

**Oral History Interview of
Quincy White**

**Interviewed by: Daniel Sanchez
October 29, 2013
Lubbock, Texas**

**Part of the:
*African-American Interview Project***

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The African-American Interview Project 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 Quincy White, Assistant City Manager for the City of Lubbock, in the second part of an interview discussing early childhood development, Little League Baseball, and library development in Lubbock, Texas.

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Daniel Sanchez (DS):

This is Daniel Sanchez. This is tape two of my interview with Quincy White on October the twenty-ninth, two thousand thirteen. Quincy, we were talking about meeting some of the kids that yall had been involved with.

Quincy White (QW):

Yeah I went to this kids wedding about a month ago. He's my sons age who also played little league, thirty-four years old. A bunch of his buddies that had left Lubbock to live in other places came back for his wedding. It was kind of for me just some reassurance that working with kids actually does work. Because a lot of these kids that had came back had played in the little league and they're successful and doing great things all over this country. I know one of the kids that came back for the wedding is going to get his PhD in May from University of Alabama. So he came back from Alabama to Reggie's wedding here in Lubbock and it's great to see kids that are successful and that you at some point touched their lives.

DS:

And it also speaks to the change from when you were in high school. Through the turmoil of the civil rights; what went on in Lubbock in the seventies and now these kids are going to Alabama. PhD's.

QW:

Oh yeah. This kid he actually lived in Green Fair when I went to work for the housing authority, his family lived in Green Fair, and he came out for baseball when he was eleven years old. And he had never played before. We were having try-outs. So we decided—he was a pretty good size kid; tall and athletic, so we decided to try him out at first base and they had some ground balls to the shortstop and the shortstop picked it up and threw it across the diamond to him on first base and he stuck his glove up like this and the ball went right by his glove and hit him in between the eyes. Nobody drafted him. And so Scoop, the guy I was talking about, Scoop drafted him on his team. He ended up making the all-star team, that year and every other year, from eleven all the way through fifteen years old. He was the salutatorian at Estacado that year, and he got a football scholarship, and he also got an academic scholarship to go to Eastern New Mexico [University]. And so he went over to Portales in New Mexico. He used to come back home for the summers. He was a MIS [Management Information Systems] major and had him to intern at the city of Lubbock, IT department every summer. So we kind of watched over him. He was the kid that a lot of black men had their arms around him you know, Scoop, Walter Hibbler, there were just a bunch of us that at some point did some unique things for this kid. And he graduated from—played football over there. He graduated from Eastern New Mexico and his math teacher at Eastern New Mexico got him a full academic scholarship to get his Masters at Duke University so he went to Duke, got his masters and worked for a while in the investment market. And then went to Tuscaloosa, Alabama and he's working on his PhD. But there were other young men

there who also had done some great things; graduated from college, play football and doing good things. It was a good feeling to see a group of thirty-four year old black men who are all doing well.

DS:

Let's go back to your life. You had been—I think you said, about a year and a half in that role that you're talking about and then you became the director of—

QW:

The Black Chamber.

DS:

The Black Chamber of Commerce. Talk about what the Chamber was involved with at that time.

QW:

Most of the time I was the director of the Black Chamber when the conversations going on all over town that all three of the chambers should merge. And so the biggest challenge I had was dealing with the merger because we weren't ready to merge. And the other thing that I was confronted with was members. We were financially in horrible shape and so for most of the time I was over the Black Chamber it was about fundraising and getting members involved and so forth and I also was able to accomplish that and then an opportunity came open at the city as a youth services coordinator, which basically I had been doing with the housing authority and then the little league. And so I ended up going to work for the city as a youth services coordinator and my primary objective what to write a strategic youth plan for the City of Lubbock because again this is when the gangs were pretty violent a lot of shooting and so forth was going on at that time. And so I wrote a strategic youth plan for the City of Lubbock back in nineteen ninety-three when David Langston was the mayor of Lubbock in terms of how we deal with raising a generation of children that don't have these problems that we were experiencing then.

DS:

What were some of the answers y'all had in mind?

