

Tacoma Community History Project
FINAL TRANSCRIPT

Narrator: Laurie Arnold
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Interviewed by: TeyAnjulee Leon
Place: Tacoma, WA

Begins at 3:48.76

TeyAnjulee Leon: So I heard that you're participating in another oral history project?

Laurie Arnold: Yeah this is like weird, you're like the second person to interview me in like the same week almost. When was it...last uh [long pause] it was last week, but it was like Friday or Thursday or something.

TL: Okay. And what's that one about?

LA: So that one is a like a community history project that's about Hilltop. That's what it's about, the Hilltop, cause I grew up in Hilltop and so that's why they you know...I'm one of about 40 people I think that are on a list to be interviewed about how the how Hilltop has changed over the years, so. They have like different generations of people that have been born and raised here that they're interviewing

TL: Right

LA: And they get some money from the city I guess to do this, and it's gonna be um it's gonna have a multimedia or maybe I don't know about multimedia, but it's gonna have a combination of audio recordings and art. And so there's like an artistic team that's working with us too and it's gonna be interactive. So you know, their vision anyway I guess it depends on how far they can make the money go [laughs] Their vision is for it to be interactive in a similar kind of way, like if you go to EMP or certain museum exhibits and you know push a button and see this happen [gestures], or listen to that

TL: Hear a story...okay

LA: Yeah

TL: That's cool!

LA: Yeah, I know [unintelligible]

TL: So that was one of my questions, you were born and raised in Hilltop?

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LA: Yes, mmmm

TL: And what was your...just tell me about growing up; what was your family like?

LA: Well, I'm the only child. So my immediate family was me and my mom who actually, my mom and dad got divorced before I was a year old. They were kind of doomed from the beginning, I guess [chuckling]. So...so it was just me and my mom, although really it was only me and my mom part of the time because my mom was a nurse. She was trained as a nurse, and all that almost got interrupted entirely because she ended up going to Mississippi Freedom Summer, 1964.

TL: Wow!

LA: And almost missed her state board exam to become a nurse. So she ended up having to leave earlier than you know the whole delegation that they went was leaving and--and skip through to some state. She didn't even take her exam in this state I believe...Or she did--I don't know it was something weird. Where she--I feel like she had to take her exam in a different state somewhere between here and Mississippi, but I can't remember the whole history. But anyway, so some of the time I was living with an aunt, not my mother's sister, but my father's sister.

TL: Okay

LA: Um...and she also would um cause she worked graveyard...you know when you first become a nurse

TL: Mmmm

LA: One of the things that happens is you get the graveyard shift for a bunch of years first cause that's the shittier shift that no one wants [laughs], so that's where the newbies go. So she was a single mom, working graveyard, you know can't have a kid alone all night, and you can't have a kid basically alone all day while you're sleeping. So I didn't live with my mom a lot of the time growing up

TL: Okay

LA: But I was always living in Hilltop. And boy, if you start asking me what the addresses or where--I lived everywhere, I just bounced all over the place.

TL: But you did go to McCarver, right?

LA: I went to McCarver, yup. I went to McCarver and Jason Lee.

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TL: Okay

LA: I didn't go to high school here, I went to high school in Seattle.

TL: Oh which one?

LA: Garfield

TL: Nice

LA: I didn't...I didn't...I really can't claim. I shouldn't even hardly even say that I went to Garfield cause, I did go to Garfield, but only for like, a month

TL: Okay

LA: And then I dropped out of high school and never went back. I dropped out of high school and left the state.

TL: Wow

LA: And I never went back to high school so...

TL: So I have...I'm kind of curious; your mom was involved civically, in Freedom Summer

LA: Yeah

TL: And from what I--from what I know about you before meeting you, it sounds like you are too. Did you--do you feel like there's a correlation between those two things, or?

LA: Oh for sure I mean...not just my mom but my aunt, the one who was my dad's sister. I mean really on both sides of my family it's a long...from grandparents maybe even great grandparents I don't know. But from grandparents down on both of the family they're very politically active; they're all lefties you know

TL: [Laughs]

LA: Well...there's Communists on both sides of my family so I'm a red [unintelligible] I'm a third generation red diaper baby too

TL: Okay

LA: [Laughs] So yeah, there was a lot of civil rights, anti-war, labor, you know, pro-

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labor

TL: Mhmm

LA: Workers' rights, environmental rights kind of stuff going on with like I say, grandparents on down. Especially my mom's sister--[to self] my mom's sister--my mom's mother, so that grandma, grandmother. And it's the women for sure. I mean the women dominate. The men were just kind of like, "Sure, honey" [swings arm]

TL: [Laughs]

LA: They didn't stand in the way. But they weren't like, out there as much as the women. So my grandmother was definitely more politically you know overtly politically active than my grandfather was. My mother was more overtly politically active than my father was. I'm more overtly politically active than my husband is. In a way, I mean, he just has a different style.

TL: Mhmm. Interesting...and so tell me, kinda, let's pick up where we left off: you went to Garfield for about a month, and then dropped out, and then what?

LA: I actually ran away. I went to Florida

TL: Okay

LA: [Chuckling] I lived in Florida for three years ish as a teenager, and I came back here at 17. And... got my GED

TL: Mhmm

LA: And then I went to beauty school. Got my cosmetology license and worked at that for about four months before I decided, "Yeah, I don't know if I wanna do this forever full-time, this is not quite..." You know, you think things are glamorous or fun or whatever and

TL: Mhmm

LA: It turns out they're kinda drudgy. I mean kinda like how people think, "flight attendant", right. Cause that was another thing I thought about doing. And it is you know sort of pink collar

TL: Right

LA: Lower working class background type jobs

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[Bit into tomato 10:34-10:46]

LA: But yeah um... You know, those are the sorts of career options I, you know thought about having.

TL: Right

LA: And like, flight attendant, after I started actually going in planes--which I had never been on a plane before, it's not that glamorous being a flight attendant. It's a glorified waitress in a really cramped space with your ears popping. Yeah.

TL: Definitely

LA: And you never know what time it is cause you're everywhere in all kinds of time zones. And not so much fun after all, so I'm glad I didn't

TL: Mhmm

LA: Like pursue that as something but...anyway, I didn't stay with the cosmetology thing as a formal career. I had a friend who um I had become best friends with, and she knew I wasn't happy with what I was doing. She was going to Pierce College, which is--back then it was called Fort Steilacoom Community College

TL: Mhmm

LA: She was going there, and she was studying marketing and fashion merchandising and stuff. She's all, "Why don't you come with" you know "with me, why don't you quit what you're doing and go back to school with me." And so I did and uh decided I wanted to do education because I read um a couple of books. I think my mom gave me these books--it was like a trilogy of a memoir of this one woman who was like a displaced homemaker. Like her husband died or left her or something when she was about 40 or 45 or something, and she had never worked

TL: Hmm

LA: A job outside of the home. And somehow landed in a Special Ed classroom with severely emotionally disturbed and psychiatrically disturbed children. And it was a super inspirational story of how this you know woman just took to this work and you know herself ended up going back to school and getting a PhD and all kinds of stuff and had all these really interesting experiences with these kids. Well that sounded all like, super inspirational to me

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TL: Right

LA: So I'm gonna go back to school and maybe I wanna be a teacher too and I wanted to be a Special Ed teacher. But I didn't end up doing Special Ed because you know things turn out the way they do because you usually--a lot of it is economics, so the only school that had a Teacher Ed program in Tacoma that had Special Ed um track or endorsement or whatever it was UPS¹. Getting all the financial aid I was eligible for, which was the maximum cause I was poor

TL: Mhmm

LA: Still like ten thousand dollars per year short

TL: Wow

LA: So there was no going there. So I went to um Evergreen.

