Jerome Hunter:

My full name is Jerome Hunter. I have no middle name. I was actually named after a pediatrician, a white doctor in Alabama who, I guess he had delivered my older brother. He had asked my mother to name one after him, so she did. Dr. Jerome Meyers, I believe that was him. M-E-Y-E-R-S, I'm not even sure. I was rarely called Jerome, only probably when I started school. Jerry is pretty much what I was called. That's pretty much what I go by now, except of course, in formal situations.

Jerome Hunter:

I was born in 1946. Of course, it was the segregated South. My parents both came in from farms. My father was from Lowndes County and my mother was from Elmore County in Alabama. We grew up here. We went to, they assigned us Black, they used the term colored signs. It's segregation apartheid for our country.

Jerome Hunter:

My father worked in the steel mills. He had a seventh grade education. My mother finished high school. So, I grew up in a working class family in the segregated South. We went to all Black schools, up until the time that I left. I saw you had an article when I left and went, or came to California. But I went to Brunetta C Hill Elementary School, A.H. Parker High School, up until the age of 17.

Jerome Hunter:

It's like anything else. You're a historian, so you realize the circumstances that were there. I was very fortunate, I think, with one of my friends, as with my choice of parents, as well as the circumstances that I grew up in, because my mother was a doting parent. She never worked outside the home. We had encyclopedias. She was in the PTA. She was a Den Mother.

Jerome Hunter:

Very unusual for our community. My brother and I went to YMCA day camp. It was all segregated, but that was for the community that we came up in, we were pretty rare. That was because my dad, in addition to working in the steel mills, on Saturdays, he delivered dry cleaning. A lot of people didn't have cars to take their clothes to the cleaners. On Sundays, he'd cut hair on the back porch.

Jerome Hunter:

So, he worked seven days a week, and she focused all her attention on me. I have an older brother, and then an older sister, half-sister by my dad's first marriage. Then I have two younger sisters. All of us, I didn't realize, I was telling that lady in the newspaper. When I was an undergraduate at UCR, taking a sociology class, I realized that growing up as an urban dwelling family of six, and looked at my dad's income that we were raised in poverty.

Jerome Hunter:

But it never seemed that way. We had a house that my family owned. We owned the car. My dad got new cars periodically. The situation in the South was just what you were raised with and what you got accustomed to. So that was the reality that I grew up in until I left to come to California.

Jerome Hunter:

My father's name is Lawrence David Hunter, but he went pretty much by L.D., so L.D. Hunter. My mother's name is Theresa, T-H-E-R-E-S-A, Theresa Brown was her name.

Jerome Hunter:

I came out with two other young ladies that lived with white families in Santa Barbara. I lived with the minister of the Unitarian Church. I don't know if you know much about Unitarianism, but it's a pretty liberal religion, and a big change AME Zion, the African American Episcopal Zion Church that I was raised in.

Jerome Hunter:

And [inaudible 00:04:17], for me, coming was a big change. As you can imagine, growing up in a segregated style, and then three days later, you're living with white people. You can't even imagine the changes that I went through personally, particularly in lieu of the Emmet Till situation that I grew up in as a child. Reflecting to that, and relating to white people, and coming from the back of the bus.

Jerome Hunter:

I tell people the story all the time. The first time that Mrs. Crane, the family that I lived with. We were going downtown. When I got ready to get in the car, I started getting in the back seat, because that was what I was used to. She said, "Why are you getting back there?" I said, "You know." She said, "Oh, no, no. You come sit up front." But I wasn't real anxious, or I was very anxious the whole time. The first night that I was there and they said dinner was ready, my first reaction was to say, "No, thank you." A year would be a long time to go without eating. It was a big adjustment.

Jerome Hunter:

There was no comparison between the high school that I came from and Santa Barbara High at that time, or the community that I lived in. In my family, when I grew up, before they bought a house, we lived in what was called a shotgun, or a double tenant house. Two families lived in three rooms on either side, and shared a toilet or commode on the back porch, with no hot water. That's what I grew up in, until my family moved right down the street into a house that our family, it was their home, so one bathroom. Still, all of us were in a maybe five room house. I think it was a three bedroom house.

