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

**Date of Interview: November 19, 2016**

**Location of Interview: Indianola, Ms**

**Name of Interviewer(s): Jawaski Gardner and A’Xavier Carpenter**

**Name of Interviewee(s): Darnell Fisher**

**Name of file used for transcription** (audio and/or video file): Video File (Darnell Fisher)

[0:24] JG: What is your occupation?

[0:27] DF: Sargent at the Indianola Police Department

[0:28] JG: What motivated you to become a police officer?

[0:31] DF: (Laughs) Uhm It kind of fell upon me. .After I got into the industry of security and law enforcement, I enjoyed working with people and problem solving. It’s a lot of problem solving that take place at the police department that people don’t usually see on a daily basis.

[1:00] JG: What is your role in keeping the community safe?

[1:09]DF: I think that my role in keeping the community safe is being the best person that I can be when I come in contact with people. And with that said, What does that mean? That means being the best person that I can be in every instance or incident that I come upon. Which means being control of oneself at all times.

[1:30] JG: How do partner with the community in order to keep the community safe?

[1:42] DF: Well, I try to make sure that I am befriending as many people as I possibly can. Try to make sure I’m meeting people in the community and talking with them during times that are good not always when times are bad. Letting them know when we meet in a situation where I have to be a police officer I’m going to be a police officer. But when we where we can just have simple conversation based upon who we are as individuals then that’s what I want to do.

[2:16] JG: How do you feel African American young men are perceived?

[2:20] DF: I feel that African American young men are perceived unfairly. Most African American young men are perceived based on what people see in the television and that’s not always the case.

[2:40] JG: How do you feel about having SROs in the schools?

[3:38] DF: I think it’s needed. I think is uhm, it’s a good thing. Uhm, as long as they are trained and have the type of people skills and patience that it takes to deal with young people. Y’all can be hand full. But at the same time you do have to have some type of security and control in the high schools now-a-days. It’s not like it used to be. So, uhm not only to deal with the students but to deal with the predators around the students.

[3:13] JG: What alternatives to incarceration would you recommend for the youth and why?

[3:20]DF: Alternatives for incarceration? Well, I think it begins early after Mom gives birth. That’s key. Uhm you have to teach children where you want them to go, what you want them to be. You have to have expectations. You have to set the expectations high so that they’ll have goals to shoot for. Kids your—or like you or younger, especially when they are just beginning life-- the one thing they definitely want to please their parents. To deter them from incarceration it starts early. It starts with patience and everything has to come from a position of love. Then you have to have some alternatives in terms of additional schooling and jobs and things of that nature. We can go on and on about what it would take to deter from incarceration. Uhm with all that said it has to come even from a higher place in terms of the federal government. The federal government has to play a role in deterring the incarceration of young black men or young people period. And they need to step they game up as well.

[4:54] JG: What do you think is the single most important positive solution to improve interaction between students and law enforcement?

[5:02] DF: Communication. Law enforcement and students need to learn how to communicate better. They got a lot of law enforcement officers who tend to feel that because they have on a uniform that what they say is right and that’s not always the case. Uhm, the only that can really help that situation is communication. And everybody has to be willing to listen to one another. You have, as a young man, if you have a situation or a problem, I need to be able to listen to your situation or problem and hear it fully before I even open my mouth to say what I’m going to say and not be so ready to put handcuffs on you or assume that you’ve done something wrong. We need to be able to hear each other out. Communication is key.

[6:05] JG: How do you see discipline policies affecting students?

[6:09] DF: Well, I don’t work in the school system. I think they’re doing the best they can with the information they have. How the policies impact the students, I can’t speak to that because I’ve never been a resource officer. But to answer your question I would have to say that there is probably room for improvement.

[6:40] JG: In your role as your police officer what are you protecting?

[6:48] DF: I’m protecting life, liberty, health, and uhm freedom. Everybody has the right to life. Everybody has the right to freedom. Everybody has the right to be who they are. Of course, materials things, I have to protect those things too—cars, clothes, commerce. Actually there are plethora of things that we protect but I think that the main thing that we protect is life.

[7:25] JG: As a peace officer what is your responsibility in protecting young people?

