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Lori Lyle interview for Wright State University History Course 485

Troy Baker

Lori Lyle

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History 485
Oral History
Interview #1 Race Relations
Troy Baker April 30, 2001

Troy Baker

Introduction

Lori Lyle is a 26-year-old probation officer in Montgomery County. I am interviewing her about her experiences growing up and with racism. I will also try to gain information about her parents and their experiences. I am interviewing her at her aunt's house on the west side of Dayton. The setting is a quiet kitchen overlooking the back yard. In the interview we cover various topics that are relevant to race relations and past events that have shaped her view of race relations in America. We begin the interview with her childhood and a brief discussion of her upbringing and hometown. We move on to why her parents settled in Middletown and the effect small town life has had on her. We quickly move into experiences with racism and what role race played to her as she grew up in Middletown as one of the few black children in a predominately white neighborhood. We discussed the effects of growing up in an all white neighborhood and whether or not it had a negative influence on the way she relates to her culture in the present. She moves on to talk about some experiences at Wittenberg University dealing with black culture.

As we move on in the interview we discuss her parents' involvement in the civil rights movement and some of their experiences. She talks for quite some time about the things that she would tell her children about race and about what has helped her. Next she tells me what and where she learned about the civil rights movement and she also discusses some of her feelings about Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Jr. She then discusses the effects of the educational system on the outlook of America towards race.

She touches on the riots in Cincinnati, the O.J. Simpson Trial and the L.A. riots and white privilege and racial profiling. We move into a deeper discussion of the L.A. riots and her feelings. She brings the discussion back to some racial incidents that occurred at Wittenberg University and we conclude the interview with a lengthy discussion of the O.J. Simpson trial.

Troy Baker

Tape Summary

- Q. Can you tell me about where you are from and a little bit about your **childhood**?
[009] From Middletown Ohio had both parents in the home and describes her family. Childhood memories are discussed and small town life as a child is discussed.
- Q. Do you know why your parents moved to Middletown or were they born there?
[031] Mother was born in Middletown and Father from Denver. He relocated to Middletown and they remained in the town.
- Q. How would you describe **race relations** in Middletown?
[041] Racism and race relations were not really a major issue. Ms. Lyle didn't have much negative exposure to negative race relations. Most of the people were grouped together because the town was so small. She recalls the year the town had a **Klu Klux Klan Rally**.
- Q. How big of a role did race play in our experiences growing up?
[072] Race played a role, but not necessarily negative. She was **one of few black children in an all white neighborhood**. **She learned to survive in both cultures**.
- Q. Do you think growing up in Middletown has affected the way you relate to the black race now?
[091] It played a role because she internalized the fact that **most of the black people in the town lived in a certain part of town** that she did not live on. Because of the upbringing she had her parents taught her not to look down on others, but as she got older **she wanted to relate more with her black culture** than when she was growing up. She talks about some experiences at **Wittenberg University**. **"fake black people."**
- Q. What kinds of things did your parents tell you about race or racism that they experienced?
[121] They didn't talk much about race. Instead **they encouraged self-awareness**. **Her Mother's story about why she quit the track team in high school because of a racist coach**. She talks about her grandfather and his status. She talks about **the first time her mother had to talk to her about race relations**.
- Q. Did their approach help more or hinder you? Which approach is more effective?
[164] It helped her to be sure of herself. She never felt inferior. For her it was helpful because her self-confidence was not ruined and her parents told her **"You are great because you're black."** **Experiences with dealing with racism in Middletown**.
- Q. What kinds of things would you tell your children about racism and about your experiences and how to interact with people outside of their race?

[216] She has two children and **she has her son attend and all black private school. She discussed hair and things that the mainstream culture does not understand about black culture.**

Q. Did you learn about the civil rights movement from your parents?

[247] Her parents weren't involved.

Q. What did you learn about the movement and where did you learn it?

[260] Late high school and college taught her many of the facts of the movement. She discusses **Rosa Parks** and how she got tired of hearing the same **generic information. She expresses admiration for Malcolm X and how she never learned about him until very late in her academic career.**

Q. Do you think mainstream society fears Malcolm X? Why do you think Martin Luther King has been portrayed as the central figure for the civil rights movement instead of Malcolm X?

[275] People don't want to hear a side that is scary.

Q. How has the education system effected the overall outlook of society on race relations having been denied the opportunity to learn African American History in lower grades?

