

**Oral History Interview of
Thomas James Patterson**

**Interviewed by: Daniel Sanchez
July 26, 2004
Lubbock, Texas**

**Part of the:
*African American Interview Series***

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Interview Series Background:

The African-American Oral History Collection documents the diverse perspectives of the African-American people of Lubbock and the South Plains. These interviews and accompanying manuscript materials cover a myriad of topics including; early Lubbock, segregation, discrimination, politics, education, music, art, cultural celebrations, the May 11th 1970 tornado, commerce, and sport.

Transcript Overview:

This interview features Thomas James Patterson as he discusses his career in politics and the ethnic minorities of Lubbock.

Length of Interview: 00:58:23

Subject	Transcript Page	Time Stamp
Introduction and background information	05	00:00:00
Staying in Lubbock; teaching	07	00:10:21
His decision to run for office in Lubbock	10	00:21:07
When the blacks and Hispanics in Lubbock started working together	13	00:30:48
Starting the Southwest Digest, and their goals for the paper	16	00:38:55
Area differences; Lubbock being behind the times	22	00:49:53

Keywords

Politics, Ethnic Minorities, Lubbock, Texas

Daniel Sanchez (DS):

My name is Daniel Sanchez and I'm with—today, I'm with TJ Patterson. It's June the—

Thomas James Patterson (TJP):

July the twenty-sixth.

DS:

July the twenty-sixth.

TJP:

Two thousand four.

DS:

Two thousand four. I left my calendar at home. Well TJ, for the record, could you please state your complete legal name?

TJP:

I'm Thomas James "TJ" Patterson.

DS:

Okay. And where and when were you born?

TJP:

I was born June the 29th, 1937 on a Thursday at four p.m. in the afternoon delivered by a midwife in Waxahachie, Texas, Ellis County.

DS:

Okay. Could you tell us some about your background? About your parents, their names and where they from?

TJP:

My—I guess my family, like any African American, most African Americans my age are older. My grandmother was born a slave in North Carolina in 1862 and she moved to Texas and she married a German, a white brother, in Waxahachie, Texas, and they had eighteen boys and girls. My mother was the eighteenth child and I was my mother's firstborn, which my grandmother showed favor towards me and she put me on an insurance policy, a dime a month, for me to go to college. A little old short lady and didn't know a way _____ [?] [0:01:48]. Spoke to her several times because of her age and my grandfather, she—they died in 1947. My grandfather died in Lubbock when I was in Vietnam at Methodist Hospital and I think about that and so I guess I was destined to come to Lubbock and I was born, like I said, twenty-ninth of June in '37. My

mother took me to Wichita Falls because my father and her separated, but at age two, there in Waxahachie, I had a terrible disease. It was something called infantile paralysis. In those days, there was not a cure. There were five of us—six of us ____ [?] [0:02:49], according to my mom, that had that disease and I was the only one to live. I was the only colored. The others were white. And they tell me that I couldn't even sit up like a normal human being. They had to sew my back to cardboard so I could breathe. And I was noticing the other day, even there in my rehab, I see signs of my polio back from that day. You know, polio will reoccur. That's a true statement. And I'd die, they say, because of prayer, my brother, and the sewing of my back to cardboard so I could breathe. God let me live and we went to Wichita Falls and my mother married a man named Patterson. Of course, he adopted me legally and gave me his name. Thomas James Patterson. I have three other brothers and sisters on the Patterson side. My brother died in California from crack. That's why I'm against drugs. I'm very—I don't hate the individual. I hate what they do to destroy their lives and other young children around them. That's why I'll go to the street without fear or favor. Don't care where. Can't do it now, which is obvious. That's something you have to stand up tall with and we come from a good family because mom was a beautiful lady and a good person. And we grew up there in Wichita Falls and I attended that school system there. I finished Booker T. Washington High School in 1954. I was so excited because I was off on a hundred dollar a year scholarship to go to Bishop College in Marshall, Texas. That was a black college founded by ex-slaves in 1881. I went there and I took the hundred dollars. I didn't know what it was, but it was nine dollars and thirty-six cents a month to be a janitor. So I had to clean the floors, wash the toilets, and I think about that. I think about that. This day and time, kids have so many opportunities. Mine was one hundred dollars and I was there and I became a sports editor of the newspaper. I became the editor of the college paper and I became president of the student body my senior year and I graduated and left college. Came home to Wichita Falls, Texas, where I grew up and had no money, but I was offered a job in Fort Worth, Texas, to sell insurance. One of my favorite cousins gave me a briefcase. I went to Fort Worth, my friend, with eight dollars in my pocket. Eight dollars. I was a member of the YMCA. If you had a YMCA card, you could stay in the Y for six dollars a week and I had two dollars to live off of. In those days, they had money in the hole. Every morning, I would get up and walk to my jobsite on Missouri Avenue. I was downtown by the old Ken Cadillac Company down on Jones Street and I would get up. There was a black sister, had a restaurant. As I raised up my window, I could smell her grits and eggs and I would just smell. I said, "Lord, help me." And I would just smell and get full on everything [?] and walk to work. You understand? So when I see young folk want to quit, they cannot afford to quit. No matter how insurmountable the amount in their tier, you cannot afford to quit, my brother. You have to keep on going. So I did that for about a month and an old man saw me, what I was doing, and he said, "Patterson, Here's what we'll do. For twenty-five dollars a week, we'll let you stay with us and we'll feed you and an extra ten dollars, we'll wash your clothes." I said, "Lord, that's a blessing." So I took him up on that. I didn't have a car. I was an insurance agent on the south side of Fort Worth. I'd catch the bus to stop six. I'd ride the bus to Lake Como. I'd go out to the bone [?] [0:07:39]

