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## Anthony R. Robinson interview for a Wright State University History Course

Lois Foy

Anthony R. Robinson

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Interview with Anthony Robinson

***Anthony Robinson is a black African American male who grew up in the inner city in a two parent home. Anthony reveals how important it was for him to have parent were loving and supportive. He believes that the key to a person's success is to have parents who point out what is right and wrong to children whether they listen to the advice or not. Anthony recently completed the graduate program in Urban Affairs.***

Lois Foy : Tony tell me where you were born?

Anthony Tony Robinson : Well I was born in North Carolina. My dad was in the Marines and he happened to be at the Naval Base at Camp Legune and that's where I happened to be born.

L.F. :How long were you in North Carolina? What do you remember about it?

A.R. : Well actually we were only there probably about a year, actually, I was just born there and my dad was there only about a year. So I don't remember much about that. After that we went to Cuba for a couple of years and then back to the United States. And I don't remember too much of being in North Carolina because I was so young.

L.F. : How old were you when you arrived in Ohio?

A.R. : Maybe about two, an then they moved to Springfield and then Dayton.I spent Most of my years right here in Ohio.

L.F. : So you grew up in Ohio?

A.R. : Basically in Dayton, although I was born in North Carolina.

L.F. : Ok, great Tell me about what you remember about your childhood?

A.R. : Well I remember my childhood was pretty good because I had three other brothers and a sister and the neighborhood we lived in a lot of people had children about the same age as we were, so there was always someone to play with and my parents were really nice and they provided, we didn't always have a lot of money but we had a lot of love. And that's the difference that it makes, and when I think about my childhood, I had a good time and it always puts a smile on my face.

L.F. : Now, describe that neighborhood.

A.R. : Well it was just a small neighborhood, it was actually an African American neighborhood out in East Dayton, and most of the neighborhood surrounding us were white, we had a lot of people from Kentucky and, it was interesting, and after a while you just kind of got use to each other, and it wasn't a bad environment and it also exposed us to more than just one side of a culture. We didn't just come up around African Americans

We were exposed to both cultures and there were no other minorities out there at that time. And that was about it, but it was, We went to school with everybody and other parents were close to other parents and everybody went to the schools and the difference back then was that they did things together back then, I mean it was important to go to PTA meetings and it was important for parents to say this is my son and it was important for parents to go to most of our sporting events. And we were proud to say “here are my parents.”

L.F : Ok So you would say that your growing up in Dayton was positive?

A R : Absolutely, absolutely, my parents were always very supportive, and I know it had to be difficult having four boys and we were all about two years apart, especially in the teenage years when we kind of had to express our independence, so to speak., My mother was one of those who would give you advice and if you didn't take it usually you got into trouble, and that kind of brought you around to see the big picture, that they really was trying to do what was best for you, although you didn't like it.

L.F. Ok, great. Tell me about your aspirations and what you wanted to do in life?

A.R : Ok, well when I was very young, around ten or eleven, I wanted to be an oceanography, and that went on like forever I use to watch all of the shows that had anything to do with the ocean or water I would watch, any documentary that had to do with the ocean I would watch.

L.F : What influenced you to want to be an oceanographer?

A.R : Well I don't know. I just always wanted to, but I hated to fish, I didn't want to eat the fish, plus I liked to swim. Plus I guess I was born in March and I am a Pisces and I just like water, and that could have had something to do with it too.

L.F :What is it about the Miami Valley that interest you to decide to live in the area?

A.R : Well the Miami Valley is kind of unique because of where it sits, now, we get a lot of people from the south, like especially from Kentucky, so it's kind of an un-usual, but as far as , you know race is concerned, I think we need a lot of improvement, because a lot of people are still bringing up those old ideas that really in the twentieth century we shouldn't have to put up with that kinds of things. But some things never change. But as far as Dayton, Dayton is starting to grow, and people, I think are starting to become aware of a lot of different things with women starting to express themselves and I think that's a great idea, because after all you women are the backbone of everything.

L.F : Ok (laugh)

A.R : I mean behind every strong man is a strong woman. And culturally, we are starting to grow – There's still a lot of problems but that's due to where we are at, and how this area was formed with people coming from the south and people coming from the north, so there is a lot of possibilities here.

L.F : So do you think people, African Americans coming from the south and whites coming from rural areas like Kentucky, do you think that has an impact on diversity issues?

A.R : Absolutely, absolutely, because a lot of people coming from some of the southern rural areas still have a lot of the old ideas about how things are suppose to be. And especially like some of the white people, because they still got this slavery thing in their heads and they think this superiority thing, but the fact is, its changing. Weather they like it or not its changing and our African American citizens coming from wherever are starting to realize that they are not “chained” any longer, but now we got to remove the

“chains” from our minds, because we have them off our feet now. But a lot of the prejudices are more subtle now.

L.F: Ok, ok

A.R : but they are still very effective, but we're beginning to see and we're beginning to appreciate who we are as a people, and actually I like it because I am very proud of my heritage.