QW:

Interestingly enough the number one recommendation in that report was early childhood development. I had become convinced by that time that you do not correct the behavior of eleven, twelve year olds on a very high percentage basis. It's too late to start, even though I had spent a great deal at the housing authority and then at the little league doing intervention with that age group. It had become very apparent to me that if a group of eleven, twelve year olds are engaged in an inappropriate behavior, you're not going to save a whole lot of them – that's Quincy. And what has convinced me was one Saturday I was in the press box, I always used to

do press box at the little league when the tee-ball was played. I mean that was the funniest thing in the world to me. And one Saturday a buddy and I were in the press box watching a tee-ball game and a four year old kid, we'd watch his behavior after he struck out at a tee-ball game and it was amazing, absolutely amazing to see the behavior of this four year old kid after he struck out but what was even more amazing was his parent reaction to—you know in tee-ball you get three strikes and you get what we call a courtesy strike. So you get a fourth strike. You can't just continue to let a kid swing at the ball all day, you've got another game scheduled next hour and so forth, after he had his courtesy swing the umpire said, "That's it for you," and this kid just pitched a fit. I mean, I'm talking about throwing the bat—I mean, it was unreal. But what was more was his parent's reaction in terms of screaming at the officials and so forth that they should keep—you know. And I said to my buddy in the press box, that day I said, "You know something? We're starting too late. Even at four years old we're starting too late." And so I became involved with a group, many of whom were from Texas Tech College of Human Sciences, who were advocates for early childhood development, and we met several times with David Langston who also had become very interested in early childhood development, and we had a strong group of folks, but we didn't have any money.

There was a documentary that came out that year that Tom Hanks was the M.C. for called, *I Am Your Child*. And it was about early childhood development and all of us had gotten together as a group, because this is when Reese Air Force Base was still open and we went out and we watched this documentary as a group. But we never were able to get the money to do anything with it.

I finally became the director of the Lubbock Housing Authority after I worked for the city, I went back to the housing authority as the executive director and during the time that I was executive director I had access to some federal funds to start the early childhood development program for public housing and I had to convince my board that this was a good place to spend money. Because the housing authority, their number one objective is to provide decent, safe, and sanitary housing for those people in need. It didn't say anything about early childhood development. So I had to convince them that that fit in with the mission of providing decent safety and I was able to do that, and so we dedicated some money, and I got back with those ladies I had met from the College of Human Sciences at Texas Tech when I had some money. And I said, "I have some money so let's put this thing together." And so we did, we put together a Parents as Teachers Program. And we operated for about eighteen months and there was an opportunity to apply for some funds for an early childhood development program and we applied for those funds. The Parents as Teachers Program became the match, the matching funds that you needed to apply for this grant and we opened an early childhood development program in East Lubbock in nineteen ninety-nine and it's still operating today. I'm just an advocate that the best way to deal with children is to get them off to a good start where they never get involved in those negative activities to begin with.

DS:

You mention money was a hurdle, I'm assuming in all things there's some interpersonal challenges also getting that started. Can you talk about some of those?

QW:

Well, I mean—I was a math major, I'm not a sociologist; I'm not an early childhood—I got convinced from running a little league that you got to start earlier. The ladies from Tech, they're experts at early childhood development and those kinds of things so it was an interesting dynamic to have an African American, male, mathematics major, talking about early childhood development with these experts in early childhood development. We just hit it off. We were all convinced that it was incumbent upon us as a society to create a generation of children that didn't have the problems that the generation that we were dealing with were currently have. We were just all committed to that cause and what's interesting is that I had wrote that in my strategic plan for the city that the most important thing we could do was early childhood development. I had written that before I met these ladies. I got convinced on that ball park in watching that four-year-old and his parents that we were starting way too late.

DS:

And how would you deal with a parent that had that type of mindset to turn them around.

