

TEXAS AFTER VIOLENCE PROJECT
Interview with Rudolph Williams

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Place: Austin, Texas

Equipment: Sony HD DV camcorder; Sennheiser external microphone

Recorded on: Sony mini-DV cassettes
Three mini-DV tapes

Interviewer: Virginia Marie Raymond

Videographer: Shane Cruz

Transcription: Tia Leone, Ilana Smirin

Proofreader: Virginia Raymond

[TAPE 1]

VIRGINIA RAYMOND: Hi, Mr. Williams. This is Mr. Rudolph Williams. We are in your house today and you said I could call you Rudy. Today is Wednesday, July 20th. We are here at the home of Rudy Williams, here in Austin, Texas. In the room, is besides Mr. Williams, there is Shane Cruz, behind the camera. And this voice that you hear, this disembodied voice is Virginia Raymond. We are here to do an interview with Mr. Williams for the Texas After Violence Project. And, we really appreciate you making time for us today. This is really-

RUDOLPH WILLIAMS: No problem.

RAYMOND: Really great. I showed you, described our process to you, do you have any other questions?

WILLIAMS: No.

RAYMOND: Okay. So we, you know that we asked you to consent to the interview. That the risks as you pointed out, there's always risks of speaking out. But I couldn't think of any other risks to tell you about the interview process. But do you have any other questions?

WILLIAMS: No.

RAYMOND: Okay thank you, so Mr. Williams you sent out a letter. Well first off.... Actually before that, Mr. Williams can you tell us a little bit about yourself to start with?

WILLIAMS: Well my name is actually Rudolph Williams. I am a junior. So there is another Rudolph senior out there. And, I was born and raised in Houston, Texas. And during my youth in Houston, I saw a lot of police abuse. I lived right behind the police station in a small neighborhood called First Ward and it was behind the main police station. The level of police use of excessive force, harassment and profiling was vey high back in the 70s and 80s when I was growing up. And, so it's always been an interest that I've had on how we can deal with these issues.

The basic instructions that I was given as a child were to keep your I.D. on you at all times, you always say "yes, sir," "no, sir," no more, no less and follow the commands of the officer. So that kept me out of trouble through most of my childhood until I went to college. And, became a little bit more outspoken, which sometimes drew the attention of the police. And when I moved to Austin and settled down in this neighborhood, and I

decided to work more in the community and I noticed that it had the same problems that my neighborhood had in Houston when I was growing up. So I decided to do whatever I could to alleviate and to reduce these instances of police abuse and excessive force and poor behavior.

RAYMOND: You mentioned that you were outspoken starting in college. Do you want to talk a little bit about that?

WILLIAMS: Well, I'm outspoken in general, I think my mom would tell you that. But as I grew into knowledge, I think that kind of shaped my attitude towards things that were going on, you know, at the national level, across the world. And in my neighborhoods, wherever I lived, I've always been told that if you move into a particular neighborhood, join a church, become a part of the neighborhood, don't just sit there and do nothing. So I have tried to integrate that into my life. And, wherever I've been, whatever schools I have been at, I have tried to do that.

And when I came to U.T. that was in 1981 the Black students were working in a community to slow down the gentrification of the Blackland inherited by U.T. So I joined in on that and then from there I have been working in the community ever since.

RAYMOND: Thank you. Well, I started to say, jumping in a little bit too early, on Friday, July 15th, just a few days ago, you sent a letter to the City of Austin and specifically to the City Council, and a lot of other powers that be, a lot of people in the community, on the history of police, A.P.D., Austin Police Department, misconduct and specifically a whole series of deaths of young men, particularly Black men, although others as well. And, I wondered if you can tell us about that letter as well as what prompted it at this moment.

WILLIAMS: Well, I am going to start from the beginning. I became involved in, or fully involved, in trying to reduce the incidences of deaths, beatings, tazerings and other behaviors by the Austin Police Department. (phone rings)

RAYMOND: Do you need to get that?

WILLIAMS: I can turn it off. Do you want me to turn it off?

RAYMOND: Or we can wait it out.

[inaudible]

WILLIAMS: I do need to get that.

[camera off briefly]

RAYMOND: So 1981, the Blacklands...

WILLIAMS: Yeah, I started working in the community when I came here and was finishing my undergrad degree at U.T. Trying to slow down the gentrification of Blackland. And like any endeavor where you find a powerful force, I didn't feel we won. We got some agreements and some promises from U.T. But I think almost any fight we had, if you are a community organizer or activist, you are usually up against old odds.

I started working with, or on, the issue of excessive force when Sophia King got shot. And she was shot in 2002. And, as I have said before, I have seen a lot of these problems in Houston before, and I've already known of other incidents here in Austin that occurred with force of Sophia King. But she was the one that tipped me towards working on this problem because one Sophia King is exemplary in many ways. She was mentally ill. I've worked with mentally ill people for most of my college life. So I know that one of the first responders to any incident in the community with a mentally ill person is going to be the police. And unfortunately, they are not trained to deal with mentally ill people. So, nine times out of ten, that incident will result in that mentally ill person or another person being injured by the police or arrested by the police. I see a lot of mentally ill people ending up in jail and instead of treatment, which, they end up in jail repeatedly.

But in this particular case, Sophia King ended up getting shot, even though the police knew she was mentally ill. They had visited her earlier that day. She's well known in the community. Everyone knew who she was.

And so to me that was where I decided I was going to try to affect change in this area and started working in the community and communicating with police and City Council on ways we can alleviate this problem.

Now, about a year ago, I worked, I was, I've been the president of OCEAN [Organization of Central East Austin Neighborhoods], which is a five neighborhood organizations that covers Central to East Austin. And working with OCEAN, I started trying to get the police to come up with more objective stringent criteria for use of force. And also, I was president of Blackshear Neighborhood, that's this neighborhood right here, for three years, and I continued that effort.

We wrote a resolution -- to the police chief, to the City Council, to all these police who have some control over the police and have some control over the criminal justice system -- that they really need to come up with a better policy in terms of use of force. Now that we had now was just so broad and so subjective, it allowed the police officer broad discretion to use force. And in many cases, that was the first option instead of the last option.

And that has caused to me, unnecessary death especially in minorities, Blacks and Hispanics. We've had, at last count, about twenty-three people who died just by A.P.D. [Austin Police Department] hands since 1980. Of course the Sheriff's Department at one time has had problems with, but they have seemed to alleviate or changed their policies to avoid the frequency of incidents they had. Also, T.A.B.C. [Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission, for some reason, ended up shooting some people unnecessarily about three [] six months ago.

So it's not just A.P.D., it can be any police action, but we've been focusing in the community on A.P.D. since they've had the most incidences. And they should be setting the example. And when I say "they," I don't just mean the police force because I think City Council has kind of just washed its hands of responsibility and allowed the police and the police chief a little too much of a free hand in how they handle these situations. And that includes the city manager and the district attorney has done absolutely nothing. So Austin is not unique in these types of police incidents. You read about, you could read about it almost everyday if you just pull up something on the Internet and there will be a shooting in a town in a fairly large metropolitan area, under suspect circumstances where some kid or Black person was reaching for the wallet and got shot sixteen times or coming out of a night club and shot or running down the street and shot.