Jerome Hunter:

52, so I was born in '46. We moved into that house, and again, it was a big thing. My dad had a lot of pride in the fact that he owned the house. It was, again, I don't know how you'd describe it. It was right behind the supermarket, so it wasn't like we moved into the suburbs, or anything of that nature.

Jerome Hunter:

But he owned it, and they took real good care of it, or we did. I mowed the lawn, and washed windows, and did things like that around the house. My brother, as he got a little older, actually worked at the supermarket. It was owned by an Italian family that, at one point, lived above the store, which was unusual to have, although they were white people living in the neighborhood.

Jerome Hunter:

At one point, they moved out, when they were able to do that, which was an option that Blacks did not have at that time, to leave the area. It was called Smithfield, which is one of the communities in Birmingham. 508 2nd Street North, in Birmingham.

Jerome Hunter:

You've seen the pictures that Mammie, that his mother showed. It was pretty clear that white women were taboo. That was just something that you didn't do. From time to time, my brother and I would go down to

Wetumpka, which is where my mother's people were. I just remember going into a little store where you would buy things. The store, when we went in, because my mother was always real, as I said, she was a doting mother, so we were always neat, and clean, and very polite.

Jerome Hunter:

So, when we went in the store, it was pretty apparent that we weren't from Wetumpka, and one of the white women that was in the store started talking with us, asking a lot of questions. After that, we never were allowed to go back in again. My aunt told us, she said, "That woman's got too much interest in you." It was just kind of a taboo.

Jerome Hunter:

It created challenges, of course, when I got to Santa Barbara high, as far as the relationship that I had with my peers, particularly with white girls. Because they were a little more assertive, and I was very uncomfortable. It took a while, still, a long time to make an adjustment to feel comfortably publicly. It's something that was ingrained in me, and I'm sure other Blacks coming up at that same time, which was a part of what it was intended to do.

Jerome Hunter:

Oh! Oh, my goodness, no. At the time that I came up, not at all. Of course, when I got to California, I would obviously see some of that. But even in high school in Santa Barbara, hmm. Don't remember a lot of it in Alabama, for sure. That's not the case now, but of course, it wasn't then.

Jerome Hunter:

You said you were going to try to talk with Donna Hatchet. Birds eye view of that situation that she and James went through, at the time that they were here in Orange County, in California, and the kinds of situations that they had to exist and endure.

Jerome Hunter:

He was a probation officers. As a matter of fact, we just talked to Donna day before yesterday. She was saying that he and Harlan Lambert were friends. They knew each other because they were both in, I guess you would call it, he was a probation officer, and Lambert, obviously was a policeman. So, I guess, whatever you would call it. Not police service, but apparently Donna was saying he and Lambert knew each other well.

Jerome Hunter:

At one point when I was working at Santa Ana College, I actually did a course. It was called Contemporary Urban Issues. One of the courses was called Minority Groups and the Law. It focused on the relationship between the minority community and the police, but one chapter was called, or maybe it was even a book, it's been so long ago, called Blacks In Blue, that focused on Black police officers. They used the analogy of a nutcracker that they got caught in, between their loyalty to the community, and then the expectations of being a police officer. It wasn't an easy place to be.

Jerome Hunter:

Another one of the chapters, and it's been a while, long time since I did that, was called The Police As a Minority Group. That kind of talked about the fact that policemen, as a group, are subject to the same kind of treatment as any other minority group; being identified visibly, typified or stereotyped by virtue of one individual within the group.

Jerome Hunter:

Again, don't ask me to say a lot more than that. It's been years now, since I dealt with that information. But I think about it now, particularly all that when people start talk about defunding the police. Look at the folks, particularly minority policemen and see the role that they're in, in light of Black Lives Matter, and some other things of that nature.

