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### Angela J. Jewell (JD 1979)

UNM Black Alumni Chapter Oral History Project

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UNM Black Alumni Chapter Oral History Project  
Interviewee List

1. Angela J. Jewell  
Retired District Court Judge

2. Barbara Br...

***UNM BLACK ALUMNI CHAPTER***  
***Oral History Project***

3. Rev. Charles Becknell Sr.  
PhD American Studies,  
Pastor of Emmanuel Missionary Baptist Church

4. Charles P. Roberts  
Former UNM Dean

A UNM Black Alumni Chapter and  
African American Student Services  
Research Project

5. Harold Bailey  
PhD American Studies  
Former Executive Director, New Mexico Office of African American Affairs

6. Ira L. Hargis

New Mexico Sports Hall of Fame  
UNM Logo  
Conducted by the  
University of New Mexico Oral History Program

7. James P. Lewis  
State Treasurer of New Mexico from 1973-1990 and from 2006-2014  
2015-2016

8. Gordon Malry, PhD

Albuquerque's first black school principal in 1964, first black elected state  
representative in 1968 and Ber... first black county commissioner in 1990.

Funded by:  
The University of New Mexico  
Center for Regional Studies

9. Jita Ann Turley Powe  
Director of the Board of... and Culture Center  
Owner/Manager at Mr. Powdrell's Barbecue House

10. Tommie Jewell Sr.  
Retired Educator



*(First give me your name and spell it)*

My name is Angela J. Jewell. So Angela, A-n-g-e-l-a. Middle initial, J, and Jewell is J-e-w-e-l-l.

*(What is your title?)*

I'm a retired District Court Judge.

*(So thank you for being here. A lot of people in Albuquerque know your name because of the Jewell and Jewell judgeship, but they don't know a lot about where you came from and how you got here. Can you start from your beginning and educate us?)*

Sure. So I'm the oldest of nine, nine siblings. My mom was born in Montgomery, Alabama and my father was born in Mobile, Alabama. So we have a lot of ties to Alabama. My grandma was there and we'd go visit her and it was through that experience that I, I didn't really so much experience any segregation as we were sheltered from it by all of those. So I just have vivid memories of driving through the south when we were on our way back from a military station, and I remember one time I had to go to the bathroom, and I was in the back of the station wagon and we were traveling through the south and I could see as we were, you know as lights were whizzing by, you know you saw the signs, and my father kept saying Angela, you gotta hold it. Just hold on. He actually said we have to wait until we get to Texas so I guess in those days, Texas was better, but, that's my remembrance but I do know that because of my father's military, we were really sheltered. He tried really hard to keep us from that. My mother was a rabid education person and I'm being nice when I say rabid. It wasn't you know, are you going to college or if you're going to college. It was when you go to college. I mean it wasn't an option and in fact all nine of us were college bound and went to college, and so education was really important and then coupled with that was the military life. You know my father was real strict, strict Catholic. So we had to be neat. We had to be clean. So between the two of them, I always felt that we were, you know, we were raised pretty rigid, pretty strict, and so that sort of set the tone for going to college but not really doing what you wanted to do so much as you were doing what you were supposed to do, and so that's where I can comfortably say I had not the faintest notion of being an attorney or a judge or anything along those lines, and so and it's kind of ironic that you're sitting across from me asking these questions.

*(Because?)*

Because I had left college. After two years of college here at UNM, I decided I'd had enough of college and I was gonna go out into the world and get a job and live. That's how I was looking at it and ignore my mom's sayings about Angela, there's a



reason you're making this sacrifice now, but I didn't, I didn't pay any attention to that. I got out of college and I went and worked for the Department of Motor Vehicles, and I was, aside from me, there was one other African-American working there at that time and he was in the, kind of in a supervisory position, but there was only the two of us in the whole MVD, and so I was a typist and I was pretty good. I was a good typist and that's, I typed driver's licenses, and so I said, I'm pretty good at this and people kept telling me, you're really good. You're fast. You know? So I thought, oh a raise, a promotion, something's coming, something's coming. So I kept typing and I just noticed that the faster I typed, the more work seemed to be on my desk, and so this went on for a while and I was getting frustrated. No mention of a raise. No mention of anything.

[mic adjustment]

So I was hoping to get a raise or something.

*(More work?)*

But it was just more work, and so I was frustrated and I had become friends with the African-American, I've forgotten his name after all those years. I think it was Dean. Um, I had become friends with him and so I was conveying my frustration and he started laughing. He goes, "well I'll tell you I know who is getting a raise, and that would be the person who's getting credit for the statistics, you know? For the work that you're putting out. That would be your immediate supervisor. That person is probably getting a raise because your numbers are so good, and they're just going to give you more work," and he said you know, "you were telling me about why you left college." He goes, "this is probably why your mom wanted you to go to college. You're going to work and you're not going to get the credit. The credit is going to be given to your supervisor who's going to get a raise and a promotion because you're boasting, you're boosting her numbers." I went back to college so fast. I got the best grades in those last two years, but because it was sort of a general program I had started with an Education major and a French Literature minor, and then I said, "well now what?" So I just followed in my mom's footsteps. She was a teacher, and I thought, "let me try teaching. That seems like you know, a reasonable thing to do with my education degree," and so I started student teaching at Eldorado, and it became quickly apparent that I was not cut out to be a teacher because I wanted to literally kill every one of those students as fast as I could. So I realized I didn't have that temperament for teaching like my mother did.