[306] **Media, schools** cause people to believe certain stereotypes and racist ideas. **Racist society set up to educate just enough. Black history month. Society gives black people a complex. L.A. Riots, Cincinnati, O.J. Simpson.** "Rioting is the cry of the unheard." Discusses white privilege and experiments on race. **Racial Profiling by police is discussed.**

Q. How did you feel at the time of the L.A. Riots?

[400] It made her sad to see so much anger. She felt anger because people she grew up with spoke in favor of the police who beat Rodney King. She had an **awakening.**

Q. Do you think you must compromise your identity to have a relationship with people outside of your race?

[440] **Race relations are a joke.** If you really want change you can do it. Race relations are not rocket science. **Racial incidents and Wittenberg University. They benefit from a division,** if police want to change they can. She talks about honesty with black and white friends and how she deals with issues of race openly. We will continue to see Rodney Kings, **Cincinnati's** and superficial relationships. The problem is only serious because it has reached suburbia and. **We don't mean anything in this society,** when we die it doesn't matter(530).

Q. How did you feel about the O.J. Simpson trial and Verdict?

[532] "I was so happy." Her focus was a **race issue. "We finally got over. We've been killed lynched, set on fire..."** It was a guilty happy but I was happy. "At least we got one." Racial tension built up, it went back to us against them. 575-

Troy Baker: The date is April 25th, my name is Troy Baker and I'm interviewing Lori Lyle about her memories and experiences growing up in the 70s, 80s, and 90s. I'll start with just a few easy things. Can you tell me about where you're from and a bit about your childhood?

Lori Lyle: Yeah, I'm from Middletown, Ohio, which is a small city between Cincinnati and Dayton, that's how it got its name. And basically my memories as a child are good especially compared to what I see nowadays. I had both parents in the home. My mom was a teacher, my dad was a minister and I have a younger brother and an older brother. So I'm the middle child. The memories that I have are running outside playing with the neighborhood kids. Playing until the streetlights came on, but sometimes because our parents knew the families that had been there for as long as they had you were able to stay out longer every now and then. We played games like kick the can and hide and go seek and kick ball all the time.

TB: Do you know why your family moved to Middletown or were your parents born in Middletown?

LL: My mother was born and raised in Middletown and my father had relatives in Middletown and he is actually from Denver Colorado. He came to visit his relatives and ended up either liking Middletown or falling in love with my mom, I believe it was the latter. He ended up coming back and he stayed and so they got married and decided to stay in Middletown.

TB: How would you describe race relations in Middletown?

LL: Because I was born and raised there it's not anything like a city like Dayton where they're recognized as being a very segregated city. Black people live on one side of the city, white people live on the other and that's pretty much how it stays. Even though Middletown is set up somewhat the same way there were not a whole lot of problems. Granted I was born in '75 so that was after civil rights and all that kind of stuff. But just from the people I hung out with and my family there was not a whole lot of exposure to negative race relations. Middletown is so small we have one high school and a hand full of elementary schools and so you don't get to choose and pick where you want to go so your kids can be with all black kids or all white kids. Everybody gets shuffled into the same high school no matter how much you make or what you look like. But when I was in high school, no I'm sorry, my freshman year in college, the KKK held a rally there. From that point that's what we were known for because some people viewed it as a small hick town and others had viewed as a nice, little suburb. I guess it just depends on who you talk to get that view of Middletown. I think I was more exposed to race relations in college more than I was when I was in high school and growing up.

TB: So would you say that racism didn't play that much of a role in your experience when you growing up, race relations didn't really have a big impact you as a person?

LL: I think it did, but I think it did in a positive way. I lived in a predominantly white neighborhood and I was the black child who was kind of, I don't know if can say this, I was the token black child. I grew up in a predominantly white neighborhood we lived in part of the richest section in Middletown, so it was like, I was exposed to a lot of wealthy, very influential people so by the time I got to middle school and high school I wasn't Lori,

just the black girl, It was Lori, the one who by with us, Lori, the one who lives with us. Like I said Middletown was so small, you knew those people you knew everybody in Middletown. It played a positive role on me because I ended up learning, as a black youth and a black woman, how to survive in both cultures. In the black subculture, and in how we live day to day. I think it was positive and it helped me learn how to present myself in certain arenas of life.89

TB: Growing up in Middletown as you say being one of the few black people, do you think that affected the way you relate to the black race now, or in college or in the professional world? How do you think that affects the way you relate to the rest of your race? 94

