

Community Archive Center Oral History Project Transcript
Jamika Scott, Interview date: 8/10/2022

dindria barrow : 00:01 Hello.

Jamika Scott: 00:03 Hi.

dindria barrow : 00:04 Please state your name.

Jamika Scott: 00:05 My name is Jamika Scott.

dindria barrow : 00:08 And please spell it out fully.

Jamika Scott: 00:10 J a m i k a. And my last name is spelled S c o t t.

dindria barrow : 00:15 Excellent. And then what is today's date and where are we?

Jamika Scott: 00:18 Today is August 10, 2022 and we are in the main branch of the Tacoma Public Library.

dindria barrow : 00:26 Fabulous. How are you doing today, Jamika?

Jamika Scott: 00:29 I'm doing well, <laugh>. A little frazzled cause I'm running around, but I'm doing well,

dindria barrow : 00:34 <laugh>. Right on. I'm gonna start with the first prompt. And the first prompt is please name some of the places people or things you call home.

Jamika Scott: 00:47 I mean, I think to start, like, the first thing that comes to mind when I think of home is Tacoma. It's where I was born and, and, uh, I've lived here with the exception of like, college and a few random things that have taken me other places. I've spent definitely the majority of my 35 years right here in Tacoma. And so, it feels like home more than any other place. Specifically, inside of Tacoma, the Hilltop I grew up in the Hilltop. And feel like that's a very, it just holds a very special place in my heart. And yeah, so I don't currently live in the Hilltop, which feels a little heartbreaking from time to time, but, so, you know, but the Hilltop will always just kind of be home. Currently though, I live in Central Tacoma and so that has become my home and it's been very, it's been fun to kind of get to know a different part of the city.

Jamika Scott: 01:51 I feel like I was like single minded about the Hilltop to a fault sometimes where I'm just like, nope, if it's not over here, I don't wanna do it. I don't wanna live anywhere else. I don't wanna go to school anywhere else, but yeah, but I really like it. It's definitely a little bit of a different vibe of Tacoma. It's interesting how when you move around in different places you kind of hear different sounds. I don't hear, I feel like I don't hear trains as

much as I used to, but I still hear them every so often. Definitely hear the airplanes a bit more <laugh>. But yeah, and the, and the helicopters for the hospital tend to go over a lot. So yeah, it's just a, it's very, it's a new home, but it's, it's definitely becoming a part of my, like, Tacoma story, I guess.

Jamika Scott: 02:39

And then my house is my home with my partner. Um, and then also my mom's house. I just feel like, you know, my mom also doesn't live in the Hilltop anymore just because of like displacement and the prices going up for housing and all that. But she lives in South Tacoma now, and so that's been, it's been cool to kind of get to know that area too. And she's been exploring the area and getting to know it, but, she was also, you know, when her family, when she was a kid, when they moved up here, they moved into the Hilltop. So it's just been this place that's kind of been where our family has been. And so it was all, it was really sad cause none of us, live in the Hilltop anymore, sadly. But, so, but I still, you know, I think of my mom's home as home.

Jamika Scott: 03:25

And then my grandma's house, she lives in the, the West End, and she passed away. And so, I guess her house, her house is still in the West End, but she passed away a couple years ago. Um, we saw a family who lives there for now. We're kind of talking about possibly selling the house. But yeah, so it's, I feel like they're, those are my, my main homes. I just feel at home when I'm kind of, as long as I'm here. And it could be on a friend's couch, on my couch in a park or walking around the streets, but yeah.

dindria barrow : 04:02

Right on. Um, I wanted to ask you about the vibe. What do you feel is, you were talking about sounds, what is the vibe of Hilltop versus Central?

Jamika Scott: 04:14

I feel like the Hilltop is really like, busy. Like there's a, energy, like a vibrant, energetic, kinetic type energy that happens. At least that's how I feel when I'm on the Hilltop. It feels like it's such a close-knit part of the city and I'm sure other people will feel that way as well about, you know, the part of town that they grew up in as well. But it just feels like, you know, there's this constant movement. There's always something going on. I felt like when I lived on the Hilltop, I heard children all the time. Like there were always children around. We've been in our house now in Central Tacoma. I think this is our fourth year there. And only this summer did I hear kids playing outside. And I don't know if that's because the neighbors had like, really young kids or maybe they had older kids who are just like, I like to stay in my room.

- Jamika Scott: 05:09 But yeah, it's only been very recently that I've started hearing kids. I don't see them running up and down the streets. And I kind of miss, like, there was this feeling when I grew up in, in Hilltop of like, well, there's, well, one thing in particular, there was one time, you know, I thought I was, I was in elementary school and I was like a big kid and I didn't want my mom walking me to and from school anymore to like my friend's house because she only lived like a, about a block and a half away. And so, you know, my mom let me, she'd watch me walk from, like, she'd stand on the corner and she'd watch me walk up to my friend's house. And then, when I left, I, she would stand on the corner and I'd get to walk to meet her.
- Jamika Scott: 05:45 And there was one day in particular where she was supposed to meet me after I was leaving my friend's house. And I called her and she's like, I'm gonna leave in a couple minutes and then you leave at this time and I'll see you out there. And so I left at the time she told me, and I start walking and I get closer and closer and I still don't see her. And so I get to the house and I'm just kind of like, oh, well I made it here. But it was kind of getting, it was starting to get dark and I like went to open the door and it was locked and I was like knocking on the door and nobody was answering, but the lights were on and I was like, well, maybe I missed her.
- Jamika Scott: 06:16 And even though there wasn't really a way to miss her but I was like really worried. I didn't know how to get to my, like, get into the house. So I was able to like, walk down the street to like, you know, a family friend's house who was like really close to, and I probably could have just gone to a neighbor's house, but I knew for sure that like this friend would be home. And, we sat over, I sat over there and like, she called my mom. And you know, this is before the time of cell phone, so the house phone rang and rang and you know, we were trying to figure out, but within like 10 minutes I heard somebody I heard people calling my name and my mom like, didn't drive at the time, so she had come outta the house and didn't see me.
- Jamika Scott: 06:55 Went back to the house, called somebody to come pick her up. They were driving around the streets within a couple of minutes and they like found me. And like, I was like as, I wasn't lost in the sense cause I knew somewhere else to go, but that's kind of, you know, and my mom had, it was just like she was trying to leave. My little brother had like, needed to use the bathroom. He was young and potty training and so we just kind of missed each other. But it was just, you know, that's, that's the vibe of the Hilltop for me is that, I could knock on anybody's door and I know people and like, you know, when I was a kid I had painted some pictures and walked around and tried to sell 'em to my