*(Were they bad students?)*

They, well no. They were just, you know, at the time, education was changing where you weren't just a teacher. Now it's infinitely worse, but you were a referee. You



know, little counselor. It seemed like that I thought that I'm not doing much teaching. I'm so busy disciplining and doing these other things that this just isn't going to work.

*(Were the challenges in the classroom far more than you expected?)*

It was. It was. You know I had a, my mom was born to be a teacher, and she's been a teacher for a long time and she just, she had it down. She had the temperament, the demeanor. You know, she had control. I think if my mom looked a certain way, people just sort of fell into line. You know, because she just had that, whereas I'm more of a pushover.

*(Mary (Inaudible 07:48) was a mother to everybody that she met, and that was the demeanor.)*

Yeah, that would be mom.

*(But you were the oldest of nine. Wasn't that you too?)*

No. In fact, my siblings tease me because you know, I'm supposed to be babysitting and my thing was, I wanted peace and quiet. That was me. Just you guys do whatever you want, just leave me alone. Let me watch TV or read my book, just you know. So I wasn't the classic older sibling that you know, sort of mothered everybody and took care of everybody. They knew that oh, Angela's taking care of us. Let's go do our thing. As long as we leave her alone, we are good. It was just sort of the way I distanced myself from conflict, but I mean, you know, I had to take care of them, but I did it from a distance.

*(But you couldn't be at a distance in the classroom?)*

No. You can't be at a distance. Being at a distance served me well later, because I learned to be, I learned to distance myself from the cases that I saw every day, and so in that sense, the distancing was a positive thing. For my siblings, yeah it was positive too, but it probably wasn't, didn't make me a really good caretaker.

*(So you decided to move from teaching to...?)*

Well that's where you came into the picture. 'Cause I was trying to figure out what I wanted to do, and I get this, I don't know if you called me or just hunted me down, but you said Angela, we need, we need black women at the Law school. You need to take the LSAT and go to Law school. So I almost, I looked at you like you were crazy. I said, "Marsha, I don't even want to talk to you, no less get up and talk to a jury or be in a court room," but you reminded me, practicing law doesn't have to be about litigation. It can be research. It could be, so I could hide away in the back of a room somewhere and be a clerk and be a paralegal and research you know, for the



attorneys. So I thought well you were pretty persistent. First I said. "Marsha, don't go away mad."

*(Just go away.)*

[Laughing]

But you were persistent and so I said I'm just going to take this test so that Marsha will leave me alone.

*(Oh please.)*

So I took the test.

*(Let me stop you there for a moment. The reason I remember, see you are jogging my memory. I remember you were working at Afro-American studies.)*

Yes. Oh yeah.

*(And you were doing some of that great typing, typing everybody else's papers in the world, making them look good.)*

Visas. Yeah. Dr. Becknell was just reminding me about that.

*(You were such a good writer. I thought wow, what a great skill. So okay.)*

Okay. So you believed in me.

*(I did.)*

So yeah, I took the test and actually enjoyed the problem solving aspect of the LSAT. 'Cause I've always liked you know, puzzles, mysteries, and then the test sort of appealed to me in that way, and did pretty good and got in to Law school, but I can back track, and you reminded me about the years at UNM with Sam Johnson and Barbara and Dr. Becknell and Harold Bailey. They were building their dream. You know, because when I came to UNM from, we were stationed in Del Rio, Texas, and my mom just said, get on the bus. The bus will take you to UNM. Bye. 'Cause they were getting ready to go overseas to Ramstein, Ger...no Weston because we had been stationed in Ramstein for my high school years. So I was just on my own and I got off the bus and there I was, you know in Oxfords. It was hilarious. I think the Omegas laughed at me when I got off the bus, but I started working part time for African-American studies as a typist under Bonnie.

*(Yes. Bonnie Gadson.)*



I have such fond memories of Bonnie. Yeah, we had good times at African-American studies but that paid my way. You know and I learned a lot from Sam and Barbara. Although some of my activities with Sam as the leader got me in a lot of trouble with my mom, and remember, she's the education fanatic, and so they had started paying my tuition at UNM and Sam decided we were going, there was some segregation regarding the football team, if I remember correctly, and so Sam decided to stage a demonstration, and so there we were with the signs. You know, walking up and down. You know, protesting the treatment of the players, and a friend of my mom's happened to be there and she took a picture and she sent it to my mom in Germany, and my mom wrote the most scathing letter. Miss militant now. You know, you know my mom. She went to the other extreme, but she wrote me back and said, "Angela, we didn't send you to school to demonstrate. You demonstrate after you get a degree. Right now, no we're not paying your tuition anywhere." Yanked my tuition. I had, that's, hence working at African-American studies was crucial because I had to pay my way. Of course in those days, it wasn't like it is now. It was very reasonable, but I always, whenever Sam tells me, reminds me Lulu salsa. Remember we were in the dance group and protesting and I said, Sam you got me in big trouble, and I think that's why he got me the job at African-American studies. He felt sorry for me, but those were really nice years. You know, I enjoyed the classes with Professor Bailey. I got a really good background in African literature, African-American literature. You know, it was interesting how the evolution of African-American studies, it was so important for the, for us that were coming up at that time, because we got to be a part of history. UNM was vastly different than it is now. You know, you could look on campus and see two or three black students and now you look around and there's more and more in different fields, and it's just amazing the work that was done in those early years to look around now later and see what has evolved. You know, it really makes you appreciative of what they did back then.

*(So let's talk about evolution for just a moment. You said you are the oldest of nine?)*

Right.

*(And traveled because your dad was military?)*

Right.

*(So you were in many different places way before you came to New Mexico?)*

Yes.

