

Adleane Hunter:

Adleane Hunter, and Hunter is my married name. My maiden name is Adleane Gardner, spelled G-A-R-D-N-E-R. And nothing significant that I'm aware of. My father named me and I guess that makes it significant. I was his firstborn daughter and it was a name that I swore I was going to change as soon as I got 18 and legal because people always, always had a problem with it. But I learned to embrace it and I kept it because it was special to him. And so I hung onto it, I didn't change it. But when you're young, it's difficult to have your name mispronounced all the time.

And I had no nickname. There was no nickname. I was asked that question a lot and people wanted to and would give me a nickname, which I did not like at all. My mom never gave me one, my father never gave me one, so that was... to say no to that, I went through a period of time when I wouldn't say no to it. I just accepted it was Addie and I did not like Addie at all. Without permission. I mean, it was being done professionally.

It was done to me when I started to work for Hunt-Wesson Foods at the age of 20. No one had ever done that and no one asked my permission. They just began to do it. And when I got the courage to say I really didn't like it, they were like, "But it's affection. They have affection for you." Well, you feel affection when you say it. I don't. Yeah, it has meaning and for me. I take great care with people's names for that reason, I think.

I was born in [inaudible 00:02:03], Florida. That's southern tip of Florida. And I was born in 1949. [inaudible 00:02:11] just get brave here. Like, okay. Disclose your age. And I actually was told once by someone in the business, because he said, "You know, you look a lot younger. And please don't tell anybody your age because it will hold you back." Yeah, and I was a director. I wasn't an on camera personality at all, but he was saying, "You're really good." He had worked with me and said, "You're really good." He was a writer on a show and he said, "Don't tell me your age." Isn't that interesting? And I think from that moment on, it was like you got to conceal it.

It's interesting and I think I came from a culture and... I think we all come from a culture, but in my culture you revere the wisdom of your elders. You are to honor and respect your elders. And being a southerner, it was really ingrained in me. I came to California when I was 12, so that was pretty... just standard expectation and you knew that they knew more than you, they had more experience, they had more wisdom. Not necessarily always true.

Cousin on my father's side moved to California and she was very close to my mother. My parents were divorced by the time I was six. My cousin and my mom were very close. So when she migrated to California, better opportunities, pretty much. Her husband. I had lived with her for a couple of years and she had no children, so I... My mom had six children. I'm the second of six and I'm the oldest girl. And the cousin had a miscarriage and I came to help her out for the summer, but we all knew I wasn't going to go back because my cousin wanted me here, I wanted to be here. It was very difficult. The separation was very difficult for me because I was very close to her.

She had lived with us at a certain point before she got married. So when I arrived she said, "You're not going to have to go back. I'm going to talk your mom into moving here." And that's exactly what happened. By the next year, my mom had moved here with the other five siblings. But I did a long... In the last, let's say, 10 years or so, ask my mom why Santa Ana because I would get that question all the time from my friends in Los Angeles who would say, "Why do you live in the OC? Why are you in the OC?" They just see the reputation of Orange County. They just could not understand why a black person would choose to come from the south and move to Santa Ana. And I thought, "Well, I'm wondering the same thing," but I never asked, so I did.

And my mom explained that he did go to Los Angeles, he being... his name was Seymour [Dorsey 00:05:17]. He did go to LA to look for work and couldn't... He was a laborer. Couldn't find work there and he found... someone referred him to a job that was in Anaheim and he got that job and in order to be close to that job, there was a black community in Santa Ana and a lady who rented rooms at her home, her name was Miss Kitty Mac. He rented a room at Miss Kitty Mac's house and was able to work, save enough money, get a house over on 5th Street in Santa Ana, and then sent for his wife. And they just stayed. They stayed in Santa Ana because he worked for a company out of Anaheim, actually, until the day he died.

Yeah, right. And she later [inaudible 00:06:10] the guy that she was dating did come follow shortly... maybe a year later, and they got married. And we all just stayed in Santa Ana.

I had a single one, but it informed me moving forward in my life because I was so young and I had my daughter, who is now 51, in the car with me. I was on Bristol headed home. I lived on 2nd Street and there was a store, I think it was called Santa Ana Market, on 1st Street. And my daughter was a year old sitting in the car next to me. You didn't have to have car seats at that time. We just sat the kid in the seat and there weren't even seatbelts. I think back sometime and go, "Oh my God [inaudible 00:06:59]."

Anyway, I was headed from the supermarket to my apartment I was living in and again, one street over, I was stopped by the police, pulled over, and he approached the car with a gun in his hand. That was very startling and unnerving to me, of course. And informed me that there was riot going on at a theater downtown on Broadway. There was a movie theater down there. I was nowhere near there. I think that's five miles plus from where I lived, but the fact that I was black and I think the fact that I was driving an El Dorado, had a car, young, very young, that he probably thought... just wanted to check me out. I don't know.

But what was startling to me was that he... when I rolled my window down, that he had a gun in his hand and that they were just checking anybody who was in the vicinity. From that moment on, I did report it. I shared my story with the people I worked for at Hunt-Wesson Foods, who did a article on it in the paper, the company newsletter did a story on it. Nothing was ever done that I'm aware of. I was never contacted and there was no followup. That was the end of it.

But going forward, I... police, I just had a real concern about being stopped. I moved to San Diego in 1990 and would commute from San Diego to LA to do plays. And this was still there. This police are not there to protect me. This is you have to be careful about the police, and this is prior to all of these other incidents that we know about. A cop followed me on night, and I lived in Rancho Bernardo. And I was watching the speed limit. I would always have it on cruise control.