neighbors and people bought them cause they were like, oh, okay, thanks.

- Jamika Scott: 07:35 And, and then like one of my neighbors in particular, like, they hung it up in their house and it was up there for years. And then, you know, they ended up, doing like a afterschool program and their garage with like a tutoring program. And I went there and then they became teachers at the elementary school I went to. And so it, like, that's what it feels like for me in the Hilltop is like, I think that's why I feel like of all the homes, the Hilltop feels most like home because, there was so much community there. And as I've, I'm feeling it out now and like there is definitely a community in this, in the central Tacoma area. It's just a little different. I don't feel as close to my neighbors. I don't feel like I could just go knock on the door or you know, like even, you know, share my stuff in the garden with them or things like that. Like, it just feels a little bit more disconnected. And that doesn't mean that they're not nice or anything like that. It just means that like it doesn't feel as inviting. And maybe that's just cause it's easier to make friends as a kid than when you're an adult. So, <laugh>
- dindria barrow : 08:40 <laugh>, That's what's interesting about, our perceptions and the way that the vibes feels in a neighborhood. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. So, um, who are you and where do you come from?
- Jamika Scott: 08:52 Uh, I feel like the question who I am <laugh> is a question that constantly sends me into like an existential crisis. <laugh> . I'm used to it. I'm, I'm used, I'm, I'm constantly on the edge of existential crisis. Um, no, I'm just kidding. But I, yeah, no, I, like, I feel like I have a hard time defining who I am because I'm afraid to be like, pigeonholed into one thing cause I often change my mind a lot, <laugh>. And, you know, and when I started doing like community organizing, people really quickly wanted to start calling me an activist or an organizer. And like, when I started community organizing, that's not, I didn't know necessarily specifically that that's what I was doing. I really just was like looking for an outlet to kind of relieve some tension that I personally felt and that I could kind of feel in the community as well as like society nationally.
- Jamika Scott: 09:50 But so I don't know. Like I feel like I am a lot of things and it kind of depends on the day of, like of what I will identify with most. But, you know, I mean, I think to go back to kind of my roots, I am, you know, I'm a middle child, <laugh>, I'm a Gemini. I'm my mom's only daughter and my grandma's oldest granddaughter, kind of in line to be the matriarch of my family in a sense. And our family has been pretty heavily on the

matriarchal side of things, as far as like, you know, the head of the family structure and things like that, and who people go to and depend on. And so I feel like that's definitely shaped a lot of my, a lot of my choices and a lot of who I am and how I've carried myself.

Jamika Scott: 10:50 And, you know, there were definitely times where, um, I think people would've expected me to like flee from Tacoma, but I like part of, I've always loved Tacoma first of all. But, the other part of it is that like my family's here and I feel like I do have, there is some responsibility I feel to like stay here. Even if things that I do take me other places for, for various times, like, yeah, this is always where I feel like I have to have a home base at some, at some level. And then, yeah, I mean it's, it's hard to say who I am, but I think that those are really like, you know, some of the keys to, to me, I'm an auntie. I don't have any of my own kids, but I have quite a few nieces and nephews and, so, you know, and, and I really like that, um, they often ask me if I'm gonna have kids on my own.

Jamika Scott: 11:48 And I'm like, if I have my own kids, like you guys will never see me. You know, like <laugh>, I can't, I can't be the fun aunt who pops in and out. I got my own kids. <laugh>, you gotta, I gotta know my role. So yeah, so I think that that's a big part of who I am. And as far as where I come from, like, you know, like I said, I was born here in Tacoma, but I think as the, where I come from is a bit kind of mixed into, you know, the people I come from. And so, I have family, my family ended up coming up here from the South and have been up here since my mom was in her preteen age. And so, you know, I feel like I come from a long line of strong women.

Jamika Scott: 12:39 I come from very opinionated people, <laugh>, I come from, you know, a family of people who talk fast and loudly and over each other, who fight hard, but also love incredibly hard. So, you know, I think that I just, that's who I am. I am the, the product of, of kind of all the, the people who helped raise me and the city that I've been fortunate enough to grow up in. And then also some of the choices I've made, which we can get into at a different time. But some are good and some are bad <laugh>, but they were all always, they were all learning lessons. <laugh>.

dindria barrow : 13:25 Right on. Um, tell us about your filmmaking, writing, your artistry.

Jamika Scott: 13:33 Yeah.

dindria barrow : 13:35 Um, I saw your website.