factory. That's where the Lord's tail work. I went all over there. Didn't have a car. Never got mugged. Always on T-I-M-E, ready to go. But I got up early. Work late. And then I got tired of doing that. That was the summer of '58 when I finished business college [?] [0:07:59]. I began to look for another job in Fort Worth. It so happened that I—there was a place called the Bethlehem Recreational Center and I applied for a job there. They said, "No." My aunt called me from Lubbock, Texas. She was the fifteenth child. My mother's sister. She had a private school here called Mary and Mac Private School. That's not why she called me, so she said. She said, "I have a car for you I want to give you for your graduation present." I said, "What?" It was a 1951 Plymouth stick shift. "If you come here and get it, you can have it." So I went over [?] [0:08:45] and quit my job in Fort Worth, and I was going to Atlanta with Dr. King. That's where I was going. I was going to Atlanta, Georgia, my brother. I was going to work my way all the way to Georgia. Washing dishes. Anything to get there. So I go there and come to Lubbock on the Texas/New Mexico carrier [?] [0:09:05]. On a Thursday, on the twenty-ninth of August, 1958, we drove downtown. We had the colored section and the white section. I got off the bus and called my aunt. She said, "Catch a cab." I said, "I don't have no money to catch a cab." My auntie was a bootlegger. Not the one at the school, but my other aunt that I was going to stay with. She was a tough lady. She was tough back in the day when the old Hispanic folk were on the south—east end of Broadway and the black folk were down on Avenue A. That was crazy. Thousands of Hispanic on Ave—on Broadway—thousands of blacks on Avenue A. But they never came together, brother. A few—well, a few mavericks who would cross over. Prostitutes. Bootleggers would cross over. That's why blacks and browns of Lubbock must learn to stick together, my brother. That's so key and crucial. If they know from wince they've come from in this town, they cannot afford to go the opposite direction. That's my opinion. Forget about who has the largest number. I'm going to tell you what I saw with my own eyes. I was not born here. Anyway, I came here and my aunt talked to me, said, "You need to stay here Lubbock." I said, "No. I got to get out of here." And I stuck—I stayed around here for a while and I worked in that school, the private school. I taught school. Didn't like Lubbock. I was trying to get out of here. Wasn't married. I met young lady named Barbara Jean Baylor, my wife today of forty-five years or more. I've been here ever since. Been involved in a lot of things. I was drafted. Went to Vietnam thirteenth months. That's why I don't think American citizens are paying close attention to the war in Iraq because Iraq can be bigger than Vietnam if we don't wake up because the folks who were fighting in Vietnam, we were mostly drafted. We weren't the professional soldiers. You understand? But the gobbling young bucks there now are mostly reservists who come out of offices. They have no idea what war is about. That's my opinion. That's a quick and dirty analysis. I was there thirteenth months. Survived. Damn near bombed the palace. I was so close from bombing the palace [?] [0:11:30]. Our bombs come down in Saigon. Worked in Da Nang [?][0:11:34]. I was a cryptographer. And I served my country. Came back home. Taught school. Then I applied for a job called the war on poverty, the community action board. They hired me as the assistant director. I worked. I became the director of the office of economic opportunity over Sargent [Robert] Shriver's program under the Johnson Administration. And I worked with