QW:

Well, I don't know if you do at four years old because I don't want to call any names but I said to my friend that day in the press box, I said, "Unless this kid gets some different parents, he's going to end up dead or in prison—" He's in prison - that four year old. But I mean, it was like, "If he doesn't get some different parents, if he doesn't go home with two different people, he's going to end up dead or in jail," that's where he ended up. So the thing that's nice about starting with zero year olds, because early childhood development starts with zero year olds, so you get the mother when she's pregnant, and that's when the greatest connection exists between parents and children when they're very, very, very young and one of the components of the early childhood program was a fatherhood initiative. To grab the father, not just the pregnant mother but get the father involved. With successful fathers, that volunteered their time for the fatherhood initiative, get them hooked up with some of these young men, and get them off to a good start as a family, and keep that connection.

And the thing that happens with early childhood development is when you into an early childhood development center it looks very much like a daycare. Except for at a daycare what you find employees that are ten, twelve dollar an hour employees that just basically babysit your kid for a day while you're at work. Early childhood development, you have eight kids in a classroom. Okay. You have two employees. But those two employees are certified school teachers. They're not twelve dollar an hour babysitters, they are certified school teachers. By the time these kids go from zero to three years old when they exit that program at three, their vocabulary is like fifteen thousand words stronger than a kid that didn't have the advantage of

early childhood development. The parent sees that, they compare their kid and they look at other kids in that neighborhood that are not having the advantage of this program, and they start to understand that when you do proper early development with a child and stimulate the brain, and get it where it develops properly, that these kids are far better prepared when they enter kindergarten than kids that don't have the advantage of that three to—. The parents are more engaged because the parent sees, "Oh my kid look at his conversation, look at his words my kid's using compared to these other kids." And it's just easier to keep that family connected when you get them off to a good start. Because the biggest dilemma that we face, I think, as a society and the saddest statement I ever heard in my life, and I don't know if you're aware of it. Do you know how we determine how many prison beds we're going to build in the state of Texas?

DS:

No.

QW:

Okay. Absolute fact; we make that determination by evaluating the reading skills of third graders. And that's how we determine how many prison beds we'll need in the future, because if kids are behind in the third grade, they're not going to recover. You can go to high schools in this city and find kids in tenth, eleventh grade that are reading on sixth and seventh grade level. They don't catch up. It's critical that you get kids—that they're at schedule or ahead of schedule when they get to elementary school. Otherwise there's a high likelihood that they'll never catch up. But it's a sad state of affairs when we have high-schoolers reading at sixth and seventh grade levels.

DS:

Hasn't there been a recent push to get away with those early childhood development programs? For the past couple of years—

QW:

Oh yeah. From a funding standpoint. Yeah.

DS:

So, the one thing that works, they want to get rid of.

QW:

Well, we got a lot of prisons that we built. So we need inventory for those prisons.

DS:

Well you know, I didn't want to be cynical and say that but, you know—

QW:

I'll say it: we need inventory for the prisons.

DS:

And especially now because prisons now an industry.

QW:

It is, I don't know if it's second or third biggest industry in the state of Texas now. I mean, just about every small city you drive through has got a prison.

DS:

Yeah, and as someone who grew up and you know you had your own strife's just for being a black man that had spoken up, you could have gone to jail any time. What do you think of the situation we're in now, where prison is an industry?

QW:

That's exactly it. Again one of the things I wrote in the strategic plan for the city is early childhood development is critical. The parents are the first socialization agent that the kid has. And often times to save the kid you got to save the family first. And we don't really realize that because you can do all kind of great things with kids, but at the end of the day they go home to those parents at night. And if you got a dysfunctional family environment they will destroy in thirty minutes what you accomplish in eight hours at school. One of the saddest things to me is we blame the educators for students failure. And teachers are my favorite profession. My wife is in school nurse at Estacado, and I consider her an educator just like I do the classroom teacher. And that's my favorite profession because they do the toughest job. That's developing the minds of our young people. But when you have all of this pressure about passing a test and so forth and when those results aren't what we think they ought to be, we blame the teacher, as a society. And that's really, really sad because it's really our fault, the adult's fault, that children are failing because we have allowed an environment to evolve that is very different than the environment that we grew up in.