TL: Mhmm

LA: And Evergreen had a partnership with UPS at that time to offer a teaching [prep?] program as part of a Bachelor's degree. So you did some of your work with Evergreen, some of your work with UPS faculty on the Evergreen campus.

TL: Okay

LA: But they didn't have a Special Ed endorsement but I just got a 4-12 teaching credential. Fourth grade through twelfth grade. And...then my friend Michelle, we both went to Evergreen. We got recruited to go to Evergreen together from Pierce College, and she studied all the performing arts and dance and choreography and costume designs. She was you know she was sort of a more theater/performing arts person and I was all in this education things. So we didn't ever have any classes together, even when we were at the community college. I don't think we had a single class together.

TL: Mhmm

LA: But we just pulled each other along. She got me to go to Pierce College. I got her to go to Evergreen with me. Um after we graduated, I started teaching at the Urban League and she ended up coming and working there part time cause she was doing tutoring uh like a Saturday program [unintelligible] after school for SAT prep. And she got into that so much she decided to go back to school and get her Master's in Teaching

¹ University of Puget Sound

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TL: Hmm

LA: Which Evergreen now had

TL: Oh

LA: I couldn't get my Master's in Teaching cause I already had the teaching credential, so Master's in Teaching program at Evergreen would've been the bomb for me cause I loved Evergreen but they didn't have a Master's in Ed or a Master's...some other kind of Master's that didn't include doing all the stuff for the teaching credential.

TL: Right that you'd already done.

LA: But so now she comes out and she's got a teaching credential, so I get her a job with me at the Urban League and we end up teaching together for a bunch of years

TL: Oh okay

LA: Hardcore, challenging teenagers

TL: Right

LA: And... yeah. So we just... and then she pushed me to get my Master's. I went back to school and went to--like I taught for like five or seven or somethin years and then I--and she kept sayin, "You need to get your Master's, you need to get your Master's" and so I finally went to UWT

TL: Mhmm

LA: To get a Master's in Ed

TL: Wow

LA: And then we kept teaching you know with--together and then she got sick, passed away and I left. I actually left that position that I was--we were teaching in that program together and I left it originally temporarily

TL: Right

LA: to... cause the president, then president of the Urban League was Tom Dixon. He wanted me to be--he gave--he put me on loan basically to another organization that the Urban League had a partnership with to

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TL: Mhmm

LA: To try to save a big grant program that was floundering and was off the rails. And he was like, he wanted to have somebody that was from the Urban League be the one who fixed things because that would be a good feather in his cap.

TL: Right

LA: So it was supposed to be like a six to eighteen month or something like that twelve to eighteen month on loan thing then I was gonna come back to the Urban League. But after my friend died... it was just too traumatic. I just... I couldn't bring myself to do it.

TL: Yeah

LA: And, things were also changing a lot at the Urban League cause Tom Dixon finally retired after an--he did like a Michael Jordan... LeBron James you know

TL: Oh... retiring then...

LA: He kept announcing a retirement, and then he would be back. He didn't do it that many times, but he had had a whole date he was going to retire, which then he didn't and then--but this time he did so

TL: Oh okay

LA: Um and I just couldn't see going back to the Urban League with so much change going on there. Things were completely different; you know in the year and a half that I ended up being gone. It was just--I couldn't go back to it. So um I kept sloggin away at this organization, which was a soul-killing thing.

[Both breathe out]

But whatever, I learned some stuff. [Laughs] But um the job came up at Evergreen Tacoma campus for a student services coordinator, and I was like, [sings] "BINGO!" I'm an Evergreen grad, I woulda gone to Tacoma campus if they had had the teaching program there, but I was an Olympia campus grad

TL: Mhmm

LA: Um...we had partnered and done a lot of things with Evergreen Tacoma because we would take our kids there for like lectures and different programs and get them you know on a college campus seeing themselves in different you know educational realms. So I ended up getting job at Evergreen Tacoma campus and worked there for almost ten years.

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And then through a confluence of events there ended up leaving there to go to Bates. It was gonna mean a huge--actually a pretty darn huge pay increase and potentiality of international travel

TL: Wow

LA: And we were in the midst of regime change at Evergreen Tacoma as well

TL: That's always hard

LA: Because the long-term director was retiring--or had retired, actually and just some stuff went down with the leadership [unintelligible]. It was just a confluence

TL: Mhmm

LA: Fifteen thousand dollars more a year. Uh possibility of international travel. Strong possibility of international travel. Which I'd never been off the continent. I'd never been out of the country before except for you know, Canada. Um things are kinda going a little rocky

TL: Mhmm

LA: But I've questioned my decision every freakin day since. Yeah, I mean it's been an interesting experience. I did get to travel. Several times actually, I went to China three times...

TL: This is in your position now?

LA: No. It's not the position I have now because I left, I shed that position--that position was working with international students and programs and it just--I got too frustrated by the institution's dysfunctionality around how it was doing international stuff. Never taking any of my recommendations. I finally decided they just weren't really interested in actually having an international program, they just wanted international student tuition, and I'm just sayin, that's the way I feel about it. [20:03] I just didn't think--ethically I didn't feel like it was cool. And I didn't think I had a particular future in it because eventually they're gonna go "oh well, I guess we're not gonna do international anymore cause it's just really not profitable" or something or "we just really can't--it's just too much of a drain on other things we're trying to do" and you know I figured it would be less job security.

TL: Right

LA: So...During that time I ended up having--taking on a second job actually at the

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college uh because somebody else got moved up so rather than hire a whole new person you know I ended up for like a year to a year and a half doing supposedly half time one and the other jobs that had been held by their previous owners for the previous 15 years, full time.

TL: Wow

LA: So then I balked at that finally I made you know, vague threats that you know, union and arbitration. Anyway, I was very polite about it actually, I didn't make vague threats, I just said, basically what I said was the institution is going to suffer because it's only a matter of time before something--I'm going to make some kind of mistake that's gonna cost them. Cause I can't do it, I can't sustain this kind of workload. You guys are killing me here.

TL: Right, mmmm

LA: And so anyway, I finally--so then they asked me what--which one did I want, which would I choose and so I said, well I--in my mind I'm thinking this international thing is really not going anywhere. I've been trying for the last six, seven years to get something going and so now I've been with the Worker Retraining Program which is a grant funding program that helps dislocated workers and displaced homemakers--kinda like that lady that was in the book that I read.