LL: Well, don't get me wrong. Middletown has black people, it wasn't like our family and another family but in where we lived, we were one of the few black family's that lived out in that area. But I think growing up; I know it played a part because I really feel into that. . I would never say it, but I internalized that "well I live out here and you guys live over in the projects". Even though (laugh) our parents may have made the same amount of money. We were just blessed enough to live in a nice area of town that my parents could afford. I went without a lot of times. But I think because of the upbringing that I had, my parents instilled you're not better than anybody else, it's only by the grace of God that we are where we are, so don't get up on any high horse or don't get up on any type of "I'm better than this person or I'm better than that person" because, Like I said growing up I kind of had some of that, but then by the time I got to college it had flip-flopped and I wanted to relate more with my black culture and my black heritage than I did when I was growing up. I got to Wittenberg, which is obviously a predominantly white school, and you know you were there, I think as a freshman going in, I talked to some of my other friends who felt the same way, black kids going into Wittenberg, feel like you gotta hold on to this blackness, because you're getting ready to be swept in to all this. Even my first thought was that "I'm not about to go to this school with all these fake black people, these wanna-be white, black people.

TB: Going back a little bit to your childhood, what kind of things did your parents tell you about racism they experienced throughout their lives and how it affected them? Did they talk about those kinds of things with you and your brothers?

LL: (Laugh). That's funny because my parents actually didn't talk a whole bunch about it and they grew up in the prime of all that stuff that went on because both my parents, well one was born in '44 and one was born in '43. There was one story that my mom used to tell me about when she ran track and why she ended up quitting the team. Her track coach would take all the white girls home, even though the white girls lived around the corner and her and her friends would have to walk miles and miles home. The coach would literally drive by them to take the white girls home. So after a while, their team was really good, but they ended up quitting because of that kind of treatment. I think that my mom didn't want to expose us to the ugliness of racism and even though we learned about it later on in school, watching videos. They didn't really talk a lot about what they went through in that era. I suspect that it is also because my grandfather was pretty prestigious. He owned his own business, had his own cars. You know that back then that was a big deal for a black man to have all that kind of stuff. With a family of 11-12 kids and you are still able to buy food every week and pay your bills on time and have cars and nice clothes, people thought they were super-rich. I think that he had some of that same respect that he wasn't the "typical black man" raising a "typical black family". I

just really think they tried to shield us from that, although there was an incident when I was younger. We were driving in a car, and I looked over at this little girl, and she happened to be white and I smiled at her and I waved and she licked her tongue at me. And that was the point that my mom had to start explaining that kind of stuff to me. Because I was devastated and I cried I think for the rest of the day. Because it just hurt. Not necessarily because I knew the little girl, or if she was even doing it because I was black, but she was doing it simply because she was being mean and that prompted my mom to start talking to me about people, not liking you because you're different. My parents really took a proactive approach to it. My mom read to us a lot; she read a lot about black history but didn't focus on the negative things that happened. She talked about it, but she focused more on instilling us with "you are a blessed child and you can do it no matter what. Yes you're going to run up against these brick walls, but it's going to be hard, but she took it from standpoint and that's what I remember.

TB: So do you think their approach helped you deal with it more or do you think it hurt more when you did begin to experience racism? Not being exposed to it and then telling you things to look out for, do you think it hurt you more or that you were stronger because they told you you were a blessed child, what do you think was more effective?

