stevens and I went like hey it looks like they could use my services and Dany Campbel, I had a talk with her, she said she went back to her office after I left and I started working; I was a secretary up on the third floor at Palmer hall. I worked for about five or six professors

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And ironically enough I ended up living next door to professor McMann years later and he was one of the ones that I worked. I did that and met a lot of nice people, a lot of nice people and it answered my needs at that time and then we started a family and as they there, because Justin was born in 78 so I stayed there til I had Justin and then two in a half years later I had Merrit and I came back after the children got in school I think, I came back to the campus and it worked out beautifully because some of the athletes they were my babysitters. They were my babysitters.

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I had the best babysitters in the world. They were close; some of the football players the boys loved playing with them and I worked then in the Dean of Students office and I had a lot of fun in the Dean of Students office. See you were either very bad or very good if you came to the Dean of Students office but I had a lot of fun there working with *Post Carboral* and again just it was, Rhodes I was there the day the name changed. I went to work at Southwestern at Memphis and then that afternoon I was at Rhodes College just like that but really good people, a lot of fun there and then I moved there to Hine Park so I was like in the backyard.

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Jones: Maybe you can tell us later about what kind of college student Dr. Wigginton was.

Bailey: He was pretty serious, he was pretty serious yeah, because he was a basketball player. Yeah, he'd never got into trouble, but you know working in that Dean of Students office was just, well some of everything came to you. I mean not only the students but, and I worked with, again because I felt that need, the black students association and I was the kind of counselor to them because who else did they have and I worked with them and that was rewarding t because it took me back to a place where I really understood you know I got it. Again,

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black students had a presence on that campus and I say this in all honesty and it would be a disservice to white students if they did not have this exposure. Everyone loses, so I wanted all students to embrace cultures and I wanted them to know the richness and fullness of the black culture and I saw some of the same kind of things that I'd seen at Stevens College, still been, still going on just like its

natural and everybody just with blinders on like that's the way its always been; no it doesn't have to be

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that way, it shouldn't be that way. Donald Dougan I remember he was president of the Black Students Association, did some dynamic things and I loved seeing them grow and flourish and be a real part of the infrastructure on that campus. So that gave me a lot of pride in doing that, I really had fun.

Jones: There's this pattern of youth mentorship that we see and you also were CEO of big brothers big sisters, so what excited that passion for youth mentorship and how did you find yourself in this CEO position?

Bailey: After the kids started getting up I started getting involved in the community. I worked with Memphis in May as a volunteer and did the children's international festival for three years

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And through that, that's how I got to the food bank and I believed in the mission of the food bank very, very much, I mean this is such a rich society with so much, I mean compared to other countries, just the resources that we have and I enjoyed my five years there and then a board member from big brothers big sisters approached me about considering leading that organization. I believed in that mission too. I mean even though the mentoring that I had received is not in a organized kind of structured arena but mentoring is so strong and so needed so,

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I felt like I could really embrace that. I went like you know what, I like this whole concept and with the number of single parent households that are here in Memphis need it, strongly need it, and then you start looking at the statistics of incarcerated males, the percentage of them who had no male figure in the home. I was in, I was in and it was a tuff job. I mean because of the commitment piece, I mean a lot of people volunteered like oh yeah, I go to the school once a month or

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once a year but we're talking about consistency and my hats is off to those volunteers that share that much of themselves with a child so I loved the work even there was a high-risk factor, I mean because it's child safety that you're talking about and then you're talking about doing it right. It only works when it's done correctly and it's a lot of monitoring and oversight. You have to have dedicated staff that they get it and they're in too so when all of the dynamics line

up and workout it's a beautiful thing and I was able to do it for twenty years and I'm very, very proud of that and in fact just the other day I had one of the little brothers

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to come and visit me within the last, really couple of months. I've had a couple of them, again it was that epiphany moment you know just looking at, telling you your own children when they say I get it. When a kid comes to you as a man, male, both of them are successful, and say Mrs. Bailey I just want to thank you for helping to change my life.