TL: Did you remember the name of it?

LA: You would think cause it's had like this big influence on me, but god it's been...

TL: Sometimes it's just the stories though. You said she was a displaced homemaker?

LA: Yeah. And it was a three-part series, like it was three different books, as I recall. It was at least two, I recall it being three, but...

TL: No I'm just interested cause now, I work in education as well and so I'm thinking, "maybe I should go read that."

LA: Yeah

TL: It's always nice to have those kind of finds.

LA: It's interesting, I haven't thought about trying to remember the title of it even. But now that you brought that up, I probably gonna be trying to really think about it. I'll be like, Googling, trying to figure out what keywords I can use to...

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TL: Right

LA: But it was very very um...messed up kids, I mean kids that had real deep deep deep psychological and emotional issues

TL: Mhmm

LA: So um yeah. I mean actually fortunately I didn't end up doing that. I mean in a way I did because ended up working with gangsters and stuff, pregnant girls, and you know kids from the hood and stuff. Sometimes they have deep deep you know issues.

TL: And so that's what you do now?

LA: No, that's what I did when I was working at the Urban League.

TL: Oh I see.

LA: Yes, I haven't been classroom teaching since that. Cause I went from the Urban League to the on loan 'fix the grant' program to Evergreen Tacoma working with adults

TL: Right

LA: And now at Bates working with adults in a student services and kind of advising.

TL: Oh I thought it was like a job-training thing

LA: Oh

TL: Based on the title. Okay.

LA: Oh, the 'worker retraining'? Yeah, I know it's weird, and it confuses students all the time because it's so generic. First of all it sounds like it's an actual training program. It's not. It's just the name of a state grant program that's for dislocated workers. I think it was originally--I think it--it's been around since the 70s, and I think it was originally geared towards people who are victims of large-scale plant closures.

TL: Mmmm

LA: Right, the Simpson paper mill closes down and 350 are out of work or whatever you know, you can't really just put all those people in the economy without jobs and things aren't gonna happen. So I mean, so you actually kinda have to do something [laughs]. So they have this fund that people could then use to pay for training

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TL: Mhmm

LA: To get a different job

TL: Some more skills

LA: Yeah

TL: Okay so--

LA: But now it includes like people who separated from the military--anybody who's been thrown back into the workforce because of some event: they got laid off, they got separated or divorced and they were the homemaker or their spouse died or became unemployed.

TL: Okay

LA: So they don't have income anymore. Um, separated from the military or people who lost a business. They were formally self-employed but due to like an overall economic collapse in the community or natural disaster, they had to close their business. So again, they're back at work. So that's the point of it. But you have to be--it's only good for two-year programs, you know two-year colleges.

TL: Mhmm

LA: You can't get a BA on it. You know it's only gonna fund up to an associates degree in a technical--professional technical realm. So you can't get just like a transfer AA, right. Like, "Oh I'll get two years of free college and then go to UW and get a Bachelor's on some other money."

TL: Right

LA: You can't do that. They won't fund that. They'll only fund what they call workforce ed programs.

TL: Hmmm

LA: So nursing, welding.

TL: Yeah. Interesting.

LA: Whatever. As long as it's a professional technical, Associate's, or certificate, they'll pay for it.

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TL: Okay.

LA: it's a pretty good program actually.

TL: No, it sounds awesome.

LA: And so I--I mean even though I don't really care for my the day-to-day, it's a lot of number punching and paper pushing, my student contact is fairly brief. It has to do with paper, documentation, that you're eligible and stuff like that. I get satisfaction out of the fact that I get to give money away to people who need it so

TL: That's a good thing

LA: That's kinda cool. It's like half a million dollars every year.

TL: Wow. So what were your experiences like in school? You--like you--you were a teacher, and that seemed like that was something that was really close, and dear to your heart. And even now you say you don't have maybe as much student contact as you would like. Where do you--where do those feelings come from? Why does that seem like it's something that's important to you?

LA: I--you know what, that's a really good question. I don't think anyone's ever asked me that question that way before. I think--cause I didn't have particularly good experiences in school myself. I was extremely painfully shy. And so you know scared of my own shadow basically and socially awkward and all that, so I didn't have a good social life at school. I was academically very average. I didn't have--I didn't excel at anything, I was kinda crappy in math, really had a lot--a hard time with that. I mean if you were gonna say I excelled at anything I usually could test well on in the language arts and the social sciences, but not in the math realm.

TL: What did you teach again?

LA: Huh?

TL: What did you teach? I don't think I asked.

LA: I taught everything cause I taught in an alternative high school, so I taught all the subjects. I mean except for Art and P.E. and stuff. But I taught math, reading, writing, you know all the social sciences, history and geography and civics. You know, all the high school subjects. Um and actually learned so much math along with my students. I was like--I finally got a unlocked thing and became not a math phobic anymore in my 30s. I was in my early 30s when that--all of a sudden I had like an epiphany, and it was

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based on doing an activity with my students and I was all of a sudden [gasps] I had this revelation about--and it was all around pi.

TL: Oh okay.

LA: If you're interested in my revelation, I'll tell you about it, but I'm not trying to get us too far off track. But I think it comes from--so I didn't have particularly good experiences in school myself, um, I dropped out of school a month into 9th grade...

TL: Mhmm

LA: so I didn't even go to high school. I really--I barely remember--I remember the hallways and the bathrooms at Garfield and maybe one of the classrooms. I mean I don't remember anything. I don't remember any of the teachers--I wasn't there long enough. So where do I get this thing about education and teaching, well my own journey like coming back after having run away. Coming back at 17 and I get my GED and how I got my GED is I went to this agency and I don't know how I out about it. But I went to this agency called EORC, that was the name of it back then, Education Opportunity and Resource Center. And they helped people figure out how to get their GEDs and apply for financial aid to go to college and stuff like that. So they're the ones that like gave me a practice test for the GED so I could see if I would be able to pass it or if I would to study for something and helped me arrange to get that scheduled. And I actually took my GED at Bates Technical College.

TL: Hmm...wow. Full circle.

LA: Yup. And I then I went to beauty school and all that. And then I ended up, right, going on this educational journey myself which GED, beauty school, community college, Evergreen/UPS, Master's in Ed at UW. And so, it was kind of like, wow--and I was a first generation college student.

TL: Right

LA: [Unintelligible] if you know anything about that, you could see why I end up the journey I was on. I mean prrfft, I'm lucky I got where I got

TL: [Laughs over LA]

LA: It's just quite amazing. And so um and then there was that book, those books I was reading. Right at the time when...I was questioning the whole decision about going to beauty and being a hairdresser for the rest of my life

TL: Sure

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LA: So that just kinda--you know something else could've serendipitously landed in my lap right when I was questioning that, and I could've gotten all inspired to become an...a skydiver or something. Who knows? You know some of this is just like, so happenstance. There aren't--I mean--I think my grandmother on my mom's side is the closest thing to a teacher in my family. There isn't anybody. I'm the only teacher. I'm the--I mean my grandmother was like a preschool/kindergarten you know type teacher for a little minute. I think she got a b--I think my grandmother actually got a Bachelor's degree somewhere in California in something like education or something like that.