LL: That's a good question. I think the approach they used was very helpful. Like I said before, I went to a school where it was myself, my brother and probably 3 other black kids out of grades K-6. Being that we were 5 kids that could relate to each other out of a school of 300-500 kids. I never walked into a classroom feeling inferior. I never had that problem. I always knew that I was smart enough, that I could get this stuff. I never had that inferiority complex that some black kids have simply because of what's given to them. I'm not saying that some parents do it intentionally, but sometimes if somebody tells you over and over again that this is your legacy and this is why you ended up being poor, because your parents were drug addicts, that doesn't make you feel very good. I'm not taking a stance on which approach is better, but I think for me it was extremely helpful that my parents took the approach of building my self-confidence like they did. Because so many times I see so many black kids who just don't have the self-confidence about themselves. It's great just to have that self-confidence just because you are black. You're great just because you are black, when society wants to tell us you're trash because you're black. It doesn't matter what else you have, but you're trash because you're black. Where my parents did the opposite. I also think that in dealing with the real life issues I get more passionate about it because maybe I don't know as much about it or I didn't experience that much. There were times, 2-3 times, where we would be walking home from an event in Middletown and truck full of guys would drive by and they would call out the "N" word. I'd have some friends that would start chasing the truck, they would want to go beat the people down and I felt that same anger, but at the same time it was like who cares. Along with the same mindset, my parents tried to instill in us that wherever you go, white, black, Asian, whatever there are going to be people who don't like you for who you are. There are going to be people who don't like you because you're black, there are going to be people who don't like you because I'm a woman, there are going to be people who don't like me because I'm short, there are going to be people who don't like me because I'm skinny. There's not anything you can do that makes everybody like you all the time. (Referring to the incident). It's like, yeah, you called us niggers, and yeah, you're ignorant, but that's your problem that's not mine! Whatever you feel about me that's your own opinion. Granted society doesn't always work that way because no matter how much confidence you have in yourself you may

still hit that glass ceiling at some point and time. But I think the things they instilled in me and my brothers was to walk tall, hold your head up. We've always been taught that promotion comes from God, not from a white man or a black man, it comes from God, so it doesn't matter anyway if you don't like me because I'm still going to get blessed. Help or hurt? That's kind of a difficult way to phrase the answer, yeah it was helpful. Yeah, there were a lot more things I wished they would have shared, like their experiences. I think you also have to look at the older generation. At least my parents are a lot more laid back than I am. I would be following in the Black Panther Party, where they would be following Martin Luther King. You can't say who was right or who was wrong, but their approach back then, to some of our approaches now because we have all those rights is a lot different.

TB: Staying in line with that question, what kind of things do you think you would tell your children about racism, your experiences, how you dealt with your experiences with racism and race relations, how to deal with people outside of their race?

LL: Because I have 2 kids, I have a boy and a girl and that's one area that I'm struggling with now because there is a lot about race I think people are scared to talk about. At the same time, what my parents have instilled in me, I definitely want to instill a strong sense of who they are and them as individuals. But I think there is a lot that you gain when you are in a setting when you are comfortable because everybody looks like you. My son right now, he's 5, and he's in a school right now that is predominantly, well I think it's all black. It's Pre-K, private school, but I really am comfortable with him being there because there are so many life lessons and little things that he will learn and not be ashamed of and feel comfortable with that I didn't have when I was in school. There were things about my hair that my friends just didn't understand because they didn't understand that black people didn't wash their hair everyday, or why my mom put grease in my hair or what I talked about when I said my hair was "nappy". And nowadays we've come a long way and people kind of know what that means now, but those are things that the bigger culture sometimes doesn't look at. They don't understand what it's like to go to 5 different stores before you can find some grease or before they can find a head wrap. Even (finding) books. Even celebrating Black History Month. He's in a school now where that is celebrated all year long, not just in February. And he's learning about people who are not just Martin Luther King and Harriet Tubman and Fredrick Douglas. Everybody knows about them. We want to learn about the Garret Morgan's and the Charles Drews and those people that you had no idea that they had such an influence in America. That kind of stuff is very important to me, so I think what I'm going to try and do is have more of a mix and obviously it comes a lot from home because I think because I had such a strong family background and my parents were able to instill that to me. My life is a little bit different because I am a single parent, and a lot of times when I come home from work the last thing I want to do is read a book about Charles Drew at the same I think that's where the other arenas of school and things like that come in.

TB: Did you learn anything about the Civil Rights Movement (CRM), were your parents involved in any kind of way? Protests? Non-violent marches? Did they tell you anything about their involvement?

LL: No they didn't. And it's very interesting because I've always wondered why. I know they were involved in that era, and I know that because of the way they view things and

how my dad is very much like me, in that he will stand up for what he believes in and he'll say what he feels. My mom is more of, and not even all that much but she's more of the political correct person. But they're both very up front individuals and I'm really surprised that they really never talked about that.

TB: Staying with the CRM, what other things did you learn about the movement and where did you learn them?

