**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): Jadan Farrow**

**Name of Interviewee(s): Liz Johnson**

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

[0:20] JF: Are you from Sunflower County?

[0:24] LJ: Yes, I am born and raised in Sunflower County.

[0:28] JF: Can you explain to me how it was when you were growing up in Sunflower County.

[0:33] LJ: As growing up from a young person I lived in a rural area and from there we had to walk so many miles just to catch the bus. Rather it was raining, hot, snow, that’s the way we got to school. And from that point after coming through elementary and I went to Gentry High School here. And from there when we would leave school in the afternoon we had to go back home to the cotton fields. And we had to make up the rest of the day in the cotton fields.

[1:16] JF: Have you seen any changes in your life time?

[1:18] LJ: Yes and great changes. From the cotton field I knew one thing—how to get out of the cotton field was based on education. And from education to me as a milestone. Number one it got me out of the cotton field and from there it got me into a four college where I graduated with a degree in accounting. And from there I’ve been employed for the last 38 years for the largest company in Mississippi when it comes down to home health. So it has really helped me a lot.

[2:00] JF: Would you mind telling me if you have any kids?

[2:03] LJ: Yes, I do have two girls. And I say girls but they are both adults now. And they are also from Sunflower County and they were blessed to be raised in the Sunflower School District. And they were blessed so far to have college degrees and one has her Master’s degree.

[2:36] JF: What advice would you give a young person like me growing up in Sunflower County?

[2:44] LJ: The advice that I would give a young person growing up in Sunflower County is number one keep your head focus. Always remember that God is at the top. When you need some guidance start with your parents. Then you venture out into the counselors and then sometimes there are good friends but always stay focused. And everything that looks goof isn’t always good.

[3:15] JF: Have you experienced any racism in Sunflower County?

[3:17] LJ: Actually I’ve experienced it and I’m still experiencing it. It is still here today.

[3:29] JF: How old were you the first time you experienced racism and do you remember?

[3:34] LJ: Yes like I said we lived in a rural area and that means we worked on a farm and you were being told what to do, when to do it, and how to do it. And making 50 cents a day so yes it’s still there.

[3:57] JF: If Martin Luther King was alive today, what would he talk about? You know with what’s going on these days, what would he say about it?

[4:00] LJ: Number one he would finish his dream. He had a dream. That would be number one. And secondly some of the things we have experienced, if he would have just stayed with us we wouldn’t be going through it. Like some of the things that happened in Ferguson and some of the things that are happening right here in our own county. We would not be going through some of those things.

[4:25] JF: Do you enjoy living in Sunflower County?

[4:28] LJ: Yes, I do. I enjoy living here. When I graduated from college my first job interview and job offer was in New York City. I went up there stayed up about 5 days, and I didn’t want to be away from home. So, I ended up coming back home.

[4:51] JF: Alright, thank you for your time.

[5:17] JF: Hello, may you tell us about – How do you feel about the racism in Sunflower County?

[5:19] LJ: Ok, How do I feel about the racism in Sunflower County? That’s a long story but, we can make it pretty much short at this time. I feel like it’s something that should not be. And if we just treat each other the way God intended us to treat each other, we would not have the racism that’s here now. Do I think that it should continue on? No, I don’t I think we should stop it now.

[5:51] JF: In the next 10 years, do you think Sunflower County would be a better place than it is now or even more racist?

[6:00] LJ: In the next 10 years, I see Sunflower County being somewhat better. Because I’m expecting some great leadership to take place here. With this leadership, I think we will be lead into a different area.

[6:20] JF: Thank you.