TL: Sure

LA: And um did do the kindergarten or preschool type teaching for a few years and then end up moving up here with her husband and ended up doing--being a Rosy the Riveter type person. And she worked at bookbinding and few other things but...

TL: Awesome

LA: She wasn't a teacher as a like career for a long time. She was just--it was a fairly brief amount of time. Then she became a mom herself blah blah blah so...Yeah, that's interesting. I don't think anybody ever asked the question about like what did inspire me to actually--cause you wouldn't a thought with my--there wasn't anything in my background necessarily would've pushed me to way. It was just things that converged at the same time. I'm not that happy with this whole cosmetology thing, maybe there's something better out there for me. Oh, you know my friend was going to college, I could go with her, we can be buddies.

TL: Right

LA: Something we can do. She was a first generation college student too.

TL: Rock on

LA: Yeah

TL: So--are there any things--You said you were pretty shy, would you say that much was true when you went to McCarver?

LA: Oh yes.

TL: Yeah?

LA: Mhmm

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TL: Do you remember any--any teachers, any friends? Are there things that--I know you were real young--where there things that happened or experiences you had that you feel have shaped you, now?

LA: Um, you know it's interesting. I remember more teachers and more...um of my own experiences from McCarver than pretty much any other school I went to.

TL: Mhmm

LA: Um, you know other than college. When I was in--so I went at--McCarver wasn't the very first school I went to. I went to Grant for a minute.

TL: Sure

LA: Because of the babysitter that I was living in with while my mom was working graveyard until my mom took me out of her care because she found out what a racist she was by accident. And so she took me out of there. Um so I went to Grant for I think kindergarten and first grade or something like that...a part of first grade. Something like that. And then I went to McCarver until I was in sixth grade.

TL: Okay

LA: But I remember um McCarver even more than I remember Jason Lee. [Unintelligible] I went to two different middle schools; I went to Jason Lee and I went to Meany middle school in Seattle when I was in eighth grade. Ninth, that was when I went to Garfield for a little month, but after that...So, Jason Lee, I was only there for seventh grade, but...McCarver--the thing about McCarver was...it was different, okay? It was structured entirely differently. So picture your standard brick schoolhouse, like McCarver is

TL: Okay

LA: Or most of these old elementary schools are. You know they're basically a long hall with classrooms on either side. Boxes, right? You go into each box individually. Well what they did, you know this is the 70s. Late 60s and early 70s. Not only was there this whole you know desegregation, voluntary integration called magnet school thing going on but there was just educational innovation kind of going on. There were experiments going on in pedagogy you know at the time so...McCarver in a way was a kind of like a ticket for people who wanted to do innovative things to get a chance to do that so, they knocked out all the walls. And there were open classrooms. These were--they were not individual classrooms. Everything was completely open. When you think about like houses now that have open concept instead of individual living room, kitchen, bathroom,

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everything is just separate little boxes, it's all open and there--things are--spaces are divided up by furniture, right. Instead of by walls. Well that's how McCarver was. The classrooms were you know more like learning spaces you know or something. And um you know then they had um--the big thing that people who go to McCarver remember was Friday Activities. People who went to McCarver in my generation all know about Friday Activities. It was like, "Aahhh Friday Activities!" So Friday Activities were I feel like it was all day on Fridays but it might not have been. It might have been only like in you know the last half of the day. But it feels like Friday was just a whole other different scene. So Friday Activities, you could sign up for--it couldn't a--it must've only been certain hours cause it couldn't a been--I don't think it was all day. But whatever, it doesn't matter. But you could sign up for 2 or 3 different classes or programs to do for Friday Activities and you'd do this every semester. So

TL: Oh I see

LA: Um I think it was every semester. We did it more than once in a year, so it must've been every semester if not more often. Maybe they broke it up into smaller chunks. But the kinds of things you could sign up for--you know you think of them kind of like elective classes or something but it was just called Friday Activities. I took macramé, I took uh what do you call it uh manicuring. I took four square and tetherball and bowling. Some of the Friday Activities were actually off site and they had buses and you could go and they would take you. Um [mumbles to self] Cooking. You know there were just lots of different things that you could do and you picked which ones you did. And so it was like a--it wasn't like regular school. It's Friday Activities. [Chuckles]

TL: I like that

LA: It was really awesome. Everybody remembers Friday Activities. I remember more of my teacher's names

TL: Mhmm

LA: from that school. Ms. Pettit was the art teacher; Mr. Carhito [?] was the PE teacher; Mrs. House, she was the English teacher and she also was the manicure teacher in the Friday Activities, and she had really long nails.

TL: Mhmm

LA: She always had you know a lot of rings and long nails. She was one of those...

TL: a glam

LA: People that had a lot of glam on her hands you know. And Mr. Carlson was my

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homeroom teacher and he also taught social studies. Um you know I can remember these people. Mr. uh---Alyssa and I were talking about this. She was trying to see if I remembered the principal's name, and I was like, Mr. Durham, I said, but I think he was the vice principal.

TL: Mhmm

LA: And I said, but maybe I just think about that in--maybe I think that in retrospect because he was like the disciplinary type. You know that's usually what--the role they give to the vice principals and I think a lot of kids don't even ever know who the principal is. They know who the vice principal is more than they...and so--

TL: Oh, were you a troublemaker?

LA: [Laughs] No I wasn't! That's what Alyssa said, "I never thought of you as a troublemaker." And I wasn't cause I was super shy but apparently, I must've been caught by Mr. Durham running in the hall because I found myself--and I have such a clear memory of this--there--at that time, when you walked in to McCarver, up the big stairs that face j street--like 19th or whatever it is, 21st and J, you go into that main door and there's--there was an office and like where that office is, admin was over off to the right and then the hallways that went to the other places and there was kind of like a big open area that was like the crossroads of that.

TL: Mhmm

LA: And I just remember being out in the middle--on the floor, with this big piece of butcher paper where I was to write I don't remember--I feel like it was 500 times, 'I will not run in the halls.'

TL: Oh

LA: yeah. That's the only time I've ever gotten in trouble in school. There was one other time when I was going to Meany--no when I was going to Madrona middle school. That was another--I went to three different middle schools. [Exclaiming to self] I moved around a lot. I went to Madrona middle school in Seattle too. But that was a back and forth thing. I went for McCarver in the...part--I went to McCarver for part of fifth grade and went to Madrona for the rest of fifth grade and the sixth grade.

TL: I see

LA: And then came back and went to Jason Lee for seventh grade

TL: Mmmmm

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LA: And then went back to Seattle and went to Meany for eighth grade and Garfield for the little month of ninth grade. So anyway um...why was I saying that? What was I saying? Madrona....