Jerome Hunter:

Yeah, Mayor Bradley was a real unusual personality, though. You saw it in some of the news articles. I was a [inaudible 00:11:23] fellow back in the '60s, so I got to actually work on one of his campaigns. I think he was the commencement speaker the year that I graduated from UC Riverside. But a real, I'm trying to think of the term, mellow personality.

Jerome Hunter:

When I was up there, it was when he had his first campaign against Sam Yorty, and it was ugly. It was racist. He didn't make it the first time, as I recall. But I remember seeing little stickers that people used, that they had on things, that had real racist terminology and everything, about the mayor. But he never seemed to allow that kind of stuff to get him down. He always had, you mentioned earlier, a positive, upbeat attitude. It prevailed, and it worked for him.

Jerome Hunter:

That's what I mean. Just by getting to know him, I never saw him when he wasn't smiling and pleasant. I always saw him in different circumstances. Again, that always spoke to me.

Jerome Hunter:

It was a much nicer physical facility. Based on test scores and things of that nature, I was actually placed in the college prep track. So, it was very competitive. It was a challenge for me. First of all, being uncomfortable around white people. That's just the reality of where that was.

Jerome Hunter:

There was, I'm going to say at that time, a big campus, probably about 2,000 students. At the same time, I'm speaking from memory, which is probably suspect. Maybe 50 Black students on the campus. I say this with all due respect. Because of the classes that I was enrolled in; physics and trig; I didn't have Black students in ne of my classes, except history and physical education, and didn't live with them. I lived in a white neighborhood, so it was a big challenge for me.

Jerome Hunter:

I remember, I would tell the story. When I had P.E., which is where only the Black kids were, when they would have sports, the Black kids would assume that I would get on their team, because they broke it up based on race. Then the white kids, I was in their class. They assumed they knew me. They assumed I'd be on their team.

Jerome Hunter:

So, sometimes I didn't even have to try to make the choice between the people of my own race and the friends that I had in class. I played football when I was in Birmingham, so I would go high in the draft when teams were picked, because I didn't mind blocking and doing things of that nature. But anyway, it was a little bit of a challenge.

Jerome Hunter:

But the Black community, sometimes I was there, and I was somewhat embraced. I got to know some of the families, had dinner with some of them. I went to Santa Barbara City College, concurrent with my senior year of high school, because I had accumulated enough credits to do that, and got to know a couple of other African American athletes there. We developed a good friendship. They took me under their wing and helped me out in some ways, to make me more familiar with the community.

Jerome Hunter:

Of course, I went to the Black barbershop there, so I got to know folks there. They had articles about me, and Marilyn, and Betty, the other kids that came out with me, in the paper. So, the people in the community knew who I was. It was for the most part, a pretty pleasant experience.

Jerome Hunter:

There was, just to be honest with you, at some point, there was a Swastika that was painted on the house, the Cranes' home when I was there. It's not clear whether that was as a part of a reaction to my being there, or, Reverend Crane was a pretty liberal minister and had come out pretty strongly against the John Birch Society, which was prevalent in Santa Barbara at that time. So, they just wanted to make sure they got that off before I saw it. But I knew. It's the reality of the society that we're in. Coming from Alabama, you adjust to that reality at a very early age.

Jerome Hunter:

But for the most part, it was a very pleasant experience. I stayed in touch with the Cranes. Mrs. Crane passed away and Reverend Crane remarried. When Adeline and I were married, he actually conducted the marriage ceremony for us. He conducted a reception at their home.

Jerome Hunter:

He passed away a few years ago. Jack, his son that was my age, passed away a couple of years ago. So, there were Jack, David and Douglas were the other brothers. Douglas now, the youngest, is the only one that's still alive. We have communication. He lives up in, I think it's Oxnard Ventura area now.

Jerome Hunter:

So, we keep in contact. My kids, when I would go back out, I would take the kids up to visit. So, we kept a rapport and relationship. I probably developed a closer relationship with him as an adult, when I would go back and visit, and talk with him about philosophical kinds of issues and political kinds of things.

Jerome Hunter:

The experience for me was positive, everything that came up. Of course, when you're out with kids, things come out. But again, when I think about it, it wouldn't be something that I would not have done, to leave Alabama to come to California. It's a good decision. It was a life changing decision.