that program from '63. Let's see. From '63—came back about until '70. I worked with that for a little longer than that. Did a lot of programs in Lubbock for Hispanics and blacks, poor whites. Wrote a lot of program. Did a lot of things. We did a lot of things. It was a very tough board and then in 1972, I was offered the opportunity to go to Texas Tech University in the College of Business and I was assistant to the dean in the College of Business to Dean Steel. My primary function was working with freshman students, making sure they had a correct curriculum in the College of Business. At that time, the College of Business was the second largest in population of college of business in America. Number one was Drexel in Pennsylvania, Philadelphia. I worked there and then one day, I got tired in '84. I said, "I'm sick of this. I'm tired of being academician. I want to be a practitioner." So I walked away from Texas Tech University. Said, "I'm tired." I taught classes that—Had two classes. I developed a class called BA1290. I think the number has changed now, but it's an introductory course to business disciplines—accounting, finance, marketing, MIS, etcetera. I had two sections on Tuesday and Thursday. One section met at nine o'clock. The other met at eleven-thirty. Eleven, I think, eleven-thirty. Forty-five students in each section. So Mondays, I had—on Tuesdays, I had eight hundred students. On Thursday, eight hundred students. One of my students was [John] Hinkley, the man who shot Reagan. He was in my class. Something. Section A. Section C. About the eighth row. Oh yeah, anyway. I liked that because I got to be around young folk and I got tired, like I said. You know, came back. We started the *Southwest Digest* in 1977. I guess the rest is history, my brother. Being elected in 1984 on the city council was not a victory for me. It was a victory for all of us. Maggie Trejo, my sister, was from District One. I was in District Two. To be able to see how cities function. Cities are not run locally. Texas is what you call a home little [?] [0:14:38] state. I see my folk talking about taxes. They're on [?] [0:14:42] a tax equalization board. Hell, that's outside of the governor's office. You can't give them all of that. You got to use common sense on things that you do because when you start talking about taxation, my brother, who's hurting? Folk who look like you and I when they drop them on his head. We's the first to suffer. Folks got to understand all of that, but you cannot depend on Kool-Aid with cyanide. That's government money. You got to go to the mighty ocean and deal with the private sector and not depend on cities for one thing. Looking at the welfare police. Fire, water, et cetera. Make your own help, the other will come to you. If you don't make no help, they don't come to you. They keep you on a plantation. You understand what I'm talking about? I see it. It's so easy to see it now. All those years I served on the city council, I really appreciate it. God knows I do, but I made money for so many other rich white folk. They capitalize our CBG. We got no contracts. They capitalize our—I'm not angry, but your eyes are open on what you see. You understand what I'm talking about? And you look at that, but yet, black folk and brown folk don't understand that. We have to understand how it works, man. You don't really need no—see, cities can't fund your area—your effort. Let's take southwest Lubbock or Wolfforth, Texas. Those folk with money put their stuff together and they develop that, brother. The only thing the city of Lubbock does is come in with right-a-ways. They come in with necessary services like sewage, water, et cetera. They're mostly paid by developers, but they flourish. That's what bothers me. Why can't we do it in north and

east? The city of Lubbock can't do it. They're not going to do it. Where can we do it? Services. What will we do? So with that perspective, my eyes have been opened to see who really holds the string to the kite. And only when you understand that will you get respect. City council members and mayors are nothing but—we're just servants that people use us the way they want to use us. Ain't got no power. We got a public forum. We sit there and pass ordinances suggested by a committee we appointed. Am I making sense? But it's necessary to be in a democracy, but you have to understand what gives you power is when they vote. There ain't no strength—you got to vote or there ain't no strength there. _____ [?] [0:17:38] because the folk with the bucks control that, all over the country. Am I making sense to you?

DS:

Um-hm. You know, you were talking about the northeast development?

TJP:

Um-hm.

DS:

And you know, in the southwest, they've had the private funds come in.

TJP:

Yeah.

DS:

Do you see anybody coming to the forefront in the northeast development to help out there?

TJP:

We going to get—we going to get some small stuff on the way in, but until we put our minds together ourselves and say, "We're going to," like the Good Book said. Like God told Abraham, "Go claim that land." Until we go claim that land, we going to by ourselves we get some help. We got to do some claiming ourselves, man. Them folk ain't about to put you ahead of them. That's common sense. If you are on the hill and you in control, you ain't want nobody up there with you. That's just human. But if I got some muscle, you'll deal with me. If you got some muscle, you'll deal with me. You understand what I'm talking about. You understand that? You got to have some muscle. I go to jail every Christmas. I look at all them minds in there, brother. All them hip hop gang bangers. It ain't worth a quarter—it ain't mean nothing, man. The fellow making money with hip hop, he'll get you none. Am I making sense to you? You have to thank about that. But yet, you a slave. That's legal slavery. That's worse than my grandmother schooling all my white folk [?][0:19:11]. That's worse than that, man. Then they fixing to build an eighty-two million dollar jail everybody talking about. The hell? So what? Am I making sense? If you commit a crime, you pay the price. I don't support you when you do wrong

because you don't have to do wrong. At the same time, you have to understand what's happening. You have to understand what's happening, man. So when the Good Lord send that white boy, I call him a young white brother, Mark McDougal, to talk about north and east, that was God working. Not him. Because he from a developing family. You understand what I'm talking about? And he sees how they began to work with—they began to see the merit with it. Now, I'm going to tell you what I saw Gary Bourne [?] [0:19:58] do the other day. He had a neighborhood meeting out here with two neighborhoods. Wanted to go, well hell, what's that for? _____ [?] [0:20:06]. That's what's going to happen. I see what they're going to do. I see it and I'm not upset, but you don't need to worry about that. You get your own stuff together.

DS:

You know, I was at—the groundbreaker opening over there for the fiesta plaza a few weeks ago [0:20:21]. That's part of this [inaudible] [0:20:27] and somebody there, cynically or not, you can judge this. So like, when—you know, they throw this little scrap to us and they're going to try to forget about us now.

TJP:

Got to be careful. Between me and you, off the record, I had to go. I see too much. I see too much. In fact, I got tired and frustrated. I got frustrated. They said, "Man, you can't quit now. You're too young to quit. Too young to quit." But we all God's children, my brother, and we have to—can't quit, can't quit. Got to climb the mountain.