But long story short, I called my husband ahead and said, "Listen, I don't know why this policeman's following me, but I want you to know." If he waits until I get off on my exit, which was a long, winding, very dark road near a lake where I lived. I said, "I'm not pulling over," because I actually feared that something would happen to me. So I wanted my husband to know, and I kept him on speaker on my cellphone by that time. I kept him on speaker and once I got off the highway, he did not follow me after that so I was okay.

But I had already just said to my husband, "I'm not pulling over." I just feared being out there in the dark on one of these wayward roads. But that experience when I was pulled over... and I guess that was 1970. And the... you are being... basically the word now is profiled because there's a riot going on at the movie theater on Broadway. Why are you five miles away pulling over a woman who's riding around here in a El Dorado? I'm not [inaudible 00:09:59] the theater. I'm not a kid. I don't know. Just none of it added up. I was freaked out just to say [inaudible 00:10:09] understatement how freaked out I was.

Of course he let me go. He didn't give me a citation. It was all about there's a riot and we're checking people around. People? What people are you checking? So that set in motion for me a real fear of police and I never saw them really as my friend. I mean, we'd been cited, had many tickets, when we would drive across country from Florida to California, which we did pretty frequently over the years, and you just knew where those fit. They would target people who had California license plates is what my family would say. Arizona and Texas were the worse. You kind of knew you were going to get a ticket there and you were going to have to pay cash to get the ticket.

So I think they always had some kind of thing going on because they'd take you off somewhere where they have court, have a judge there, and we're sitting out there in the car while they do this and you better have some cash in your pocket [inaudible 00:11:07] in order not to go to jail. You were going to have to pay some money.

So that was something that the adults in my life, my mom, my cousin, her husband, they were accustomed to and they would be prepared to do it so that they could be on their way. It was going to happen. And if there were trips where it didn't happen, I don't recall them because it almost invariably always happened. If Arizona didn't get you, Texas was going to get you. You were going to get cited.

And the family had no fear. My mom and the adults in my life were very fearful of Alabama and Mississippi, those states. I don't ever remember them being pulled over in those states. I'd have to ask my mom. But of course, she could never stay in any of those states so we always slept in the car. He pulled over to the side. They rotated drivers.

So I mean, growing up as a kid, all of this stuff that was going on, it was a way of life. It was what was happening. And you look to the adults in your life to help you get some sense of understanding about it. So that's just how it was.

And I came to understand once I got here where California was supposed to be... I [inaudible 00:12:22] use the word... I use [inaudible 00:12:24] now, but it wasn't supposed to be like the south. It wasn't supposed to be racist. You were supposed to be equal, more equal here. You didn't see white color only, you didn't see that kind of thing here. Again, we're talking the '60s.

But I learned pretty quickly from school that... there weren't signs, but I could tell by the way people treated you that they weren't accepting of you, that they were... I'm going to use the word racist now, but my word at the time was they just didn't accept you. You weren't accepted. And I formulated for myself that I'd rather know that people didn't like me and that there were laws that said this plain and clear, as opposed to those that were hiding it. I'd rather know who you are. I thought here, it was just covert, it was hidden. And because you didn't think, "Well, maybe it's me."

And it's like, "No." After a while, you [inaudible 00:13:25]. As a kid, I was going, "No." I'm not making it up. It's not in my mind. I grew up where you knew. You knew when people didn't... and you had signage everywhere as a reminder, so...

I was not told. I grew up in an all black town. Everybody in my life, teachers, doctors, store owners, they were black. And coming out on a bus from Florida, I think we were on a Greyhound. It was either Greyhound or Trailway. The first stop in Georgia, get off the bus, follow the people. I was on with my cousin, who was 18 or 19, headed to northern California and I... 11, 12 year old. I followed the masses of people and he didn't realize I wasn't following him, so I actually went with the group inside. And when I sat down, they immediately said to me I had to go out and around to the back.

So by the time my cousin realized I wasn't following him and was headed to get me, I was already headed out going, "Why aren't we eating in here with everybody else?" And it stayed that way until Arizona, someplace in Arizona. And I don't remember where we stopped, I just remember the bus driver saying, "Everybody can eat inside together." He made a statement that now we... Because after

that, I didn't get off the bus. My cousin would bring me food. But we had food. They had packed up chicken and [inaudible 00:14:55] cake and stuff for us to eat on the bus. But if you wanted a hot breakfast or something... I didn't get off.

That was, again, pretty disturbing and I didn't understand it. I had never been out in that situation, so it was a big eye-opener. Yeah. And it was very hurtful. I just remember being very hurt. Why are they rejecting me? What did I do?

Yeah, it's pretty similar to Florida, I think. I didn't find it that different except now I was living in an integrated community and going to a integrated school. The community I live in initially was pretty much... Not pretty much. It was probably 90 plus percent Hispanic. My cousin, the house he found was over off 5th and [Rate 00:15:50]. That was pretty heavily Hispanic. And coming from Florida, where I was familiar with Cubans, I initially thought these were Cubans. Looked like Cubans to me, so that's what I thought. Wasn't anything I said, but it's what I... somewhat familiar that way because I didn't live in a mixed community, but I saw Cuban people.

Because I always lived on the north side of... Well, what is that? 1st, and then later on the north side. I lived off City Center Drive. It's now City Center Drive. I lived on English. That was the Santa Ana High School District, so I went to Santa Ana High School. I didn't go to Valley. So Valley high school was the high school where most of the black kids went because they lived right [inaudible 00:16:47] in that direction, going toward Edinger, and I lived on the other side. And Michael Lynem, I think, went to Valley. He lived within that district.