Teachers should not have the responsibility of discipline children at school. That's not their job. When I grew up in fifty-three the parents took care of that. Teachers didn't have to worry about discipline. The last thing on this earth that I wanted, when I was in school, was for a teacher to call my dad and tell him I behaved inappropriately at school. Oh, no. That was a phone call I never wanted made. My parents sent us to school prepared to learn. And prepared to learn means I had a good night's sleep, I had a dinner before I went to bed, I had breakfast before I went to school, I wasn't getting high, going to school, I respected authority, I had done my homework, and I knew I better have my butt in that seat in math class five minutes before class started with my book, and paper, and pencil out. My parents took care of that part. All the teacher had to do was educate. Nowadays the teacher is spending half of the class period dealing with three or four

idiots in the class. Then when the class doesn't do well academically we blame the teacher; when it's in fact, the community that's not sending kids to school prepared to learn. That's just so sad to me. Funding, I think in the state of Texas, if you throw a kid out of school, you lose funding. I'm no advocate of throwing kids out of school, but sometimes there's just no option. If you got a student that needs to be expelled the school system shouldn't be penalized funding for that kid being expelled, because you've got one kid that's affecting the learning of the whole classroom. The teachers got to throw him out and do all this paperwork to send him to Project Intercept, and so forth: that's crazy. And we let that environment evolve. The kids didn't create it. We allow that to evolve by a lot of habits that we have gotten away from. The basics that I grew up under, you know—praying in schools, I'm sorry but if you don't want to pray I think you have the right to ask to go to a different room but I don't think we should take away the ones who want to pray rights to pray. We've done a lot of things in my mind to put kids on a path to destruction.

DS:

I think one thing that has to deal with that, you mentioned early on the sense of community. Have y'all lost a sense of community? Or have we all lost a sense of community?

QW:

I think every group in America has lost a sense of community; black, white, Hispanic; except for maybe Asians and some of the other groups that are coming into this country; pooling their resources and twenty of them staying in one house till they get their money together and then they'll open a business over here. Their kids seem to value education more than we do. Because here at Tech, I guarantee you, on a percentage basis your Asian students are doing better than American students.

DS:

It's interesting you mention that. Because a lot of them, that's the way it is. They get here and I've had lots of Indian students work for me, from India. They have a very active group that when they arrive at the airport they may not know anyone, but they're being picked up by a group, being brought in to their new home, in a sense. So that have a really strong foundation, where someone that coming over from Arnett Benson may have him home-boys, but up on campus he's basically alone.

QW:

When I was growing up as a kid in east Lubbock I knew and my parents knew everybody in the neighborhood. They knew the parents of the kids that I was hanging out with. We knew everyone. Daniel, I've been in the same house in Lubbock, Texas for twenty-two years, I don't really know my neighbors. I don't. Do I know their names? Do we speak when we're out cutting the yard and those kind of things? Yes. I don't know my neighbors. As a kid, at Dunbar, my senior year, I knew my neighbors, my parents knew my neighbors. I don't mean just knew their

names, they knew the challenges that those families were confronted with, and so forth and so on. And I think every community has lost that sense. It doesn't matter in terms of color, it doesn't matter in social economics; I think that's just something that we've lost. And I think it's a very political aspect, because again, I was raised by a community.

DS:

And the broader issue of how we lost that sense is something we can't tackle, but I want to ask you this, when did you feel you stopped connecting with your neighbors? At what point? Was it Albuquerque, was it Houston, was it—

QW:

No, there certainly were some differences in Albuquerque than Lubbock. There were certainly some differences and I didn't have the same kind of connection with my neighbors as I had in Lubbock and I think that became a further distance when we moved to Houston. And I think it's even further, now that we've moved back to Lubbock. We just have different interests.

DS:

Has society changed that much?

QW:

I think it has. Because nowadays, you could get shot telling somebody else's kid what to do. The time that I grew up—number one, no teacher ever had to call my parents, about my behavior in school. One reason, because George Scott was there. If you got out of line George Scott took that board and whooped your butt. He didn't need to call daddy because daddy had told him, "If he get out of line, you whoop his butt." So we didn't have those behavioral problems at school. We just didn't tolerate that. It was all over the community. I went to the Boy's Club, Mr. Phea didn't put up with inappropriate behavior. And Mr. Phea had been empowered by the parents in the community to put out whatever kind of discipline he needed to put out on the kids that came to the Boy's Club. Uncle Chess, The Boy Scouts, same thing, Uncle Chess didn't put up with no mess. Period. He had been empowered by the whole community to take care of those kinds of problems and so forth.