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- Jamika Scott: 13:36 I've been working on it, so maybe you've seen it when it's been in this more recent stage, <laugh>, because that'd be nice. <laugh> instead of the old one. Um, oh my goodness, I gotta stop doing that. Sorry. No, it's fine.
- Jamika Scott: 13:48 Let me just readjust myself. It's just, it just
- dindria barrow : 13:51 Reminds us of, of like, again, all the things.
- Jamika Scott: 13:53 We have to grounded <laugh>, be present,
- dindria barrow : 13:56 Always have to be ready for it.
- Jamika Scott: 13:57 Yeah, so, I have always been a fan of words, I guess. Like, I was definitely a big reader when I was a kid. And then I got into journaling. I really enjoy pens and paper <laugh>. And one of my tattoos is actually a, it's like the writing that you see on a Bic pen, um, because it was my favorite, the white barrel blue ink Bic pen was my favorite pen. And they don't make it anymore. It's very sad. I was the kid that would like steal pens. I still, I have to like stop myself from being like, this is a nice pen, I'm gonna take it. Um, but <laugh>, so I, yeah, I just, I started out really early just like kind of writing and I would write little short stories here and there in my journals and, but mostly I was just kind of like writing about the, you know, mundane aspects of my life, but at what seemed mundane, but at the time were like the biggest deal ever.
- Jamika Scott: 14:59 And then from there, just kind of like, it was just always been something I've done, I've always been interested in. I went, when I went to college, I was actually planning on being an elementary education. And then I realized how early teachers have to get up <laugh> and I'm not a morning person <laugh>. I love working with youth. I love, you know, helping to foster growth and, um, being that like education and instruction space. But being a everyday teacher, uh, no, I would've been just as grumpy as the kids. It probably, probably wouldn't have gotten much done. But yeah, so I, eventually ended up switching my major to English. And then within the English department started taking a lot of creative writing classes and, and I think part of like going to college, you know, at first I was like, well, what's, what do I major in that's gonna get me a job?
- Jamika Scott: 15:57 But I was kind of miserable <laugh> looking at things that way. And so, I, you know, decided to major in English and, and, from there took some creative writing classes. I took a screenwriting class, and it was just like the coolest thing ever. And I have always loved like, film and tele and television and, used to really

want to be on that TV show “All That” as a kid <laugh>. And then, uh, so, but I just, you know, like I just never, outside of like a few examples, like I didn't see myself in the film and television space, so I didn't necessarily consider it like a viable option for me, until I went to college and I had a very cool, quirky, silly writing professor who was like, yeah, you can write. And like, you know, was very passionate about sharing his love of film.

Jamika Scott: 16:52

And, so yeah. From there I got really focused in screenwriting and creative non-fiction. And so I used writing as, mostly a way to process things. It's a way for me to like look at the world around me and, make some sense of it or to, share out thoughts that I would like to see in the greater conversation. And, um, it's been kind of a journey cause writing the script doesn't necessarily mean the movie's gonna get made <laugh>. And even if somebody buys a script, it still doesn't mean the movie's gonna get made. And so I eventually got into, trying to do like, shoot some of my own short films. And I did that. The first time I did it was through the Grand Cinemas, um, “253 Film” competition. So they're 72-hour film festival or film competition.

Jamika Scott: 17:47

And that was really fun. And I wasn't behind a camera. I had a friend who had a camera and, and he, um, filmed it for me and I, you know, helped him edit it. And we did it a couple years like that. And then the last year I did the filming myself. And since then I've been able to kind of, practice more being behind the camera. I don't love it. It's a little stressful <laugh> I'd much rather be able to be like, this is the vision and have somebody else figure it out. But, it's been really cool because it's also gotten me back in touch with photography, which is something that I was really into when I was young as well. And so that's been another passion that I've like gotten back into in the past few years.

Jamika Scott: 18:27

And so, I was working in a lot of youth and family services and I was really burnt out and felt that I wasn't because of being burnt out, that I felt like I wasn't actually like helping the kids I was supposed to be serving. And so like, after talking it through with my partner and like friends and family, and cause I'm, it takes me a long time to make a decision if I don't have a deadline. So <laugh>, I like, you know, I decided to leave my job and I didn't necessarily have anything permanent lined up and, just kind of took a chance on trying to focus on building a creative portfolio. And, in the past, like it's been about, I think I stopped working there my last like, you know, nine to five in 2018. And like at the very end of 2018.

Jamika Scott: 19:18

And then from there, yeah, it's been pretty interesting. I've got a chance to work on some films and for like, my own personal

stuff. And most recently I was working on a, like a series called “Matriarch” that was about like the matriarch of, black families and, specifically kind of through the lens of my own family. And then, I recently worked on a project for the Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence, which was cool because the last nine to five I have was at a domestic violence agency. So this felt like I was kind of coming full circle and kind of bringing both of those things back together. And I also got to do a film fellowship. So it was pretty cool that like, you know, and people, I'm still always very surprised when people wanna pay me money for things that I've created. But I'm always very appreciative for it. So yeah, so it's been a really cool like, journey of like kind of figuring out that it's okay to be more than one thing and that, a lot of the things that I'm into, I can kind of layer them with each other and, and use them. Like they don't have to be the siloed interests that I can find ways to combine all of them.

dindria barrow : 20:35 I love that how you say that, siloed interests, they can overlap and interject or intersect I should say. I saw you MC a film festival discussion of “Since I've Been Down” and did that come about because of your work with filmmaking?