So I didn't participate a lot because I teachers... I learned at [Carr 00:17:05]... I had one black teacher and I had her in my ninth grade. In those days, it was seven to nine, not seven to eight, not intermediate. That transition happened after I had my own kids. I had teachers who were always pretty positive and encouraging, and lot of affirmation that I was smart and even put in a cluster group of kids because we were advanced in our classes. Fourth or fifth grade, because we were advanced, they put us in a cluster group together, the smarter kids, and my school was so excited about me coming to California, going to school here, and making sure I understood I was going to have to work hard because these schools were probably going to be difficult.

My mom worked in the cafeteria there, so there was that connection of having, I guess, maybe more interest paid to me for that reason, because my mom worked there and she had a cousin who taught there. I mean, I'd send my report cards to my mother and they would read my grades over the intercom with the morning devotion, right? So they were very, very excited that I could come here and do well. But what I found for me personally was the kids here weren't that smart. I didn't find them that smart and was told by an English teacher once to put my hand down, to stop raising my hand all the time. And I thought, "Well," I just looked around, I thought, "Well, nobody else is raising their hand and I know the answer." So that was the beginning of you are to be seen and not heard. You're not to be recognized.

And when I got to ninth grade, my government class, I had a teacher named Miss Darling, later married and her name is Miss Whitaker. She was such a breath of fresh air, I just fell in love with her. I had such an emotional connection to her and later got to share that with her. I was asked to do a presentation for Mother's Day at Johnson Chapel Church once and she was a member there. Part of what I shared, my presentation honoring mothers, I think it was, I paid tribute to her and I told her how much she meant to me because I never, ever told her.

I get emotional when I think about it because for the years that I was there, I never got that from any of the other teachers. And there was this black woman standing before me that I knew. She didn't do anything special toward me except be who she was and because of my earlier upbringing, I

knew that she was somebody who cared about me as opposed to these other teachers that you were to just do your work and not make... Don't be a problem. And of course I wasn't a problem child. I was being raised not... My mom was pretty strict.

My mother was working very hard to provide for us and we were taught not to do... to get your work, get your school work. My mother said I always [inaudible 00:20:17] get your education, "I want you to get your education." She wasn't able to get hers. Her mother died when she was nine and her mother and father were not married. And she was estranged from him, and her older sister raised her. I think she went as far as ninth grade. So she was really pretty adamant. It was important for her to make sure we understood we were to get our education and you were to follow the rules and not [inaudible 00:20:41] problems.

And I was the kid that walked that line pretty straight during those years. I started coming out once I got to be an adult, coming out in terms of saying, "You know what? This isn't right. Not going to speak up about it." I'm going to say something about it.

I just withdrew and did what I needed to do to get out of there. I was saying to my daughter the other day, relative to [inaudible 00:21:09], she was saying people... through Facebook, she gets contacted a lot from people that she went to school with. And I said, "I have no desire." There's absolutely nobody. There's one person and she and I were friends. Her name is Lois Curtis. Her brother is Isaac Curtis. He went on to play pro football and was very big in football when he was in high school.

But I wasn't close to any of those kids. I didn't join any clubs, I didn't get involved. I stayed to myself, I got a job after school. I worked for W.T. Grant's downtown. I didn't have extracurricular, and some of that was by choice. Just didn't feel welcome and didn't feel like I belonged, so I didn't involve myself. And I told her, I said, "I'll never..." They would send me the high school reunion stuff. I said there would be no reason for me to go to a reunion. I don't have any connection with any of those people whatsoever. And that's just how it was because, again, I went off into my own world and started to work in corporate America. By the time I was 20, I was working in corporate America for Hunt-Wesson Foods.

And I was never a part of what actually was called the in crowd at that time. It was a group of black kids that actually had a club and they called themselves The In Crowd, and Michael was a part of that group. And there was a song. A guy... I think his name was Dobie Gillis, called The In... Yeah, that. So there was that. Michael was such a good looking guy. He was a handsome guy, and he dated a girl that I knew and was friends with in junior high school. We called it junior high back then. Her name was Elma Burnett, and I think they got married. I think they got married and may have had a kid or two. But Elma was always in trouble, so I didn't hang out with kids who got into trouble, right?

They were kids that... they were the hip kids. They were the everybody want to be their friends kind of kid and I wasn't that kid. My mother was very strict and you toed the line. Although I had a sister who didn't, I was a kid that did pretty much what I was expected to do. And we weren't allowed to be out partying all the time and hanging... I'm not saying that's what Michael did, but he was certainly one of the hip kids and the in crowd kids, and a good looking young man.

So I heard that he'd gotten involved with the Panthers and I heard he later became a minister, but I never... we did not have a personal relationship at all, none whatsoever, other... say hi to each other, I guess. Pleasantries when we saw each other, that was it. So yeah. As I said, I had two girlfriends, Lois Curtis and Ruth-Anne Rhimes, and the other kids... and I'm at Santa Ana High School, so I'm nowhere... I don't go over to Valley and hang out. A lot of kids would leave our school as soon as it was over, and they'd get in cars, and they'd go over to Valley and hang out with the other kids. I didn't do that. I went home. I had chores, I had homework.

So I always say I'm the oldest girl in a black family. [inaudible 00:24:12] a lot of responsibility. I didn't have the time for that. So for all I knew, Michael was a nice... he was a nice guy, but I can't say much more than that about him. And he was a looker, I'll tell you that.

