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

**Date of Interview: June 22, 2016**

**Location of Interview: Indianola, Mississippi**

**Name of Interviewer(s): Stephanie Washington**

**Name of Interviewee(s): Theon James**

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

[0:12]TJ: Are you a native of Sunflower County?

[0:13] SW: I am.

[0:18] TJ: I want to start off by saying uhm, How do you feel about Sunflower County and the community that you live in?

[0:25] SW: Uhm, I live in Indianola, Mississippi. I’ve been a—I was uhm – I came up here in the 3rd grade and I’m 32 years of age. So, I’ve been here was raised here went to school here—elementary school, high school. I also went to delta community college here. Uhm, I feel like I’ve worked at Sunflower County at the court house for the past 8 going on 9 years. And uhm, I feel like I’m a product of Sunflower County. So uhm, I have very deep roots here. And I like to encourage young people and I like to see, you know Sunflower County move forward.

[1:11] TJ: Yes ma’am. Uhm as a community, do you see anything that we’ve progressed since back in your time since you’ve been in high school or elementary school.

[1:25] SW: The community, as far as progress, I’ve seen a lot of different organizations come about. We have the Indianola Promise Committee. We have different extra-curricular activities through the BB King Museum. Things like that.

The Mississippi Center for Justice. Uhm, they have made an impact on young children. It’s just a whole lot of different. Citizens in Sunflower County, sort of like the Watkins twins, they have started dance groups and different things like that for the individuals. A lot of people have stepped and came to foster children and help them move for and expose them to different activities. And I have seen that change since I—I didn’t have a lot of those opportunities when I was younger but I do see opportunities for many of the students and upcoming, you know, students of sunflower county.

[2:35] TJ: When you say ‘when you were younger’ can you give me a brief description of what the organizations was or how high school was back in your time? Was there influential people or influential organization in that time?

[2:44] SW: When I was high school Mr. McIntosh was our principal at the time. He encouraged us by providing summer enrichment programs. So I was able to take advantage of that to improve my ACT score. Uhm, you know like auxiliary. Different things that were offered in high school, I was able to take advantage of that. But I personally feel like it was less things to do when I was younger because I have nieces and nephews that are in the Sunflower County School System right now and they have different singing groups. And different things like that that they can participate in and different programs and stuff that we did not have.

[3:38] TJ: So, do you feel that there is a way to better the community as a whole? Other people get grown people involved with children in a organization or just coming together rather white, black , grown folks, older folks and young folks.

[3:59] SW: There is a way that we can get uh grown people, or adults so to speak, we can get adults involved in the students that attend school. Because I went on and obtained a college education and I have two Master’s degrees, one in accounting and one in business. People like me we can start mentoring younger students, maybe even providing tutoring services, things or that nature. Even people who are in college and are on dance teams and cheerleading and different things like that, they can come back and mentor the younger students in the Sunflower County district. And things of that nature. Different things like job shadowing. Different business owners, especially entrepreneurs in the area, they could take different students under their wing and provide them with those opportunities.

[5:00] TJ: In conclusion, could you give a word to youth of the community? Some influential words to the youth of the community.

[5:07] SW: Ok well to the youth, I feel like you all could possibly you know just basically look up to your business—black entrepreneurs, white entrepreneurs – whoever we have in the community. Try to look up to them and ask them for advice. Go reach out to them. Because a lot of times a lot of people don’t know that you have interest in certain things. I would say get your school work done, try to study away from home, and limit your internet usage. Even if you do use the internet. But you know, utilize it in an educational manner or whatever. And uhm that’s about it.

[5:58] TJ: Well thank you miss Washington.