**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**

**Name of Interviewee(s): Shaketta Davis**

**Name of file used for transcription** (audio and/or video file): Video file (Shaketta Davis)

[0:12] JG: Are you from Sunflower County?

[0:15] SD: I’m not. I’m actually form Washington County.

[0:20] JG: What brought you to Sunflower County?

[0:23] SD: Oh, a job opportunity. I work for the Indianola Promise Community here in Sunflower County.

[0:28] JG: What do you like about Sunflower County?

[0:39] SD: Well honestly I really just enjoy being in the atmosphere of young people. We have a lot of young people here who are very talented. And just being around this culture really motivates me to continue to do the work that I do for the Indianola Promise Community.

[0:53] JG: What problems do you feel that are in this community that you would prefer that woould this community

[1:05] SD: I think there’s a lack of activities for our kids to participate in. I think that uhm there’s a lack of educational support and academic support for our kids and I also feel like there is a lack of job opportunities and internships and stuff like that for our youngsters to participate in.

[1:30] JG: As young black men, as we are, do you feel that it would help if young black men help lead camps and lead programs help young black men and young black women to show them that it’s a better way—that you don’t have to go down this path. And you don’t have to have babies having babies and all this other stuff. Do you feel like that will help?

[1:50] SD: I actually do. We have a couple programs that are actually led by young black men who – I think one has a kid and one does not have any kids. Well it’s actually three. And I think another one is married with kids. And I think that are young black men and young black women seeing men, black men, in positions like that—it just really brings home the fact that there is a lot of purpose here in Sunflower County and there are several opportunities, if they take advantage of the opportunities. So, seeing black men in positions like that I really believe that it has a great impact and influence on our culture.

[2:37] JG: Do you think there are young black mens and young black womens that rather go into the state pen rather than pen state?

[2:37] SD: Whoa, that uhm—I don’t want say that I believe that they would rather go to the state pen. I feel like as a culture and as a community we make things a little bit more difficult than what they have to be. So—then we have lowered expectations for our kids so much so to where they really just don’t know how to perform to a particular level. Because we just really don’t expect that much out of them so we just do the bare minimum to get by. So, when they get out in the corporal world, it’s like in order to survive they haven’t been equipped with the knowledge and skills to survive. So, they just do what they can which leads them to the State Pen. So I don’t want to say that they prefer go there rather than go to Penn State but I just feel like again back to the first question that you just asked about what’s lacking. I feel like if there was more support, educational support, and other kind of positive programs that they could participate it would prevent them from going to the State Pen and promote them to going to Penn State. I like that.

[3:44] JG: Do you feel that the educational part of our school—do you think that if we brought back some of our old teachers and you know teacher and let the young teachers just getting out of college get more training—do you think that would better help?

[4:10] SD: I think that that would be one part to help the educational system but I also feel like if we uhm if we reach out to the parents of the kids and develop a relationship with the parents. Because we do have a lot of young parents these days. And I feel like they still want to go out and live their life versus actually trying to rear their kids. So, I feel like in addition to having those mentors of older teachers, more experienced and seasoned teachers, I feel like if we just try to bridge the gap between the actual teachers and administrators in the school and the parent then we will have better outcomes for our kids.

[4:40] JG: If we were talking about the young women, do you think that gathering with them and letting them know that they are more than shape and their hips and beauty and go to college. Letting them know that if a man ain’t covered it then he can’t uncover it. If we teach them that do you think that there would be a better lifestyle?

[5:18] SD: I do. I think that it is very important to have mentors for young ladies as well as our young men. I also feel like we need to have more positive female role models in the media. Because these days the only thing that’s being portrayed is uncovered women, who just sleep around and do whatever they are big and bad enough to do. There is a lack of role models who are actually out there grinding and hustling and making a life for themselves and for their kids. So I feel like if we had some very positive role models then the young girls would see that there are many opportunities versus having to go out there and sleep around and do different things.