*(And yet when you got here, you almost immediately got involved in protests and what were militant kinds of things?)*



Well you have to remember, they were, my parents weren't here.

*(You are getting where I'm going. What was your life like before that? Had you been involved in protests or challenges?)*

Oh no because like I said, you know, I think my father, well that may have been just what he wanted to do to earn a living, but it also had a way of sheltering us from the real world. When you are on base, you know, it's a whole different atmosphere than when you're in the city. You know, it's the Federal Government. You know, you're not supposed to be racist. You're supposed to, you know, you have a certain code of behavior. I just remember every time we moved, we had to clean the house with and use white gloves. You know to make sure there wasn't, it was just, it's a whole different lifestyle. It's really following rules and regulations, and so when you're reared to follow rules and regulations, you don't really, you don't have the freedom of choice. So one of the things you know, you always say you're not going to parent like you were parented. So one of the things I was determined was that I was going to give my children options. Dress, how to dress. You know, if they wanted to choose to dress. If they wanted to do their hair a certain way, you know, to a degree, because I think that sort of, when we finally got out from under the rules and regulations which were necessary. I understand that. There were nine of us. You couldn't be too touchy feely, too you know? You had to be pretty conservative to make it, but I thought that when I got out into the world, unlike kids that are real confident in their choices, you know, I was governed by well what am I supposed to do as opposed to, what do I want to do? So that played an important role for me in that I feel that unlike my husband who knew what he wanted to do when he was nine years old. It just sort of fell on me through you for example, and so I think I've learned that a balance between learning how to make choices based on what you want, not what you're supposed to do. You know and I think that's just from being reared with really people that, who've been through segregation. Who've been through racism and were determined that their children weren't going to do that and weren't going to be exposed to that, and the way they did it was to make sure we followed all the rules and regs so that we wouldn't you know...

*(I see what you're saying. So your parents both from Alabama?)*

Right.

*(Who lived through ugly times?)*

Yes.

*(And survived however they and their families did?)*



Right.

*(Your mom and your dad made choices to move out of those environments, but are you telling me that in all the travels to all the different places you lived growing up that you never experienced any negative reactions to black kids being in these different places?)*

You know, the only experience that I felt in that sense because we were always on an Air Force base. Was a sense of isolation because there were so few of us, and it didn't help that when we came to New Mexico that you know, because we were still what, still 3% of the population here. I've always felt, even in Law school and I didn't feel that way at UNM because I was surrounded by you know, people that, Sam and everybody was a real nurturing environment and I pretty much lived with a lot of African-American surrounding, but in Law school, now that's where it started for me. The feeling of isolation. I remember I would not want to be called on in class. So I would sit in the back of the class to avoid that which only made matters worse because you know, when you go to the back of the class, they immediately target you, and my mom told me, she said, "Angela, go sit in the front row, and that way, they'll think you just raise your hand, and you won't get called on," but I mean that was my, that's why, it was that upbringing and being sheltered around that I just felt so isolated in Law school, and I felt too that sometimes the teachers were a little condescending to me. You know, sort of like and I don't know why because overtly I don't think anybody you know, made any comments or did anything. It could have been me imposing that on myself, or it could have been that that's just the way it was. You know, you're here. You're kind of a statistic, and we're happy that you're here because you are a statistic but I didn't get that same sense of really being nurtured and part of the class and that sort of thing. I don't know if that's a combination of my personality or really the way, the way it was.

*(So that's interesting that you are questioned whether that's personality or reality or a merger of the two. I think I remember every time I was at your house, you were reading, every single time.)*

Oh yeah. Yeah, I like to read.

*(Or listening to music or running. Those are all soloist kinds of activities.)*

Yes, that's true.

*(So are you amazed that you ended up in a career where you had to deal with a lot of people?)*

Very amazed.



*(How did that work out?)*

Well it worked out because, get back to the distancing. So my specialty was domestic violence, and so you know, I would see interesting conflicts. Interesting is not the word. Just tragic you know, situations and a lot of violence. You see the impact on the children and in the court room, you know, it wasn't just like in the civil world where money is involved so everybody's on their best behavior or even in the criminal world where people are trying to show the judge their best behavior so they'll get a lighter sentence. This is where reasonable people who have serious issues just act totally unreasonable. Act out. Issues of power and control. You can feel the anger. You can feel the toxicity in the court room, and so that's where it was positive that I was able to distance myself because I was able not to jump, not to let the emotion get to me. So when people would erupt and you know, the alleged abuser would say ugly things or the victim would you know, be emotional as should be, I was able to keep my equilibrium. You know just try to judge it objectively and provide a response that didn't insight or you know, make matters worse. Exacerbate the situation, and that tool served me well because I did that for 22 years, and welcomed it. You know, it became my niche to handle those cases. Not just in family court but in criminal court, and I felt like I was able to empathize even with the alleged abuser because I knew that it's a cyclical thing. You know that the abuser probably had witnessed this sort of behavior you know from his dad to his mom or vice versa when he was little. I say he because of the majority of the alleged abusers being male and also able at the same time to try to empower you know the victim, and so that tool kind of turned itself around, and I was amazed that when I got in the court room and I was making decisions or trying to, talking to the litigants and the attorneys, I didn't think about being self-conscious or shy. I, you forget about that when you're trying to help people. You just forget about it, and so I really felt I had a really rewarding career in doing that work.

*(Let me back you up just a little bit to before you got in to that career, so where did you graduate from?)*

UNM.

*(In high school?)*

Oh. Kaiserslautern American High School in Vogelweh, Germany.

*(So you've come from Germany back to the states?)*

To Del Rio, Texas. Really big city.