LL: I started learning about the CRM when I was in about 7th or 8th grade. Of course it was all generic type stuff until I got to college. The whole lesson of Rosa Parks got on the bus she didn't move and thus ensued the whole movement. Once I got to college and started learning about things that happened actually what I found out was that Rosa Parks wasn't the person who started the Civil Rights Movement, Rosa Parks was just the icon, there were plenty of woman who said "I'm not giving up my seat". There were plenty of women who tried to sit in the front of the bus but it didn't get started until they decided to start with Rosa Parks. I started learning in depth stuff in college, what I know about the CRM is, it's embarrassing to say but I think after a while I got sick of hearing the same old thing. I know we boycotted, I know the generic stuff you learn about he CRM. Martin Luther King. He went to all these places, he got jailed, all these people did all these protests and then Malcolm X came on the scene, and actually I find Malcolm X more intriguing than I do Martin Luther King because he's one of the people you don't learn much about. I didn't learn anything about Malcolm X until I got to high school, I never even heard his name.

TB: Why do you think that is? Do you think mainstream society fears Malcolm X? Do you think they feel that his contribution wasn't all that big? Why do you think they portray Martin Luther King so much more as a symbol for the CRM?

LL: Obviously, I think it's society. Living where I lived, growing up in Middletown, Ohio, you didn't want to give people a chance to hear a side that made sense that was a little more scary than what Martin Luther King was talking about. Yeah, we'll let Martin go, because he's not really talking about anything violent, he's not talking about rioting, he's not talking about "down with whitey", he's not talking about that kind of stuff so he's okay. You couldn't have Martin Luther King if you didn't have Malcolm X. Because they looked at Malcolm X and thought whoa, whoa, whoa, if we have to take one we'll take the lesser of the evils and we'll take Martin Luther King. I think if Malcolm X had not of been on the scene then we might not of had a Martin Luther King because he at the time was a radical. I was kind of upset with my parents when I found out that this was one person that they didn't tell me about. But I think, like other people they feared what now what would happen if they told me about him, but maybe they thought that he was negative or maybe they thought that this was an ugly side of the CRM I don't know, but I think that he's an extremely intriguing figure in the CRM because he gave America this raw-in the face "this is what your doing to us". He was scary because mainstream society was doing all these things to us and when he finally flipped back and said we're going to the do the same thing back, it was like he was violent. He made America look at themselves in the mirror versus Martin Luther King who wanted to bring everybody to the table and talk about what was going on, we can work this out and Malcolm X was more like "we're not doing it like that anymore, we're going to play by our own rules, and we'll see how the war ends" until he made his conversion and started over.

TB: Going back to your knowledge of the CRM in high school and junior high school and how it was a generic version, how do you think that effects most of society because that's the way most of society is taught about the CRM and unless they do go to college and take African-American History or African-American Literature, 9 times out of 10 they won't learn those things. Only learning the watered-down version, how do you think that's affected the over all outlook of our society?

LL: I think that along with everything that we see in the media and what we do learn in school, I think you hit it right on the head when you said 9 out of 10, I would say that 9.9 out of 10 people believe all that, and even when you try to tell people that Garret Morgan was the first person that made the traffic light, they don't want to believe it. I'm not a person that uses the term racist, but we have such an institutionalized racist society and people can be racist without even realizing it because our society the way it is set up not to educate everybody on everyone. It's to people just enough so those cultures will be satisfied, "well, we gave you February". Everyone can learn all they need to learn in February. Like I said before, I feel sorry for our black children, I feel sorry for our Indian children, for all the people from different cultures everywhere that they have to go into a society where the blood of red, black and yellow men have built this country and then to walk into school and learn that you guys don't have any type of contribution and we built this great country that we live in. It's a slap in the face and I can't tell you how many times I've cried being young and older now. Because, society gives us, all kinds of people, this complex of "you really didn't do very much for this country". I think that's why you see so many things like what happened in L.A during the Rodney King verdict, and you see those responses when OJ Simpson gets off and you see what happens in Cincinnati. Granted, I think what happens when white people see that is that they go "see, I told you, see how violent they are, see how stupid they are". Some famous philosopher said that "rioting is the cry of the unheard" and when you're not listening your going to get reactions like that. When our society does not listen to our youth, that's why they're going out and killing each other and shooting each other and taking all kinds of drugs and destroying themselves because no body's listening. No body cares enough to listen. You know that's one reason my child is in a private African-American school because he's going to learn a lot more than what a regular public school or private school where he would be surrounded by a lot of white people. You do have some exceptional teachers that are going to give you some more. I had one in high school who had us read a paper on white privilege. It was a paper on white privilege, he actually brought it in and had us read it and asked our feedback on it. That was a paper that made people stop and listen and even in high school, made us look at ourselves. We even did different experiments outside of school. I think that people get caught in the CRM was the CRM and slavery was slavery but come on now every body should be happy. But black people are still bearing the consequences of what happened that long ago. I think it's ashamed when society doesn't take notice and look at it.