Jamika Scott: 20:53 A little bit, but it actually, I met Dr. Shepherd, through my organizing work actually. One of the people that I organized with, Julissa, she has been connected to the Evergreen State College for a while. One of her mentors was close with Dr. Shepherd. And so that's, I actually had met, I should say, I met Dr. Shepherd like when I was much younger, but hadn't seen her in a while until, you know, after high school, college. And then I came back and we started doing this. And so that's how we kind of gotten back into touch. And then I'd also been doing some work with The Grand. So I think that it was, I think it was before I was on their board, or maybe I was already on the board. Sometimes I forget how when things happened, especially with like the pandemic things feel very mashed up. But, yeah, so it was kind of a mix of both of those things. Like I had, you know, the, uh, The Grand, the folks at The Grand, uh, had worked with me and then also I had a relationship of sorts with Dr. Shepherd as well. And so, kind of, it worked out in that way. So it was a little bit of both again, because, yeah. They all kind of intersect that energy.

dindria barrow : 22:04 Yeah. The intersections. Um, tell us about, um, and, and then I'll get back to my third prompt <laugh>. Um, tell us about the Tacoma Action Coalition.

Jamika Scott: 22:15 Uh, oh, the Tacoma Action Collective.

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dindria barrow : Excuse me.

Jamika Scott: No, you're fine.

dindria barrow : 22:19 Tacoma Action Collective. Why do I have the wrong thing?

Jamika Scott: 22:21 Because it, it happens all the time. You're not the first person, and I guarantee you won't be the last, cause there's like Hilltop Action Coalition, right? Tacoma Action Collective, Tacoma Mutual Aid Collective. Like, there's a whole lot of, you know, but yes,

dindria barrow : 22:37 <laugh>, sorry,

Jamika Scott: 22:38 But yes. I'm

dindria barrow : 22:39 Sorry. I shouldn't be laughing.

Jamika Scott: 22:40 You're fine. It's ridiculous. <laugh>. I mean, it, I'm sure it serves a purpose, but not for what we're doing. But yeah, so we, the, Tacoma Action Collective, or we call it TAC, uh, colloquially. I guess is, so we originally just started again, like, as I was mentioning before, like I didn't, when I started organizing it wasn't cause I was like, I wanna be a community organizer. I really like, had never thought of myself as that, had never really thought about being an activist in any way. Not that I wasn't passionate about things that, you know, obviously, but, I just had never thought about it in the way that I think about it now, I guess. And so essentially it was like after Michael Brown was killed and so that was like 2014 I believe.

Jamika Scott: 23:38 And there was just a lot of tension. A lot of tension. And I like, you know, a lot of it was, you know, I was seeing it online obviously cause I was here and not in Ferguson. But it, I could see how it was impacting people all over and how, you know, it wasn't that this is the first time something like this has happened that's impacted people, but for some reason, just the way that things like kind of caught fire and how like prevalent it was, especially after like Trayvon Martin too, you know, like, I think that it was just one of those things where people were like, we've always been tired of this, but like, man, we're really tired of this. Like and so it was just this thing where I could see that like, people were doing things and, I felt like I needed an outlet and I was like, you know, I feel like I should be out there, like with the sign in the streets, handing out water, marching, whatever it is, I just felt like I needed to be on the ground.

- Jamika Scott: 24:44 And I kept thinking like, you know, well, I looked around to see what was happening in Tacoma and I had even actually gone to like, you know, what was called a Black Lives Matter march. And it was a very interesting thing. It was, you know, like the police chief was there and the mayor was there, and it was very, political, you know, it wasn't at all like grassroots. It wasn't, it was a, it felt like a photo op, you know, it felt like, let's show people that Tacoma is not Ferguson. And like, look, you know, look at us, we stand hand in hand with our chief and we walked through the streets and like, and we're together on this and Black Lives Matter and, you know, even though I don't think people were really seeing that at that particular moment necessarily in Tacoma.
- Jamika Scott: 25:31 I just, I went to that and I was just kind of like, this was not what I needed. And I had saw some other stuff that was kind of popping up and, and finally I just, I saw, I was online and I saw a group called, the Coalition Against Police Violence. And they had put out a call to action. They were doing like a national call to action for people to organize four mile marches in their city. And they wanted it to be done on MLK day of 2015. And when I saw this, like, it was like January 2nd or third, yeah. Like, it was like, you know, MLK Day was like, less than two weeks away. And so I just basically like, they had a little checklist of things you should consider.
- Jamika Scott: 26:21 And so I just posted on Facebook like, I'm gonna do this thing. Does, is anybody interested? Does anybody know how to do stuff like this? Like, anybody wanna help? And, you know, a few people were like, oh, this is great and I'll help and blah, blah, blah. And, nobody then followed up. And then, except for, you know, Julissa, she sent me a message and she like, what do you need? Like, I'll definitely help you. And so we kind of went through the checklist and, tried, you know, we plotted out the march route and we put out a press release and we did, you know, kind of what they said to do. And it was just very interesting. Like, I was walking down to the march the day it happened and I'd get a phone call, and it was like somebody from the news and they were like, oh, you know, like, you're organizing the march.
- Jamika Scott: 27:14 And, and it was just like all of a sudden, like, I don't know, it was just a very interesting, like, I went from being somebody who was just like following the steps of this little plan that somebody else put together to like, people calling me to ask me like, well, you know, how many people are gonna be there and, and like, what are the numbers and blah, blah, blah, this and that. And I was just like, just show up. I don't know, like, it's Facebook, you know, like 40 people said they're coming, but like

a hundred people said they're interested. So, I don't know, maybe 30 people show up, like over a hundred or so people showed up. And so I was just like super surprised. And, we did the march and at the end of it people were like, so what's next?

Jamika Scott: 27:56

And I was just like, I don't know what's next <laugh>. So we didn't really know, but like after that, you know, we kind of, from there we just kind of, tried to listen to the people in the city and, look at what's happening in the city and see where we could be most impactful. And we knew pretty quickly that we didn't want to be like all about, you know, protests and, or that, I guess not about all about protests, but that we weren't of the mind that protests like of marching in the street or a rally on the corner were, was the only way to protest. And so we wanted to, you know, we also wanted to do things that helped people feel joy and feel safety and like learn, new skills or learn about you know, resources that they can be connected to and, and things like that.