So it's a problem throughout our country and it's a problem that we have yet to proactively deal with here in Austin and other cities they have taken and made some changes and made some efforts to change their policies. But here in Austin, it's been very difficult to get the city or the police department to look at themselves introspectively and to make the changes that are needed that will make the citizens feel like they are doing what we're wanting them to do. That they are making sure that police use force in a manner that is consistent with preserving life instead of taking life.

So, that's where I've been for the past, I would say since 2002 I have been working on this. And unfortunately, I would like to say that its gotten better but if it has gotten better, it hasn't gotten better by much. So, we, as I've said before, I got all the neighborhoods – A.N.C., that's Austin Neighborhoods Council; A.N.C.E., that's the eastern sector; OCEAN, that's the organization I was president of; and individual neighborhoods -- to sign on to a resolution saying "Hey we would like you to change your use of force policy."

That was about a year ago. And then since then we've had five more shooting incidents where young men were shot in the back under very, what do you call them, suspicious circumstances. I hate to use "suspicious," that's not the word I'm looking for but under circumstances where it appeared they did not have to be shot.

And, I would say three of those incidences; they were shot in the back. So, they obviously weren't trying to shoot somebody, or it seems like they were trying to get away from the police instead of, had a confrontation with the police. And in the only incidence where recently where the gun was pointed at the police, I mean or it actually appeared that the police was endangered was the young man who was in the yogurt shop murder. And, he just happened to be white and he slashed a cop's throat. Now I can understand that.

But these other incidents where supposedly the kids were casing cars to steal and which was not confirmed or anything like that. But yet, they ended up getting shot. Or the kids in Big Lots who were robbing the store and one of them had a gun but didn't shoot at anybody or anything like that but he ended up getting shot in the back.

So it seems like there is a, how do I say it, when it comes to minorities in the city of Austin and in other cities also, the likelihood of you getting shot, or killed, or beaten, or tased by a police officer is higher than if you were of the majority race. And, I don't have an explanation for that but I do think that if we have policies in place that limits and requires the police to have a graduated process before they can use lethal force. Than maybe, just maybe, some of these lives can be saved.

RAYMOND: So thank you for that. A really useful summary of where you've been. I want to get a little more specific about these policy changes and you mentioned the graduated policy, of the graduated steps before you pull a gun on somebody. The other one that you mentioned in your letter but not yet in this interview

has to do with the standard. I wonder if you can talk about either of those issues, whichever one you want to go first.

WILLIAMS: Well the standard right now is called the “Reasonable Officer Standard.” And it is a standard that is blessed by the Supreme Court. And under the Reasonable Officer Standard, if the officer reasonably believes that theirs or the lives of others is endangered, then they can use lethal force. Also, the assessment post tuning is that is this what an objective police officer would do under these circumstances?

Now, the City of Austin policy is called the “Response to Resistance Policy” and it’s not very long. It’s about two pages, maybe two pages long, the part that has to do with actually shooting someone or using force against someone. So it’s a very easy read. But what it also is, is a very broad allowance in terms of use of force because it relies on the officer to make these very snap decisions with little or no guidance. And then it goes on to say, “now you should consider these things” but it does not mandate that you go through a graduated process.

So, like in Nathaniel Sanders, where he was sleeping in a car and the other young man, [Sir] Smith was sleeping in the car. And Nathaniel Sanders supposedly had a gun on him. The officer goes into the car, while these two people are sleeping and supposedly, tries to pull the gun out of his waist, or out of his hand or wherever it was supposed to be. The officer says, he says Nathaniel Sanders wakes up and appears to go for the gun. So he immediately yells “gun, gun, gun” and shoot him again.

Now, what we know is that Nathaniel Sanders was shot several times in the back and what we also know is that there are no fingerprints on the gun indicating that Nathaniel Sanders ever reached for the gun. And what we know, is that the police officer went into this car where there were two sleeping men.

Now, if they had reports of somebody shooting a gun off during the night sometime and they thought these were the two suspects, under a graduated response, they could of said, you know, called in for backup, put them on the speaker and said “All right gentlemen come out of the car with your hands up. If you have any weapons, leave them in the car,” and then see what happens.

But that is not what occurred. Even the police chief said, “Well I wouldn’t of done it like that but I can’t question the cop.”

Now if the police chief says “I wouldn’t of done it like that” that indicates that something was not done in a way that protected the citizen and the police officer. In other words, he endangered himself by going into that car and trying to take a gun from a sleeping individual. But, and this has occurred again and again, almost each time we have these incidences, the occurrences in such that an officer feels that their life is endangered or that their life was endangered.

And a graduated response mechanism policy procedure, I think it would help them by providing guidance reducing the split second requirements of deciding to use force.

If a young man is running, it used to be, Police Chief Kathy Bonds in Houston once said “If a young man is running away from the cops, you can shoot him in the back.” Now somewhere down the road I think somebody said, “No you can’t do that.” But it still appears to be happening. So if there is a graduated response, maybe the young man who is running away from the cops and supposedly had a gun, they would not have ended up with a young man dead in the back fence somewhere. They could have called more people, once again, especially if the young man had presented no danger to anybody, even let him go. We’ll catch him later. You know, we do that on police chase. Supposedly we are not supposed to have high-speed police chases because they endanger the public.

And, in many of these incidences, like Jesse Owens trying to drive off in his car with two young men trying to drive off recently, and it ended up where deadly force was used almost immediately with no gradual response. So that is, to me, the fault on the weakness in our current policy, is that it allows you to go to deadly force almost immediately with no real efforts to de-escalate, to come up with other alternatives, to think through this particular process before you take, use deadly force or any of those things it doesn’t require.

So the police chief or even some police say “well they need that type of flexibility.” I don’t think so, there’s been in not one of these incidences, except for when the two white guys was concerned, does it appear that the police were in danger. So if the police aren’t in danger but they fear that they could be in danger, than that’s two different things. And something in between there has to be the policy that will guide them and alleviate the so-called fear factor or reduce it and at the same time create an environment

where mechanisms can be used to disarm, reduce the possibility of and bring that particular situation to a peaceful resolution.

So to me, that's what our problem is. It's not necessarily one bad apple or two bad apples. It can be any police officer in a situation where they have to make a decision and they choose to use a gun as their first choice. And so I try not to demonize any individuals or police chiefs or city leadership because this problem has been with us for a long time. This is not anything new. It's been going on since Reconstruction, since slaves were freed. And it has to do with, and I have no better way of saying it, it has to do with what the police have been charged to do over the years. And over the years, they've been charged to control that unruly population. And their perception of police, in general, and not all of them, but the perception of many of our police forces is those unruly people just happen to be the Blacks and Hispanics in the tough part of town.

So the East side gets an inordinate amount of police-related shootings and to overcome that historical problem, we have to have polices in place just the same way we have to have laws that require people to respect voting rights and have laws that require people that say you can not discriminate against people who want to use your restroom or want to go to your restaurant. So, it is nothing more than a furtherance of our civil rights and supporting our constitutional rights under the Fourteenth Amendment.

RAYMOND: Beautiful. Thank you. Thank you for explaining that. I want to -- you also mentioned and I want to ask about the relationship between another term that you use in your letter to City Council and to everybody else which is asking for a "preservation of life standard" rather than this "reasonable officer standard." And can you tell us what is the relationship between the "preservation of life standard" and this graduated steps that you have described?

