**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): Myron Hawkins**

**Name of Interviewee(s): Edrick Hall**

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

[0:08] MH: What is your job title?

[0:10] EH: Chief of police for Indianola Police Department.

[0:13] MH: What motivated you to become a police officer?

[0:16] EH: Well I think it was something that I just wanted to do as a young child. Uhm when I was a lot younger. Uhm just growing up I had another relative that was in law enforcement kind of looked to him and admired him. Saw all the work that he did. And found out what is was that I needed to do to become a police officer. So, my goal was to become a police officer, and one day move into the field and become the chief of police and I’m blessed to say that I’m the current chief of police at this time after 17 years in law enforcement.

[0:47] MH: What is your role in keeping your community safe?

[0:51] EH: Wow, uhm. Keeping the community safe… I would say to make sure that we keep crime reduced. And that’s not always by arresting people keeping crime reduced. That’s by officer presence. Doing events that like you guys are doing today. Making sure that we are out here and letting the community know that we are there for them. Encouraging citizens that if they see something to say something. Notify us of what’s going on in the area and just being a part of the community. So many times people look at it as being something separately but I say Indianola Police Department we’re here in the city so we are apart of the community and not separate.

[1:25] MH: How do you partner with community members to keep the community safe?

[1:28] EH: Well, a lot of things we do at the police department is that we like to do outreach. We go to different things like we’re doing now. We go to different organizations and civic clubs and we speak to them. We are trying to start uhm community policing where we will have an officer and that’s all he will focus on. Uhm and preferable we’ll have that started soon. We are going to try to engage the community and make sure we’re there for them.

[1:56] MH: What circumstances impel you to seek incarceration for a young person?

[2:01] EH: What was that I’m sorry?

[2:05] MH: What circumstances impel you to seek incarceration for a young person?

[2:08] EH: Incarceration for anybody is sad but when you do have to incarcerate the youth it always plays a role on you mentally. Because you always wonder is there anything that I could have done differently as an officer to maybe try to save this youth, to try to save this child. Uhm but sometimes it is unfortunate but certain people don’t want to be saved. We can try to do programs that we are doing now. I wish there were more kids here but some just decide to go a different path so unfortunately for those we still have to make the arrest. It’s not nothing we take pride in especially in arresting youth but it does happen so those circumstances are uhm not foreseen.

[2:51] MH: What alternatives to incarceration do you recommend for youth and why?

[3:00] EH: I think that the biggest thing we need to start is with the school, our education. And I think that’s the biggest alternative. Because the way to get out of anything… The way to get out of poverty, to get out of single parent families, mother’s being single families, or father’s even being single families is for the child to get a quality education. So I think that if a child has a quality education, then he or she can succeed and do whatever they need to do and that keeps them away from crime. When you live in a city such as Indianola we don’t have YMCA, we don’t have different things that the kids can do. So, I’m grateful for the different outreach programs that we do have. But we don’t have enough I think to keep our young kids off the street. So, I think we need more to keep them off the street.

[3:40] MH: As a peace officer, what is your responsibility in protecting young people?

[3:44] EH: It’s my responsibility to protect all. But I would say, do it affect me more mentally, emotionally when I see something happen to a youth or elderly it does. It makes me drive a lot harder when they are a victim of a crime. We can’t predict crimes as they occur. All we can try to do is stay motivated and be proactive but uhm all crimes bother me but when they pertain to youth or elderly they bother me more.

[4:20] MH: What is your top recommendation for creating school where young men of color can thrive?

[4:24] EH: Engagement. Uhm, I think we have to make sure that… to remember we are living in a different age. The same thing that went on when I was it school that worked. It doesn’t work for this generation that we have now. We have to make sure that we keep our kids engaged. Make sure that the teachers are keeping the kids engaged. Everybody learns different. And I challenge the teachers to go out and find… I don’t care if you have 30 kids in your classroom. You need to understands what’s the best way to keep each child individually engaged in class so they can receive their proper education.

[4:57] MH: What advice do you have for African American young men?

[5:00] EH: Education. It’s simple I can’t stress it enough. The most important thing is education. Uhm, stay in school. Do what you have to do. We have a fad that’s going to where we think it’s ok to hang out on the street. We think it’s ok to sag our pants. We think if we make all A’s in school we are a nerd or we’re a geek or something like that and those kids sometimes are targeted. But those are the future doctors and those are the future lawyers. Those are the… that’s the future. And I would just encourage them all to realize it starts on how you feel. So, if you get up in the morning and you’re dressed to impress and you go to school feeling good and you get your education. Education is just the key.

[5:45] MH: How do your own personal experiences in the Delta shape how you engage young men and boys of color?

[5:47] EH: Raised right here in the Delta. Born in Greenville, MS. Have I experience racism? Yes I have. Have I seen racism? Yes I have. But I have to honestly say that things are better in the Mississippi Delta. Uhm, we are not perfect. A long way from perfect. I don’t think we’ll ever be perfect but just from my own experiences. It was just those to make sure that I wasn’t overlooked for certain positions that I applied for. I was not targeted for driving just because of my skin color. To make sure that I was treated fairly whenever I was pulled over. But I would also say on the opposite side of that whenever I was pulled over, I made sure I respected the officer. No matter if it was a male or female. Not matter if they were black or white because that’s what I was raised to do.

[6:43] MH: What gives you hope?

[6:44] EH: Youth. Things like this. Just knowing that sitting here with you guys today. I think I counted about 17 or 18 of you all today I could be off a little bit. But, just youth. You could be anywhere else right now but you chose to be here today and you took time out of your schedule to want to interview and talk to me and I want to thank you for it. That gives me hope.

[7:05] MH: Is there anything that you would like to add?

[7:08] EH: I would encourage each of you and everybody whose looking at this just to keep pressing and keep fighting. I can’t tell you that you won’t come along obstacles. I won’t tell you things won’t hurt along the way but if you stay the path and you make up your mind what you want to do you can be whatever it is you want to be.

[7:24] MH: Thank you.