*(Did you see a difference in the environment or the community attitudes when you returned to the states in Texas from Germany?)*



You know, I knew Texas was, even then was very segregated, but Del Rio was so rural. You know and we were again on a base. We were on a base so you still had that kind of sheltering from the society.

*(Alright. So then you get to UNM, you graduate from UNM. Didn't have to go to jail so your mother would really kill you.)*

Yeah. 'Tis true.

*(You made the decision to go to Law School and after graduated from Law School, what did you do?)*

Now that's where I started to experience a little bit more overt racism. Yes, I have to say. I was trying, because that's really what it was, but it's very subtle. One thing about New Mexico that I've noticed, it's very subtle the way racism can rear its head here. I've heard you know, people say oh New Mexico, we have such a diverse population. We don't know, there's no racism in New Mexico. I mean there's all these different cultures are here and everybody. No. I'm sure Mr. Jewell conveyed his story about buying a house in New Mexico. My mom and my dad were in the same position when they finally bought a house up in the northeast heights. They were the first African-Americans up there, but I decided I was going to just walk and get a job. I was going to walk from firm to firm downtown and apply.

*(Applying.)*

And that experience stayed with me. I mean I did it, it was interesting because I started in the morning and by the end of the day, my very last place that I went to, I found a job, but the experience along the way was fascinating. It was just, I would go in. You know, I had appointments. So I'd go in and I'd have an interview, and it was just clear to me each time I left, that I wasn't going to get this job. I wasn't even going to get asked back for a second interview, and I don't know why I felt so strongly about that, but I did. It just seemed they'd say, "well, we will be in touch." You know, all the right words, but you just, you got the sense that you weren't going to be asked back.

*(And you had passed the bar?)*

Oh yeah. Passed the bar, but you know, I had average grades. I had As and Bs.

*(That's not average.)*

You know what I mean, but it wasn't like the major firms would be hiring the 4.0s and that sort of thing. As I was headed back to the bus stop to take the bus back to my



apartment, I passed a law office on Broadway in a house, and it was Harold Parker. I just said, well it can't hurt. What can it hurt? So I went in and applied, and Harold hired me.

*(So what kind of practice during those years?)*

It was a general practice. I took family right away and Tommy who joined me later. He had started with Legal Aid. He did more of the civil kind of business side.

*(So when you are saying Tommy, who is that?)*

That would be my husband. Yeah.

*(Who is better known as Judge Jewell.)*

Yeah. The other Judge Jewell.

*(The other Judge Jewell. Very good. Tommy leaves legal aid and...?)*

And came over with Harold and me. I went to Legal Aid part time but that's how I got connected to domestic violence and I was the Pro Bono coordinator. Trying to get attorneys to represent victims without charging, and that's how I got interested in that world.

*(When we hear information about the judicial system in the United States whether it's about children or criminal cases, we tend to always hear about adverse impact on minorities.)*

Yes. Disproportionate.

*(Would you say that's true?)*

Absolutely, and I was wondering, I know there's a sparse population of African-Americans in New Mexico, but I expected that I would still see African-American women coming in for help and I didn't. I didn't see very many. Every once in a while, an African-American woman would come in and ask for an order of protection and help, but I got to talk to one, what was, I can't remember her name, but I was curious why I wasn't seeing more African-American women and she said you need to read this book. *Chain, Chain, Change* by Evelyn White. It's an African-American perspective on domestic violence and when I read the book, one of the reasons it gave for the lack of African-American women reporting issues of domestic violence was that they were convinced that if they reported it, their husband or significant other would be hit with a much larger stick than other men who were being reported, and so that would be their reason for staying in a relationship and allowing that to



continue to happen because they were persuaded by their husband or significant other that you can't turn me in because you know, they're going to really punish me and so you've got to be supportive. You've got to be loyal to the brother. You know, you can't just, you have to deal with this.

*(Angie, I want to give another perspective and see what you think.)*

Sure.

*(You talked about women being persuaded not to report it. It took me many, many years to identify myself as an abused wife. Straight out of college and I mean this guy tried to burn my hair, my big afro. He punched me. He hit me. He tried to drown me. I ran away to my job basically and when they said well why would you go back? Why would you go back? You know, 'cause you feel like you can help. You feel like you can do better. You feel like you did something wrong.)*

Something wrong.

*(And then I wouldn't ever report it. I didn't tell my parents for 20 years because I felt like it was...)*

Your fault?

*(Not so much my fault, but I didn't want it to draw negative attention to him to impair his career, to embarrass him.)*

Right. That's the other reason.

*('Cause this is still a black man trying to make it and we were college educated people. You know, he had struggled to do that, but I took on that responsibility to protect him. Do you think?)*

No. That's part of it too. In other words, if you turn me in, not only will I go to jail longer than anybody else but I'll lose my license. I'll lose my job. You know, all of the disproportionate things that happen to African-American men in the criminal justice system, and so you know, my response would be you know, that's still not right. It doesn't make it right. You're supporting your man basically. So you're not, you shouldn't take that. That doesn't, you know, that's not how you help. That's sort of, you need to get out of that situation and the system isn't perfect. You're right. He may get a disproportionate response from the system, but that doesn't mean you have to take that kind of behavior.

*(So what did you do to even the playing field for those victims?)*



You know, it's hard for one person to even the playing field. Although I've got a felony probation violation docket right now and just by being there...