WILLIAMS: Well, the "preservation of life standard" is supposedly the stricter of the policies as it relates to use of force. It requires that you consider all other options first before you use deadly force. It requires a graduated response, it requires that you consider that you take the life of the, of the person as paramount. In other words, that you are going to do all things possible to preserve life whether that person is a criminal, whether that person is in the act of committing a crime or whether you just think that person is a bad guy or whatever. You're going to try to preserve life first.

And I think what that does is it flips the perspective of a police officer in that instead the perspective being “I’ve got to protect my life first” than the perspective being “I’ve got to protect this citizen’s life first” -- even though he may be a bad guy.

And generally speaking, in that particular environment, it may seem like you are endangering the police officer but I do not agree with that, especially given the instances that we’ve had here in Austin, I only think that it will change the outcomes of these use of force incidents. And it would maybe, just maybe, change some of the attitudes of fear that police officers have when they come into minority neighborhood.

RAYMOND: Okay, let’s take apart both parts of that. This is so important that I want to be crystal clear. So in your view, under a reasonable officer fear, officer of whatever background, whatever ethnicity, gender, etc. sees a young man perhaps Latino or Black young man, and that person is believed to perhaps have a gun, maybe something that looks like a gun and is running away. Under that scenario, what would you expect to happen under the “reasonable officer standard?”

WILLIAMS: Well, under “reasonable officer standard,” I believe Daniel Rocha attempted to flee; he was wrestling with the officer trying to get away from the officer. The other officer, I don’t remember her name, lost her taser and she believed Daniel Rocha got it and she shot him in the back.

Jesse Lee Owens, he was attempted to flee in his car, officer shot him six times, supposedly he thought a wallet or something that Jesse Lee Owens had was a gun. This also happened to the young man who was at the nightclub, I think, let me see what his name was, Kevin Brown that was the young man in the after-hours nightclub, or outside the after-hours nightclub supposedly he had a gun on him. They called the cops, cop shows up, Kevin Brown starts running, next thing you know, he’s dead. So under the “reasonable officer standard,” in each one of those, I believe that when the officer believed they feared for their life or not, that is the reason that they used.

Now under a “preservation of life” standard, if they going to put the life of the suspect at, that were going to try to preserve this person’s life versus than kill that person. Then you have to approach that car differently that Jesse Owens was in, you don’t reach in and start grabbing the keys and do other weird stuff. You don’t reach into the car where Nathaniel Sanders is and especially if you think there may be a gun in there and grab the gun and or try to reach for the gun and all of a sudden shoot that person. Or like

the two young men, just recently, I believe one was, what was his name, I think it was Bryon Carter, he was the sixteen-year old who was shot in the back while the driver was attempting to drive off.

I just think you would have a different outcome or the penalty for not using a graduated response, not using a tactics that would preserve life, those would allow a grand jury to look at that and say, "Hey, well you didn't follow policy and it ended up with somebody being dead. So therefore, you're going to have to be punished for it." Like now, under "reasonable officer standard" almost anything goes, so therefore you will not be prosecuted because the policy is so broad it will allow for you to shoot that person almost under any circumstances.

So I think that it would tighten up the rules, it would protect the officer as well as the citizen, it will allow for prosecution for gross negligence or for negligence under the rules. And just maybe reduce the number of incidences that occur.

RAYMOND: So, just to, that was very clear and thank you. But just to sort of be absolutely clear about what you then are asking city council to do. The "preservation of life standard" replacing the "reasonable officer standard" and the "preservation of life standard" would necessarily include a set of graduated steps before an officer uses lethal force.

WILLIAMS: That is correct.

RAYMOND: Okay...

WILLIAMS: And, I'm just a citizen. I'm a citizen who's done a little bit more research than your average citizen. But it really should not be up to the citizen to find the best solutions to these problems. That's what we elect our representatives for, that's what we hire our city manager for, that is the responsibility of the police chief, that is the responsibility of the police monitor. So sometimes -- I just find it very, what's the word? -- I find it very odd that an individual citizen is supposed to come up with the solutions to the problems that we face. But unfortunately, that's the way it is.

Because if you talk to the police chief he'll say, "Everything is fine. We're doing a better job. We don't need to change our policy." If you talk to the police monitor, they'll say, "Well they follow the rules so there is nothing we can do about it."

If you talk to the City Council, they'll say, "Well we'll look at it" or "we might look at it" or they may not say anything. They may not even respond to you.

So that is the problem that we had, and that is why working through neighborhood groups, we've just been putting pressure on our elected officials, and on our bureaucratic structures including the D.A.'s office and the monitor and all these guys to do their jobs! And, you can figure out the possible, you can do the research by going to other police, what do you call them, police departments that have tighter policies but I do not see that inclination to make that effort.

RAYMOND: So, you've provided me with an intro to my next question, which is that you said earlier in the interview that we have seen, or you have seen, some improvement in the Travis County Sheriff's Department and in certain other cities. And I wonder if you can talk about where those places are and what has changed.

WILLIAMS: Well, I know that Houston used to be very bad. I grew up there. So Houston changed their use of force policy. They also fired a bunch of police officers. And, this is when Kathy Whitmire and Lee Brown basically -- Kathy Whitmire was mayor and Lee Brown was the police chief -- and then Lee Brown became the mayor.

So during that time frame, the Houston Police Department changed drastically in terms of hiring, in terms of change in the use of force policy, in terms of firing police officers who where just would not follow guidelines. And that doesn't make them angels, they still had major problems. As a matter of fact, Harris County has one of the highest rates of sending people to Death Row and we know that that particular system is flawed. So, there's a lot of work to be done in all these cities as it pertains to the freedoms that Americans should be enjoying, especially minorities. But, as I've said before, you're also trying to overcome 200 or 300 years of systematic racism. There is no other way to say it. And, it does not necessarily mean that police officers are racist but the outcomes of their behaviors affect Blacks and Hispanics higher. Those outcomes can be anything from shootings to beatings to taserings to just profiling. And until that particular historical problem is dealt with, you're gonna always have problems. And this is just one area that needs to be dealt with.

There are more areas within our legal system alone that, that this is a problem where it affects minorities at a much higher rate than it affects the majority of the

population. But it also happens to be that area that it's most disturbing because it is extrajudicial killing. Death penalty where a lot of people on Death Row, and don't necessarily supposed to be there, that's judicial killing. But when you're killed just out on the street because somebody is afraid of you, that's almost borderline lynching.

RAYMOND: And the outcomes of D.A. actions and failure to prosecute in some of these cases, seems to suggest that a "reasonable officer" and I am putting that in quotes, but a "reasonable officer" would, would, does, do "reasonable officers" do fear Black men, especially young Black men, under certain circumstances even when they are running away.

WILLIAMS: Correct.

RAYMOND: I wonder if you can talk about that fear and the, and the perception, or really even the judicially stamped or you know, sometimes the police department stamped approval of that fact. You know if that's just the way it is that a "reasonable officer" would fear a Black man or sometimes even a Latino man even when they are running away.

WILLIAMS: Well, I don't know if they fear them, but that is the reason given. And that is the reason that's allowed under the law that will get you no-billed with a grand jury. If you reasonably feel that that person is a danger to others or yourself, than you can use force. So that's when that particular excuse is used a lot. I don't know if they really fear them. I do think that going into a Black neighborhood, sometimes, yes an officer does fear the people that they encounter. In other incidences, I think it is just an excuse for use of force first versus using other means. I would, I would hope that it's not an excuse most of the time. But, to tell you the truth whether it's an excuse or an actual fear, the end result is that you have a dead person.