[7:28]DF: Ask me that questions one more time.

[7:33] JG: As a peace officer what is your responsibility in protecting young people?

[7:35] DF: My responsibility in protecting young people is pretty much everything that I just said. Uhm, young people are most important in that aspect. Because you guys are our future. When addressing the youth of today it is important that we listen and understand where you’re coming from and not be so quick to incarcerate. So, I think that it is very important for us to protect is all aspects even if it has to be protecting you from your own people.

[8:25] JG: What is your opinion about the use of corporal punishment at school?

[8:30] DF: I think that corporal punishment—it’s probably needed in some cases. I think that it’s something that should be agree upon between the school and the parents. That’s been a very controversial subject for a long time. Some type of disciplinary actions have to be taken. You have to be able to suffer the consequences of your own actions rather that be corporal punishment or not that something that definitely has to be talked to or about between the school system and the parent.

[9:15] JG: What do students need to be protected from?

[9:17] DF: A lot of students need to be protected from their own selves. Some of the are their own worst enemies. Uhm, they need to be protected from negative environments around the school. We have a lot of people who don’t necessarily have the best interest in schools in mind when they’re looking around the school. It’s a whole lot of things that students need to be protected from but we have to take it on a case by case basis.

[10:00] JG: What aspect of Mississippi History do you think all people should know about?

[10:03]DF: Mississippi’s history? The aspect of Mississippi History that all young people need to know about: one is slavery and prejudice. All the students need to know about that. We need to know where we’ve come from as a people.

[10:30] JG: How do your own personal experiences in the Delta shape how you engage young men of color?

[10:40] DF: Give me that question one more time?

[10:45] JG: How do your own personal experiences in the Delta shape how you engage young men and boys of color?

[10:50] DF: Well my experience in the Delta, uhm shapes how I interact with the youth by first, compassion. Because most young in the Delta are faced with obstacles that a lot of youth around the globe aren’t faced with. So, I would have to say first compassion and then respect. Everybody deserves respect and once we can get those two things mobilized, I think the door will open up for everything else.

[11:39] JG: What do you want the world to know about African American young men in the Delta?

[11:41] DF: That they have the ability to do and be all that anybody else has the ability to do and be.

[11:53] AC: What advice do you have to African American young men?

[11:56] DF: Advice? Learn how to operate-- start and operate your own business. Learn how to create jobs for your own people. Learn how to create jobs for yourself. Lear to become self-sufficient. There’s nothing wrong with going to work for somebody else but you should always have in the back of your mind that you’re going to eventually do this or something else for yourself. Because people aren’t standing by waiting to give you a job. People aren’t standing by waiting for give you anything. It’s best for you to learn how its done and what it takes to get it done.

[12:40] AC: What gives you hope?

[12:44] DF: What gives me hope(laughs)? What gives me hope is people like you asking me these types of questions. Young black men trying to do the right thing. Trying to face the obstacles that are plaguing you on a daily basis, that actually hold you back some instances rather that be outside of inside. And then the other things that gives me hope is my spiritual connection. Spiritually speaking I would have to say that I believe that there is a better place for all of us. There’s a better thing coming for all of us. We just have to be patient. It may not even be in my life time but I think better things are coming for us.

[13:30] AC: Is there anything that you would like to add?

[13:33] DF: Well I would just like to reiterate to you and your counterparts to remember that as you’re going through this journey of your own life remember that nobody has anything set aside for you. You want you have to go get it. If you don’t know how to get it—we’re living in an information age—information is there for you to learn how to get it. Once people see that motivation and that drive you’ll be surprise how many people will come out of the wood work and to try and help you reach your goals. I would say that the most important thing is to keep pressing forward. Don’t – as they say you can’t move forward if you’re always looking at the rearview mirror. So, you’re going to have some bumps in the road and you’re going to have some obstacles that you have to get over. It may even be within your own family but you cannot let any of that stop you from what you trying to go to. You are your brother’s keeper. What you do will reflect him and what he does will reflect you. So you guys have to be sincere. You have to make a sincere effort to make a change in this world because behind you will come your son or daughter and behind them will come another generation of us. If we all take the responsibility of I am my brother and my sisters keeper, we can go some places.