DS:

Let me go back. You know, you mentioned how you got involved in '84, you know, when you ran for office. Before you ran, were you ever thinking about running? Or what happened that made you run?

TJP:

No, I was not. We had just had a decision of the single member district. That first election there was six of us running. Not to _____ [?][0:21:27]. Didn't care if I won. If I won, good. If I won, I didn't think I'd be in there twenty years. I became a part of it. You see, I got involved in the Texas municipal league. I worked my way up from secretary of region three. Okay. Then I became vice president of region three. I became president of region three. That's twenty-three counties in West Texas. In the meantime, I organized a group with help of my brothers called the Texas Association of Black City Council Members. At that time, they wanted 232 black elected officials at the municipal level in Texas. We organized that. At the same time, there was not a Hispanic group at the college AHEO, [?] [0:22:18], Association of Mixed American—Association of Hispanic Elected Officials, AHEO. And we were meeting in Corpus and the Hispanics were next door raising hell and I was conducted—I said, "What the hell is going on next door?" They sent over the mayor of Alice, Texas, a Hispanic sister, was the president _____

[?][0:22:40] and we helped them organize AHEO [?]. We helped them. That was in 1987, '88. That should be in history. That should be a, "Remember about that time?" And they got involved. So it's not the idea, "I'm black or brown." It's the idea of seeing people grow, man. That's what's important. You see, because kids don't know what a councilman is about. They don't know what a mayor does. When I got involved helping with that then I ran for the president of Texas Municipal League and white folks didn't want me there. They tried to knock me out, but we hung in there and we won. And we won. And we won. Not only that, we were able to get the Texas Association of Black City Council Members and they APOM [?] [0:23:27], I can't get it right. The Association of Hispanic Elected Officials as an auxiliary to Texas Municipal League. If you look in there, they're there. Both groups are a part of the total auxiliary of the Texas Municipal League. See, in Texas, you got 1,044 cities, towns, and manners. The problem with Texas and Texas is a home rule state, which means legislation passed on the house side and the senate side in Texas affects cities. You can't do nothing to a city unless it's approved at the statehouse. You can't arbitrarily do something that's out of step with the statehouse. And I ran for that. We won that. And I said, "Jesus Christ. What do I do?" And then I went over Texas, from Mercedes, Brownfield, Marshall, El Paso. All over Texas, seeing folk, talking to folk. They're not getting involved in the National League of Cities and Henry Cisneros, who is the mayor of San Antonio, we tried to organize. That helped us get organized. The mayor of Houston, a sister. I can't think of her name right now. Because when you have something to bring to the table, people will help you. You got to take advantage of your resources around you. You can't do it by yourself.

DS:

What was the main function of the league?

TJP:

It served as a lobbying group for those cities and towns in Texas. It also provides necessary resources. I think a city up here in Spur don't have an attorney. Why, the Texas Municipal League has an attorney. They can get help that way. You look at legislation being passed by the reps and the senators. If it's against the wish of the city, then you fight that. That's your lobbying group. You work hard for that. Okay? You need that. To my opinion, you need it. I got some council ____ [?] [0:25:30] they don't need it. You can't work by yourself. You have to work collectively together with people to make things happen. And then there's a National League of Cities with a combination of all the cities in America. I got involved with that by—I was first appointed to a policy committee of communication and transportation, and then I was appointed to steering committee of energy environment natural resources steering committee of the National League of Cities. After serving there a few years, I became co-chairman of that committee. So I became chairman of that committee and then I became a member of the board of directors of the National League of Cities so was Victor, was a member of the National League of Cities Board of Directors. And then I ran for national office. I ran for Second Vice President

of the National League of Cities. The mayor of Washington D.C., Tony Williams beat me. But you know, if I would've won that two years ago, I'd probably have been dead somewhere because I would've been sick. I was sick. I was sick. So God intervened. I almost beat Tony. He beat me by a few votes. That's the goodness of God. So I didn't need that. And of course, we've seen a lot of things. A lot of changes. My brother, politics are local. It all begins at your front door with what you decide to do. Decide. Determine, my brother, what your neighborhood will become. If you have no interest outside your front door, then you never vote. That's how I look at that. So it's not—I don't have to live in Washington D.C. or Bellevue, Washington, Clark [?], Chester, Massachusetts, Hartford, Connecticut, or Miami, Florida. South Central, L.A. San Diego, California. Salt Lake City. I can do it from where I live. You understand? As long as I have—I am focused. I have a goal, a plan. I have the desire. I have confidence. Most of all, persistence can things like—it's not what cities will do for me. It's what will happen in my neighborhood. You understand? And that's the way I see it. It's an outstanding opportunity to serve at any capacity, but you serve understanding that the things you may do on the dais, it might not occur for ten years, but at least you would have planted some seeds for it to happen. That's government. But you take the other road on the private side, that's where I'll be utilizing most of my energy doing some things on the private side. That's what I'll be doing because there are too many opportunities. You understand? This city is a great city. I love Lubbock, but it's not the only play in town.