RAYMOND: That's right and you have, and I don't know which would be worse. The fact that so many reasonable officers do fear even sleeping Black men -

WILLIAMS: Yeah

RAYMOND: -- that it's a real fear or that it's an excuse. Both seem, both seem pretty sad state of affairs --

WILLIAMS: Correct.

RAYMOND: -- even if the result was not death.

WILLIAMS: Correct.

RAYMOND: They both seem pretty, pretty sad statements.

WILLIAMS: They are sad statements.

RAYMOND: To -

WILLIAMS: And, I was going to tell you something about the legal process. It seems to me that our legal process is, and as I've said before, the policy is such that it allows for, and so the legal process seems like the no-bill is just a formality. And so I'm really disturbed by that particular part of it also. As you almost know what's going to happen regardless of how the [inaudible word] the act is because the way the policy is and the way traditionally how are grand jury system is set up. The prosecutor really controls the grand jury and feeds them the information they want and solicits the outcome they want. So, I think there's a critical problem there also.

I think that the third critical problem is the hiring practices of our police force. We've always had a problem with minority hiring in our fire departments and our police force. So this is a proclamation but it's also here in Austin Texas. And we hire a lot of policemen that have never grown up in the community. We hire a lot of policemen that, who basically, they're not minorities. So they don't have a perspective to work with. I think that the problem with police officers being hired and police chiefs and police, other police being hired outside of the city when we have people who have been in the community and police officers also for years but cannot be promoted to chief, we have this - I don't, I think it's a corporate attitude that we have to hire, we have to do a nationwide search for a police chief or police, or fire chief so we can get "the best." But we end up with is people that have no clue about what's going on in the community, and they are basing many of their decisions and assumptions based upon the experiences that they've had in other cities and not based upon what's going on this particular time.

I think we've had several candidates for police chiefs who came up through the police force but yet they were not considered to be police chief material. And I find that to be a sad statement on the lack of faith and trust that you have in your police force as professionals and as people who have worked through barriers to get to where they are to reach these higher levels but yet can't be a police chief because you have to go outside. And as far as minority hiring, of course as most Southern cities, that's always a problem. It's a "good ol' boy" system that has been able to inoculate itself from minority hiring

practices and if we could recruit within our schools, in the city, and offer incentives for our police officers to stay in the communities instead of commute to Pflugerville or Round Rock or wherever. Then I think you have a more connected police force that is connected to the community, that has a stake in the community, that knows the young men in the community. There is only a few Black and Hispanic police officers that I know of who are actually/ I think generally speaking, they may be more from the city than the white officers, percentage wise, but I think. . .

[END OF VIDEO 1]

[TAPE 2]

VIRGINIA RAYMOND: And Mr. Williams you were talking about instead perhaps making it so that more police officers are from the communities and grew up in the communities perhaps giving incentives for even those who didn't who lived elsewhere to be living inside the communities that they serve.

MR. RUDOLPH WILLIAMS: Yeah I think that is an option that we're not using. It seems like there are so many opportunities that we have to improve this city to truly be inclusive to truly incorporate East Austin into the broader city. If you just look at our history, black folks and Hispanics first make in rows into business or professionalism through public service. They work as garbage men, they work at some of the lower levels of our city structure, but it also gave them the opportunity to move up including our police force. But it seems that somewhere along the way we have moved away from that.

We have moved away from trying to and wanting to recruit people into our police force to have a more diverse force from the community and then also, what do they call it? Mentor them and help ensure that we have people in leadership positions that come from the community. I don't know why we've moved away from that but we've moved away from that and toward lets go recruit from the outside and bring them in. I think what it is, is that when we recruit from the outside and bring folks in, a lot of them already have experience so it's almost like it used to be at one time you would find that the people who were paired the streets were predominantly black or Mexican American. But, as they got older they moved up in the structure or they left.

Then we started our Mexican Nationals because they already had the experience to use concrete and use asphalt and to build our houses and to fix our roads. So, it's cheaper and you can pay them cheaper too because they aren't American citizens, so they have all the skills they need and they're not American citizens so we can pay them cheaper. So why hire an American that you have to train and then you have to pay them more and it takes longer to get them up to speed. I think the same dynamics work in our police force. It's probably cheaper to hire somebody from the outside who already has the experience than lets say establish student police academies where you train them in school or have them work with a police officer if they're interested in becoming a police officer and then incorporating them into the police force.

RAYMOND: In the short-run it might be cheaper.

WILLIAMS: Yeah in the short-run it might be cheaper.

RAYMOND: Yeah, I'm not sure about the long run.

WILLIAMS: In the long run I think you end up with some of the problems that we have. We have police officers that are not familiar with the community. We have a little bit more fear and trepidation when you go on the east side who do not really know the community because they don't live here and they have not built the relationships in the field. And has less of a connection with the city so their only thing that guides them and limits them and restricts them are the policies that they have and the empathy is not there.

RAYMOND: The person who they're running after is not their next-door neighbor

WILLIAMS: That is correct.

RAYMOND: Or their nephew

WILLIAMS: Or their cousins or not the kid that they know who lives 3 blocks down the street, who know they are probably going to run home so they can meet him at the house and say "Hey what the hell are you doing and why don't you just drop the gun."

RAYMOND: So, what you're suggesting would certainly fit more within the rhetoric that we hear among that community about policing about building relationships and so on and so forth but for some reason there seems to be perhaps the suggestion of a disconnect between the idea of community police and what really happens when you have people not from the community doing what the police do.

WILLIAMS: Well we don't really have a relationship, that's the myth. Because most of these cops, they not getting out of the car if you get stopped. I got stopped behind my house right on 8th street right here. I didn't turn my lights on fast enough or something, I don't know and it was south by southwest and the first thing the cop asked me was yeah he says "have you been drinking?" I said no, then he asked me about three times if I had been drinking and I said no, no I haven't been drinking. He says have you ever been arrested. I said well what kind of question is that? I just had my lights off and I just didn't turn them on you know? "Well I ask that to everybody" and then he says, "Well I smell marijuana." I said, "No you don't smell marijuana but if you want to go find some marijuana, there's about 200 kids over there behind Ms. B's and I would say maybe a third of fourth of them are smoking marijuana." "Well I smell marijuana in

your car,” so he goes and searches my car, puts me in handcuffs. My wife is in the car, puts me in handcuffs and I’m standing in front of the police car and the other car had already pulled up. They had just magically showed up and so I had to face that particular indignity, and that was no more than the year before last, the last south by southwest.

So it’s something that I’ve had to deal with for most of my life and so like I said at the beginning of this I’ve been instructed and trained by my mom and pop but I believe that the younger men and women that police run into today are not as well-trained and so that’s where some of these more dangerous cases can take place. Because they may feel that I have every right to go about my business without being interfered with and stop I don’t know why you’re harassing me and that’s where conflaguration starts. So, I think that there are a lot of things that we can do to avoid extensive force issues, a lot of things we can do to improve minority hiring by recruiting from our communities. There is a lot of things we can do to reduce frivolous searches and frivolous charges against these young people because I see them and I’m talking about male people now, despairing from always being under the scrutiny of police, always having to pay fines and fees and surcharges and never seeing them again and then under the threat of re-incarceration if they don’t pay. A lot of these young men tell me that it’s nothing but a money game and that if you’ve got the money you pay your way out of it. If you don’t have the money then you’re always going to be under this criminal justice system. So for a lot of them I think it breeds a certain attitude towards the whole system that is very negative and ultimately can be very dangerous.