*(Explain what that means.)*

I'm sorry. So when someone is convicted of a crime, they may have to do some time. They may not. They may get complete, what we call probation, and so there's rules and regulations on probation, and if you violate those rules, you, there's a hearing held in front of a judge regarding what should happen, and I can tell you sometimes you're looking at more time for violating probation than you were at your initial sentencing on your underlying crime. So I try real hard because the goal of probation is rehabilitation to tell, to help offenders get a chance at treatment and counseling. Because to me it doesn't do any good to incarcerate someone with a serious drug problem. That's not going, that's not the answer. So I bend over backwards to give people opportunities as opposed to saying, well you messed up. Just go on to the Department of Corrections and be done, and so in that sense, I am being fair and in trying to do that, when anybody comes through but in particular when African-American men come through, I mean, you know, I try to, I always do what I think is appropriate, but I always try to get it across to them that you know, you can't mess up, and you know, everybody else in here might be able to side step and do a little dance but you've got to follow the rules and I mean follow them strictly, and I don't say it that way but they get my drift. They know what I'm trying to tell them. You know, I tell them you, you know, it'll be, it's ironic to me. I'll have a defense attorney come up and with the same kind of background, the same kind of criminal history, they'll recommend oh let's maybe six months at MDC with some good time and go through the ATP program, and then an African-American man will come up and I'll hear max him out in the Department of Corrections, and it just, it's fascinating.

*(From the defense attorney?)*

Oh no, from the state.

*(From the state?)*

And so it just strikes me that it's there. It's very alive and well and when you read about the disproportionate sentences, it's true. It's true and so it's systematic though. It doesn't start with the judge. It starts with the arrests. You know, it starts being born in the poverty. You know, it starts, it's a systematic problem and it needs a systematic change. It's not something that I or judge Whitaker or you know Tommy can address. We just do the best we can under the circumstances. So I even had a response on an evaluation one time that, she favors black men in my sentencing and in my, you know, and I just said that just means I'm being fair. That's how I responded to that. I said, I'm just being fair. So everybody that comes in front of me,



I look at your history. How did you do with the opportunities you were given? Did you go to your counseling? You know, if you did and you're trying, I'm not going to say, waste your time in DOC where you don't get any help at all. I'm going to say, let's try this. Here's an option. Now if it keeps going than you know, they tie my hands, but I bend over backwards because the goal is rehabilitation on probation. So you know, it's just that you can't do it alone. It's got to come from, we have to make that change as people. To change that system because it's set it up that it's disproportionate for African-American men.

*(So you've been in two critical fields, criminal justice. Did you do criminal defense for a while?)*

I didn't do criminal defense. I started on...

*(I'm sorry?)*

What happened is when I became a judge, it was a special slot. It was the domestic violence.

*(So in the general practice, your focus was on family practice?)*

It was family, family practice.

*(And then from there, you were appointed the...?)*

Commissioner for domestic violence.

*(Commissioner. So...)*

And then when the judgeship came up, the legislature created a domestic violence judgeship. So I was the first domestic violence judge in New Mexico, and because of that, Judge Brennan who was our Chief Judge at the time said Angie, you're going to have to do criminal work now. Here we go again. I said everybody keeps messing with my comfort level. So I hadn't done a criminal case at all. I hadn't been in the public defender's office. I hadn't been with the DA. He just took me in threw me into the....so I had, at first I started with the specialized domestic violence criminal court, and then because the family court was suffering, you know, and I had started the DV process there, I had to do that part time. So it just got to be too much after a while, and in about 20, let's see, I was appointed in '96. So in about 2002, I went totally over to family court.

*(So let me ask you a hybrid question here. You and Tommy have been married, you had children. Between your upbringing and your raising of your children, and then what you've seen in family court of the circumstances of families and children, what*



*kind of differences do you observe from what's going on now to the way you were raised?)*

You know I think, you mean in terms of what goes on in homes or...?

*(However you interpret that.)*

Okay. You need to run that by me again.

*(So I'm asking you to think about the way you were raised.)*

Okay.

*(Structured, disciplined or the lack thereof, the way you've raised your children.)*

Right.

*(And what kind of issues you're seeing come into your family court that reflect the way children are being?)*

Oh yeah. It's you know, family court is an eye opener. I mean at the time that I retired, I was seeing the grandkids of the parents when I started. The kids of the, it's a whole different dynamic now in family court. Now you see more grandparents raising their grandchildren. You see the results of the domestic violence. I had a criminal case with the father, and about, he got out of prison and came to court in family court with his daughter who was being abused, and he set behind her while she was requesting an order of protection.

*(Against him?)*

Against her boyfriend.

*(Okay.)*

And so they had children, and it just crossed my mind as I was watching him just glaring at the significant other. To myself saying, wait a minute. Where did she learn to accept that kind of behavior? And it just, you know, you see examples of that over and over again.

*(Generational.)*

It's a generational learned behavior. Which is why it's so important to get in to be preventive and get it when these children are young and witnessing that and try to intervene in that cycle before it becomes their behavior. So I see a lot of, you know,



it was the big secret many years ago when I was raised. I didn't hear anything about domestic violence. You know, it was the deep, dark secret, and now all of these things are coming out. You know, what's really going on in our different cultures.

*(Talk to me a moment about your family. You and Tommy met where?)*

At Law school. Well actually, it was pre-law. We went to CLEO, which was a pre-law program.

*(Counsel on Legal Education Opportunity.)*

Yeah. There you go.

*(Can't believe I remember that.)*

Yeah, and it was in Tempe and I'll never forget it was so hot, but yeah, that's how we met, and we were really good friends. It was funny. It was only myself, him and Houston Ross in our class. So we sort of naturally gravitated you know, towards each other, and we were friends for the first two years and we started dating in the last year.

*(So when did you get married?)*

We got married in 1981.