He's the only one I knew. There may have been some who came after him, but a lot of respect for him. I just remember he had a motorcycle. I think he was a motorcycle cop. So he would come into the community and I would see him talking to people in the community. He seemed very friendly and I didn't feel any type of fear or trepidation about him whatsoever. I did feel like he was there. I would call that community policing, what I came to know as community policing, because I think he was very visible in the community. There were some people that thought he was arrogant. I remember hearing certain things people would say about him, and he thinks he's this and he thinks he's that. But for me as a young person, and I think by and large most people felt, was a lot of pride about him.

I never had any personal interaction with him at all, but I would see him. And usually when I saw him, he was either riding through or he'd be on the motorcycle. He'd stop and he would be talking to people. And it was like giving citations kind of thing. It seemed to me just community. Hey, how's it going? Chatting with people, checking out is everything okay kind of thing. So I never saw him engaged in what I perceived to be... he was... ...citing and giving anyone a citation or anything like that. I never saw any of that.

So again, I pretty much didn't interface a lot with... other than my church and the handful of kids that went to school with me, I really didn't interface a lot with the community. And once I moved into the corporate sector, Hunt-Wesson Foods, albeit I was pretty young, that continued. I got married twice. [inaudible 00:26:11] with my second husband right now 48 years.

Just went into a whole nother world. I had a teacher at high school whose name is Paul Riordan. [inaudible 00:26:26] Mr. Riordan, he was over the ROP Program and he selected me to be his secretary/assistant for the program. [inaudible 00:26:35] said, "I see you have a lot of potential," and he wanted me to learn certain business etiquette and things like that, so he would take me to interview the companies, the corporations where they would place the kids. We got units for that. I got my units working with him and I did that in 11th and 12th grade.

So in my free time, outside of my class time, I was actually doing things with Mr. Riordan who, again, saw a lot of potential in me and took an interest. Very unique, special man. He has an organization right now and he works, I think, mostly with Hispanic kids in the sciences and the maths, and he gives a lot of scholarships. My husband and I just last year were at a fundraiser that he does. We've gone a couple years in a row to his fundraiser and it's pretty impressive. These children are so impressive.

And he would always come out at lunchtime and hang out around the black kids to talk to them, arm wrestle with the guys. He had polio or has polio and I don't know what stage in his life, but he walked with one of those cuff walkers on one arm but was very strong. Worked out and very strong upper body, so the white guys used to like to arm wrestle with him. And he would joke and tease and play with them, but he took a personal interest in them and all of us, and again handpicked me to work for him.

And so that gave me a lot of status. That elevated me to a certain level in high school, being that person. So I interacted with these students because I was involved with their placement and followup with their evaluations and that sort of thing was what I did with him. But he'd take me to places. I remember him taking me to lunch when we went out to do site visits to Coco's and this was done in Santa Clara area. I think later, it became some other restaurant. It's not a restaurant now.



But I just remember him taking me to Coco's and saying, "These are the kind of nice places that you want to go to when you get old enough and you're grown and you choose places to go." Because most of the places I went to... And we eat at home. You weren't eating out a lot. My mom couldn't afford that. But he would go to a local rib place or something. But he took me to Coco's and I just remember my introduction to Co-

Yeah, that's what I was going to say, and Reuben's. So later, I bought a home mid '80s over off of Santa Clara [inaudible 00:29:05] Bristol in those Rancho homes, Santiago something homes over there, those custom homes. And we would go to Reuben's for dinner. I couldn't think of the name. We would go to Reuben's.

I was saying back then I wanted to be an airline stewardess and he said, "That's a dumb waitress in the sky. You need to think about something." I owe him a lot and [inaudible 00:29:33] he calls my husband and talks to my husband and gets him involved in things that he's doing with his project. We haven't heard from him maybe in about nine or 10 months now. But Paul was... the minute I got back here, he saw that my husband, who he had met before I married him because I actually had him sanction him. I had him check him out. He had checked out the guy I married first out of high school and he said, "Nah, he's not going anywhere."

He had a whole critique that turned out to be accurate, and so when I got ready to marry this guy, was thinking I was going to marry him, I had made a dinner date with Paul. And I took this guy over there and Paul [inaudible 00:30:08] took him to the kitchen and talked to him because he's like a father [inaudible 00:30:11]. So when Paul got done talking with him he stepped out of the... came into the living room where... his wife and I were in there talking, waiting for him to finish his interview. He said to me, "This one's got some sense. This one's..." and he gave me his blessing. He gave me his blessing. He said, "This one, yeah." Course, he was right both times.

Her name is Chrystal and we spell it C-H-R-Y-S-T-A-L, not C-R-Y. Was talking to her about that the other day like, "Has that presented a problem for you, people?" And she said, "I know I like the way it's spelled, but people do want to spell it the traditional way." Well yeah, I think it just brought out all the mother instincts, all of the protecting instincts, all of the indignities, things that had happened to me, that I wanted to make sure didn't happen to my children. I know there are things that could have been much worse. Certainly [inaudible 00:31:12]... My husband's from Birmingham, Alabama, so there are things I'm aware of that he talked about and I know I wasn't subjected to anywhere near how bad it could have been.

But the things I was subjected to and that I could intuit, I didn't want my children to endure it. And I [inaudible 00:31:34] have to go through that, and I wasn't naïve. I realized that just because it wasn't blatant and in your face... I didn't know the word institutional at the time, but I understood that it was there. It was lurking in the dark, behind the varnish and the smiley faces and all of that, but it was there. And so I was [inaudible 00:31:58] very protective and [inaudible 00:32:00] friends since we were just talking the other day about how I would always go and interview parents of the children that my kids... before they could go to their home, I need to get a sense of these people. Just go to white people's house. Sorry. That's that. [inaudible 00:32:16] over whatever, zealous mom, over whatever bearing mom, but I would do that.