DS:

You know, you mentioned frustrations. You said, you know, probably Victor was frustrated.

TJP:

Yeah. He's human. He's human.

DS:

Does any of that play with the fact that, you know, we're, you know, individuals like yourself that have been working so hard, and yet, people won't get out to do an act like vote?

TJP:

No, unless it affects you. Only when it affects you, sure. You see, what you understand, you got to do it 24/7. You got to do it all the time. You _____ [?] [0:29:18] mad when it affects me. You got to keep on doing it. You got to keep on doing it. Can't quit. Can't get frustrated. Oh yeah, you cry sometimes, but you can't quit. Can't quit. That's the problem. I told my fellow who beat me, Floyd Price, who defeated me in the election, "All those folks there supporting you, that's great. Call them back next month, they won't even show up." I said, "That's the human beast." Because people want to see instant things and you don't see things instantaneously. It doesn't happen like that. It took twenty years to come up with the North and East Lubbock Development Program. Twenty years. And perhaps, it took longer than that. There

were people before me because we're just standing on the shoulders of people who want to see things happen.

DS:
Right.

TJP:
You understand? There were folks who paved the way before me. You understand? God had a role—what the old saying? That the world is a stage. We're nothing but actors and actresses. We have our entrances and we have our exit. We have our parts to play depending on the great producer up yonder. When your day is done they'll understand, brother. Then you move to different chapters in your life. That's the way I look at life.

DS:
You know, you mentioned something early on when you started talking about Lubbock that I think a lot of people just don't really realize it unless they were there and that's that traditionally, blacks and Mexican-Americans have been just as segregated, separated—

TJP:
Oh yeah.

DS:
--As they have from the white community and so we had a student a few years ago that was asking for a research topic, you know, areas where they had worked together as a group and I said, "I can't think of a, you know, in the very, you know, far past." Can you think of when it sort of happened?

TJP:
You have to set a single member district really happening together. There was a man named Jose Ramirez, Harvey Romero. They're from the Hispanic community, who work together with blacks. Jose Ramirez was also a milk man. Delivered milk. And they worked together in the neighborhood. We worked together. We worked together. But we've always had that division line of folk on the outside keeping us apart. After a while, my brother, we'll be the one race [0:31:58]. Look around.

DS:
That's the way it's [crosstalk] [0:32:02].

TJP:
Look around. That's the way it's going to be. One race, no way. Won't matter no way. Are you a

believer in the Almighty? That's what's going to matter after a while. It's all that's going to matter. That's all that's going to matter. My grandfather was white, German. Don't mean nothing after a while. I look at that. When the folk played them kind of games, I feel sorry for them because you cannot live with them by yourself [?] [0:32:27]. And some of the problems we have are because of what we've done to ourselves. We done to ourselves. When I was a kid, they had reefer and marijuana, but we didn't get involved in that stuff, man. Huh? Now, the parents not raising the children right, brother. I'm serious. Look around. You know? We done no—you know, we not doing what we supposed to be doing. We're not putting discipline back home. That's our problem. And the man takes advantage of that, you become a slave. You know? I was taught to say, "Yes sir, no sir." They don't do it anymore. These young folk don't believe in that. They go talking _____ [?] [0:33:15]. You understand? It's crazy. So we have a responsibility. God created the greatest institution in the world, which is the family. It's almost gone, man. Talking about gay marriage. Come on, man. What's wrong with us, brother? What's wrong with this country? Huh? You cannot legislate that, man. It starts at your front door.

DS:

Yeah. You know, in the past, I've interviewed other individuals who talked about how, you know, the demise that they saw within the community was when they lost that sense of, you know, family. You know, I keep—you know, even though, like you were just a neighbor, you saw somebody doing something, you could tell their parents.

TJP:

Yeah. You whooped their butts.

DS:

Yeah.

TJP:

The neighbor whooped my behind and took me home. That's how I was raised and it helped me. It helped me. It helped me. And I thank God for that. You don't ask the kids what they want to do all the time. You tell them what they better do. You don't debate with a child. You understand?

DS:

Right.

TJP:

Huh?

DS:

Exactly.

TJP:

If I would've called 911 on my mama, man, I'd be dead and the fellow come get there be dead. You understand? You have to—you know, even animals look after their young more than we do. When I said more, you know. I watch animals. You know? Birds, how they going to do with their kids. The eagle, he drop that dude. Make him fly. They turn them loose. But young, young. I don't know about the Hispanic community, but I do know in the African American community, we had a young married mothers and daddies say, "I don't want my child going through what I went through." What you mean? Did it help you? In my house, I have three rules. I got three kids. We have three kids. You mistreat your mother, you mess up my name, you mess up our home. You better catch your bird and fly. Hope it never like ____ [?] [0:35:34]. Daddy going to shoot you right in your foot. I mean—I meant that, man. I meant that because there's nothing greater than that. Okay? Don't—but like, that's—it tears me—I get tore up on folk look that way on kids. Huh? We walk in the street, these little dealing drug punks. They don't know what they doing. They don't know what they doing. Mother's afraid of their children. That's crazy, brother.