*(So after you were out of Law school?)*

After we'd gone through Law school, and yes.

*(How did it happen that you both became Judges? The amazing historic Jewell and Jewell? You made National news and Ebony magazine.)*

Yeah I remember I was pregnant and they had a picture of me and I was so, so pregnant on the front of the magazine, and I was like oh Lord, but we, let's see. Tommy always wanted to be a Judge. His family, I don't know if Mr. Jewell talked about that, but his family had a huge medical malpractice lawsuit when he was nine years old. I'm not sure what happened, but they, either they settled it or it went to court and they got a settlement, but ever since then, he said he just was fascinated by Law and that's always, that was his goal. Whereas you know how I fell into it, but it was good in the sense that we sure ran our issues at each other when we got home. It was look what happened to me today. Oh you should see what happened to me today. Thomas and Tajah would be sitting at the table looking at each other. We're sick of this.



*(Your son and daughter?)*

They were tired of us talking about our cases. You know, we really were able to talk each other out of, you know, I'd come home and just had a toxic day. I'd call it a toxic day, and he would just, you know talk me down from the stress of it. He so enjoyed being a Judge. You know, he had the children. The irony would be I'd have the parents and he would be seeing the children.

*(In Juvenile court?)*

In Juvenile court. Abuse and neglect.

*(Did you ever find that there were any problems that were raised because there was a husband/wife pairing sitting on the bench?)*

No. You know, and that's probably because we were in two different buildings. He was in children's court, although it's District court, it's housed separately, and so, now we never really had a complication around that. You know, we could never hear the same case or you know, there was no conflict that ever arose.

*(So tell me a little about the merging of these two lives. Tommy who was raised here in New Mexico. A black family with a diverse experience I guess.)*

Yes, very.

*(You from all over the world, basically, and then back via Del Rio to New Mexico.)*

Yeah.

*(What were the concerns that you both had about how you were going to raise your children?)*

I'm going to back up because I lived in New Mexico from the second grade through the ninth grade and that was a slice then of more of a reality regarding the city. Because I lived in the Kirkland addition, and on San Jose street, and the Kirk was considered you know, the pocket of poverty then, and it was majority African-Americans and Hispanic, and so there I had a different slice of life. I mean it was, I could, the doors were open. We wandered down the street and you know, the neighbors would take care of us.

*(The community.)*

Community. Mom worked on base. Dad worked on base. So we'd get out of school, we'd walk to San Jose, we went to San Jose Parochial school which was on South



Broadway. Still there, and it was with nuns and the Priests. That was an experience and again we were the only, pretty much the only African-American children that went there because the other school was a public school. San Jose public school and the majority of the African-Americans in our neighborhood went to that school. That was my father's strict Catholic, you know, that we went to that school, and so we had a really interesting growing up in that neighborhood because you know, that's where all the alleged drugs were and at the time, this was all hush-hush. It wasn't like it is now where it's you know, drive-by's and the violence was if you had a pocket knife when I was growing up. The doors were open. We'd go down the street, get into trouble. The neighbors would tell my mom or they'd discipline us ourselves. I mean it was a really different environment than now where you know, you lock your doors. You can't go down the street. It's very different, but that was, even then we were kind of sheltered as always because we went to Catholic school where you were taught to be tolerant of everybody, and you know, so it was almost like being in military school, and then when the ninth grade, I had to go to St. Vincent's all-girls school which was the sister program to the Menaul Boys' School. So you can see, they were always trying to keep us from what they'd experienced. They worked real hard at that, my mom and dad. Mom's theory was you get an education so you rise above that. You get an education so that you can do something with yourself so that if you, if people attempt to segregate you and you know, you can make your own way, and dad's idea was you follow the rules. You'll be a good person.

*(Did you ever have your parents tell you of their upbringing stories in Alabama? What it was like?)*

Yes. Dad, my father came from a very poor family in Mobile. Extreme poverty. So he had a strong work ethic to get out of that, and he talked about, my dad and mom had two different ways of handling racism. My father's way was you conform. You, I'm not saying that to say that he would accept being mistreated, but I guess you could call it the Creole culture was such that you tried to, not to pass, but to behave so that you'd be accepted. So my mom analogized it to the house slave. You know, they used to have interesting discussions about racism.

*(If people don't know Mrs. Suzanne, they may not understand that. Very vocal, very straight forward, very blunt.)*

Very blunt.

*(Down to earth?)*

Very yeah, and so her, mom was raised in the segregated Montgomery, Alabama and her thing was you know, you get an education because you're just as good as anybody else, and you get an education so you can succeed and do well and you fight racism wherever you find it. You rebel against it. Hence me losing my tuition. I



found that very ironic, but they both, they were so different in how they handled it but together, you know, they were determined to shelter us. So it was interesting. Looking back, it was interesting because they both experienced racism in ways. Dad, it was a culture in Mobile that just, I don't know how to describe it. It, you just, you tried to get along. You tried to. Dad's world was you just be clean. You dress nice. Have a good work ethic. Be a good person and that's what gets you through life, and you won't have trouble, and moms was, raise trouble and get an education, and so they, you know, that's how we were raised.

*(So knowing the mix of your eight siblings, there's a real broad range of personalities in there.)*

Very much so.

*(You and Wanda are like day and night.)*

Day and night. Wanda's, I mean, she goes crazy with this current political situation. She's on the phone fussing and just oh my goodness. What is the world coming to?

*(So where are your children in that spectrum?)*

Thomas is, he just, he called me, this is vivid because of the racism issue, but Thomas is in California and at the time, I think they were trying, the gay lesbian community were trying to get a legislation on the ballot that you know, for no discrimination, and it was turned down and Thomas found out that the majority of the African-American voters didn't want it.