RAYMOND: Do you mind if I go back to some of the other issues, this is really important for us to go back and push you a little bit on some of these. Your ideas about community policing are very persuasive about real community policing are very persuasive And I certainly have you know this corporate model of you must do this nationwide search for this position or that position when you have people working up and doing the jobs sometimes without the titles but actually doing the work you know you see that in a lot of different areas certainly in the schools you know in every definite superintendent every time we do a consultant, we have to do a nationwide search sometimes it seems like hello you know.

WILLIAMS: Don’t we have anybody good enough?

RAYMOND: Yeah. But I want to push you a little bit because you said that you used to one of the you know a big time of change was when they did adopt new policies and they did fire a lot of people. So ones of the things that you hear over and over when you discuss this issue of police abuse or police brutality or excessive force or by whatever name it goes, one of the things that comes up over and over again is well police officers are loyal to each other, they are in danger, you know they are dangerous jobs.

WILLIAMS: Yeah.

RAYMOND: And that they feel kind of a loyalty to each other which is in many ways a beautiful thing. It's a beautiful thing to feel like you're on a team but it makes it a lot more difficult to achieve change.

WILLIAMS: Right

RAYMOND: If everybody's resistant to it and they want to back each other up and their loyalty is to each other rather than to initiate change. So yet sometimes people say well in order to make change certain police force or law enforcement of course you really have too. The argument for bringing people from outside is you need fresh blood and you need fresh air, these different kinds of metaphors. So what do you, I mean how do you reconcile these different ideas?

WILLIAMS: Well like I said, in Houston, Lee Brown came from Atlanta and from all that I know about Lee Brown and Atlanta, he came from Atlanta right after the Atlanta child murders, I can't remember the young man who was arrested for, it was a black man arrested for that but it was highly controversial. But what Lee Brown also did was hire women, blacks, and Hispanics locally. And I think doing that did more to reduce some of the instances that were occurring in the city than anything else besides firing police officers that just weren't doing what they were supposed to be doing, had to many instances of violent incidents and things like that. He also implemented a policy of hiring and I believe a lot of those were Eastonians so I think that helped a lot. I think you, I think sometimes we carry things; we get carried away with certain things. And I think one of the things we have gotten carried away with is the so-called nationwide search. I think Sam was a very good deputy chief who could have easily been a good police chief. I think that, I can't remember the black lady's name but she would have been the first black police chief if she had gotten the job, and I thought

she was pretty good and she came up in Austin and I thought she would have been very good but she was passed over also for Acevedo.

So what happened to these people when they were passed over, they had nowhere to go so they retired and so we lost quality leadership. We didn't gain anything, so I think it's a balancing act and of course our city manager came from Dallas and he was the one who hired the police chief without knowing much about the police force. So it ends up that if you keep on hiring and outside the community that you're supposedly working in, then you end up with a lot of people who just do not know the community. And I was saying one of the difficulties that our city manager has is that he just or one of his biggest difficulties is that he doesn't know the community. And so a lot of his initial mistakes had to do with not understanding the dynamics of this community. And I hate to say it but I think one of the other mistakes he made was with the current police chief

RAYMOND: Well you've certainly answered my question so thank you. I want to go back again because these different comparisons are useful, and it certainly is. So you talk about Houston making changes and how that came about. What about the Travis County's sheriff's office and what about other cities, could you talk about that?

WILLIAMS: The Travis County Sheriff's office has a black sheriff, other than Margo Frasier I don't necessarily think they had a great reputation. But it wasn't a terrible reputation, but under Greg Hamilton I think they have a great reputation. Their community, their interaction with the community is much more natural, much easier, and it seems to whatever they're doing in terms of use of force is working. You're going to have to talk to Greg to see what he thinks but and I have talked to him and he says we just have a different approach. And I said well why don't you talk to the police chief, our police chief and he said well you know that's a touchy subject. If they want to you know acquiesce, I mean to access what we do, I'd be willing to help and more than willing to help. As a matter of fact he sent an email to us recently, to me and said I'm more than willing to work with you which was totally different from what I got from our Acevedo So it's a certain openness, a certain willingness, and a certain approach that they have in the community that's significantly different from APD does.

RAYMOND: And do you know whether that different attitude is codified in a set of policies or different standard?

WILLIAMS: I don't think it is, I think it's just the leadership that he's shown, I think the policies. But now I have not read the sheriff's policy. I think now, I think it was the constable, the one that tasered the little old lady that go back, was that the constable?

RAYMOND: Or maybe someone from the constable's office.

WILLIAMS: I think it was someone from the constable's office but I don't know if it was the sheriff. But you know that's a classic instance of really poor decision-making under those circumstances. And there was one where the, this was also on Mopac where I think it was an ADP officer who stopped some black man in a car, just got totally out of control and it was also videotaped you know. So these things happen, as I said before I think the sheriff, either through leadership or maybe, maybe it is a policy. I'd have to look if it's policy, has forged a different relationship with the community that APD has yet been able to implant. And I don't know if it's, sometimes these things are nothing but bureaucratic rivalries, well we don't deal with them, or we don't talk to them or we don't do this or that. I wish they would, I think that given the cost that any government has, that shared responsibilities, shared skills can only cut down costs, reduce instances where use of force in not necessarily appropriate responses. Almost all those things would be beneficial to both APD and the sheriff's office.

RAYMOND: Sure, you cross you know, cross-fertilization of ideas.

WILLIAMS: Yeah cross-training that's something I've been also trying to get the city and the school board and the county work on taxes but that's another issue for another time and I have yet to get them to do that.

RAYMOND: So lets go back to the sheriff's department, the changes there and you mentioned that Sheriff Hamilton was a black man and Margo Frasier as sheriff well, former sheriff Margo Frasier was white or Acevedo is of Cuban heritage.

WILLIAMS: Mhm

RAYMOND: Now tell me what's the significance of that because you know there is a lot of complexities to how race and you know upbringing play out.

WILLIAMS: Yeah

RAYMOND: So what do you think?

WILLIAMS: I don't think there, I think leadership and good leadership knows no color. I think Sheriff Hamilton is a good leader and as I said before I don't think Margo Frasier did a terrible job. I think she did a better job than any of our Austin Police Chiefs have done. So I, if I you know insinuated she did a terrible job then I want to correct that. I just think that Greg Hamilton has done a better job and I think that is just an example of his leadership capabilities and I think Margo Frasier did a good job as sheriff and that is indicator of her leadership abilities although there were some problematic instances that occurred. But unfortunately our leadership under the Austin Police Department and maybe it's the size of the police department it's a bigger organization. I don't think the police contract, which I really truly do believe has politicized the police force has helped because it has made the union stronger and you know they do everything from threatening to you know threatening our city council members even you know in the elections. They do crazy stuff you know so I think the APD job is bigger; I think systemically the problems it has faced have been long-standing. And so therefore harder to correct and the leadership that we've had in those positions just has not been able to do the job.