DS:

Right.

TJP:

That's crazy. Afraid of your child that you birthed into this world? Come on, man. Something wrong with that, brother. Something wrong with that. Something wrong with that. But yet, [Laughs] you see, I was cold. Didn't know I was cold because my mama was there. Daddy was working. My stepfather was working, but I had food on the table. Huh? I had chores I had to do. I had to respect my family, man. Huh? I'd be in church and mother just in the choir, she nodded me. I'd then be quiet, man, because she'd come out that choir, stand on me. You see, the old folk in them day poke your behind in front of folk to embarrass you and let you know they didn't play. Oh yeah, man. That's the way I came up.

DS:

And that—you know, that part where you said, "In front of folks."

TJP:

Oh yeah.

DS:

It reminds me of something that you had told me a while back that you did with the *Southwest Digest*, when you started taking those photos.

TJP:

Oh, yeah. Oh, we do that. We going to start back doing that. Yeah. Show you a picture. If you got the gumption to sell drugs, we got the gumption to show your mugshot because we call you alleged. We didn't arrest you. You shouldn't have got caught. It was also generally for all these different wards in town walking around town [0:37:44]. You have a responsibility, man, as a citizen, brother. Governor can't do it all. Not trying to save the world, but some things you got to do. Some things you must do. You must do because, like we said, we live in a time of wars and losing wars and _____ weather and everything going crazy [0:38:04]. Gay marriage. Everything going crazy, man, and we have a responsibility in our own house. In our own house. In our own house. You see, even folk who go to church think they always right. That's not necessarily true. Satan had been right with us all week and we're speaking Satan's game. Anyway, I'm not going to get to that. I just—it's the way I see it.

DS:

Right. You know, you talked earlier about the private sector and you had the Southwest Digest in '77? Did Eddy Richardson start it?

TJP:

Yeah. We started it. Yeah. Yeah.

DS:

And what was y'all's goal when y'all first started?

TJP:

To get the word out. To communicate it. It's still on my—on my—here it is. An independent pictorial newspaper for all people, primarily serving the black population of Lubbock County and the surrounding area. It started as the *Lubbock Digest*, then folks said, "No, that's just for Lubbock." So we called it the *Southwest Digest*. Haven't missed a publication day since 1977. Been on the street every time. So we thank God for that. That's our goal, brother. That's our goal.

DS:

Was there any other news?

TJP:

There was. There had been some projects. They had the *West Texas Times*. *The Manhattan Heights*, *West Texas Times* before *Digest*. So I came along and there was only one Hispanic paper. The old brother had one across _____ from the jail [0:39:54]. I can't think of his name. He's dead now. And then, Bidal Aguero and Ernesto Varto [?][0:40:00].

DS:

Was it *La Voz*?

TJP:

No it wasn't *La Voz*. Yes, it was *La Voz*. Yes, it was. Right across the street from the county jail.

DS:

Was it Padilla [0:40:10]?

TJP:

I ain't going to say. It's all you had, it's all you had. It's all you had. Now you got about eight Hispanic papers in town. That's too damn many. I'm not talking—I'm not telling what they do. God Almighty. _____ [0:40:23]. Jesus Christ. Lubbock is only two hundred thousand. Got eight thousand. _____ [0:40:30]. Pretty close to it.

DS:

I guess that speaks to the fashions that still exist.

TJP:

I didn't say that, you did. [Laughter].

DS:

Well but you know what I mean.

TJP:

But eight? That many? Oh man. With a population of 30 percent Hispanics in this area. It would appear to me if one or two would be strong enough. You'd be very mighty. Then the system don't pay no attention to you. They laugh at you. They laugh at you. Now, we get the ____ [?] [0:41:06]. Hell. We getting too old to do this stuff. You know, but it's too good to let go. It's just now getting there. We on Broadway. We on Avenue Q now.

DS:

Right.

TJP:

You understand? That's nothing but the goodness of God.

DS:

Do you have some young staff coming in to take over?

TJP:

Not like we'd like to have. Cannot allow [?] [0:41:30]. Not like we'd like to have. You see, with all the public school technology that they have in journalism, kids are not interested. We start at five dollars. A prayer, a bar, a table, an old IBM machine. Five dollars from the start. It's not what you got. It's what you do with what you have. You understand? And take care of your health. I'm serious. You think I'm a health nut, man. Take care of your body. Just so important or you won't be around. Won't be around. But through it all, I wouldn't exchange none of it all, brother. I wouldn't exchange none of it through it all, through it all. If I never see them on my life, nobody will destroy my joy. Nobody. Nobody.

DS:

What do you see in the future? I know it's kind of difficult right now. What do you hope to try to do?