Jones: It's beautiful.

Bailey: It is, it is I mean it's like a lifeline you're extending out there and again the big brothers and big sisters that say hey, you know we give them that vehicle and try to make it as easy as we can for them

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to give that special gift, the gift of just being there, the gift of just listening, the gift of connecting and relating is a great thing it really is so I am glad I was able to give it twenty years, I am glad I was able to take it from here and take it to there.

Jones: What was your vision for the organization when you got there?

Bailey: Well, I always wanted to have you know when I started twenty years ago, well it's been twenty-two now I think we had about thirty matches, I mean that's not quite cutting it so I said

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oh, I want at least a thousand matches so we got up close to that number. Active matches all at the same time really you know I wish it could've been five or six thousand. I mean when you look at the number again of single parent households but we had that one program that was a real game changer and I was mentoring children of the incarcerated. Powerful program, tuff tuff program, I mean tuff really on everybody because the main thing we had to do was go to the prisons, I've been in almost every prison in the state because that's where it starts. It starts with where are your children and the stories, all of it kind of based on bad decision making you know people that were just were

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they just made bad decisions and that's where they ended up but they're not the only one's who's doing time.

Jones: Right.

Bailey: Their children are doing time too so how can we make this better and that was the main objective, how can we make this better for this child and the richness of it all I mean you're sitting down and you're talking to a detainee and they're even connecting the dots and saying if I had a model in my life I probably wouldn't be here right now if I felt that someone really really cared for my existence, for my future and they wanted that for their child and

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we were able to give many of them that opportunity so I'm going like, I mean and again it's so many wonderful stories I mean it was this one man that got out of prison and he and the big brother became friends because he said man you helped my kid when I was locked up, he said I couldn't do it but you did it and I thank you for it and one of the most difficult jobs was going to the women's prison I mean it was hard, some of those situations tuff. I mean can you imagine a decision that you made and you're torn away from your children two or three of them

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you know that are living you know one child may be with a cousin one with the ma you know just...so it's good work and it's hard but it is a solution. I'm not saying it's going to work on every child but it's a vehicle that helps them to inspire, grow, reach beyond and I love it, I love it and I wish Souzan, Yolandon, Cam and the gang over there all of them continuing to do the work. I tried to be a good mentor for them and they said that I did so that makes me feel that

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Jones: You talked a little bit about or a lot about influencing the growth of others and having that feel good moment as they come back to you as men and just saying that they get it but could you describe a bit more about how big brothers big sisters grew as a result of your leadership and your CEO position.

BAILEY: Oh, we grew through not only that one model you know one child match with one adult for one year and to do more creative programs, group mentoring, we engage because everybody can't do that much time but they can give something so they don't go by the school one hour a week to be matched with a child we grew that program. Mentoring children incarcerated that program again targeting that

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Group of kids at a really hard hit you know not just a little kid that's doing well in school whose dad just died or mom just died you know that's tuff too but you dealing with a population with mentoring incarcerated that they're eighty percent most likely end up in prison themselves unless an intervention is put in there so growing that program, growing the mass and the numbers so to go from thirty active matches up to a thousand active matches, huge. Partnering with other organizations, we wanted to think broad, we wanted to use a model that we knew was successful and partner with

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others so as many other groups like Church groups or something that wanted to do a mentoring program, didn't know how but you know working with them and using a true and tried model doing that so I think we were very innovative in working the program and making in the school system, again another partnership because when we went with the school system they had no structure. They used to say, you have a mentoring program? Yes we have a mentoring program. How many matches do you have? We don't know. You don't know I said okay well what kind of background checks and stuff do you do.? We don't do any so again working with the school system and helping to develop safe

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mentoring matches because that's important, child safety is key. You want to do good, you don't want damage so those are some of the examples of how we were able to, and also the educational piece which I'm proud of in helping people to understand what mentoring really is because it's kind of a, it can get kind of mucky, again you're going to ask somebody what is mentoring and just like I said they go oh I go by the school once a year for an hour and I talk to the kids or I read to them you know difference. We go into it where we want to benchmark where is this child emotionally

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academically, socially? We want to move that dial. We benchmark and six months from now have we made some improvements here or are they still just in that same spot so using those metrics to work for us because I could sit here all day and tell you oh yeah it's such a wonderful thing. How wonderful is it really? It's important, everything we do especially now is databased, you got to have a data you got to so I think we brought that strength into our programing which gives it legs, it makes it last, it makes it real.

