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

Date of interview: June 22, 2016

Location of Interview: Indianola, MS

Name of Interviewer(s):  **Jawaski Gardner (A)**

Name of Interviewee(s): Carolyn Willis **(B)**

Name of File: 026.MOV

[0:22] **A**: How long have you been working in Indianola?

[0:24] **B**: I have been working in Indianola since 2012.

[0:28] **A**: Do you feel safe here?

[0:29] **B**: Yes, (nods head) relatively safe here.

[0:32] **A**: If it’s something you would want to change about it, what would you change about Indianola?

[0:37] **B**: Uhm, what would I change about Indianola? Not really changes but improvements. Improvements to the community--would include more recreation for young people—especially those who are ages 8 through 18. I think they need more outlets aside from those that are provided in the school, maybe providing some sort of league sports like little league baseball, some soccer leagues. The other thing that I would change is (to the interviewers) and I know you’re males but more of a female focus especially as it applies to exercise, most of the time our girls only get an opportunity when it comes to basketball or baseball--and so more focus on females. The other thing that I would focus on is improving, because of the work that I do, teen pregnancy and really doing some things to address teen pregnancy. I believe that if you are able to make the link between activities for young people, you decrease the amounts of teenage pregnancies that happen. The other thing that I would like to address is perhaps looking at some property improvements—especially in the downtown area and the area along 82. Sometimes when it comes to how people perceive the community, they look at the numbers of buildings that are boarded up and that kind of thing and so just kind of some beautification projects and I know that the mayor and his office have started on some of that but rather than it being just a one-time thing, to keep it all year and to involve young people in the process because sometimes when young people are able to become involved that makes them proud of their communities and the way that they view things and so those are just a few of the things that I would improve.

[2:48] **A**: What brought you to Sunflower County?

[2:50] **B:** Well, I work in Sunflower County because I feel really connected with the work that is going on through the Indianola Promise Community. I actually left from private sector work and came into public service work because I want to make a difference in my community. Indianola has a unique opportunity through some of the initiatives through Indianola Promise Community as well as Sunflower County United for Children and I wanted to be a part of that work.

[3:29] **A**: Do you want to change something in where you work?

[3:27] **B**: Well when I first started working for Delta Health Alliance I had more of a connection to people and now that I’ve moved in a different direction, I don’t get a chance to see you guys (to the interviewers) as much as I would love to be able to work with young people and so if there was anything that I would change in my work is more of the community based aspect and being able to do just what we’re doing now—talking with young people about what they view as some of the issues and working with young people to make sure that those issues are addressed. I think that’s where the real work takes place--that’s being able to connect with people that really want changes in the community and so if I could change anything, for me personally, it would be that grass root--really working with people to develop practices and to develop the skill sets of young people—more programs that address that.

[4:38] **A**: Do they have this going down in Greenwood?

[4:39] **B**: (shaking her head) No. You really have a unique opportunity in Indianola and Sunflower County. There are smaller efforts in Greenwood but not to the magnitude of the work that’s being done in Indianola. There isn’t, I don’t think, anything that exists in the Delta that is as unique as what is being provided in Indianola.

[5:01] **A**: Do you think things are the same as how it use to be?

[5:06] **B**: I can see changes but change happens at slower pace in our area. I can see those changes just based on when I came into Indianola and Sunflower County in 2012. I came in with the school under conservatorship—that has changed and I think it is for the better that you now have a seated schoolboard and a superintendent that are able to make things happen at the local level rather than them being pushed at the state level. I can also see more of the social changes happening in Indianola just by virtue of some of the things that are provided like books for young children through Imagination Library, like the people in the community being more in tuned to what is happening in the community and trying to make those steps but then again those are small steps and they’re happening kind of at a slow pace but I can see some changes happening.