TL: You got in trouble there

LA: Oh yeah, I got in trouble, sort of at Madrona because um there was a kid that throwing spit ball or whatever at me and I kept telling him to quit so then I did something like I threw something at him across the table. We had the--the classroom desks were put in clusters of like six or eight and so they made like a big table kind of so we were sitting across--and he was just--I don't know if I threw something at him or something and he came around the whole table to my side, charging at me [sneezes], like he was some kind of a raging bull or something. And I had a white patent leather go-go boot on

TL: [chuckles]

LA: And I just stick my foot out like this--he was coming towards me and I just stuck my foot out like that, and like kicked him right in the head. So we both got sent to the principal. But that was all I mean, I don't remember exactly what happened. It wasn't a big--we got a talking to.

TL: Right

LA: [Laughs] That's the only other time I got--well I got--one other time when I was at Meany I got into a fight with one of my friends in the locker room. It was one of those things that totally got instigated by other people.

TL: mmm

LA: It got escalated by other people. "Ooh are you gonna take that?" [Scoffs] That was really stupid. But I ended up getting the better of her because something--somebody told her to slap me--cause I wasn't gonna fight her! She was my friend. We were like friends. We were part of a little group of friends. Cause I had started to come out of my shell a little bit at Meany.

TL: Mmhmm

LA: Actually. Somehow I ended up getting semi accepted by this semi hip group of girls. And so this girl, her name was Lizzie Anderson, she was one of the girls and we had played a prank on her

TL: Mhmm

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LA: That we hid her purse from her. You know it was this “ah ha ha ha ha,” you know just silly little thing and but at some point she decided or thought that there was money missing from her purse and she accused me of taking it. I’m not even sure if she was really serious, but because there were other girls around, as soon as she said, “you stole my money,” you know then it was like “ooh” something's getting ready to happen. So people start crowding around and they start encouraging a fight. There was this other girl, who was like the toughest girl in the whole school. Her name was Roxanne.

TL: Sounds tough

LA: Doesn’t she sound tough?

TL: Mhmm

LA: She was the tough girl. She was really eggin it on. And you know I’m like, “I’m not gonna fight you, Lizzie. I didn’t take your money, come on. This is dumb, this is stupid” And uh Roxanne told Lizzie, “Slap her, that’ll make her mad.” I’m here to tell you, if you’ve ever been slapped, it does make you mad. Pretty much instantly.

[Both laughing]

LA: Cause here I am, this shy girl who never does anything--like wanna say boo, and Lizzie slapped me. And I all I could do, I remember I felt this instant I went, “Don’t do that again.” I mean, I felt like--she slapped me again. They said, “Slap her again.” she slapped me again. I don’t even know what happened. I was all over her. I became--I mean I even heard myself like growling like a rabid beast. Then she started having an asthma attack or something and then everyone pulled her--pulled me off of her and then of course we got sent to the principal.

TL: Sure

LA: And we got a stern talking to. Cause that’s how they dealt with fights back then. You got a stern talking to.

TL: If only

LA: And you had to apologize to each other. Yeah nowadays you end up leaving school in handcuffs, especially if you’re black. And that’s what would’ve happened to Lizzie. Cause she was a black girl. Now.

TL: Right.

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LA: Well, even then. But you know it was a fairly progressive school, I don't know, they didn't handle it that way but shoot for sure nowadays, lizzie would've ended up in handcuffs or something. Certainly she would've been expelled. Maybe I woulda been too but [throws up hands]

TL: Maybe not

LA: That would really depend on...yeah

TL: So did you have a lot of friends of color in school?

LA: I--well I didn't have any friends of anything for the most part until 8th grade.

[Laughs]

LA: And then I ended up getting in a fight with one of them. But we ended up making up later. It all became--it was just dumb. We both realized how stupid it was. So we were still friends afterwards. However, both of us had a little bit of a more elevated reputation in the school just because we had a made a big--we'd had a big fight in the locker room and you know that's....

TL: That's how status works

LA: That's how status works. We're tough girls now, so we both you know, got a little something out of that. But I didn't have any you know friends until I went to Meany. And so then, the girls I ended up hanging out with, this little semi hip group--group of girls was Lizzie, Dolores, Helen...[speaking to herself] Lizzie, Dolores, Helen...it seemed like there was another girl in there but....

TL: You?

LA: Me, but I feel like there was another.

TL: Oh

LA: Somebody besides me. Maybe not. Was that four? Is that four?

TL: Mhmm

LA: Yeah I guess that's all cause there was four of us. Yeah.

TL: And so you said that this school was kind of progressive, and it took you until about eighth grade to have friends. Do you remember the makeups or the dynamics of your

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classmates? I mean, even now you're saying if she--being a black student at school, she would've been expelled. Do you remember thinking about--like along the lines of race?

LA: Um...with that specific incident, I can only go, "she woulda been expelled more likely than me" in hindsight. But there was an incident that happened--if you wanna call it an incident--oh I got in trouble again. I guess I got in trouble more than I really remember.

TL: The truth is comin out

LA: [Laughing] but I mean it's so minor the stuff. You know it's like shit I shouldn't even get in trouble. So we had--everybody hated this math teacher, Mr. Solomon. This is at Meany. This was not at McCarver. Mr. Solomon was a mean math teacher. And he loved--whenever you got in trouble in his class, his punishment was you copied dictionary pages.

TL: Yeesh

LA: Yeah, way to get people interested in writing and words and language. Hmmm not. How about like negative reinforcement. But right

TL: Yeah no kidding

LA: And whatever--aversion therapy.

TL: Mhmm

LA: I mean god, really. So you know according to the seriousness of the offense or how many times he had yelled at you about that the thing was how many dictionary pages you got. "That's five dictionary pages." And he called people by their last name. He must've been like a military dude. I was Raider then--before I got--Arnold is my married name. "That'll be five dictionary pages, Raider." so anyway I got in trouble for something. I think I was staring out the window. Or I was talking, probably to Dolores or Helen or whatever--you know they were my--we were like--that's how we--that's what you do when you're in school, you talk to your friends as you're doing your work. So I got in trouble for talking in class, and I had to copy dictionary pages. And I feel like that must not have been the thing that brought my mother there, cause that was just a--maybe it was a school conference. Like a normal--that must've been it. I don't think my mother--I didn't get in the kind of trouble that ever brought my mother, like they'd called my mother and said, "Come."

TL: Mhmm

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LA: “You need to come talk to your daughter, she’s in the principal’s office” or anything. But so it musta just been a normal parent teacher conference or whatever but anyway there was a point at which Mr. Solomon told my mother that I had a lot of potential and I’d be a lot better off if I didn’t hang around those girls. And I don’t remember what my mom said. I wasn’t there. She told me what he said, and I don’t remember what words he used. I don’t know if he said “those black girls” or just “those girls,” I’m not sure what he said. But the message was very clear to my mother. She knew what he was saying, whether he actually was real explicit or not. Cause she knew who I hung out with.

TL: Mhmm

LA: And so, she made a big stink with him and to the principal and everything. That he said all of that, but nothing came of it she just expressed her opinion.