And actually, that was triggered additionally by a situation with Chrystal where she wanted to play with... these kids would come to my house often over a period of, let's say, six months or so after I moved into the neighborhood. I never knew where these kids lived. They would just show up [inaudible 00:32:38] my yard. Can Chrystal play? Knocking on my door, "Can your daughter play?" And then once they knew her name, they would always come down. And they once said to me, "Can Chrystal come to our house and play?" And I said, "Sure."

Well now, by this time, I've seen these kids a dozen times, probably, but being the black mother I said, "So I need to know where you live," and they walked out to my yard and pointed down the street where the lady was maybe eight, nine houses down, if that far, on the opposite side of the street. She was watering the law and they said, "That's my mom. That's where we live." Okay. So I let Chrystal go. I stood out there until Chrystal got to the yard with them, and then I went in the house.

And shortly thereafter, Chrystal came home just boo-hoo-hoo-hoo-hoo-hooing, crying down hysterically. The kids' mom said, "White children don't play with black children," and I had to go home. Well, yeah, you don't even want to know. I don't even want to remember what I said to that lady because I just [inaudible 00:33:41]. I went down the street in a rage and she was saying, "It's not me, it's my husband. He's from Texas. He doesn't like black people. I didn't know Chrystal was black." She'd seen Chrystal in the yard. Chrystal's fair skinned and I don't know, just didn't know she was black. She said, "I didn't know, and so when they asked me if Chrystal could come down to play, I didn't know she was a black kid." And why does that matter?

But again, even trying to have reason with this lady, I was so furious that she'd hurt my child that way. And that was the last time Chrystal ever went down there or those kids came to my house, and they moved shortly. Within less than a year, they had moved. They were renting the house they were in. We were buying our home, but they moved off the street and we were the only black family in our street. And again, Chrystal had been revisiting a number of things and I told her after I got your message from LinkedIn. She said, "Well, my kids comment when they see my pictures from school," her school pictures, that she was the only black kid in all of her classes. She was the only one.

She went to Sunny Hills High, she went to Santa Ana High when we lived in Santa Ana. But she said her kids always... She was living in Columbus, Ohio, for the last 19 years and they always [inaudible 00:34:58] you were the only black kid? That's how that was. That's how it was, yeah.

So yeah, the mother in me just did everything I could to protect my children because I thought I don't need other people's ignorance or racism or anything directed toward my child in any harmful way. So I did whatever I could to block that and to screen it out. And if I went and talked to... We talked about this family that lived a block behind us and over several blocks the other direction. Judy was the mother's name. I don't remember... I think Craig, Judy and Craig. And I really liked Judy and Craig, and I got a good sense of them, and I thought these were good people. And so Chrystal and their daughter became friends over the years.

But she was pointing out that that was the only little white girlfriend she had. All her other friends were the girls from [inaudible 00:35:53] because she and I never talked about what that experience was like for her, so I asked her. In preparation of talking to you, I said, "So [inaudible 00:36:01] it's interesting to me. You and I have never talked. How was that for you? What did you think? How did you feel?" Yeah, just tell Mom what you thought.

And she was saying a lot of positive things that made me feel like it was the right thing to do, for sure. Because at a certain point, as the girls got on into high school, they begin to date or have more social life and none of them lived... Well, with the exception of the Hatchets, we all lived in Fullerton and Ewing, [inaudible 00:36:31] Ewing. But Laguna Beach, Tustin, the girls lived all around. Right? They weren't necessarily all living in the same city so we really had to work to get them together, right? We had to commute and bring the girls together.

So yeah, I just went with my gut instincts on it and I just did everything I could to protect my children and I had two more kids after that. And same, the same thing pretty much. All I can say is I was just fiercely protective of them. I made sure I was involved at the schools, I volunteered. I want to know the teachers, I want the teachers to know me, and I wanted them to be able to call me if there was a



problem. We showed up to let them know we were interested parents, we were involved parents. My husband was in education, and of course he became pretty known with many of the teachers who would teach part time because he advanced. He worked at Santa Ana College and was able to advance to a position called area dean, but he had a lot of teachers who taught teaching English as a second language and other classes through the program, the non credit program I think they call it now. So a lot of them began to know him.

Prior to that, I just made sure the teachers knew me. It wasn't drop my kid off and just disappear, no. I would go into the schools and get involved. I was always a parent who would work the little fairs and take the trips and, yeah, I was a stay at home mom so I was able to do those things. And again, my thing was... it was hovering. And if I sensed there was an issue or going to be an issue, I was going to speak out. And my kids knew. They were not shy. I had one who wanted me... my middle child wanted to handle her own things. It's like, "I got this, Mom. I'll take care of it." And/or not tell me things until after she'd taken care of it. But they knew to speak up, and they definitely knew to tell me, and they definitely knew Mom was going to be down there.

I have a nephew that stayed with me for about a period of six weeks when things were going on in my brother's home and he said to me, "Auntie, the thing that I so thank you for," he said, "Nobody ever showed up for me like you did." Something happened at school, I picked him up, I want to know, "How was school?" And he told me what had happened. I turned around and I went right back to the school. Teacher, we need to talk. And he said, "Nobody ever made me feel like they were going to stand up for me." And he said, "When you stood up for me like that," and just talked to me as an adult male, he's now 41. He talked to me about what that meant to him and what that said, that I don't have to put up. I don't have to have people mistreat me and be unfair to me. I [inaudible 00:39:16] to speak up for myself. It's important.