RAYMOND: And if I were playing advocate for APD here, I guess this is really a question but you know maybe I would say you know look we APD officers, we have 6th street, we have all those drunken people every single weekend. It's crazy, it's wild, they're out of control. We have the city and Travis County and the other areas of the county you know other particular jobs and you know you guys have back up you know in certain ways and we don't have these university, all these young people and all these drinking people in the same degree.

WILLIAMS: Yeah, but they not shooting those people.

RAYMOND: Right

WILLIAMS: They are only shooting black people and the Hispanic people and most of the times they come over to east Austin to do that. If you're on 6th street, I'm safer on 6th street in west Austin than I am in my own neighborhood as it pertains to police. I've never been stopped, handcuffed, and my car searched in any other part of town other than my own neighborhood.

RAYMOND: All right. Okay.

WILLIAMS: I don't know if that's an answer.

RAYMOND: No, it is an answer. It's answer, I would I mean, I wanted to because as you mentioned they have different jobs.

WILLIAMS: Yeah

RAYMOND: They do have different jobs, and different jurisdictions and.

WILLIAMS: Correct.

RAYMOND: And the city as a whole and well the city isn't whole I guess.

WILLIAMS: I haven't had problems with Austin police except in my own neighborhood. So that to me indicates something is going on

RAYMOND: And it would be maybe this is a project that one of those could work at is to even map these killings.

WILLIAMS: I would say, and I did map them, I think it's in one of statesmen articles.

RAYMOND: That's right

WILLIAMS: It's a map, it will show you where all the shootings are. At least except for the last 5 that occurred just recently. I think it goes up to Jesse Owens 2010, 9.

RAYMOND: Well this is from 2010-2011.

WILLIAMS: Yeah I think 2010s and 2011s you won't find them mapped but most of them occurred in East Austin too except for the big lots ones and 2 kids that just got killed. I mean one of them, a 16 year old that got shot that was on, off of 6th street on 5th street I believe.

RAYMOND: By a cop.

WILLIAMS: Uh huh, and then the young man drove to East Austin where I think he was close to his grand mothers house when they picked him up.

RAYMOND: Let me ask, just I want to make sure I get a sense of rounding that knowledge out of it. I don't know about that. But Houston, you mentioned Houston and you mentioned Travis County. Are there other cities that you know of that have made substantial improvements in this area? I know that since the 70's Houston and Philadelphia were the two worst then you moved to the 90's and when I think of police abuse I think of L.A.

WILLIAMS: Well and Dallas

RAYMOND: And Dallas

WILLIAMS: Dallas has been very bad. I know more of the bad actors than those that have made improvements and that's just because they've been in the news. So I haven't really researched those guys, and maybe that's something that our city leaders can do. Research those guys who have practices in place that have reduced complaints of police abuse, that have reduced incidents of excessive force that have reduced incidents of death by police officers. I think it's, as I said earlier it should be the responsibility of the police force, it should be the responsibility of the city manger, it should be the responsibility of the police monitor to find the best practices out there and then implement them in our city.

It should not be the responsibility of the citizens to keep complaining to our police force, our city manger, our police monitor and having them say well what is the solution like I'm the one who is supposed to come up with the solution. I try to tell city leadership all the time, I do not have all the solutions but I'm trying to let you know there is a problem and that you need to fix it. But we pay you the big bucks to fix it. But it seems like when you challenge them, they always ask you for the solution. Like you're supposed to have the solution as well that's fix the problem. And I don't understand that particular attitude of our elected officials and our bureaucrats.

RAYMOND: And yet agreeing with and not disagreeing with you but I have to say that one of the things that struck me when I read your letter on Friday was that, and this is I'm sure this is my opinion but most of the time when I read about people trying to do something about excessive force of police department, law enforcement in Austin it has been around the issue of what the police monitors office should look like, what powers the police monitor should have and not have like subpoena power this and that and who should that person, who should that individual be. And so what struck me about your letter was that you were saying you know lets look inside the policies of like how people act, not the afterwards you know post-mortem.

WILLIAMS: Yeah

RAYMOND: But looking at you know the standards.

WILLIAMS: You want to do it before the incident occurs. I believe that the only way to really and truly get at this historic problem that we've had is

to avoid it before it occurs, to redirect it, to come up with policies and procedures that prohibits or restricts or requires some steps before you move towards a situation of using deadly force. So yes I'm trained as a policy and strategic planner so I have some experience in that so maybe that's why I approach it from that particular point of view. But I also believe that those police officers out in the streets, they need that, it's not once the deed have been done and since. They need on the ground rules of engagement the same way the soldier in Afghanistan has on the ground rules of engagement that reduces civilian casualties. And I would hope that police officers in Austin would begin to visualize east Austin not as a hostile territory but just as another part of the city that they need to help protect the citizens.

RAYMOND: Sure. So this is really important, this more than I want to ask you right now what responses have you seen if any from the city council, the city manager, anybody in power to your email asking them.

WILLIAMS: Cheryl Cole said she was willing to help. Acevedo said don't paint all the police officers with a broad brush. Greg Hamilton said he is more willing to assist.

RAYMOND: That's it?

WILLIAMS: That's it.

RAYMOND: Nobody on city council?

WILLIAMS: Nobody except for Cheryl Cole.

RAYMOND: Right well yeah not others?

WILLIAMS: Nobody else. But then that was the response was even less the first time that we asked them to look at this.

RAYMOND: Mhm

WILLIAMS: But unfortunately, well there's two things. This is not going to change; we are still going to have the shootings until policy changes. So this issue is not going to go away and sooner or later they are going to have to address it. And the other negative to that is that city council members and bureaucrats have short memories. The community has long memories. When I hear people say that well you shouldn't bring up what happened in 1980 or 1990 or early 2000's then I tell them the community is still feeling the pain from those particular incidents. People are still upset over Sophia King getting killed, people are still upset over Jesse Owens getting killed.

And people still feel that there is no justice in the community. So, and because the policy hasn't changed and the behavior of the police officers hasn't changed, and that doesn't mean that all police officers are guilty of shooting black folks whenever they seem them walking down the street. It just means under certain circumstances this is what could happen to a black person if they are caught in this particular environment and so if we have rules in place then maybe, just maybe you can alleviate something.

So how do you reconcile short-term memory elected officials and bureaucrats with long-term memory of the community? The long-term memory of the community, that's very difficult, that's two different perspectives. Even police chiefs, they are only here you know 3 to 5 years so their perspective is totally different. I remember when we met over Jesse Owens I believe or I think it was Jesse Owens it may have been Daniel Sanders but I think it was Jesse Owens, the police chief was saying well you know this is a big city, one or two incidents like this a year is about average. You know and I was stunned and I got up and told him look if you do not have another incident like this in the next 10 years then I will assume that you are doing something right. And he has repeated that phrase several times. So obviously there is a difference in perspective between the community and our police-chief and between the community and our elected officials. And I keep trying to bridge that gap by communicating to them and showing them the picture.

I think sometimes you actually have to see it and see the names of the people and see the circumstances that they were killed under to, for it to hit home to them and then maybe one of our short-term memory elected officials will say hey this looks pretty bad. And maybe we can get our police force to look at the use of force policy and reassess what they are doing and then try to also get the community to stay involved because after a while, after the 20th shooting the community gets kind of desensitized and they say, these guys are going to do what they want, why should we even have arrests and then young people become not just desensitized but even angry and they say well if they are going to shoot at us, why don't we shoot at them. Now that's what happened in Dallas and Houston and I would hate to see that happen here. But it's something that could happen unless we change the perceptions in the police force, unless we build a better relationship between our police and the community.