TL: Right

LA: Um and “defended” my friends which like raised the esteem that I had of my mother. Cause she was like, I was like, “hey! She like, has my side and my friend’s side.” against a teacher. That’s like, huh okay. [Laughs] I’m kinda liking that. So that was some--a place where I definitely saw--and when she told me that’s what he said, I knew why he was--what he was saying too. And so I knew that there was a disparity--I knew that he--cause here’s the other thing. You know you hear stuff like that and then you make connections with other things that you heard when you were younger. So remember I said that my mom took me away from the baby sitter that she found out was racist?

TL: Mhmm

LA: Okay, so what happened with that was--there were a couple of things that she said. One that she said to me and one that she said-- or one that happened with my mother that I wasn’t aware of that I found out later. She--I remember her saying to me one time, “You’re so much prettier than those colored children.” And she was pointing to some people on the street. We were walking down the street and

TL: This was in Tacoma?

LA: This was in Tacoma. And I literally did not know what she meant by colored because even though that was sort of in use still in the late 60s by white people or you know, even black people, it was not the standard use in my circle of lefty people who were all like, Black Panther sympathizers and stuff

TL: Right

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LA: So I knew “colored children” as “black children”, so when she said I was so much prettier than those colored children, I didn’t even know she was talking about black children.

TL: Okay.

LA: I thought--or that that's what she was referencing. I thought she was making a comment about like their mismatched colored clothes or something. I just didn’t know. It just didn’t compute. But later, it did. When I thought back on it and I knew some stuff. Cause that--at that time I was maybe kindergarten age--I was like--she’s walking me to school in kindergarten. Okay so later, after I’d been with this woman maybe a year and a half or somethin, there was a young woman who was in our family circle who was kind of um unofficially foster daughtered by my aunt who foster daughtered me a lot of the time when my mom wasn’t available. She’s African American, and she was about--at the time that she was living with us she was 14, 13, 14, 15. And she was with us for a few years. And she came with my mom once to pick me up at the babysitter’s. And the baby--this was a babysitter that I stayed with overnight for weeks on end. You know it’s--maybe once a month my mom would bring me home to spend a weekend or part of a weekend with her cause she was working graveyard right.

TL: Mhmm

LA: So Zefra, that’s the young woman--well she’s not young anymore, but you know, she was then. She came with my mom once, and Betty, the woman who was babysitting, literally ignored her on her porch, like did not see her at all. Willfully didn’t see her.

TL: Okay

LA: And I think she even asked if she could have a glass of water, and Betty did not acknowledge her. Didn’t say yes or no just ignored her. And so anyway, my mom, pretty much the next day or really quickly after that, I don’t remember where--it was some sort of emergency gotta find another childcare situation. I remember there being a lot of flurry about that.

TL: Mmhmm

LA: Um except I didn’t--hadn’t really known that that had gone on. I found out about that later. All I knew is, suddenly I wasn’t going to be at Betty’s anymore, and boy was I glad cause I did not like that wench.

[Laughs]

LA: She was mean.

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TL: Mhmm

LA: I was a thumb sucker and nail biter. And she punished--and a bed wetter. I wet my bed until I was [whispering to herself] seven or something.

TL: It happens

LA: And--but she would--she punished me horribly and humiliated me publicly horribly for all those things. Physically punished me, and she shamed me. She was mean. And I was--

TL: You were glad to be gone

LA: I was like, "Hallelujah." In fact years later, it wasn't even like a lot of years later cause I think it was probably by the time I was like, a preteen....

TL: Mhmm

LA: Um I found out about that, I was like thankful to Zefra for being the catalyst even though that was like a weird thing to be when I was a teenager, but I really--I mean there was a piece of me that was like, "Thank you Zefra for making that happen."

TL: So it sounds like--did you grow up like even in school or in your neighborhood in Hilltop or um, just at home--did you have a lot of people of color around you?

LA: Yeah. Well when I went to McCarver, um it was the first magnet school in the whole country. I didn't know that then. I didn't even know it was a magnet school then. You know, I didn't even know about that language. But, prior to it becoming a magnet school, it was something like 80 percent or 90 percent black, the student body. After it became a magnet school, it was more like 60 percent black. So it was still majority black, as was the neighborhood. Um but the weird thing was that I didn't know why it was weird cause I didn't know exactly what the dynamics were at that age. But I did notice that a lot of my black friends that were neighbors--I shouldn't say friends, cause I didn't really have friends--friends, but you know, acquaintances, people I knew. They were my neighbors. Didn't go to McCarver, like I did. Like I--I lived--I wasn't one of the white kids that was magnetized to come to--

TL: To come to McCarver. Did you walk?

LA: Cause I lived--yeah I walked. Um so but a lot of my neighbors did not go to McCarver. They were bused out and went to other schools, so...Not all, because there were still--60 percent of the school was still black, but there were a lot of--I think it was a

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voluntary busing thing, so some parents sent--some black parents sent their kids to the more north end Tacoma schools

TL: Right

LA: And then some of your progressive, white, north end people sent their little white kids to McCarver.

TL: Right

LA: But I wasn't one of those white kids cause I didn't live on the north end. I was just one of the poor white kids that lived on the Hilltop. But it was kind of odd that like, even to this day, people that I grew up with in the neighborhood, we didn't go to school together. We didn't go to elementary school together. We didn't go to junior high together. And since I didn't go to high school in Tacoma at all, that happened. But you know, like I remember people from elementary school and from--and from uh middle school when I went to Jason Lee.

TL: Are you in touch with any of them? Like Facebook or anything?

LA: I have like maybe...one or two Facebook friends from back then cause here's the thing, most people from back then don't remember me

[Laughs]

LA: I remember them, but they don't remember me. Why? Cause I was a freakin wallflower and I did not wanna be noticed. So I'll be--I'll see somebody at Costco or something and be like, "Aren't you Beatrice?" Beatrice, whose last name I can't remember, and it was Be-atrice, not Bea-trice.

TL: Mhmm. That's different. That's unique.

[Omission 56:58-57:36]

LA: And that's happened to me more than once over the years. I'll see people from Tacoma that I know and they don't remember me. I'm like, "Yeah, Laurie, I used to be Raider, Laurie Raider. We went to McCarver. We were blue team together, Mr. [Scoggins?]." They're like, "Yeah, I remember Mr. [Scoggins], I remember blue team, but I don't remember you." [Laughing]

TL: So you were blue team and you were Mr. Scott--

LA: Yeah but I was also peach team, Mr. Wesley.

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TL: Okay.... I hear that that's really popular among McCarver alumni

LA: Yeah

TL: Their colors, what are those, locker colors?

LA: No, it's just your--they um [breathes out] what do you--they had this school broken up into um sorta learning communities, and they were teams. And so the blue team was a certain cluster of teachers and kids that stayed together for multiple grades.

TL: Oh, like a pod?

LA: Yeah. There you go. And Meany was kinda like that too. I went to Meany middle school in Seattle. They had um houses instead of teams. But I can't remember what they were called. It was like the somethin or other house and the somethin or other house.

