**Name of Project: R.O.O.T.S of Sunflower County**

**Date of Interview: June 24, 2016**

**Location of Interview: Indianola, MS**

**Name of Interviewer(s): Betty L. Petty**

**Name of Interviewee(s): Kyle Pernell**

**Name of file used for transcription** (audio and/or video file): Audio file

**[0:13] KP:** Are you from Sunflower County?

**[0:15] BLP:** I live here in the city of Indianola, Sunflower County.

**[0:20] KP:** What brought you here to Sunflower County?

**[0:26] BLP:** Iwas born and I was raised here in Sunflower County. And as a matter of fact, I was born right on church street here in the city of Indianola. So I’ve basically been a Sunflower Countian, an Indianolian all of my life.

**[0:44] KP:** Can you tell me about your experiences growing up here in sunflower county and Indianola.

**[1:00] BLP:** Growing up here in the city of Indianola , sunflower county during the time in which I was actually coming up and I can actually speak specifically to, I would say our school system here. Was that during the time when we were going to school, I think our system was extremely good. And the reason that I would say that is because we had teachers that was from the community. We had teachers that actually cared about the well fair and the being of all children in the classroom. When we went to school, we knew exactly what we were going to school for. We were going to school to learn because we had teachers that cared about our education. We had teachers that wanted to make sure that we were getting the education that we actually needed in order for us to be productive in the global society that even though we talk about now and that is one of the things that needs to happen now. We need to make sure that even our children is getting the education that they actually need.

**[2:11] KP:** Do you see any changes in the school system now form the past years?

**[2:14] BLP:** I do.

**[2:15] KP:** What are they? Can you explain?

**[2:20] BLP:** Some of the changes that we actually have is that a great number of our teachers are not from our community. So therefore a lot of them do not know nor do they understand the culture of us, our community. You don’t have teachers basically going out into the community and going to homes visiting the homes, talking with the parents, expressing their thoughts or even their concerns that they may have for the children in which they teach everyday. When we are talking about the ideal of our children, there should be a joint shared obligation in making sure that our children are receiving the type of education that is so rightfully deserving unto them. And if we did effective communication, if we were able to talk to with one another, if we were able to even ask questions with one another about what it is that our children are doing. How is it that they are doing in school? And we shared it from the home to the school and from the school to the home. And if we had caring teachers, I think that there is no limit to what it is that our young people today would be able to do. Sometimes that’s all they need is just somebody or they to know that someone actually care about them. Caring about a child could make a world of a difference. But in… in just working with that one child you need to be able to understand and know how and where that child actually came from. what is going on there? what is it that we can do in order to help you? If you do not as a parent have all of the tools and skills that you need but what is it that I can do to help you with your child.

**[4:30] KP:** What personally can you do to help those situations?

**[4:32] BLP:** Mr. Pernell what I actually do on a daily basis is I work with parents. I work with students every day. I’m in schools. I’m in parent’s homes. I’m at meetings with them. If a parent has a need, Betty Petty will be there in order to assist. Because so many people say that our children is our tomorrow. I beg to differ. Our children is our today for our tomorrow. Which means we have to work with them now. We have got to teach them. We have got to show them. If they’re doing wrong, we have to help them to understand why. So I work with them on a daily basis. Helping parents, helping children out. They need us. We have to be there one for another. We have to make sure that our children are getting what it is that they need in this society in order to be productive in a global society. So it is up to all of us to do what we can to help one another.

**[6:07] KP:** What are your other professions and are they productive?

**[6:13] BLP:** My other professions that I have, and you ask are they productive? Very productive. I believe in engaging parents. I believe in holding community meetings. I believe in listening to the voices of the community, the children as well. Students have a voice inside of this society as well. It’s no more to me than the adults sitting at the table making the decision. Students need to be heard as well. If students is going down the wrong road, it’s left up to us to help direct them. We listen to understand, not to respond. So it’s left up to all of us to do what we can for one another.

**[7:15] KP:** How can you get that message throughout the system of school, to other parents, and other people of the community.

**[7:22] BLP:** All of the parents in which I deal with, they hear this day in and day out. And my question, What is it that you’re doing in order to help your child. In order to educate your child. But see the thing of it is Mr.Pernell, it’s not just because it’s my child. But there are other children out there too that need help so we have to bring them along too. We’ve got to show them that we care as well. This is about all of us coming along together. Because if I can help just one somebody that on somebody can go and help someone else. Because you know why? Someone heard me one day. Someone gave me an opportunity one day. Someone said yes you can. And you can if you put your mind to do what needs to be done, you can rise above the horizon because I’ve made up my mind that I can do it. And you can do it.

**[8:49] KP:** How do you feel or what do you think about your African American men in our community?

**[8:53] BLP:** African American in our community is a generation that seems as though they want to be heard but no one is listening to the cry. Things are being done for some reason or another just to get some attention but no one is listening to the cry. A lot of times it’s not what is being said it is what is not being…. A lot of times it’s not what is being said it’s what is not said. We have to be able to look at our children to see that hurt and feel that need. And we need to help them. We have some bright intelligent gifted young black males in our community. And the only things that we need to do is to give them encouraging words and be that model for them and help them to understand that they can make it.

**[10:25] KP:** Are there any programs to help steer our young African American Men or what can we as a community do to better them?

**[10:28] BLP:** You all as young men can actually be role models for the other young men. You can role models for them. You can take a stand. If you don’t stand for something, you’ll settle for anything. But you can take a stand. If you see a young man down, you can go to that young man and tell that young man that you can make it. I’ll be here with you. I’ll help you. Sometimes all they need is a little guidance or somebody to tell them that you can make it. And they can make it. As I said earlier, the cry is there. When will we hear the call.

**[11:18] KP:** Do you see this county, this state, or even this nation changing for the better? Do you see us prospering?

**[11:29] BLP:** You can prosper if you take a stand. You can prosper. You all can join forces together and decide that we not going to let our county, we are not even gonna let our nation go down. because you know how? You’re a part of it. To lift it up and to bring it up and then you get to the point where you say you want to do something differently about this, then I can do it. And you can all do it together. One person can only go so far. But look at if you had 25 men from Indianola. If you had 25 men, young men, from Inverness, from Moorhead, from Sunflower, from Rome, from Parchment look at the length of you all. You all are powerful powerful people when you are organized and when you come united.

**[12:54] KP:** If you had just 2 minutes to encourage us gentlemen, what would you say?

**[12:57] BLP:** Keep your head up. Make a difference. You sat and counted the cost to say what it is I want to change. Who is it that I can get to help me make this change. Lay out your plan, know what your objectives are, and how you are going to go about doing it. And do it Because you can. You can rise about the stigma that has been put or the label that has put on our young black men.

**[13:40] KP:** What is the first step in rising?

**[13:42] BLP:** It’s first identifying that there is a slope and I need to get above that slope.

**[14:00] KP:** Hmm. Wonderful. Is there is there anything else that you need to tell us about sunflower county or about life period?

**[14:07] BLP:** Sunflower County is a county that really needs some help. Sunflower County is a county that no matter it may look like there is some help that needs to be done. Racism is still alive. Racism is not about hatred. It’s about domination and control. That’s what it’s about. But we can still rise about that when we join together as a one man force. There is no limit to what we can do when we actually put our minds to do what needs to done. You all are young and vibrant you can do it. It doesn’t take a whole whole group. One person can start a change. One person. And can actually get there and influence others. But you all have an opportunity to come together and decide we can make a change here in sunflower county. And the change has just begun.

**[15:38 ] KP:** Thank you so much for your time Ms. Petty.

**[15:42] BLP: No problem at all.**