Jamika Scott: 28:50

So, and so we, you know, we started doing handfuls of things here and there where, you know, sometimes it was a vigil. Sometimes it was an outreach thing. It just really kind of depended. But for the most part, we weren't at that time calling ourselves the Tacoma Action Collective. We had created a page on Facebook called the Tacoma Action Collective, but it was mostly cause everybody kept saying like, what's next? We were like, well, let's create this page on Facebook where people can post what's next, you know? Yeah. It wasn't an entity, it was just a Facebook page, like a, a message page essentially. And then we ended up doing, there was a group out of Oakland and they had created this, for this direct action called Black, uh, Black Brunch. And yeah. And so they would, you know, go into restaurants and they'd have kind of a little prepared speech in a sense.

Jamika Scott: 29:47

And it wasn't very long. And it was, you know, it was, Black Brunch is about reclaiming a space and, and demanding that Black voices ceased to be ignored. Um, and it, you know, we would say some statistics about how often Black people were killed by police, security guards or self-appointed vigilantes. And then we'd read the names of, you know, depending on, you know, just the timeline and how people in the restaurant are reacting, you know, 10 to 20 names. And after each name we would say "ase" [/ah shay/]. And then on the way out, well first we would end with a Assata Shakur quote of, um, what was the quote? The, I don't know why I've said it so many times. I'm not sure why I'm blanking on it.

- Jamika Scott: 30:39 But, “It is our duty to fight for our freedom. It is our duty to win. We must love and support each other. We have nothing to lose but our chains”. And then we would sing “Which Side Are You On”, friend? And we would leave and it would really take like, maybe three to five minutes. But in that time, like people, the reactions were so varying, and it, and some people were like, yeah, you know, they listened or they would stand up and say or they'd raise a fist or they'd, some people would clap when we left, like things like that. And then, but some people got really, really, really mad and they would call the cops on us and they'd yell at us and they'd push us. And it became a very kind of like, not volatile, but it was one of those, it was definitely a thing that, like, it sparked conversation and that's what it was for.
- Jamika Scott: 31:22 The News Tribune wanted to kind of follow us on a day where we were doing Black Brunch, um, which we said okay to, and, we set some kind of ground rules about like, you know, like I had already, my name was already kind of out there, so I was a spokesperson for the group and we were still trying to be very careful about like, putting too much of our information out there. And so, but what ended up happening when they published this article is that they, put one of the, like they embedded a tweet from one of us and the article got posted on like a white supremacist message board and then like, you know, there were death threats and all kinds of stuff.
- Jamika Scott: 32:10 And we asked the News Tribune if they could like, the reporter that did it, if they would take that tweet off the, cause it was just in the online thing and they wouldn't, cause they said that they didn't break any ethical rules and it was a public tweet and that wasn't the point. But like, so it was, you know, there was like this issue where we were like, well, people don't seem to care about helping us protect ourselves, so we kind of need to find a way to protect ourselves. And that's when we kind of like folded ourselves into the Tacoma Action Collective. And like everything we did, it wasn't like we were tweeting it or posting it from our own Facebook pages or anything like that. We would always do it from the Tacoma Action Collective page, so that it was never coming from just like one of us in the group. Unless we chose. And you could kind of pick and choose what felt safe to post and what didn't.
- Jamika Scott: 32:51 But it kind of gave us this buffer between, people who didn't agree with what we were doing and them finding us directly and being able to target us individually. And so that's kind of how the, how Tacoma Action Collective was created as a, as an organization. And I say that loosely cause we're not like a 501(c)3 or anything like that. Um, there's no, you know, board of directors or anything like that. It's just us and, and we're just

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people who are from Tacoma, who love Tacoma, who, have various skills and we like to use them to, you know, connect people to resources and, bring people joy and help people feel empowered and give them a platform from which to speak.

- dindria barrow : 33:38 Absolutely. And I love the way that, um, social media can be used for good. Yeah. What was it like to run for Mayor?
- Jamika Scott: 33:53 Wild <laugh>
- Speaker 3: 33:55 <laugh>
- dindria barrow : 33:58 A ferris wheel at a festival, right?
- Jamika Scott: 34:00 Oh my goodness. It was, um, I have a me uh, a personal mantra that I came up with in college that is, do it for the memoir, <laugh> . And, cause and I say that simply because I, you know, I am very much like I said, if I don't have a deadline, I will take as, as much time as possible to make the decision. And so, you know, and honestly I had never really wanted to run for office. I just, it's like even in elementary school, middle school, like student body elections just weren't my thing. Um, and so it was just, it was just not something I had really wanted to do. And when I started organizing people really quickly, like probably after I organized the very first, that very first four-mile march, people were like, oh, you should run for office.
- Jamika Scott: 34:59 And I was just like, why would you say that? Like, you have no idea what other qualifications I have. Like, I'm a person who followed. I mean, I guess maybe that's what people think politicians do. They, they have a list, they followed it, they checked it off, they got it done. Um, but yeah, I was, but it, I just always thought that was really weird. And I mean, I assume people think because they felt like, oh, you're somebody who, who's maybe they felt I got it or like that I would, I would speak up for them, which I would, but I'm just like, politics is miserable. I'm gonna be honest. And it, and sometimes it feels like politics is like the total opposite of, of progress. And so it was really weird to kind of come to this point, you know, all these years later of running for office.
- Jamika Scott: 35:48 Cause really what it came down to is, you know, once we, a moment where we as the Tacoma Action Collective, we weren't like, oh, you know, these elected officials are gonna be our saviors. But, you know, there were a few people who were, running for office and had gotten voted in that we were like, okay, like these people have, at least, you know, been showing up and, you know, hopefully, you know, they say they want do

this and we wanna take them at their word. And so, you know, there were a few people we were like, okay, like maybe these people can be those people that we can rely on to start building this bridge between the grassroots and the elected officials. And it just didn't happen. <laugh>. Like, it just, that's just not how it works.