Now we're in a society, Daniel, where every other year I do a presentation at Building Strong Families. We're in a society today where parents don't really know the parents of the kids that their kids are running around with. I mean that's critical information to have. I always wanted to know who my son was running around with, but I also wanted to know the parents. I've known situations where a parent would give a sixteen year old beer. My thought process is, "Well if my son hangs out with that kid, and he's over there they might give him a beer too. If they're giving their sixteen year old a beer." We don't know—I'm a grandparent know. My kids are grown but, most of the parents now don't really know the parents of the kids that they're hanging out with.

We don't sit down— when I was a kid we had breakfast as a family, and we had dinner as a family, every day. Lunch was at school. Okay, you had dinner on Saturday and Sunday with the family. That just wasn't an option. Families don't sit down very much now and have dinner together. Kids are after school, everybody's got a car now, and they running around they're having dinner at Chick-Fil-A and McDonalds and so forth, and you don't spend that quality time together anymore like we did years, and years, and years ago. I think we've kind of lost some values, over time.

DS:

I've never thought about asking this kind of question., but you mention empowerment, and you mentioned it several times. There's other words that have described different time frames, and I'm thinking the first one is probably immediate gratification. Because we have that stretch where people were just not willing to work towards the future they wanted everything then. And then we moved on to the entitlement society. A lot of people in society feel they're entitled without really working for it without really preparing for it. How do you think those types of attitudes affect what we've seen as a whole across our country?

QW:

I think that's a big problem because— I see parents— when you start seeing high school kids driving a new cars to school, you know buying a kid a car is not parenting. Some people believe that if I buy them a nice car that shows that I love them and blah, blah, blah. It doesn't. It's immediate gratification, I feel good that I gave my kid a brand new car, I gave my kid this and that and so forth. It's not parenting. It's just absolutely not doing anything to develop a child in a way that you want a child to be developed if you stop and think about it.

There was a study done in nineteen fifty that talked about the five institutions that most influenced children. In nineteen fifty the order of those institutions was home and family at number one. School was number two, church was three, peers was four, and electronic media was number five. If you look at the order of those five institutions today. Number one is peers. Number two is electronic media. Number three is family, four is school and five is church. If you just look at those two side by side, that's our problem, as a society. Is that the number one influence on children today, are peers and electronic media, watching the videos and watching the rappers and that has become the thing that's most influential on kids. That's a dangerous situation when home and family and school and church are not the number one, and two, and three institutions in children's lives anymore. It's peers—the peer pressure of if my friends owns a pair of Air Jordans then I got to have some Air Jordans. It's those kinds of things.

The other thing is— I talked early about, we spent all our time outdoors as kids. We didn't have X-Box. There wasn't but one TV in the whole household. And there wasn't any air conditioning in the household. So there wasn't any point in staying in the house. It was hot in the house, so we played outside. Now it gets hot kids are in the house under the air conditioner playing the X-Box and all these crazy video games that they play, and so forth. They're being influence by things

that I was never influenced by, and when I watched TV back in '53, with my parents, we were watching the Jackie Gleason Show, Leave It to Beaver, Lassie, you know family oriented programs. This junk they got on TV now that's called PG is crazy.

So kids are influenced by very, very different things than I was influenced—the number one influence in my life, and the two greatest people I've ever known in my life were my mother and father. But after I left home, there are four men that had a profound impact on my life. There was Theodore Phea at the Boy's Club, George Scott at Dunbar, my math teacher, Donald George, and Damon Hill Sr. who was my shop instructor. Those were men I idolized after my father as almost four other fathers, and so forth, who kept me on the straight and narrow because they reinforce the values that I was receiving at home. They reinforced those values when I was at the Boy's Club, when I was at Cub Scout meetings, Boy Scout meetings. Where ever I was they reinforced those values that my parents had—and they did that not just me they did it for all the kids at Dunbar and so forth. I just don't see those kinds of role models any more.