TB: What was your paper "White Privilege" about and what type of activities did the class do?

LL: It was paper that listed 50-56 incidents that brought out that there is this unwritten, unspoken privilege that white men have in our society. That's what the paper was based on. It said things like, "if you get stopped by the police then you can guarantee it's not because of your color. Different instances like when you go to the mall and you don't get waited on immediately you don't have to think or question was that because this person

has an issue with race or does this person have an issue with class. It also transferred over to white and black. There's an unwritten privilege that white people have that we don't have. Just in how you're treated and how you're viewed. My parents have a very nice car. When they get stopped by the police the first thing police officers ask is, "Is this your car? Can I see your registration?" If my dad was white I don't think that would happen as much. I don't think he would be questioned because if you are black and you're driving a Mercedes you've either got to be a drug dealer.

From that what our teacher had us do was test some of these instances out in the community. I was in a group with a white girl and a black guy and a white guy. We all had to go out to the mall. The Middletown Mall, we only got one. We did some experimenting on standing around the jewelry counter. We would both act as if we were looking at jewelry. It happened without fail three separate times at three separate counters, she got waited on and I had to walk up and down the counter three times before they would even look at me. I think that was around the Rodney King riots because I was in high school when that happened. That's when all the stuff was going on in L.A. and I think my teacher was trying to awaken us to what really goes on out there and why it goes on. I'm not a person who believes that everybody has to love everybody. I don't think that's true because human nature we have conflict that's just a part of who we are. But I think that if people understand. If you just try to understand people a little bit more than you'll get a better glimpse of why somebody's reacting the way they are. If certain white individuals took the time to understand why black people rioted in Cincinnati, not that it was right but after so many years of being dogged and told "you can't get a job" and being harassed by the police. Eventually people blow up if you keep beating on them long enough, they get fed up and they get tired.

TB: People have said that the L.A. Rodney King Riots is one of the major revolutionary acts of our generation for black people. How did you feel at the time to see all of those things taking place in L.A?

LL: I think I was sad. I wasn't embarrassed, I was just really sad. My opinions, views and knowledge that I had in high school wasn't near what I have now after graduating from college and taking classes on it. In high school I really felt this ache because they were destroying themselves and destroying their communities but even more was the anger that I felt when these police officers... I felt angry because I would hear people who were my friends, girls and families that I had grown up with since I was little, little little like kindergarten. And now we were in high school together and I'm hearing that their parents have said, "Well you know he ran so he should have did this, this and this" It made me wake up and say, "you know I understand that these people like me for who I am but then that's when I think I started learning that there is a difference between who I am and what I represent". I might be a person you can look at and like but I'm also a person that is in this culture with these people that you think are out stealing and selling drugs and having babies and getting on welfare and taking your spot in college. So I think it was an awakening moment for me and at the same time it was very hurtful. You see what happens when people get fed up.

TB: After your awakening, do you think you have to compromise your identity to have a relationship with people outside of your race? And do you think a true relationship can ever exist.

LL: I think I said earlier that race relations in our country are a joke. When people get together and talk about them it's a joke. You get the city commissioner and I'll watch the news with my parents about what went on in Cincinnati because it's so close to Middletown. And there up there saying, "We want to make a new such and such....We