RAYMOND: And when you talked about despair among young people you see or hear, people tell you about, is that one of the things that you fear?

WILLIAMS: That is one of the things I fear, because of that despair, I mean because that despair, that's why these kids start running. Because they know they are going to get arrested, they know I mean and kid in big lots I mean even while they were stealing, there is really no need for that person to have a gun. I mean who is he going to shoot anyway? Sometimes these young people, you know they aren't thinking. But I think if you're stopped 3 or 4 times a week or month and you know and you're just trying to go to the store or trying to go to the club and they know you have a record and you know you got a record, then they'll search you for everything and they may find some papers under the seat and they arrest you again or find a seed in the ashtray and they arrest you again. All these kids smoke pot and you can get them for the pot almost every day if you wanted too. You know, so I think we just really need to find better reasons to arrest people, stop people, search people and you know go after real criminals you know?

In many of these instances these young people were not at all real criminals you know some of them are, I'm not going to say all of them were innocent angels, but in most instances they're not the people who are busting into the houses and raping people and if anything most of them are just dumbasses. Who should have been doing something at the wrong time or they just ran into a cop at the wrong time.

RAYMOND: Like you did?

WILLIAMS: Yeah

RAYMOND: On 8th street?

WILLIAMS: Yeah on 8th street right behind my house you know? And they might not be as calm about it as I was.

RAYMOND: You, I think it's really a good way to think about the difference between our community's long memory and politicians with the short memory, certainly that is exacerbated when the managerial administratives come in from somewhere else so they can truly throw up their hands and say hey that wasn't me you know Sophia King's death is not my fault.

WILLIAMS: Not my fault.

RAYMOND: Right, which is parallel of course to white people you know saying hey I was born in 1957

WILLIAMS: Same thing, I ain't have nothing to do with that.

RAYMOND: I didn't have anything to do with it and one of the things that seems, the other different aspect, difference of opinion is you know you look at your words at Chief Acevedo and your saying look at all these men who died, look at all these human beings who have died, this is unacceptable and Chief Acevedo is saying in effect hey we didn't do anything wrong and in fact looked at the Department of Justice handling the investigation for over 3 years.

WILLIAMS: They were vindicated.

RAYMOND: And we've indicated we didn't do anything wrong and you are talking about effects, what actually happened and they're talking about whether they did anything wrong or not which is parallel to what's happening in so many areas of civil rights and human rights right now I didn't break the law and yet you know it's hard to point a finger at and you avoid it, you avoid pointing a finger at individual human beings very carefully policies but you know there's no individual human being going out any saying why are so many black people in prison, why are so many, you know why are so many poor people drop out of school.

WILLIAMS: Yeah.

RAYMOND: The difference between effects and you know did I do anything right or not. It sounds like your focus on policies would help bridge that gap a little bit you said.

WILLIAMS: We hope.

RAYMOND: You would hope about the policies.

WILLIAMS: Yeah.

RAYMOND: Are there other strategies you can think about to say, Hey you know officialdom, I'd like to be here administrators, managers you know do you see that we kind of have two different languages here?

WILLIAMS: Yeah. I sometimes I think that they know that but their responses are based upon the excuse that it's not my fault, we didn't do anything wrong, those are the responses. Because sometimes their allegiance is to protecting the troops, the police officers, or protecting the status quo which means not changing the

policy or protecting their political life which means that hey the police unions is what elects me, not the blacks and Hispanics over in East Austin who've got about 5% turnout. So I think there are a lot of things that interfere with change and they don't necessarily have to have anything to do with the desire to do what's right. It has to do with politics, it has to do with other priorities, it has to do with who supports who and I think those get in the way of change or progressive change sometimes.

So it's very difficult to implement change in these particular environments, but as I said it's not just policies that get changed but it's some of the things that we used to do right like hiring in the community, promotion from within all those type of things that have worked with us for hundreds of years, they also created other problems over the period of time so it does take a balance of both of those. Houston promoted people from within, recruited minorities from schools, having a true community policing process. I think all those things can help, changing perceptions between, or at least communicating the perceptions the community has versus what your elected officials or bureaucrats have. You almost have to re-educate your elected officials almost every time there is an election on what's going on because they don't really know, and so I think it's a challenge for the community to maintain that vigilance, to maintain that communication, to maintain that effort, it's a huge challenge because of the merging out over a period of time.

RAYMOND: Mhm.

WILLIAMS: And I have all the old folks that used to fight the battles, they are too old to fight the battles and they say Rudy get out there and go do something about that. I just got a call from a lady named May Leonard who has been fighting these types of fights for a long time and she was asking me to help her with redistricting. And she has been one of those at the forefront of trying to get the police to change their behaviors too. But yeah she's old and dying so who's going to come along to pick up the yolk you know? Not too many people interested anymore in doing that and the community has changed to where the middle-class, the black middle-class has moved out so most of the community, the black community are either elderly or they're poor. They are the ones who stayed and they're not the ones who are leading the charge. But the doctors, the lawyers, the clergy, they all used to be part of fighting.

Now you can't find any of those people part of the fight. So it's a huge problem, I don't have a solution to it, but it's not just policy that has to be addressed but it's also hiring it's also promotion from within, it's also community policing, it's also educating our elected officials and recruiting people within the community even those people who are not black or Hispanic who have moved in the community and recruiting them to continue this particular job of basically ensuring that we all are able to exercise our constitutional rights and there are some young people, young UT students that I work with who are more than willing to take on that battle but I'm tuckered out too.

RAYMOND: And since you've tackled one huge question let me just give you another huge one. We know that policies are important. We also know or we've talked about that the right kind of leader and the right mentality, which may come from being in a certain neighborhood but could also be apart from that and connected to ethnicity but it's also some elevation of those factors is apart from that. So I want to get back to this question that you know we, I mean the United States, the Supreme Court, the powers that we seem to accept that it's okay, it is "reasonable" to be afraid of a black man or a Latino man who's running away who we see and is reasonable to be afraid of that person.

WILLIAMS: Yeah it's reasonable to shoot them if you think that person is going to hurt you.

RAYMOND: They're going to hurt you, and that apparently that happens a lot, that people have that fear.

WILLIAMS: Correct.

RAYMOND: What would it, what would it take for us to say well, you know what you now have genuinely believed that, that there was going to a direct (inaudible) I'm playing the devil's advocate a little bit and maybe that person but what would it take, what would we have to do, if this obviously big and long-term much bigger than any of us in the room were lots of places what would it take for that not to be a reasonable fear in them you know for us to say yeah you saw something in his pocket, but it's not reasonable to have your first guess be well that man with something in his pocket because he's black or brown and because I happen to staring at your phone that's going to be a gun and I see fear, reasonable fear that my life or the lives of people I am supposed to protect.

WILLIAMS: Yeah.

RAYMOND: What would it take?