TL: Interesting. Do you remember--I mean it sounds like you remember, what was her name, Betty?

LA: Beatrice?

TL: Oh, no the babysitter?

LA: The babysitter? Yeah, Betty. Betty Hovis [makes gagging sound].

TL: It sounds like you remember Betty's um feelings and kind of sentiments as well as your mother's. When you were going to McCarver or any of the your other schools for that matter, do you remember there being adult feelings--any of the adults' feelings or things on the news um about McCarver being a magnet school or the busing?

LA: No. And you know it's interesting because I probably heard stuff a little bit about it. It woulda been normal for me to have heard about something about that specific to McCarver in my household because I certainly was hearing about stuff that was more national in nature.

TL: Mhmm

LA: You know--I mean all the anti-war marches. My mother went to the March on Washington.

TL: Wow.

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LA: Martin Luther King was killed; it was a big huge thing that was huge in my family and in my household for weeks and weeks. Angela Davis is acquitted. I mean there's all this stuff that my mother was on--oh I'll have to show you. My mother, as well as other people were in the [getting up from seat] were on the uh what do you call it...Tacoma Free Angela Davis Committee. [Gets posters out of shrunk] I found this in my mom's stuff when she died, this whole collection...I wanna make sure I give you one that has the stamp. [Unraveling posters, small talk while she looks for one with a stamp]. So this is the kind of stuff that was floating around. Tacoma Committee to Free Angela Davis. 1402 South Grant.

TL: Wow. [LA rustling posters] And you said your mom was on this committee?

LA: Mhmm.

TL: That's awesome. She looks just like that still.

LA: I know. I've met her twice, I have. A couple of times was at the airport. Once when I was like, 9. After she was acquitted she was like going around the country speaking and stuff.

TL: Mhmm

LA: Cause my parents were all lefties, so is Angela Davis.

TL: The furthest left, I don't know if you go further.

LA: Yes! You don't. At least not in this country. But uh [discussion about rolling up posters] So anyway um yeah I met her--so she came to this area for you know one of those speaking engagement things and a lot of my family was involved in hosting her, hospitality and everything for her visit. And so one of the things was picking her up from the airport. Well my mom was involved with that. So I'm her kid, so I went with her and I was given a role, a job and my job was to hand Angela a red carnation. Of course it has to be red, not pink, or white! A red carnation and say something like, 'Welcome, Comrade Angela,' or something like that.

TL: Awesome

LA: And I just remember her being really tall.

TL: Mhmm, yeah she is really tall.

LA: And then the next time I met her was at the Race and Pedagogy National Conference at UPS in 2014 when she came as one of the keynote speakers and I'm on the Race and

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Pedagogy Community Partners Forum.

TL: Okay

LA: Partnership part of Race and Pedagogy. So I'm part of the conference organizing. So of course I had a job again, and I got to have the job of picking Angela up from the airport. And so, I reenacted the whole thing and I was like, "do you remember?"

TL: Did she?

LA: Not really. She said too many [unintelligible], but she did remember my mother. She didn't remember me particularly--see, nobody remembers me [laughs]--but she did remember my mom.

TL: Okay

LA: Probably because they were comrades and they saw each other more often at things. You know that was the one and only time I had seen her so, I said, "I'm just reenacting something for you from when I was nine".

TL: Mhmm

LA: Here's a red carnation.

TL: I think I gave her a bunch of red carnations, but [laughing]

LA: That's so cool though

TL: Isn't that crazy. [Laughing] and she does look really similar.

[Discussion about a break **1:03:36.35-1:04:14.62**]

TL: Um I guess the only question that we haven't really zeroed in on because you covered--you covered almost everything--are there specific experiences or memories you have of McCarver or even just growing up in Hilltop that--as a younger kid--that you still carry with you today or you feel like they have played some part in what you do now? Because you're pretty actively involved in the Tacoma community. I heard you're on a mural somewhere! I'm gonna have to go check that out.

LA: I am! Oh, it's so crazy. I'm glad--are you familiar with Chris Jordan?

TL: Hmpmm. Chris Jordan?

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LA: Yeah

TL: No

LA: He's a freakin awesome young dude. He's the one who's responsible for me being on that mural. And I'm so I'm actually glad in one way, but then in another way I'm kinda disappointed. I'm mostly glad. That he is not the actual person who painted me because it would look pretty much exactly like me if he had. Cause he's really really good. So, really...I was surprised when I was told that I was on there because the person who told me, I was surprised she recognized me.

TL: Where is it located?

LA: It's the uh People's Center on the 16th street side.

TL: Oh okay.

LA: So if you go down MLK and you drive just past the People's Center and make a right and you're on that end, that side of it, it's on--there's a big mural on that side, and I'm one of the people on it.

TL: That's awesome.

LA: And, you could probably figure out who I am, but I look a little bit different. My glasses are darkened cause I was outside I was at a protest march and the image was taken from a photograph that was taken at the protest march.

TL: Ok

LA: And so it was painted from the photograph. And so my glasses look--I look like I have sunglasses on because I have transition lenses and we were outside, so they were dark. And uh but yeah it's like I'm surprised anybody.... **[Omission 1:06:21.88-1:08:36.77]** And so he and another guy who he is colleagues with and is also an artist, they got themselves hired by the architectural firm that was working with Tacoma housing authority around figuring out what to do with six properties that Tacoma housing authority owns on the Hilltop um like what does the community want to see happen with these properties as far as affordable housing and stuff so, they recruited me. They being Chris and his partner, Kenji, recruited me to be part of this community engagement piece that they were helping with and so there's a lot of photographs from that. And on the outside of the building where all these meetings were taking place

TL: Mhmm

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LA: There are--these photographs are lined up out there. [Omission 1:09:17:62-1:10:38.52] But my friend Jaleesa was the that told--she text me and said, "have you seen yourself on the People's Center mural?" I was like, "Whaaat?!" and I knew Chris was working on a mural there

TL: Uh huh

LA: But...so then he was being really secretive cause he never told me he had put me on that mural. So she sends me this picture. And then she says, "You have to come see it in person, they're doing the dedication right now." I'm like, "Whaaat?!" So I went over there. Sure enough.

TL: Now I'll have to go see, got get a picture of it. Um are there experiences that you have--that you had [at McCarver], or even growing up in Hilltop as a younger person that in--like in retrospect you recognize, "Oh I kinda, I keep that with me, and that informs what I do now"? Because, it's kind of interesting, you know most people here are--in this part of Tacoma, they're transplants or they're here, and they've never left. You left and then you came back. And you're still here. So I'm--I guess I'm trying to dig....

[Both talking]

[Omission 1:12:07.04-1:17:11.39]

LA: I guess, I don't know. This is a really hard question to ask. It's like what is it about...I mean obviously, I like the diversity of it. I'm very uncomfortable in mostly white environments. I haven't been in them very often in my life. And like I notice it. I notice if there aren't any brown people or if it's really monocultural. I just notice it. I notice if it's an exclusively white area, then you know, it's noticeable to me.