I have two nephews that have told me that. One was a bank situation where I was sitting out in the car waiting for my nephew at Chase bank. [inaudible 00:39:26] opened an account and started to teach him how to handle his money. I had put him on an allowance. He was living with me. And she treated him like he stole the money when he was working part time at the stadium and he went in with this money to put in his account, and she was questioning him where he got the money before she would actually deposit the money.

And I'm wondering why it's taking him so long. When he finally comes out, I went straight to the manager [inaudible 00:39:48] the manager and I went on to [inaudible 00:39:52] why she made me sit out here 30 minutes, whatever. At the time, I knew how long I'd been out there. And they brought her over, and she of course would just turn red. She said that [inaudible 00:40:02] her. But I was like, "Oh no, you don't treat him like that. You had no right. You had no right." And it was all cash. It was tips he would get from... he would deliver the food and people would be sitting in their seats and they... And my mom worked [inaudible 00:40:18] so he was getting lots of tips. These were his tips and she wanted to know where he got that money. That's not your business. [inaudible 00:40:25] are you kidding me? Really?

And I had gotten him rolls. We counted it out and put it in rolls, but I didn't go in with him because he's in high school. [inaudible 00:40:36] for all of that but he's going in to make a deposit. I'm sitting in the car, go make the deposit, come back. Mm-mm (negative), wasn't that simple.

I exposed them to the [inaudible 00:40:50] of Harlem, I exposed them to Alvin Ailey, I exposed them to Don't Bother Me, I Can't Cope when plays like that came to town, Vinnette Carroll's. I had so much admiration for her work. So culture in that way, it wasn't nec- Yeah, not entertainment in that way. And I'm still not the person, still. I have a friend who's trying to get me to watch the Godfather of

Harlem, "And I know you've seen this, and I know this is gone sweep the [inaudible 00:41:13]..." like, "I haven't seen it yet, hold up."

But I would take my kids to see Nikki Giovanni. We'd go see Maya Angelou, she'd come to UC Irvine. My daughter said to me, "Mom," at one point... I think she may have been in high school. No, at college. She said, "Mom, if you taking us to see them with the their water hoses and their dogs one more time..." she went to Spelman and she would call me and go, "So Mom, guess who's here." They have chapel, Sisters Chapel, once a week. And she got to meet all kind of African-American women, and also women like Hillary. Hillary knew early on she was going to run for president, so Hillary was down there making sure she had that connection with black women. Well, my daughter would call me and go, "Oh my God, Mom, I got to see Maya Angelou, and I remember when I was little and you took me to see Maya and I was like, 'Why do I have to listen to this lady?'"

You did not go to school on Martin Luther King's birthday. No, we're going to go watch some films and we're going to go see what the Civil Rights Movement was about. And I mean every year. [inaudible 00:42:14] Debbie Allen's Hot Chocolate Nutcracker when it came around. My kids were grown, but I'd take other black children to see it. It's like no, we don't see The Nutcracker because they don't have any black children in The Nutcracker. So Debbie Allen does the Hot Chocolate Nutcracker. So that's my show, that's what we're going to go see. And it's hot. And I'm just like... No, I just wanted validation.

You weren't getting... and I came out of school with nothing but the history of slavery after 12 years of education. I went to Cal State Fullerton. I'm an alum and I came out of there going, "Wait a minute, why aren't you doing shows that I can participate in?" I actually wanted to be an actress. That was not present. There was no programming and I thought, "Wait a minute, this is a educational institution. Don't tell me..." This is before nontraditional casting was a word that I saw in the LA Times with the Inner City Cultural Center and [Jaxie Bernard Jackson 00:43:17] had started that whole thing in the '60s. I didn't know that. I wasn't reading that. I was thinking this and saying to myself, "Why do we need to be doing a play, a Ibsen, and it's got to be all white people? I don't get this."

This is a education institution. I'm learning about Ibsen, why can't I do? I don't get it. It just didn't work for me. And I like [inaudible 00:43:41], I relate to his work. Tennessee Williams, I like some of his work. Why can't... This is not for profit theater. This is education theater and I am a student in this department. And it was very clear to me if I didn't sing and dance, there just wasn't a place. We don't have any roles for you. Now, there was one play and they needed a servant and a royal family. Well, we could use- No. I'm not auditioning for that.

...out of there in 1982. I went back to school after I was married and had three children. Originally in child development and psychology. And through those courses that I was taking under that major, I encountered theater classes, creative dramatics for children was one. Professor Ron Woods and Alan Zeltser, I did a... Through some classes I was taking for credit under those majors and I got so encouraged by all three of them that I should be in theater. And I started going, "Mm-mm (negative), never thought about that. This stuff is just fun." I was thinking, "Just think this stuff is fun."

And then in my senior year, it just sudden clicked. Like, "Whoa, this is something you do well and this is something that you feel hope, you feel complete." I felt at one with myself. It was like no, this is who you are. There was that awareness that finally clicked. I sat with my husband. He was getting his doctorate at USC and we had three children and we were budgeting and we were making it work. And now I said to him, "I think I want to do this."

And I looked at what was going to be required, and now I'm going to have to go two more years of school to make this happen because these are all the classes I'm going to need in that major to

graduate. And he said, "You should do it." He said, "You should seek your own bliss." And he said, "We'll make do. We're going to make do and don't worry about it." He said, "Just do it." And I did.

I dropped all the classes I was enrolled in and I redid my schedule, and I had to start from square one, ground zero, intro to theater. I had to learn the terminology so that I could speak to people in the- I had no background. I had seen a couple plays, I had felt that connection when I saw Young, Gifted, and Black, but I had not really thought of myself as an artist who was just making... I was just making all kinds of stuff. Once that door opened, I never went back to [inaudible 00:46:32].