WILLIAMS: Well now I mean, I think that question's, I think, I kind of answered part of the question in that it takes recruitment of people who live in the community and grew up in the community, that means recruiting a new police officers out of our schools and that's part of the opportunity that we used to have that has disappeared as I said before blacks and Hispanics were matriculated into the professional areas through the civil service. We need a civil service program that will once again allow our young people to get jobs by working in the government. We don't have that anymore, as a matter of fact we tried to farm everything out, contract everything out that we can, to our cronies fundraising buddies. I think that is a serious mistake and until we move back to where people can actually get jobs working for the city, working for the county, working for the state, then we have problems there. Besides that I think you have to promote from within, promote from within, you keep institutional and community information. As I said before, if you don't then you have to educate people who you recruited from nationwide, you have to educate them all over again. So some of that is promoting from within, some of that is trying to recruit young people coming up and out of these schools so that they actually stay in Austin instead of leaving. We have a drain on young people leaving Austin and that's because there's no opportunity here.

RAYMOND: Mhm

WILLIAMS: And I don't think Austin realizes that it's losing its young people because they don't feel that this community cares for them, wants them here and is shoving them out the, across the lines. So we have to do more of that too. Also we have to in terms of changing this particular perception I believe is I think that there has to be more communication between the community and the police force and I don't mean just where the police come in say we're doing this, this, and this and you know that's it you know. It has to be a feedback and the police are doing some of this with their, they have like the chief's forums or something like that but you kind of have to go to them. I've been inviting police officers to my neighborhood meetings and so when I get them in those neighborhood meetings sometimes I do chew them out you know I'm saying hey guys look we just had this happen and when are ya'll going to change your behavior. And I've had some very honest responses from them, some of

these guys like hey look we don't want to be arresting people for marijuana but we are told that's what we are supposed to do. So if he's got to join them he goes to jail and you know until they change the policy that's what we have to do. And I'm like well you can advocate change in policy also, you got a police union, ya'll can advocate getting a raise why don't you advocate doing away with some of these stupid laws. So I think there has to be more communication between the community and our police force and more communication between our city council members. I'm working on, I think you heard the telephone ring, we were talking about city districts and I've been working on that for the past 5 years because right now there is a feeling that our city leadership is disconnected from the people and maybe if we have geographic representation they would be more responsive of these problems that we are having. So I think that is also one of the things that should be, I mean we have had large districts since 1953 and we've changed at large specifically for the purpose of suppressing minority representation in city council.

RAYMOND: A lot of the cities went to single member districting in the 70's, its sort of amazing that Austin did not.

WILLIAMS: Well that's because they didn't want to.

RAYMOND: Yeah, well yeah. But none of the others wanted to either.

WILLIAMS: Yeah, but they.

RAYMOND: You know that was.

WILLIAMS: Yeah they had to, they filed suit well I think they filed suit against Austin maybe two or three times.

RAYMOND: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: And because they had a token black person and the token Hispanic person on the council they avoided being forced to single member districts but I think those are mechanisms that allow for more contact, more interaction, more responsiveness to the community. And once again if that person lives in your community then maybe, just maybe it will be someone that's familiar with the problems in your community that has been here long enough to have a clear understanding of what the community wants and solutions that come from the community because maybe sometimes solutions do bubble up from the community but they're ignored once it gets to city council.

RAYMOND: This is really been so useful for me and I've learned so much and I'm excited to share this interview with other people we are ready to. Shane do you have any questions?

SHANE CRUZ: I don't think so.

RAYMOND: No. Okay is there anything else I should have asked you or that you want to say?

WILLIAMS: No. I think that in general it's, I focused on the deaths of these people because it is the ultimate sanction but there are a variety of different problems we have in the community. I mentioned about 4 of them in my little preamble. One of them was you know these fees and surcharges that creates this system of indentured servitude. That's a huge problem in the community. And how we use certain laws to either just harass people or and also like the report that just came out on the number of stops and stuff that happens. Those things that are continuing, the police chief says we are doing better and maybe he sees the glass half full but I see the glass as three quarters empty and that we need to make better progress on these items. And I'll keep working on them and I'll try to keep recruiting others to work on them and I'll just keep harassing our leadership and our police force and our criminal justice system to do what's right. And there is a difference between what's right and what's legal and I think Martin Luther King indicated you know that it may be legal but it's certainly not right. And in many instances that the things that we had to fight for and fight against and that fight continues until we have what is calm and perfectly legal.

RAYMOND: Well you mentioned Martin Luther King and I think well you know people have been waiting a long time and cannot wait any longer, should not wait any longer until and walk down the street and go out and.

WILLIAMS: And feel free.

RAYMOND: And feel free. You know I was struck by you saying that you know young people; many are not taught how to respond to police in the way that you were taught. To say you know for your own protection, grew up from your parents and it's ironic because you know on the one hand of course we want young people to feel free and not feel like they will be in danger of losing their lives if they ask the police officer

WILLIAMS: If they speak up or.

RAYMOND: If they speak up or say well why are you stopping me you know.

WILLIAMS: Or if they videotape the police officer arresting somebody and all of the sudden the police officer comes over to them and jacks them up.

RAYMOND: Yeah.

[END OF TAPE 2]

[TAPE 3]

VIRGINIA RAYMOND: One of the things we will do is we will get you a DVD so you can then do whatever you want with it.

MR. RUDOLPH WILLIAMS: Sounds good. My mom would like that.

RAYMOND: Is she in Houston or is she here?

WILLIAMS: She's in Houston.

RAYMOND: So you spoke well of her.

WILLIAMS: Oh yeah. She's dynamic. She's kind of helped me too, I won't say help, inspired me to work in the community in Houston first ward and it has been almost completely gentrified, she's surrounded by condos and it's just my great great grandmother's house and her house. She owns both of them and then one of the shotgun shacks, one of them was a little about and all these condos are just surrounding her. It's like a little oasis. She's got grass, she's got a yard, she's got trees but everything else is just three story condos all the way down the street, cross the street, and behind her so it's really freaky.

RAYMOND: Must be.

WILLIAMS: Yeah

RAYMOND: So we took a break because we accidentally ran out but thank you for putting up with us. You were saying about young people and the sort of you were talking about a dichotomy maybe you could explain it.

WILLIAMS: Well you want people to, I think the goal is ultimately that we live in a freer society not a police state and that's what the fight has been about since the Revolutionary War, the fight to free the slaves and establish that we are all created equal under the law and under God's eyes, the civil rights movement. All these things have made us a freer society not just the black people or the Hispanic people, but it has made us a better freer society and its hard to tell young people nowadays okay now even though you live in America you also live in a place called Texas and the requirements for Texas are the same thing my parents told me when I was a kid. Don't say too much to the police, say yes sir, say no sir, show and make sure you have your ID on you at all times, don't move too fast, and they also told me to run if I have to.

But we shouldn't have to live like that, but that is the dichotomy we live in is that even though we live in free society, there are forces at work that will not only take your

freedom but take your life. And because we live in Texas we live in that particular dichotomy. I'm sure it's like that in several other states but I live in Texas and so I need to be familiar with what goes on in Texas, in Austin, understanding dynamics, and then work within that particular framework. Because I'm sure every mother wants their child to live to be an adult, and to live a productive life and they don't want to see them burdened with all sorts of charges that keeps them enslaved and under the control of our criminal justice system. So, even though we fight for the fruition and the full enjoyment of our freedoms, we have to understand that those freedoms can easily be taken away from you and it may not necessarily be your fault. So you have to protect yourself at all times in this particular environment. And that's a tough thing to live with.

RAYMOND: Thank you so much Mr. Williams.

WILLIAMS: You're welcome

[END OF TAPE 3]

[END OF TRANSCRIPT]