*(Rejected it.)*

Rejected it, and I tried to, he goes mom I don't understand this. We were slaves. How can we judge anybody else? You know, we should be really tolerant of differences because people, we were slaves. He was so upset. I said Thomas, I said now you have to remember, we're all, Church is everything to us. You know, that's how we got through slavery. We were very strong Church-oriented people, and our religion just doesn't tolerate that. You know, our religion says that's an aberration, and so you have to understand, you know, that's deep in our culture. Now we didn't raise you that way. You know, we raised you to be tolerant of differences. I mean in the military, if you're not tolerant of differences, you're in big trouble. So that's his person, him and Tajah. Tajah's very community-oriented. She was involved at the Academy in outreach. She got an award for the cultural diversity interest. You know, that was her thing. So she got a lot of mom's but she was gentler about it. Mom was you know, it was funny. We'd watch, she was a parenting, she had parenting classes in the community. Affective black parenting, and mom was actually up there saying you know, how the reason we physically discipline our children is because when you



were slaves, if you didn't get your children's attention really quick, families could be separated. Your children die. You know or you die. So we didn't have time to reason with you and say there are consequences to this behavior. We couldn't do that. You know, we had to knock the out of you.

*(Life and death.)*

Right away. Yeah. It was a life and death situation. So she was teaching up in the front of the classroom. Me and Wanda were back there with the food and we go, were we guinea pigs? Because my mom could throw a broom or grab a pan. We said, what happened? We were just, we were almost crying back there because you know mom said, when we confronted her with this, she was so funny. She goes, "well Angela you know, we all learn." Oh boy.

*(That was her way of apologizing?)*

Yeah I guess, because she wasn't going to apologize, but yeah, it was funny.

*(I know that when you are a high profile person in the community like a Judge, sometimes people wonder why you're not more conspicuous doing other things. What's the dilemma for community involvement versus professional ethics?)*

We have rules. We have really strict rules, especially regarding politics. Like you know, I can do things, we can be sneaky now, but we can't openly endorse. We had a Judge that did that and ooh. Although I knew if we had done it, we'd probably been impeached, but this Judge managed to get away with it, but yeah, we can't endorse publically. We can't give fundraisers. We can't give money. We can't, I couldn't even put signs in my yard, and yeah, it's hard to tell people. We can do as a private. I mean certainly, we can vote. That's the most important thing, but that's just the ethical rules to prevent us and at first, retired Judges were exempt from that, but now retired Judges, because people still, I don't know what the rationale was but that rule changed.

*(Because they have influence.)*

Exactly, and I'm (inaudible 55:46) so I really can't, and it bothers because I'd love to have a fundraiser. You know, we could do it for like New Mexico Black Lawyers Association. We have a fundraiser because that's a non-profit, but to endorse a candidate or have a fundraiser for a candidate, we can't do that.

*(So you've achieved a great deal of success by any standard. Don't question that.)*

Oh no. I wasn't. I've been blessed.



*(And I'm thinking with that comes a lot of sacrifice of some of those other rights and privileges that the rest of the community enjoy. Did you ever feel deprived of some of those privileges or freedoms?)*

No. You know, you're held to a higher standard and you're in a fish bowl so your personal life is in a fish bowl and that's painful. That was painful. That aspect of it is hard, but you know you just hold your head up and keep going, but in terms of, you know you can't do, you know people look up to you, and hopefully young people that are, have aspirations of their own. When I talk, would go out into the community and talk to classes and schools about what I did, you can just, they don't sit there and say gosh, you know, she's shy, and she's self-conscious. They're just, you're a judge? You know and it makes all of that just go out the window, thoughts of yourself. You just, you see these eager faces and it's always good to see eager young African-American faces out there wanting to do something with themselves. That's really neat.

*(I know when I would bring my paralegals into the courtroom, they were just enthralled and these were young people who typically had been on the wrong side of the law before, and to be able to see people like you. Hispanic women, Hispanic men, they just, you have no idea or maybe you do, but I think you have no idea how that opened up windows of opportunities for these kids to say, "wow, there's somebody that looks like me.")*

Yes.

*(How does that feel?)*

And you know, I'm really cognizant of that because of the isolation I felt in Law school and sometimes even Judging is an isolating thing. You can't, you know, go down the hall and talk to everybody and hey attorney so and so. You know, you have to isolate yourself because it could be perceived there's some kind of bias or...

*(Conflict of interest.)*

Yeah, and so one of my colleagues, excuse me, said I have never felt so isolated in a job as I do being a Judge. You know, you have to kind of watch what you say. You know, watch what you do. That's why our staff was so close, was like family at work because there you could, you know, my assistant Tisha, my bailiff Audi were my best friends. They stayed with me until I retired.

*(You just made me remember something that I heard. I can't remember who said this to us. Maybe Leo Romero who taught Criminal Law, but one of the things that I learned in Law school is how to be a person who could argue passionately your position and learn to agree to disagree. That it wasn't personal. You don't take*



*offense and people would, Desi would say, those are the same people you're going to go out and have dinner with later on.)*

Exactly.

