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

Date of interview:

Location of Interview: Indianola, MS

Name of Interviewer(s): Calvin Griffin (A)

Name of Interviewee: Robert Earvin (B)

Name of file used for transcription: 019.MOV and 020.MOV

[0:04] **A**: How do you feel about Sunflower?

[0:06] **B**: Well I’ve been living in Sunflower all my life. I think Sunflower County is a nice county to live in but I think lately we have a lot of crime rates. I think we need to help with our young men because they getting lost out there in these streets and the crime rate is so high because they don’t have a job and they rob and they stealing and they don’t have many parents guidance—when I say parents guidance I mean they don’t have a man figure in their home, someone to guide them and steer them in the right way. And we’re losing our young men and it’s just terrible because I think Mississippi, mostly Sunflower County, work with a lot of older people have went to the city and now they want to retire and come back home and it’s not safe. They don’t think they need to come back home because it’s not safe. So much, so much crime—the crime rate is so high with burglary and young men killing each other. I think it’s just ridiculous.

[1:03] **A**: So if you could change it, what would you change about it?

[1:07] **B**: If could change it uh, I would try first, try to help young men with jobs and the young men that are dropping out of school, we need to encourage them to stay in school to get their degree. And it’s very important for these young men to have a college degree behind them because now, you know, I think technology is taking over and it’s so hard for young men to get jobs now. If you don’t have a job one of the things you’re going to go to is what? That’s stealing, that’s robbing, that’s killing. So you know we all have to come together not me but everybody as a community come together and try to change things. You know I don’t think one person can change anything, we have to come together and we have to be collective on whatever we do.

[1:48] **A**: So we should get with the mayor and see what he want to do and see how he can change it or is it just up to the people to change it?

[1:59] **B**: Well I think the mayor has a lot to do with it also but we have to—I think we have to put the right person in place. I mean (inaudible) the mayor has to be for the North and the South. When I say the North and the South I mean be for the black and the white. We need to come together as a whole; you know what I’m saying? We just can’t just say we want to take care of this side and not take care of this side.

[2:24] **A**: I want to know how all those things use to be back in the day?

[2:29] **B**: When I was growing up? Oh when I was growing up it was nice you know I was born in—

[Interviewer cuts in. inaudible]

[2:34] **B**: It was better then than it is now and the reason I say that is because we had older people that could tell you something and you’d be able to listen to it. Now, young men don’t listen to elder people now. You know, back then you know everyone helped everyone now it’s just everybody out for themselves. There’s no love, you know, we don’t have love. Young men getting steered away, even the older. You have to be at church—we have to have God in our life. If you don’t have God in your life then, you know, we in trouble; we really in trouble. And as a parent if I’m not in the church, if I don’t go out and try to seek God how can I tell my children? So first it starts with the adults, we have to get ourselves involved in church, we have to have God inside of us to instill it in our kids.

[3:20] **A**: Yes Sir. Now I just have to write your name down.

[3:27] **B**: My name is Robert Irvin. R-O-B-E-R-T E-AR-V-I-N. And I think it’s a nice thing you young men are doing. Listen to whoever is over you all and as young men ya’ll need to get involved in church. I mean there’s the choir, there’s the ushers you know there’s so much you can do, you have to have God in your life because there’s so much going on now. And be your own leader, don’t be a follower. Whatever you do, don’t let someone tell you ‘well we are going to do this, you want to do that?’ if you don’t want to do that, don’t do it. Be your own leader because—it’s just like you and your friend (points) say for instance if ya’ll in the same car, you don’t know what’s going on. If he go in a store and rob a store when they stop that car who going to prison?

[4:24]**A**: Both of us.

[4:25]**B**: Both of you. So you know if this is not the crowd that you want to be with, you have to distance yourself from it. If he’s not doing anything that you want to do and it’s always what he want to do (points back and forth between interviewers) then that’s not your friend you need to be your own man, make your own decisions because whatever decisions you make, it’s going to follow you the rest of your what?

[4:45] **A**: Life

[4:47] **B**: Your life. So you make the best decision young man. Make the best decision young men, okay?

[4:53] **A**: Yes Sir.