Jones: And we saw that you were also involved, in the papers that you gave us, we saw that you were involved with local leadership campaigns such as Gale Rhodes from the Memphis City

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School board, you were interested in the Memphis food bank and also received recognition from the national council of negro women and we wanted you to tell us a little bit more about your interactions with the community aside from the Civil Rights museum and big brothers big sisters.

Bailey: Oh gosh well you know I must be getting like really old, that's what happens because you get recognized and I'm a little kind of uncomfortable with that a little bit because you do things not so much for the recognition as you do for those moments that epiphany just like I said when that kid comes back

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Or when you go like yes but most exciting thing was carrying the torch, that was great being a community torch barrier not once but twice, can you believe that it's like lighting striking in the same place but that was fun and very very meaningful and the first time that it happened was at the Atlanta Olympics and D'Army made sure the family went to the Olympics and I was like again very tearful, I carried the same flame Mohammad Ali and just very exciting but I've been engaged and try to do whatever I could to make that change, to make it work, to lift

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someone up, to lift the community up. I bought all into that Memphis is going to start something great in Memphis and everything and I've seen Memphis go animist so it's still much work to do but I was just the other night honored at the sports ball which is the fundraising event that me a long with Willie Gregory at Nike helped to start twenty years ago. Again, I went into an organization that didn't have a big fundraiser and we were able to create the most exciting fundraising event in the city so I felt humbled by that and when they first told me I went like Oh gosh you all are going to do that but

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it does make you I mean you want to feel like you made some footprint in the sand and I think that I have and I'm grateful. You don't want to go through life just taking you know you want to give out. Focus I couldn't focus on that, I had to focus on the mission and the work and that helps you too navigate through the

project because if you take the little, I mean you'll just be stressed out so the mission

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And the work and the thing is too it's the culture and that's what I tell a lot of people. Work should be fun, no it really should be I mean because that's where you spend most of your time and energy so if it's not fun and if you don't create the right kind of environment and culture and I'd always tried to create a good working culture and make people feel valued, that's the thing; non-profit you know you're not going to be a millionaire or anything close to that I mean you have to have heart and a passion for the work so if you make people feel valued that's the pay to let them know that yeah you're making

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that's the reason why it goes back to the data driven stuff because, so I wish you well with your pursuits.

Jones: Thank you.

Bailey: Any more questions?

Jones: Just the wrap up questions so for the first one, how do you see Memphis today, how has it grown and what areas of growth do you see for the future of Memphis?

Bailey: I feel like we got some work to do, I think we kind of stepped back like a lot and we've lost some footage and I'm talking about looking at the whole state I mean we used to be like the biggest city, we are not that anymore.

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I think our economy was more thriving than it is right now as far as growth. I'm very concerned about the educational component with our young people, very concerned, I mean if you are not building at the base here then you're not building for growth but I have a good outcome so I think it goes to leadership or lack thereof. I do think we have some good things going, I do think that. I just don't know if we're thinking proactively forward you know thinking towards the future especially when I think on a national scene when we're talking you know we got leadership talking about reenacting

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coal mines and stuff, I mean we're in a whole different era here, we're not going to be in the game if we keep thinking back, we have to think forward so I'd like to

see more industry and discovery as far as the computer age and we have to go that way and automation, that kind of thing. We're not going to have foundries anymore that's not it so we're in a good location so that's a good thing. I think there's some growth and something needs to be looked further into you know as far as logistics and distribution because that's our strength and that's what we need

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To use as our strength. I mean we have to train workers to do the jobs that need to be done here in this area. Again, I think we need some think tanks as far as where do we want to be and how do we get there and what resources do we have to make that happen but this has been my home now for forty years, forty-two years so I'm glad that my children are here, my sons are here and they found their way and they're working but I am very very very concerned about the economic situation and the education situation and the opportunities that are here in the future, I'm very concerned

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about them.