*needs a break
for consequences*

want this to happen and we want that to happen." I'm just looking and I'm like you guys are such a joke. If you really want change you can do it. Race relations is not rocket science. It's only how people deal with one another. We thought it was important to make sure people were educated so we started colleges, universities and public schooling. Why not utilize those tools. I remember at Wittenberg some racial incidents occurred. Some name-calling outside some windows at a dorm. One of the guys there someone actually drew a picture of him being lynched with his name on it. So there was a lot of racial tension at the time. One of the things that we challenged the university to do was, there is one class that everybody has to take. All freshmen have to take it no matter what your major is. It's called Common Learning and it's a class that's supposed to deal with issues of reality. You have to read books on different artists and authors. And you study art and do all these different kinds of things and what we challenged the university to do was implement some kind of curriculum that you can talk about black, white, Asian and Indian and all these groups and how they deal with one another. But they couldn't do that because they didn't want to. Really if you get down to it it's because they don't want to. The benefit from the division. I'm not going to go into how, but if you really want to make a change you can do that. If Cincinnati really wants to implement a change in their policing and their community support, they can do that. I think a true relationship is possible because I'm a person who likes to know up front. The people that are close to me that I do consider my friends, black and white, we are very open and honest with each other. I have friend who grew up in a lily white hick town and when she says things I say, "you may not want to say that because people get offended when you say things-like that" or "don't clump that group together because that sounds like you're being negative." She's willing and open to accept that. It's not a negative criticism. It's just me trying to let her know that you can say it to me because I'm your friend but if you get out there society doesn't work that way. If we're not scared to educate each other then we can get somewhere. But I think everybody deals with these politically correct terms and they don't want to say this and they don't want to say that. They don't get to the real deal of who you are and who they are and how you deal with each other. Do I think it can happen, yes. People don't deal with the real issue. You don't get a white person that will come in there and say, "I'm terrified to go around black people at night because you guys scare me. It's not because I want to be racist it's because that's what I see on T.V. I see you guys stealing cars and I see you guys taking drugs and that's what I see and that's what I'm fed." I guarantee that you will probably never see that. At least I've never seen it. Now I'm young but.... I think it can happen. Do I think it will, no. I think that we will continue to have superficial relationships and we'll continue to see things like what go on in Cincinnati. And we'll continue to see the Rodney Kings and the abuse by the police. A young guy at one of the forums that I was watching said to the police, not the police but to the city commissioners, "This problem is not serious until somebody gets shot and killed. Now that somebody's dead and everybody's out in the streets rioting and protesting now it's time to do something about it. There has been in Cincinnati since the year 1995 fifteen deaths by white officers to black people. Not one white man or white person was shot during that time, at all. In the last fifteen years it was never addressed, it wasn't brought to the forefront. You didn't see the city counsel and the police chief and all those people. It wasn't an issue but now the community is out saying we want answers and we want you to do something." Now they're saying (sarcastically), "We're willing to do everything we can. This is going to be a top priority. And the boy said, "Where were you when all these other people were getting shot? Where were you when my brother was being harassed and got beat up by the police? We don't see you until you want to be voted into office." And that's true. They don't come around and they don't think it's an issue

until, excuse my expression but until crap hits the fan. That's when everybody wants to jump and say Whoop, we got a problem. Same thing with the killings and shootings, who cares if it was in the ghetto. (Mockingly) Aww those people do that who cares if kids are getting shot time after time after time. But UHHH we got a guy in New Mexico, or Nevada or Colorado who's gotten shot. He's killed kids now all of a sudden guess what? We have an epidemic with our teenagers. We don't mean anything in this society. When we die it doesn't matter. When one of their own dies, that's when it becomes an issue.

TB: How did you feel about the O.J. Simpson trial?

LL: I was so happy. I was so happy. I know that's bad because I was really happy and I shouldn't have been simply because two innocent people lost their lives. Two people were brutally murdered and left two kids without a mother and a family without their son. So I felt bad in that aspect because I thought.... But that wasn't even my focus. My biggest focus and it seemed like the people around me; their focus was the race issue. It was a big deal and I was so happy that he got off. I forgot who said it but, we finally got over, we got one over. After how many years that we've been dogged our people have been killed, we've been brutalized, murdered, lynched, set on fire dragged behind trucks. Then all of a sudden it's not that big of an issue but with the O.J. trial one of the guilty pleasures was that I was really happy that he got off. My focus was not whether or not he killed these people; my focus was is this black man getting ready to get over? It wasn't about the murders and I feel sorry and I feel bad for those families but I was happy. It was like, there's one for us after all the stuff we've been through. At least you gave us one.

TB: Were you in high school at that time?

LL: I don't remember what year was it 93? I graduated in 93 so it was either my senior year or my freshmen year in college.

TB: Were there any protests or things of that nature in Middletown when that happened or on campus. Did racial tension build up?

LL: Racial tension built up, it definitely built up. It was like it went back to us against them. Because they felt that this black man killed these white people and he got off and we're thinking Yeaaaaa for this black man because we got away with one. It sounds so bad (covers her face) Gosh it sounds terrible. I think I was in high school. I remember racial tension. You didn't sit with white friends that day and you kind of let things blow over.

TB: I've got to rap things up but thank you for your time.

LL: Thank you!!