DS:

I'm going to try to bring us back to what we were talking about because we segued from this because of your involvement with your job with the city. So let's talk about your career as you've grown in your career, and maybe your thoughts on community and family have a lot to do with what you're doing now.

QW:

It does, I think we talked about when I left the city and went back to the housing authority. Then there was an opportunity for me in two-thousand to apply for the assistant city manager job, back at the city. I did that and I was a successful candidate and that's the position I've been in for the past thirteen years. I'm responsible for some major departments in the city of Lubbock: human resources, libraries, animal services, planning, building inspections, community development, and so forth. But it hasn't changed my passion for developing strong children. Some of my departments impact it because community development receives a lot of federal funds for low to moderate income families for housing and other self-sufficiency programs and so forth. So there's still a bit of that that's helping parents become better parents, getting them in a stable environment by owning a home rather than renting. So I still get a little bit of that in some of the departments that I manage with the city. But it's probably always going to be my number one passion, is to help kids not destroy their lives. All it takes is five seconds to screw up the rest of your life. With African-American and Hispanic boys we see it every day. Because those prisons we talked about, that's who's in them. Folks that look like you and I.

DS:

Exactly and you mention that the libraries is one of the departments that's underneath you. The past few years there's been a lot of things have happened within the libraries with some closing,

whether it's the building itself that had to be closed or just the relocation and stuff. Can you speak to some of that?

QW:

Well I mean, we had, obviously, some facilities problems with some black mold in one of our busiest libraries; Godeke Library which used to be located on Quaker right there by that lake and we got some black mold, so we had to relocated the library, and we moved it into a shopping center on Slide Road across from the mall. It's a lease agreement whereas we owned the building that we moved out of. So a situation where we're going to have to move from our current location at Godeke and that's taken a lot of news time over the past couple of years, and so forth. But what gets lost in that is the libraries continue to do a great, great service as it relates to education in this community. Because that's really what it is: a component of the educational institution in our community. If you look at a good public library system then you will see a better ISD system, when you've got a strong public library system. The two kind of go hand in hand. That's kind of gotten lost in the building aspect of looking for a building, where are we going to put the library, and so forth and so on, is the great things they do to complement the LISD, Frenship and Cooper school districts.

DS:

And then of course the other major change is, and I think it's been in the paper, is a switch from actual hard copies to digital subscriptions, and how that's impacted especially budget.

QW:

Oh yeah, everything is becoming social-media type computers, so forth and so on. But we can't forget that there's some families that don't have those social medias available.

DS:

And don't have a PC at home.

QW:

(speaking concurrently) Don't have a PC at home.

DS:

(speaking concurrently) It's hard to believe, but there's many of them.

QW:

Yeah we just kind of take it for granted. There are many families that don't have computers at home and so you still need those facilities that they can go to and access hard copy books and those kinds of things so they have the same availability to them that others have to themselves. A lot of people don't realize, how many families that are out there that don't have computers.

DS:

Yeah, and you mentioned one of the other aspects is we're currently rebuilding downtown Lubbock, before that it was North Overton. I guess you were in your role during the time that the North Overton redevelopment was going on?

QW:

Yeah I was an Assistant City Ma—I wasn't really that involved in it. We were involved in it to a certain extent because a lot of people had to be relocated and the community development department really played a major role in helping people find housing outside of North Overton and other parts of the city and so forth. We've been actually involved with North & East Lubbock which is a nonprofit group created by Mayor McDougal, in helping families become first time home buyers. To get out of apartments, to get off public assistance, and become home owners and over the past few years we've helped about one hundred and fifty families become first time home owners.

DS:

That's really got to hit home with you because you were part of one of those first redevelopments back when you were a child.

QW:

Oh yeah, I mean home ownership is—I don't think people understand how critical that is. Number one you have a lot more control over who your neighbors are. If you move into an apartment complex you don't know what you're getting into, and so many of our kids grow up in that kind of environment. Apartment dwellers and you've just got all kind of stuff going on in apartments.

DS:

Okay, well thank you so much.

QW:

Yeah. All righty!

DS:

Maybe we can do this again someday.

QW:

Okay.

DS:

Hey thank you, Quincy.

End of interview



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