Jamika Scott: 36:33

And, even when people are saying that's how they want it to work, it's just like you get invited, you get a seat at the table and you're there so that they can tell people you were there. But like your contribution is, is that you're at the table. It's anything you have to offer beyond that they don't really want to hear. And you can say like, well, I think this is a great way to do outreach. I think this is a great way to solve the, you know, homelessness crisis, or this is a great way to start combating these issues of like crime we have or whatever. And it's like, you know, oh, we're listening to you or we hear you, but it takes time. And, you know, and then the final product that, that you're presented with is nothing like what you said, and it doesn't include anything that you said.

Jamika Scott: 37:17

And it's like, I get that you couldn't do everything, but you could, you couldn't do. And so it, there was just a lot of that. And then after, um, you know, we became aware of what happened with Manuel Ellis and his murder by the Tacoma Police. It was seeing one hearing from like Manny's sister Monet, um, and hearing, like once she and I just happened to be in like a Facebook group together and she was posting about trying to get information about her brother who was killed. And so I was trying to help her that way and she was like, oh, I've already done that and I've done this. And so, you know, we were talking about it as TAC and we were just like, we have to see if we can figure out what to do. And it just like the people that Monet had already reached out to who are, they're, you know, they're same people who were like, you know, support us and give us your blessing and give us your endorsement and like, be there for this and it, and you know, and like, these are the moments where we expect you to be there.

Jamika Scott: 38:23

Like this is, you know, this is the opposite side of that. This is, you know, we're putting it on this side and this is what we expect from you. And it's not like a quid pro quo thing. This is what you said you're in the community to do. And so it's just like, there, there was none of that, you know, she kept getting met with un answered emails and, and people who all they had to say was, sorry, I didn't know. And it's like, well, okay, you didn't know, but now you do. And it, and it's your job to do something with that. And, um, and so there was just a lot of like disappointment in how our elected officials, um, handled this. You know, like it

became very apparent that what happened to Manny Ellis was a crime.

Jamika Scott: 39:09 And it was a crime perpetrated by the people who were supposed to quote unquote stop crime. And if you as a city official can't look at that and say, that's wrong, and then stand up in front of the people who elected you and say that out loud that it's wrong. Why are you there? And a lot of people are like, well, you know, the city can't say certain things. And the lawyers, well the lawyers gave you advice. They didn't give you a law. There's no law saying that you can't call out the city that you work for. And if that means that they don't like you, if that means that you're not reelected, then so what? Because if you're somebody who really cares about the community, then the job that you wanna do in the community can be done from anywhere. It doesn't have to just be done from behind that dais.

Jamika Scott: 39:59 And so that was what became really disappointing to me, was seeing people who would privately tell us that this was wrong and then publicly praise police and, you know, and tell us we need to wait for all the facts when it's like, no, you want us to wait for the investigation to wrap up or the administrative thing to wrap up. But like, the facts are right here. The facts are on video. Yeah. The fact is in the audio recording. You know, like, I don't, and so, you know at one point, um, I had been assaulted and I was at a bar. Somebody used a drug and essentially kidnapped me from this bar and assaulted me. I was able to get out, a friend of mine called the police. The officer showed up at my house and he treated me like crap, didn't believe me.

Jamika Scott: 40:56 Basically berated me from not going into, like, I asked him if I should just go to the hospital. He told me that, why would I go? Like they probably won't find any evidence. And then he went back to his cop car after I asked him to leave cause he's yelling at me at my own house, and falsified the report saying, oh, she was drunk, nothing happened. And so on. So when nobody followed up on it, I had to go, I went and re-reported this. Um, there was still like no real investigation. And a big part of that is because this officer caused, like, I told him where these guys were. I told him what bar I was at. I even did my own investigating after the fact I called the bar. I was like, did you guys, do you guys have security cameras?

Jamika Scott: 41:38 Were they on that night? Can you tell me which bartender was working? Because, you know, so it's like none of that was happening. And so you have these moments in where you have people who are told, like, all you have to do is reach out for help. You try to reach out for help. And then you get told, well, we can't help you. And it's not because there's nothing they can do,

it's because if they decide to help you, that's acknowledging that something wrong happened. And if the wrong thing that was happened was done by somebody that they employ, then that, and they're admitting that, then that opens them up to a lawsuit. And I know this, this is not speculation. I literally, so when I was talking to, can I be specific with names in this?

dindria barrow:

It's up to you.

Jamika Scott:

42:24

Okay. I mean, I'm fine with it. I just wasn't sure. So, right. Like I, at the time, I ended up, you know, I had shared my story I had with, then Councilwoman Victoria Woodards and you know, and she heard me and, and you know, she asked me what she could do to help. And so I was like, you know, I just, one, I don't know whatever happened, I don't know if this officer was ever reprimanded and above all I would love an apology. You know, like, that was a traumatic time in my life. I ended up like being depressed. I was suicidal. I was in, I was hospitalized for months, you know? Um, and so I was like, at the very least, I'm owed an apology because this man had one job to do and he didn't do it.