I was gone. I had graduated in '82. Jewell came after me. But there were no black professors, remember, in theater. Acting, nothing. [inaudible 00:46:48], nothing. Dance, nothing. No people of color. They were all Caucasian. And Jewell belonged to an organization called the Orange County Links and I had started a theater company, so they were looking at me to give me some... to award me for my work with children in theater because I had a children's group too I started called Lorraine Hansberry Players.

Jewell wanted to... she was a member of this group, so she called me in for a meeting. She called me up and set up a meeting with me, and while she had me in that meeting, I guess during her screening for the award, which they did give to me, by the way, she said, "[inaudible 00:47:35] you graduated from here and I'm curious to know about this theater department." So I answered her candidly. She had office up on the top floor, over there [inaudible 00:47:47] it's across the street now. But she was up on the top floor. You can oversee the whole campus. She was smoking. She was sitting there with a cigarette. Back then, you could smoke in your office. And I laid out what I thought, what happened in my experience, and months later I heard some heads rolled over there. I to this day thought to myself, "Oh my God, did you do that?"

I made a comment once though, I was out at UC Irvine at a meeting they were... [inaudible 00:48:22] issues going on out they were, out at UC Irvine, racial issues. And they were calling people from the community in. I was perceived to be one of those people because of the things that I was doing in the community, so they invited me to this meeting and they were talking about strategies and things that needed to be done. And I made a comment that today I'm embarrassed by, just said, "I'm not real into politics." I'm not a political person at this point. His name was Tim. Can't think of Tim's last name. He was a professor out there and he said, "Sister, everything in life is political." Boy, that is truer than I ever, ever could ever come to know.

Well, my husband of course is very cued into a lot of it. He's very interested in politics so we have a lot more conversations now about it that I'm interested. He was teaching police and the law. He has a story about being stopped and being profiled in Santa Ana. And when the cops stopped him, it was his afro and his dashiki, I suppose. They asked where he was coming from and he said, "Class." And they said, "What class are you teaching?" He said, "Police and the law." It was minorities. Minorities and the police, and that was a class he was teaching.

I had started the theater company, which was called the Inter-Cultural, inter, I-N-T-E-R hyphen Cultural Committee for the Performing Arts because I was determined to do nontraditional casting. So I did do Picnic [inaudible 00:49:45] and with a nontraditional cast, I will tell you. But what I realized living in Orange County, because I was devoid of any cultural enrichment here, relative to my culture, other than the black church which I grew up in, nondenominational albeit, not Baptist or Methodist or some of the others that I think are a lot more... maybe culturally speaking, more grounded. Mine was a little more liberal, he was a little more progressive.

[inaudible 00:50:18] the church I grew up in. I joined that as an adult. As a child, I grew up in a church called Community Temple. It was founded by a formerly Methodist minister, and as I say, it was

nondenominational, which was pretty progressive at the time for Santa Ana anyway. So that's where I grew up, in that church.

But I recognized that I wanted my children to have the cultural educational grounding that went along with exposing them to their culture, and so... And there are so many other benefits, confidence building, learning how to present oneself publicly, how to stand in front of a group of people and speak confidently. So I wanted children to be exposed because my husband kept saying, "You're battling a challenging world with these adults trying to expose people," to the things that I thought were important. And he said, "You got to start with the kids."

So I had started the Inter-Cultural Committee for the Performing Arts, and after two years or three years of doing that, I branched off... I kept that going, but I branched into a program for the children in Lorraine Hansberry. As I said, I'd been so influenced. The first black play that really grabbed me and I connected with as a person of color was Young, Gifted, and Black, and so I was always wanting to jump into some research. Okay, who wrote this play that I just so resonated with?

So I looked her up of course. I found out she... first black woman on Broadway, 1959, 10 years after I was born. [inaudible 00:51:58] Sidney Poitier and [inaudible 00:52:00] Lloyd Richards, who later became Dean of Theater at Yale. All of this stuff. I started learning about the Negro Ensemble in New York, started researching that, Douglas Turner Ward. One of the foremost playwrights that came out of the program is a guy named Gus Edwards who is in Arizona and he and I have become good friends over the years.

But I just began to dig into it and learn more about it because I got none of that at Cal State Fullerton, zilch. Nobody of color. This last night going through a file, because I was wanting to look at some of the newspaper articles that were done at the time... I was doing the fashion show in the theater. I have a big file like this and I [inaudible 00:52:40]. So that was the research. Yeah, because that play just spoke to me. It just grabbed me. I mean, I just was so connected and emotional and moved, which taught me what the power of theater can do because I had that experience.

So years later, when I was naming the troupe, that's... I wanted to honor her, and so that's why I named them that. So we would do a play for Black History Month with the kids. We had workshops all year, except for a certain time of the year we wouldn't do the workshops. Guess it was the summer we wouldn't do the workshops, which would not make sense to me right now because I would... [inaudible 00:53:22] we did them. But I think the kids would all going... parents were vacationing or whatever, so we wouldn't do summertime.

But we would [inaudible 00:53:29] from the time school started, every Saturday we had workshops with these kids for several hours, and I had a friend who wrote an original piece for them because what I wanted to do was teach. It was a tool to teach them the Maya and the Nikki Giovannis. And we would chew out a play called Back to Being Black, and it was about this black kid who didn't think it was important to learn about his history. And so they had all this poetry, the Langston Hughes and the Dunbar. I said, "Oh, that's so relevant right now today." [inaudible 00:53:59] read the [inaudible 00:54:00], oh yeah, this is a very powerful poem.