Jerome Hunter:

I'll tell just a quick story about that. When I was trying to make a decision about whether or not to leave, my parents were always, "It's your decision to make." Again, you have to think back on your senior year in high school. This was a big move. I was playing football. I was in the choir. I was on Student Council, all the kind of things that make the senior year a big year for you.

Jerome Hunter:

My brother had been president of the student body. He would say, "If you're president of the student body, we would be the only two brothers." It was the kind of thing that teenagers would really feel real good about staying there for senior year.

Jerome Hunter:

I sat down and I talked with my dad. My dad told me, said, "When I left [inaudible 00:17:51]," he said, the country. He said, "I came to Birmingham to work in the steel mills because it was nigger work." He said it was work white people didn't do. "If you went out to the steel mill right now," he told me, "You couldn't get the job I have." He looked at me in a kind of candor that was very unusual for him. He said, "Son, if you want to make something out of yourself," he said, "you've got to get out of here."

Jerome Hunter:

I followed his advice. It wasn't a simple, easy decision, but it was a good one. That's what I meant. It's not a decision that I think back on and think that I should have done something differently.

Jerome Hunter:

It was tough. You had to realize this is the '60s, so there was no, of all the technology and everything that exists now. All that stuff didn't exist, so it was long distance phone calls, which were very expensive, and letters. So basically, I toughed my way through it. I think there's a young lady that's doing a project now, called Beyond the Mason, which is dealing with students that were in situations like mine.

Jerome Hunter:

There were quite a few set up, primarily by the Quakers, that took Black kids out of the South back East, long story short. She was asking about the music that we listened to. I remember actually, it was a country western song called I Want to Go Home that made me think about my family, and my parents, and my friends.

Jerome Hunter:

There were kids that I had gone to, in my senior year in high school that I had started in kindergarten with. So, I had known them all my life. Now, I don't do it anymore, but for probably 30, 50 years, I would go to the reunions at both schools, at both Parker High that I attended in Birmingham, and Santa Barbara High.

Jerome Hunter:

I did the 50 year reunion at both schools. Of course, now there are a lot of folks that are dying off. There's not a lot of them left. I still have communication with the students at Parker High in Birmingham, because one of the young ladies that came out with me went back to Alabama, finished Tuskegee, and she's now the secretary of the alumni of 1964 from Parker. So I'm included. I went to, again, they're 50 year. Another reunion they had in Vegas, so I still keep in contact with those that are alive.

Jerome Hunter:

Didn't know a lot. I knew the history, who John Birch was at first. That was very strong in Orange County when I came here, and in Santa Ana, particular. I can't say a lot more about it. I just remember being on the campus at Santa Ana College, and I took a course in Soviet politics. I carried a handbook around with me, or the textbook for the class. I remember some of the faculty members making comments about the fact that I was studying about Russia, or things of that nature.

Jerome Hunter:

But I never had any personal contact with any of the folks that were there, or any issues, anything that took place. All I know is what I read in the papers. Of course, I got it from the other side in Santa Barbara, with the Birch Society there. The fact that Lex Crane was in the paper, and coming out in opposition to some of the things that they support, but I wasn't involved in the detail of that at all.

Jerome Hunter:

No, it's very interesting. I had really thought that I was going to be going back to Santa Barbara, because I had friends there, and I knew people there, and I was going to go on to UC. But the people at Riverside actually came to the campus, recruited me, and at the time, suggested that it would be easier for me, once I got in the system, to move from one campus to the other, as opposed to being a community college transfer.

Jerome Hunter:

As a student in the community college, my grade point average, I'll back up a little bit. I didn't take foreign language when I was in high school. So I took foreign language when I got to Santa Ana College. It was very difficult for me, difficult meaning that I got Cs. When you're looking at 60 units and you've got 12 units in C, my grade point average was right at a 3.0, which I wanted to get into the university.