Jamika Scott:

43:07

And it further compounded my trauma. And so if you're here to protect and serve, you didn't, and you should own up to that. And so I, now Mayor Woodards at the time again, Councilwoman, like, she helped me get a meeting at the time with the city manager at the time who was T.C. Broadnax. Um, and you know, he asked me kind of the same thing. Like, well, what do you want to happen? And I was like, well, you know, mostly I would just like an apology and some assurances that this officer has never done anything like that since and will never do anything like it again. And he, with a flat face told me, well, you're not gonna get an apology because that's going to open them up to a lawsuit. So, this isn't me speculating that people don't want to apologize or to acknowledge wrong because it'll open up the city to a lawsuit.

Jamika Scott:

44:04

And if I'm sitting in the mayor seat, if I'm sitting in the council seat, whatever it is, and I see something wrong happen to a constituent of mine, and I know objectively that it was wrong. I don't care if the city attorney says, hey, that's gonna cost us a little bit of money, you should pay that money then. You should pay it because then maybe you'll learn to do what you need to do to make sure it doesn't happen again. Because eventually you're broke, eventually you're not gonna have insurance coverage anymore. Then what, then what happens to our city? So, if all you do is not admit fault, and then you also don't change the policies that lead, lead to and allow the behaviors that we're seeing then like, why are you there?

- Jamika Scott: 44:59 Why are like I, you know, so that, that's what I feel like, like when, you know, so then when you know Manny's sister, when Monet is going through all this and she just wants answers and she just wants people who essentially run this city who get to, you know, sway public opinion and kind of move the needle on things when she hears all of them either, you know, saying like, we're so sorry to the Ellis family and we're so proud that we have great officers. Like that doesn't line up. You know? And so, it's just one of those things where, there was a lot of that happening and finally it got to this point where I was just like, I'm tired of people saying things in private and not saying them publicly. So my kind of like last minute decision to jump into the mayor's race was, you know, first at first, Mayor Woodards was gonna be running unopposed and then, Steve Haverly, Mr. Steve Haverly joined the race.
- Jamika Scott: 45:59 And I just was like, you know, I didn't join it thinking like I'm gonna, I'm gonna be mayor. I also didn't join the race thinking like, oh man, I'm gonna lose. But I was like, what I joined the race to do was, if nothing else, like I'm gonna make you guys go on record and say some stuff. Like I know that like if I'm not sitting in this conversation or somebody like me isn't sitting in this conversation during these debates and these candidate interviews, the questions aren't gonna be the same. You know, like, because people are gonna ask me questions knowing, you know, that I've done organization work. So, like if they ask me do I wanna defund the police, they're gonna ask them. If they ask me how I feel about Manny Ellis's case, they're gonna ask them. You know, like if I'm talking about, you know, how we need to meet the basic needs of our community, like people are gonna wonder why you're not talking about that.
- Jamika Scott: 46:47 And you know, so I, that was mostly my thing is I want you to have to have these hard conversations that you guys keep avoiding by sitting on the fence. And so that was kind of my reason I decided to kind of get in the race and run. And like then it was just really wild cause it's not something I've ever done before <laugh>. Um, and it like, but it was really cool too at the same time, cause I did like, we kind of did what we always do, like with the Tacoma Action Collective, we got together a rag tag team <laugh>, um, and we just kind of pieced it out. We figured out who had strengths to do what and we found somebody who had some knowledge who had actually worked on some campaigns before. There was definitely some arguing because you got a lot of opinionated people in one place, <laugh>.
- Jamika Scott: 47:34 Um, but you know, we, like we, raised money. We, you know, we didn't get any, like, we didn't get any trouble from the PDC

<laugh>, we, talked to voters, we knocked on doors, we had our signs out, you know, we had Vince, and it was a real campaign. And it was just a very, it was very interesting. Like it was, it was a lot of work. I don't think I had such little sleep since like, I think the last time I slept that little was in college when I was like working on my thesis <laugh>. And it was just for like a, a few month period too, you know, so it was, that was also the thing is like, I was also coming in the game really late, so I was playing a lot of catch up. But I did end up putting my cell phone in the voter pamphlet and I got like, you know, I didn't mean to, it was, I meant to, I thought I was just filling out other information.

Jamika Scott: 48:32

But, uh, so people would call me thinking that maybe it was like my campaign office or something, but it was just me and my cell phone. And so I was, you know, but it was like, sometimes it was really like, oh, I really gotta go. Like I gotta go do something. Like, or they'll call in the middle of like "Bachelor" ight or something and, and I'd have to like make my friends wait real quick. But, for the most part, everybody who called was very respectful. Nobody prank-called me or anything like that. But it was there like, it was very interesting cause like, through those phone calls, I feel like I learned, you know, so many people have a very, very similar vision for what they want for Tacoma. It's how to get there and what the causes, what the root causes of some of the problems are that we all tend to kind of like disagree on or, you know, have a little bit more division in the, in the way people think about it.

Jamika Scott: 49:25

But it was very, like, it was like people would call me and I think, you know, there were people who just, who you know really, and rather than having a question wanted to tell you something about themselves. And it felt very much, very often I felt like people were either looking for a therapist. Or a mother <laugh>. Um, and you know, on my blog online, I had like a story about how I was assaulted and kind of what the, the fallout from that. And there was a person who called me and they're like, well, I saw your story about how you're assault. And, it seems as though now like, you're ready for mayor and you're doing all these other things and it seems like you've gotten over it. And I was like, well, I don't know about got over it, but like, you know, I'm managing.