Jones: What advice do you have for younger Memphians coming into these professional roles and leadership roles?

Bailey: I think it's good to prepare and work hard of course. I think it's also good to have some exposure. I think it's good to see beyond just the walls of Memphis, it's a whole big wide world out there and I think you should take advantage of every opportunity that you can find I mean the thing is you're going to always come back but broaden yourself to go out you know see what they're doing on the west coast, on the east coast, what's happening in Europe. If nothing else expose yourself through the internet. On the internet you can travel anywhere. Look at the politics, look at how people are successful, what they're doing,

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how people are creating. You know what I love, I love to hear stories about people that find a knish and create something. I've always thought I would be able to do that but I haven't done that yet. I'd love to do that, go like oh, we need to find a way to learn a lot and I come up with a oh, and it's not so much about the money aspect as it is thinking outside the box, coloring outside the lines so I'd love to see our young people open up more, open up more to opportunities, open up more to being creative or finding vehicles to sustain themselves because everybody's you know you may not be able to find the job but you may be able to create

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a job that goes far beyond anything that you could've ever imagined.

Jones: So is there anything that we haven't covered in this interview that you would like to say to us, to anyone, anything you'd like to cover.

Bailey: Thank you for today. I think a lot can be learned from people's experiences because things continue, they go around in a circle. You know they grow, some things grow in a different way but some things are the same and people have a story, they do and by hearing that story sometimes it brings light, engagement, ideas, action so I don't know if I was able to do that but thank you for the

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opportunity, I had fun. It's nice meeting new people, I like that.

Jones: And our very last question, this is something we ask all interviewees at the end, who would you suggest we interview next for Crossroads to Freedom?

Bailey: That's a very good question, yeah and I did read that. You probably have already interviewed a couple of entrepreneurs that I'm thinking of. One is Phillip Ashley, have you interviewed him?

Jones: No.

Ozahk: We have not.

Bailey: I think he would be, you're familiar with him?

Ozahk: No.

Jones: I'm not.

Bailey: He makes candy, he makes chocolate candy.

Jones: We should get on that.

Bailey: The real Willy Wonka. He lives in Memphis.

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They sell his candy at Neiman Marcus. His candy was in their gift bags at the Academy awards and at the Grammy's.

Jones: Oh wow.

Bailey: And he has a little shop right over at Cooper Young and that's a gift that I give to my special friend and another one is my friend Hugh Balthrop and his

wife is an OBGYN down in Clarksdale, Mississippi and he ended up kind of being a house husband and they have three children and he liked healthy food because she's on call a lot so he does the cooking, the shopping and he started making Jalato for his children and now his started this company, Sweet Magnolia, and when you go to like char in the different menu you order

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sorbet or jalato, it's his and he makes it from all of the ingredients that are here in the south. Peaches, berries, and honey that's manufactured here in the south so those are two again they found something, Phillip Ashley said I don't want to be working for someone for the rest of my life, I want to do my own thing and Hugh again I knew him when he had no children and now their oldest child is going to high school. He figured out how he built, so his jalato and sorbet are in whole foods not normally here but in Nashville, Atlanta, Houston, and Austin and in Houston and Austin, what is that grocery store, beautiful grocery store, I can't think the name of it but anyway and most of the restaurants here in the city so

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that'll be interesting.

Jones: Yeah, those are good ideas.

Bailey: You could get some chocolates then you can get some jalato. Those were the two off the top of my head.

Jones: Awesome, thank you so much for your suggestions and thank you again for taking the time to do this Crossroads to Freedom interview and meet with us and tell your story, it was incredible, had a great time, we learned a lot. Thank you.

Bailey: Well thank you guys.