Jerome Hunter:

So, long story short, I transferred to UCR because they recruited me, and I knew, or I thought that I was going to have to take another semester of Spanish there, which is the language that I took. I was able to manipulate so I could get out of Spanish Language Hall. Then, once I got there, I got a job as a resident advisor. That was, I couldn't leave. I was getting room and board.

Jerome Hunter:

In those days, there was no tuition for university. You had fees, but it was $80 a quarter, or something like that. So, I had no tuition, had room and board. So, the Santa Barbara thing kind of just went out. Unfortunately, I joke with the folks with UCR about it. I went there in the spring time because I transferred. The orange trees were blooming. I said, "Oh, this is great."

Jerome Hunter:

Then summer hit. That's before they've done things with [inaudible 00:23:12]. I don't want to get into that. But again, that was a good experience for me. I don't regret having made that decision. I didn't know much. One of the, I want to say maids. I don't know what the appropriate term is. The ladies that worked in the dormitories where I was that cleaned up were African American.

Jerome Hunter:

We got to be friends because later, after moving off of Spanish Hall, I was a resident advisor. I think I mentioned that. I would always, her name was Addie. Whenever she would come up a hall to clean up, I'd always teel the guys, "Okay, there's a lady on the hall." She got a big kick out of it. You know guys be running around and stuff like that. So anyway, we got to be really good friends. She would invite me over to eat with, she had a son. She wanted me to meet her son. She lived with her mother and sister.

Jerome Hunter:

I got to know some folks in the community, but most of the time was spent, I was a student, so most of my time was spent on campus. Not really a lot of contact with people in the African American

community. There were a couple of students at UCR that were from Riverside. Of course, the guys in the city liked to come over to the ladies' dormitory at that time. I think the dormitory is now integrated for gender, but at that time, we had male and female dorms.

Jerome Hunter:

So, those guys would come on. I got to know some of them when they would come over to try to get to know some of the young ladies on the campus. But I didn't venture off all that much. There's a real difference in the community as opposed to what's on campus. What was in the community was a respective level of comfort. Some of that could have been internal.

Jerome Hunter:

Marilyn and I went to the same high school so we actually knew each other before we left. Her father worked in the steel mill. He worked with my father, so we knew each other. Betty was from Bessemer. She was outside from them. Then, once this year was over, I never had any contact with her at all.

Jerome Hunter:

My sense was probably more difficult because listening and talking about relationships, and dating, and things of that nature, guys could be more aggressive. Although, I was, as I said, Emmet Till oriented. I probably wasn't as aggressive as some other folks might have been. But with the girls, I don't remember them having boyfriends. We went out. The three of us would go out and do things. Then there were the LRY'ers, the Liberal Religious Youth group from the church that we would do things together with.

Jerome Hunter:

Again, I'm talking from memory of a long time ago. I don't remember either of them having boyfriends. So, my guess would be that it was not as easy a transition, because it wasn't easy for me, but probably more difficult for them, would be my assessment of it.

Jerome Hunter:

No. No, no, no. There was one situation, again, where I think at UCR, where there was this bar that supposedly had some real good chili. There were a couple of white students, girls that had been in my classes, that wanted to go over to this bar called Frank's. I went over there. You could sense the discomfort that some of the people in there had when I went in with them, but there was no physical violence or anything. Again, it was just community. It was just regular U.S. stuff. As you know, that's a part of the culture that we come up in.

Jerome Hunter:

So, I never really had any negative interaction with any of the external people. Then of course, on the campus, I lived in the dorms. I was an RA. I was president of Black Student Union. I always felt very comfortable and very much accepted there. One of the professors that I had, a Dr. Ron Loveridge, wound up being the Mayor of Riverside.

Jerome Hunter:

That's a different story, but he kind of took me under his wing because he was a poli sci. He was a political science instructor. He was the one that directed me, suggested that I consider The CORO Foundation. I still have contact with him. He's retired from being mayor, but he still does some classes at UCR. Up until the pandemic, I'd actually go back from time to time, and talk with some of the students in his political science classes.