Jamika Scott: 50:12

And he was like, well, how'd you do that? And so like, you know, I'm like, this is a question for a therapist buddy. Like, but you know, like I did what I could to like without, you know, triggering myself and without like, you know, being the person's therapist. But I, you know, I just tried to give a listening ear and since he asked for a bit of advice, I, you know, told him like, I

got through it because I had people to talk to and to help me process, you know, those things. And so, it was just very interesting and you, it's a very like, intimate way to get to know people. Like the things people tell you when you're a public figure is very interesting, <laugh>. Uh, and so yeah, like people shared a lot of stuff with me that, it, you know, what it really made me feel as though is like, you know, people are just hurting and people are lonely and people are sad and people are scared of loss and being forgotten and being overlooked and not being considered.

Jamika Scott: 51:17

And you know, and I think so many of the systems that we have are set up to engage so few people because they're hoping like, let's just get like a sprinkling of data and then we will use that data to apply these very large sweeping changes. And I think that there's so many people who are not like, I need things to change immediately. Like, or, you know, they could use immediate change, but they, know that it's not gonna happen immediately. They just want to see the wheels being in motion. And I think that's where, the city of Tacoma is, and I don't mean like capital city cap, like capital C, capital T city of Tacoma, but just like our city, yeah, is struggling, it's that we've kind of stagnated, you know, like we've reached a point where we're not progressing in the ways that like we've progressed in ways that are kind of easy to do some policy changes here and there some, you know, some language changes and some rules and the, you know, equity statements and things like that.

Jamika Scott: 52:22

But like the real change is like people are hurt and they need to be healed. And that healing can't start in earnest until people have a safe foundation from which to do it. People are going to act out in ways that are destructive. They are going to have weapons and use guns against each other. They're going to steal things. They're going to break into things. They're going to, you know, act manipulatively or abusively because we as a society don't often give people the outlets they need to express feelings, in a way that allows them to express them ongoing rather than just like, okay, the funeral's over, get over it. You know? Okay. The, like, the cast is off, time to pick back up. Um, instead of saying that like, that thing that broke, maybe it finally did mend back together, but every so often when it rains a little bit and the weather gets a little cold, it hurts again.

Jamika Scott: 53:25

And that shouldn't make you feel shameful. And we as a community should understand that. Like, yeah, we know you have these responsibilities in the community, but you need to rest. So let us pick up the slack. And I think that that's the mentality that we're missing is that everybody is, has this mentality, or I shouldn't say everybody, a lot of people have this

mentality of, well, I'm gonna do for me and I'm gonna do for mine. And what you have to do for you is, is on you. And that's just got us here. And where we are now is, there are a lot of great things, but overall it is not, it's not ideal.

- dindria barrow : 53:59 Wow. You've given me a lot of things to think about <laugh>, and I think, I you know, mostly I'm thinking about that unity in community, and I know that sounds like a cliché, but it really is about transforming the city, our city of Tacoma, little c and restorative healing. Yeah. Um, so, you know, I'm, I'm definitely going to play this back and listen to it over and over again. <laugh>. It's because you are teaching me and that's why I really appreciate you doing this oral history with me, Jamika.
- Jamika Scott: 54:36 Yeah, no problem.
- dindria barrow : 54:36 I'm gonna finish with the last question. Alright. What is your past? Okay. We may just be able to skip that part.
- Jamika Scott: 54:45 We might have covered that part <laugh>.
- dindria barrow : 54:46 ... and what are your dreams?
- Jamika Scott: 54:49 What are my dreams? So, I feel like I, I've been asked these questions a lot lately just cause I've been reflecting on running from here a lot lately. And so a lot of this has come up, but, I had a teacher in middle school who, he had one rule in his classroom and the rule was no one has the right to interfere with the learning safety or wellbeing of another person. And I, that really stuck with me. It, I don't, you know, I mean, it, I don't know where he got that from. I don't know, you know, but it was just, it was just something that I really carried with me because I would sit in the class and I would think about it in my head. I would literally go over things when I should have been doing math.
- Jamika Scott: 55:36 I would go over things like, well, if somebody is gossiping like that interferes with somebody's wellbeing, and I would put things into like learning safety, wellbeing categories and like almost anything can fit into those categories. Just about everything, every aspect of your life can be tucked into one of those categories. And there are things that we cannot necessarily have, our, you know, safety nets of government and stuff are not, there necessarily to do everything for us. But I think that what it should be is something that kind of ensures that idea that no one has the right to interfere with learning safety or wellbeing of another. And so, you know, sometimes that doesn't mean we get everything that we want, but we get everything we need. And

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that from there, you are free to pursue whatever it is you do want as long as it doesn't come, you know, at the, the cost of somebody else's safety, learning and wellbeing.

Jamika Scott: 56:42 And so that's kind of, those are my dreams. I want to <laugh>, I want to live unbothered in a world where everybody is unbothered. I want to create art in a place where, it's accepted as a, not just a form of expression, or a form of healing, but also as a way to live your life. I feel like sometimes, you know, people just kind of like to sprinkle art on as a last-minute thought. But I think, you know, the creatives, the empaths, the intuitives, that often are drawn to the artistic side of things, are the people that we need. And more of these, more of these like really like strict and, and like not very flexible systems because I think it's been doing things for so long, for, so like the same way for so long that people are so afraid to change it.

Jamika Scott: 57:42 Because if you pull one card out, the whole house might topple. And, but an artist is like, we'll topple the house. Let's see what we can build from that. So, um, I think that we, you know, but then the artist needs that grounding of like, well, you know, we can't give everybody 10 billion today. So, you know, you need, you need the balance of that. So, I think in my dreams are for a world that is more balanced, a world where people are more unbothered, where there's just much, much less judgment and much more healing and togetherness.

dindria barrow : 58:22 Right on. Yeah. And I love that idea of art as a way of life. Profound statement

Jamika Scott: 58:30 <laugh>

dindria barrow : 58:31 Um, I am, I'm just, I have like shivers going.