We chose different works. She wrote a through line around it. His name was The Facts. He would always say, "Just the facts, man. Just the facts." And my son played that role. And then we had the little historians in the background, and they would tell him, "No, this is your history," and they would cite things to him about various people, the [inaudible 00:54:24] truce and the Harriet Tubmans and yeah, got that from [inaudible 00:54:26].

So I was borrowing from the stuff I learned at Cal State Fullerton. But I'm just saying, it doesn't have to be... You can jazz it up a little bit. And that piece became a signature piece for the kids, and we

would get invited... I kid you not, the IRS... I don't even... somebody who worked for the IRS saw that show, [inaudible 00:54:48] for their Black History Month celebration at the IRS. And when I first got the letter, I went, "Oh my God," [inaudible 00:54:55] oh wait, wait it's to perform.

And they were in Irvine, and each year we did that for about four or five years. They would pay me, I don't know, 1500, 2000. I don't remember. I would use the money to feed them breakfast. The parents would drop them off at my house the night before because we would do it at lunchtime at the IRS. So it was a whole system we had put in place. I had to have people take off from work to help me because I had to have a ratio of parent to child, so I had volunteers. And we would also take the kids because the liability of renting vans and whatever, we didn't have the money to do that. It wasn't enough to do that.

But they spent the night at my house, sleeping bags all over my family room, and [inaudible 00:55:33] get them up the next morning, we'd get them... everybody got dressed, we got to breakfast, we got them out there, they did the show, then we fed them lunch, then I had them until the evening when their parents picked them up. And that was a ritual. We did that every year.

And they did at Valley High School, so we started getting requests for this show. It got to the place [inaudible 00:55:50] the liability of carting these children around once I became really aware I was carrying liability insurance that I really couldn't afford to do it unless I got some more money. So as you learn. I had a home we were buying, but I thought, "I'm at such risk and so are the other parents," so we would do the workshop and then we'd do a public performance weekend. We'd do a Saturday Sunday matinee so the parents could bring other family members because the focus was really about them learning and interacting. They had that interaction with each other.

And so I did that until I moved to San Diego. I moved to San Diego in 1990 and ended up not being able to hang onto not only that, but the theater company would change names from the Inter-Cultural Committee for the Performing Arts... we changed our names to the Orange County Black Actors Theater. And if that's what it took to get the money, fine. Yes, in fact, because I didn't feel the need to do work with white actors. There are a lot of opportunities for them. We were the ones that didn't have opportunities and platforms, and so what I was trying to show, that I could take a Tennessee Williams play which has been done on Broadway now, twice as much success, and do it with an all black cast.

I saw Death of a Salesman in the Bay Area years ago. Not the Bay Area, up in Santa Barbara. [inaudible 00:57:17] theater up there, [inaudible 00:57:20] with an all black cast. And I sat there going, "Oh my God." It was deeper for me and I just thought, "This works. This really works." Can't think of the name of that theater company now. I saw that in the '80s, the late '80s, and that stuck with me how powerful that was that I could take the classics and it was a way also to... this somehow if you're black, your humanity is less. It's like [inaudible 00:57:51] this is a play that has all the accolades attached to it. It's one of your sacred cows. Let's look at what happens with this play when we do it with an all black cast. It was wonderful, wonderful.

Literally there are black folks here who do not see you, and I went through years of speaking to people who would not speak to me. I'm like, "Oh, did they hear me?" Oh no, they heard you. They have now been conditioned not to acknowledge you, just like Caucasians. And that took me a long time to realize, they don't want you to see them because they're not trying to acknowledge you. So [inaudible 00:58:34] don't speak to them.

My daughter who's 44? Six, she's going to be 46 in December. She asked my husband and I recently with all of this... what's going on right now, she said, "How did you raise us not to be angry black people?" And I hadn't given that a whole lot of that. I remember I tell my husband I didn't bring this up to her, but I remember her telling me she thought I was racist when I was trying to explain to her

what was happening when her very, very close white girlfriends that she had in elementary school as a gay kid [inaudible 00:59:14] not invite her to things when they started dating. And I could see that she was being left out.

Sharon Sekhon:

[crosstalk 00:59:21].

Adleane Hunter:

And I knew these were her buddies, these were her girls. And I felt so bad for her, and I knew what was going on. And I was trying to explain it to her and she said, "Mom, I think..." She said, "I think you're prejudiced," or some- I remember thinking, "Oh no, girl. You just don't have a clue." She went to college and then she came back from Spelman going, "I don't even want to look at white people. I can't go to the gym because they speak to you, they try to talk to you. I'm going [inaudible 00:59:44]." I was like, "Why are you going?" And she said, "Well, because I don't want to talk to them." She came back very militant. And so we taught them to survive, I guess, and cope in this culture, as we have. And feel, you know what I mean?

Sharon Sekhon:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Adleane Hunter:

I think if I felt like they were under attack and they needed to really have more calluses and be more hardcore to deal with some of the crap that they'd have to deal with if they lived in Los Angeles, for instance, that's what... Literally, when I went to Los Angeles more and started getting involved in the arts scene there periodically, my friends that I made there would comment about how naïve I was about culture around [inaudible 01:00:22] talking to my girlfriend's neighbor.

I'm waiting out in front of her house one day for her to come home from work, we were going to go do something, and I'm out of my car talking to the neighbor, and she rolls up, and she says, "What are you doing?" I said, "Oh, I'm talking to-" And she said, "You don't talk to her. Get in the car. What are you doing?" My girlfriend who's from Philly and lived in [inaudible 01:00:38] most of her life said to me, "Don't be smiling at any people. Don't make eye contact." I mean, I had to be taught to not do my southern, "Hi, how are you?"