*(You're on polar opposite sides. For you, for the Judge, you've got attorneys on both sides arguing passionately one way or the other. You rule in their favor sometimes. You rule against them others. How did you find that you were able to resolve those kinds of issues to maintain good rapport with all those people?)*

Well you know, my job is to make decisions, and I know that a lot of times I would look up and think, this was a really good decision. It was fair. It was equitable. I did a good job and I'd look out and there would be either anger or sorrow or you know, just all kinds of emotions based on that decision. So you, as a judge, you just have to decide, I have to make this decision. Do the best I can and move on, no matter what the reaction and you learn that attorneys, attorneys represent their clients. So they will literally put on a show. You know and then I'll peek out the hallway and they're walking hand in hand down the hall after they've just screamed and hollered at each other in the court room. So I know that it's kind of the method of operation. You know, *modus operandi*. It's just their advocacy face as opposed to the person that they are, and you soon learn to separate that although there are attorneys that you know, exacerbate the conflict as opposed to trying to, you can advocate for your client, but you also need to, you're counsel. You're a counselor at law. So you don't just take your client's position in a vacuum. If it's a bad position, you counsel, but there are some attorneys that, I'm going to fight to the death for you and it's a horrible position and they know it, and you know, but that's the difference between being a sheer advocate and a counselor at law. That's why what I'm passionate about now is facilitation. By doing that, that's my second career and I'm trying to keep people out of family court. So we, that's what I enjoy doing as a retired judge. I think I have a little more impact and the attorneys will bring their clients and we'll try to settle the case so that they don't have to go to court, and I tell them you know, you don't want a third party stranger making decisions about your children and your life because you're the one that has to live this life. You need to have some ownership here. I'm really enjoying that and it's not stressful because I'm not making any decisions. I tell her, you are.

*(You were a good decision maker. I guess one of the last things I wanted to ask you is, you are a black woman that was raised in very much an International community environment. You've been everywhere.)*

I have and it made me, what's the word? Affable. Is that the word you use when you, what's the word when you're exposed to different cultures a lot, you learn to be tolerant of differences? There's a word for that but I don't.



(Worldly?)

Worldly? That's one, but there's, and it just slipped my mind, but you're right.

(Cosmopolitan?)

No, not cosmopolitan. I'm so far from cosmopolitan, but you learn to tolerate differences. You learn when someone's different, it doesn't, you know, I'm not whoa. Or what's that all about? It's normal because when we went to Italy, it was a bunch of us. We traveled, when my father was stationed in Germany, you could travel from one country to the next in a station wagon which is what we did. We went from Ramstein, Germany all the way down to the Black Forrest in Rome in a station wagon. We just put tents, we would have a tent in the Alps. You know, it was just, you can't do that anymore without having millions of dollars, and there we were, I woke up in the Alps next to a waterfall in a tent. You know? I was, it just, you appreciate. I feel real blessed to have been able to travel a lot like that.

*(That's good. What I really want to ask you is with all of that worldly experience, what would you say to people today about how to help their children, their families have the best life? Young, black men are losing their lives across this country. Black families are being torn apart by so much of that. You've seen it in domestic court, seen it in family court. Tommy's seen it in juvenile court. What's your best wisdom that you can share?)*

I would tell parents first of all, you are blessed with children. They're like jewels, diamonds. So when you have conflict with each other and you're not even thinking about them, you're yelling and screaming at each other, hurting each other. You are putting scratches in those diamonds, and you're going to so regret that you don't just get up and spend as much quality time. They don't need material things. They don't need, you know, stuff. They need you and they need you unified. They need you to think about them and not yourself. You know, you just, and I sit there and watch parents. It's your fault that my child is like this. No it's your fault that they're in therapy at the ripe old age of nine. You know? And I'm saying, it's the conflict. You are both good parents. You love your children, but you don't understand what you're doing when you indulge in adult issues in front of them. So I'd just say enjoy your children. I learned to enjoy my children. When I think of them, I smile because they were just, I'd come home stressed and they were my stress relievers. You know, just dealing with them and I really don't understand why people don't get that, but then you have to realize you know, they, the starting place is different. You know, when you're raised with violence, you have a different starting point. So it's easy to say but I try to tell people, what you have is all you need and it's right there. It's just right there. That's all you need is just to focus on that. So I would just say, you know, love your children every day.



*(Great ending. Very good. Any extra questions?)*

*[And please look at Marsha when I ask you this. It's interesting that you say that now about children being jewels and about you know, appreciating them every second when you talked about you being the oldest and wanting to distance yourself from all the kids. When did the transformation happen?]*

Well I was, what 13, 14. You know and I was selfish. I'm a teenager. I wanted to read a book and they were noisy and they were bothering me, and I was supposed to watch them and I said, here's the deal. You guys do what you want and I'm going to read this book. Now did I get in trouble? Shoot yeah. I came home and my mom said, what is going on? We left you in charge, but it was, you know, I say that as a parent now, but I didn't feel like a parent when I was supposed to be watching those folks.

*['Cause I was surprised that you said you had children. Because you thought you seemed like someone who, and you couldn't be a teacher either. You just didn't have that going for you.]*

No, I didn't have that temperament, and you know, I teach, one of my friends at Church persuaded me to teach Sunday school. I did the same thing that I did with you. I said, oh you don't want that, and she said Angela, you're fine. I said, no. I said, I tried to teach. Do you know I'm teaching Sunday school? Sometimes I think I just judge myself and it's funny when you start doing something and these kids are just, they're fun. I learned. I've learned. My kids were, they were the best thing.

*[And how many did you have?]*

I only have two, but I have two grandkids.

*(Only. Two's good.)*

*[Two is a lot.]*

*(Well Angela, I'd just like to say one thing. That I knew you years ago and you still have the same personality. You still have the same attitude and I think a lot of times, when we get these positions and we get that notoriety, we change, but you remained the same.)*

Well, thank you. I take that as a compliment.

**Interview ends**