TJP:

I hope that Lubbock will continue to prosper. I would hope so. I would hope that this city would come together more. It's not there yet. I hope it would. We're not there yet. I would hope so. It takes all of us. It takes everybody on the same page. Bring some—like the old folk said—bring some kindling to the fire so we all can be warm, keep warm. That's what I wish. That's what I wish. I will not get involved with the city business. I'll stay from that. But I wish them well. I wish all of them well. You know, I had to be—I was a graceful winner. Had to be a graceful loser. I'd be lying if I said it didn't bother me when it happened, but I'm a realist. Hell. One and one is two. [Laughter] You know? You see it bigger, brother. I learned it from a banker named Wayne Fennel [?] [0:43:53]. He had just received an award from Republic National Bank and we saluted him one day. He said, "Let me tell y'all something. The sun going to rise in the east with me or without me in the morning. Take it little by little. You enjoy every minute of it and move on." That's right.

DS:

You know, earlier, you kind of hinted at your moving on might include trying to—in the private sector somehow, impact the development.

TJP:

That's right. That's what we—

DS:

And so [crosstalk] [0:44:34].

TJP:

That's—those are our goals—that's our goal we have on the private side. Got to raise some

money and do some things.

DS:

You found that people out there that try to bring in that are interested?

TJP:

We know where they are. We know where they are. We'll be able to do [?] [0:44:52]. We got a ten to fifteen year program. Hope we live that long to see it become a reality, but you can't—you see, I envision that north area on that lake. Two hundred thousand dollars plus houses around that lake. That would be the—the—what am I trying to say? That would stabilize that part of the city.

DS:

Well that's some of the most scenic area in this town.

TJP:

That's right. That's right. That's right. People didn't see it for what's there. Oh yeah. It's moving. Businesses come. We enjoy working. Bringing businesses out here. They're coming here and we appreciate that. It's time to go do something else. With that in mind, more businesses, along with more housetops, but the numbers will become more stable. You see? At the same time, we who live there can also bring some kindling to the fire. That's a must. We got to do it, brother, and quit saying we need to do for—hey, we can do something for ourselves. This is 2004. Now, if you want to stay on the plantation, time to bring some folks. If they bring something, so be it. I understand that, but golly. We are too intelligent. We got a lot of moxy. Let's put our minds together and do it. Let's do it. Okay? Let's start paying for the freight. Yeah. I'll ____ one day [?] [0:46:49].

DS:

Well you know, back on Juneteenth, I happen to—I was going over to Gene Lawson's house.

TJP:

Several out there on Juneteenth.

DS:

And so I went by the park there.

TJP:

You see that?

DS:

And there was a show of strength there.

TJP:

I know it.

DS:

That was amazing.

TJP:

I know it. It can happen, brother. That was a good omen. A very good omen. Gene Lawson's one of the first black Hubbers to play ball in this part country. He was good. But you're right. You saw a lot of strength there. Little threads of cotton make big ropes. That's right. Cannot use it though. We must not have used it ourselves. Got to. Then we grow. Then you get so-called power. Then folks pay attention to you. Okay. We got to use what we got.

DS:

You know, you mentioned those auxiliary proofs that you helped--

TJP:

_____ [0:47:50]. Yes.

DS:

Right. Do you still maintain contacts there?

TJP:

They're going to bring down PABCCN. I was the founder. They going to do something for me in November. I go there and see, I met folk all over. I met HEOA [0:48:09] folk all over. Hispanic Elected Officials Associates. Now, that's a national group. I also belong to National Black Colored _____ [0:48:17]. A lot of people.

DS:

I'm thinking a project like that, interviewing those individuals--

TJP:

You need to go do it.

DS:

--Would be brilliant.

TJP:

What you need to do is go to the Texas Municipal League. They have their annual conference will be in November. This year, it'll be in Corpus. You ought to go down there and interview some folk there. I don't know who the president is now. Victor would know. Victor would probably know. You go do that.

DS:

Well I'm thinking, because I don't—do you know Monty Monroe? He's the archivist here at the Southwest Collection. He's the one that asked me to check into this because it's something of interest to him.

TJP:

You ought to do it. You ought to do it.

DS:

It would be brilliant.

TJP:

If you went to the national meeting This May, the meeting in—this year, they're meeting in—where are they meeting this year? In Indianapolis in December. If you went there and saw them Hispanic brothers around the country, African-Americans across the country, you're whole idea would change [0:49:25]. You see? You see something different these folk back here don't even see. They don't even see.

DS:

Yeah. Well when you mentioned that number that there was—you said, "Only two hundred and something." And you started [crosstalk][0:49:44].

TJP:

Five hundred in Texas.

DS:

And then, but I was thinking, "What?" You know?

TJP:

Just Texas.

DS:

Naïve to think about that [0:49:49].

TJP:

Yeah.

DS:

That's still pretty high, given the time when you probably started it.

TJP:

Yeah. That's in Texas. There are more Hispanic elected officials in Texas than we have black. You get to be around them, brother, your idea will change. Let me say something _____ [0:50:05]. The Hispanics from South Texas, they different from the Hispanic in West Texas. I'm serious. In South Texas, they are more about economic development than here in West Texas. I see it. I see it. Same way for the blacks. Those African Americans east of 35 are more economical development oriented than we got west of I-35. The reason being our children are not exposed in school as the Anglo child is about economic development. You understand? So therefore, many family members just want the j-o-b to survive. Nothing wrong with the j-o-b, but they don't see that they can make it outside the j-o-b. That's the way I see it. And hell, you go to—I go to a national meeting, my mind be blown, brother. Be blown. _____made in America [0:51:20]. You know? To be around them. To see what's happening. I think about that sometimes.