TL: Right

LA: Um and I just like--I guess I just have fond associations with the Hilltop neighborhood. It's where I had my most fun I guess playing and being a kid. And down on Yakima and between 19th and 21st I'd say there's still to this day an empty lot there where there's a big tree

TL: Okay

LA: Near the street, but not totally on the street. It's like a little bit down, more on the hill and there used to be a long rope on one of those. Somebody got way up high on that tree and put a long rope and we used to spend hours--neighborhood kids--swinging out on

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that rope. It was a long rope so you could swing a long way out over that. Cause it was a hill you know, and it was just like blackberries and stuff and I fell into the blackberry bushes a couple of times, which is pretty nasty. And then you know the Quickie Too people that own the vegan place, they owned a store down on 17th and G. They're family owned a store, it was called the Quickie Mart...Hillside Quickie Mart. And either you go in there you'd smell incense and you'd hear reggae music playin and we just bought all of our penny candy there. That was like the penny candy spot. You'd go get sour apples and sour grapes and what do you call em, jaw breakers, Sugar Daddys, Sugar Babies, Sugar Mamas...all the crazy penny candy things. Bubble gum and stuff. I just have like fond feelings

TL: Being a kid

LA: Just being a kid and growin up. So it's like my hometown. Um and it's where my aunt always lived too. Like a lot of the places I lived were with her. And or with my mom. So between her and my mom I've lived in 14 or 15 different addresses across Hilltop. I lived at 10th and J; 14th and J; 15th and K, MLK; um 23rd and J; 21st and J, right across from McCarver, my dad lived there, uh after separating from my mom; 25th and G; 19th and G; 25th and Yakima, I lived in those apartments that are across the street from the Urban League on Yakima.

TL: Oh wow.

LA: They're completely different now than they were then. It was Conifer Village back in the day, when I lived there. Also the 19th and G were also Conifer Village apartments. So I lived in two different Conifer Village complexes. Uh yeah, 13th and L, 15th and Ainsworth.

TL: All over the Hilltop.

LA: All over the place

TL: So you're a native.

LA: Yeah. I've lived practically on every block it seems like. So I guess that's--I mean, I just feel like I know it you know. I know everything here. Wright Park, People's Park. People's Park wasn't really there so much when I was growing up but, you know it was there in my earlier adult years and McCarver used to have a pool also on the part of the--

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it was a little wading pool--it wasn't like a swimming pool, all you could do is wade cause it was on the part of the--there were two different playground areas at McCarver, one for the little building and one for the big building. So the little building part of McCarver where the primary grades were had their own little playground and they had a little wading pool, so in the summer time, if you didn't feel like walking all the way to Wright Park, and you were little enough to still kinda get away with having fun in a wading pool, you could at least play in the McCarver wading pool. But you know then when we got older we wanted to actually like swim, we'd go to Wright Park, and neither of those pools are there. I'm really sad that they went and took that wright park pool out.

TL: Yeah. We need community pools.

LA: Yup

TL: Um, my last question...this one's less about McCarver and Hilltop, and more just about Tacoma in general because I know you're still really involved in the community. Um how would you describe your relationship with Tacoma, and what is it, like if you could just pick one thing, what is it that you love about it.

LA: Just regular people. It's not like trying to be--or maybe it is, but it's not successful, I don't know--most people, we're not trying to be like Seattle. We're not trying to be all cosmopolitan and hipster. Except there are some people that are trying to make Hilltop kinda hipstery and that's a problem, but the natives of here are not tryin to be hipsters and so you know it's that whole grit city thing, you know which I'm not totally adopting, but I get it. I understand it's maybe sorta close to what people feel like this is. It's a more real type of down to earth place than say, Seattle is, or, that's our perception anyway. Now I've lived in Seattle, I love Seattle. Seattle's too expensive for me to live in. if it weren't so expensive to live there, I might consider living there if there were some opportunity there for me but, I've never even looked for a job in Seattle cause I'm not gonna commute. I've never commuted in my life. I've been really--part of it is lucky I guess--I mean, I have to say I've been lucky to not be forced into commuting by having to take a job that's not in the place that I live already, you know. Or having to organize my life around going to the new place. I just always have looked for jobs in the city that I live and tried to get employed there without having to uproot myself or commute. And I've never had to do it. So, I've always worked in Tacoma and lived in Tacoma. But when I was living in Olympia after my after I graduated from Evergreen, I worked in Olympia you know. When I ran away from home and went to Miami, I worked in Miami. I didn't work in Fort Lauderdale and commute to there, you know or whatever. [Chuckles]

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although, shoot Miami's really big so you can have to commute and still be in the same city.

TL: Yeah. Seattle's like that too.

LA: Yeah. It kinda is...I don't know that's all--I mean, I like how diverse Tacoma is. It's really--it's a lot more diverse than Seattle is. Um it's I think--my husband, Greg and I were toying with the idea that we thought Tacoma was more diverse than Seattle and so we just felt like it. It just felt like it--when we're here and when we're there, it feels like it's more diverse here.

TL: Right

[Omission 1:25:30.81-1:31:18.31]

LA: I think it's weird, like I notice going into say a bar on K Street or MLK Street, like the place that used to be Hilltop Kitchen,

TL: Mhmm

LA: It's across from People's Park, before that, it was the Tempest. Um and before that I don't think it was anything. But those were like during the 2000s the--the early and mid 2000s, that's when I was working at Evergreen Tacoma campus--we, many of us from there used to go to the Tempest. Now, once it became Hilltop Kitchen, years later, and then now Hilltop Kitchen isn't even there anymore, but you would go to Hilltop Kitchen and it would be all white people in there. I'm like, "What the hell? I'm on 9th and MLK, and there's a whole bunch of white people in here, this is very weird to me."

TL: [Laughs]

LA: And just recently, you know since they redid the People's Center and they got like the new pool in, I've been going there instead of going to the y. When I was growing up, the People's Center was the Malcolm X Center, so that tells you who you were likely to see inside of there. Well now, I go to my water aerobics class at 5:30 after work, and there's mostly white people in the pool. And I'm one of them. I'm like, "what the hell? This is weird." Most of the staff are white. It's just weird. There are places that used to be straight up, shantytown, projects you know, I mean for Tacoma. We're not talking Cabrini Green here, but for Tacoma. What was it...Mount Vista, Vista View, what's the

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name of the damn apartment complexes down on um 27th and MLK. It's basically--
overlooking the freeway

TL: Okay

LA: So you go all the way down to the end of MLK and that's 27th or 28th or whatever
and there's these apartments down there. Now it wasn't Mountain View, cause that was
the name of the hospital I was born in. It was Vista...Rainier Vista. See it's like
Mountain View, but it's Rainier Vista. Same idea. That's why I keep wanting to say
Mountain View because that was the name of the hospital. Rainier Vista, brown and
yellow--the ugliest damn place. It's a gated condo community now. Gated. It's weird to
me.

TL: That is weird.

[Interview ends at this point 1:34:03.00]