DS:

Yeah. You know, in many ways, people look at Lubbock and see how, you know, we're still decades behind the times and lots of things.

TJP:

That should be the catalyst to go and do something.

DS:

Exactly.

TJP:

On the economic side.

DS:

Exactly.

TJP:

You see, brother. Let me something which I don't broadcast it. You can't even do nothing about a bunch of meetings. Many folk in Lubbock in the black community come to meetings to see—to show how smart they are. But the proofs in the pudding when you start putting things together.

Doesn't take many. Doesn't take many. The Man upstairs only had twelve and one of them betrayed him. The rest of them scattered. Right? Think about that. It doesn't take many. You do things quietly and make it work. "Where you at?", "We've been conditioned. I want my input." "Well hell. You ain't going _____ [0:52:27]." Create confusion. Right? I mean, think about it. But you still have to appreciate those who want to do things, but you can't see by sitting back and just waiting. I'm going to go be at the meeting. That's my opinion. When I first was elected, I had eighty-seven meetings. That was before they had the neighborhood associations. I may have three hundred meetings. I may have five hundred. But all I found from those meetings was folks were raising hell about what we ought to be doing. What are you going to do? That's when you go to the private side to do something. You on the public side, you got all them regulations. But you got to go through it. Nothing wrong with that. You know, it's always been amazing to me. I told my council brothers and sisters when I was on the council and we had projects with Texas Tech, it makes sense to deal with the board of regents and not the president or the chancellor. Hell, they hire folk. Go to those who set policies. Right? That's how you do that. You at Texas Tech and the limelight is always the chancellor and the president. Hell. What about the chairman of board of regents? He's the chief executive officer. Am I right or wrong?

DS:
You're correct.

TJP:
Huh?

DS:
You're correct on that one.

TJP:
Am I making sense to you? Stupid hell. That's stupid. We lost a fight at the station out there on that count because dealing with the staff [0:54:09]. Should've been dealing with the board of regents appointed by the governor. Stationed by the senate. Right? Lubbock's one of the few cities that does that. They don't do it in Austin. They deal with the chairman of board of regents. Right?

DS:
Right.

TJP:
I could say a lot of things about that, but I don't want to get involved in Tech business. That's stupid. The things I see, they don't make no sense. It's crazy. It's crazy. I noticed the other day that this is public knowledge when Mr. Dr. Smith _____ born in Wisconsin had a regent _____

[0:54:57]. This proves my point. See, Texas Tech is just a private entity within a medical subdivision which sits in the city of Lubbock with this governing board.

DS:
Right.

TJP:
School the same way. LISD [**Lubbock Independent School District**] the same damn way. They do the same thing with the superintendent. Deal with the chairman—the president of schoolboard. The board. You let apples and apples go together. Not apples and oranges. That's where the confusion comes from. Anyway, it's my opinion. You see it though? Stateside, you see it? It's there. Yeah. Anyway.

DS:
Wow. Well you know, you brought up LISD.

TJP:
Yeah.

DS:
And we noticed all those school closings that happened a few years ago.

TJP:
That's because of the lack of wealth in the area, brother.

DS:
Nothing with the—

TJP:
Had you had the wealth on the private side, you wouldn't have that. Huh?

DS:
Right. It had nothing to do with numbers?

TJP:
I know it's the wealth. It's the wealth. You got to understand that, man. You got to get off the plantation and create some wealth. I don't believe in being equal. I believe in being equable. That's the problem. When you got—we had a game we played when we was kids called seesaw and the big boy always kept you up in the air, but when you got some muscle, you could level it out. Am I right? That's what it's all about. It's about leverage with wealth. Huh? That's what it's

about and once we understand that then we'll grow. The man who run against me for council said he's going to pave all these streets. I said, "Brother, how do you accomplish that?" I said, "Number one, that's not even possible because you paved all the streets in Lubbock, you talk about a billion dollars. Put it on the tax roll, where did it come from?" Said, "You play that public game and use common sense." Anyway, let me get my—

DS:

Well do you have any other thoughts this morning?

TJP:

I just appreciate the opportunity of you coming by and I hope that Lubbock will continue to grow. I hope that all four corners will grow because we all are valuable and I hope that the folk who live District Two and District One will take off those rose-colored glasses and look to the private side more than to the public side. But they all can go together, make an omelet. We all can appreciate more. Yeah. I hope that. I would hope that. Yes sir.

DS:

Right. Well TJ, it's been a pleasure working with you today and in the past.

TJP:

God bless you, man. Thank you. I hope we said something.

DS:

I know you did.

TJP:

I hope we did. Oh, thank you sir.

DS:

Thank you.

TJP:

Yeah, I hope we said something.

DS:

I know you did TJ.

TJP:

My son is—

End of Recording