Jerome Hunter:

I refer to Dr. Loveridge as Ron now. He's a little bit older than I am, but we go back. He'll tell people. The people now, I'm trying to think of Ivan Hinderaker, who the administration building was named after, was chancellor when I was there. I have stories to tell. I won't bore you with those.

Jerome Hunter:

This one I actually told, because they actually invited me back to be commencement speaker. At that time, I was Black Student Union President when Dr. King was assassinated. So, I was studying in my room and some of the Black kids that were watching TV came in and said, "Did you hear the news?" I said, "No." They said, "Dr. King's been assassinated." I said, "No! Really?" They said, "You know, we're going to demand that the flags be flown at half-staff." They said, "They're having a convocation tomorrow." He said, "We demand that Black students be allowed to speak at the convocation."

Jerome Hunter:

Dr. Hinderaker used to walk through campus from, I don't know if you're familiar with the campus. I don't remember the name of the street. So, I had met him. I had met him on campus. He knew who I was and he gave me his home phone number [inaudible 00:28:59] anything I could do. So, I got on the phone and I called him. I said, "This is Jerry Hunter." He said, "Oh, Jerry, did you hear the news?" I said, "Yeah." He said, "What a terrible thing."

Jerome Hunter:

This is the true story. He said, "You know, we're going to have a convocation tomorrow and I wonder if you would be willing to speak." He said, "I've already called the facilities people. I told them to fly their flag at half mast." He was good, though. He was good. Management people would call it management by walking around. He kept a pretty good thumb and had open access.

Jerome Hunter:

I told Ron Loveridge when I talked to him. I said, "I started looking around my room to see if it was bugged, because he was right on task." The next day, I made some comments about the assassination and that kind of thing. But that was on campus and I felt very welcomed, acknowledged. As I mentioned, the relationship I had with Dr. Loveridge, I still have contact.

Jerome Hunter:

When I was a CORO fellow, I worked with Yvonne Burke. I was assigned to her office. Hinderaker had been one of her teachers at UCLA. She spoke very highly of him when I talked with her, however we talked, and his name came up. He had taught her when she was there, and she had very high regard for him.

Jerome Hunter:

In my life, I've been very fortunate in some of the folks that I've had a chance to come into contact with and work with. It's an interesting story related to her, as well. When I was there as a CORO fellow, I was working in her office. Interns, they just have you sitting around opening letters, and doing things like that, but she was running for re-election.

Jerome Hunter:

So, I started calling Black Student Unions, trying to solicit volunteers to come in and work on her campaign. So, I'd called [inaudible 00:30:55] and I was only there part of the day. So, what would start happening is, people would start calling back, leaving messages for me when I wasn't there.

Jerome Hunter:

So finally, Fran Savage, who was her chief executive officer, whatever the title was keeps on saying, "Who is this Jerry Hunter who people keep calling here for?" So, they realized that I wasn't just sitting around opening mail. She asked me one time. She said, "Have you ever done a press release?" I said, "Never done one. I know how to write." I said, "Show me one."

Jerome Hunter:

So, they gave me one, and so I started doing press releases. Then, when they started asking her to go out and do speaking that she wasn't able, they said, "You ever do any public speaking?" I said, "I can speak. What kind?" There was a place called Gloria [inaudible 00:31:36], which was a senior citizen center. They wanted someone to go over and talk about her campaign. I said, "Give me the points. I'll do that."

Jerome Hunter:

So, by the time I finished, I was doing press releases, and going out and speaking. It was a fun experience. I saw her, wow, I think it was at one of the colleges up in Los Angeles, Southwest College, when a new president, I say new at that time. Yvonne was, I think in Congress at that time. We just had quite a flashback, her little intern, because at that time, I was a college president. She remembered my working in her office as an intern. I think Autumn, her daughter, is in the Assembly now. I don't know her, but from time to time, I'll see things about her.

Jerome Hunter:

We were the first. There was no Black Student Union. We started off as Ebony Social, Political, and Cultural Organization, or something like that. I can't remember. Then, during the '60s, as things became a little more militant, and that was just because to bring the Black kids together on campus, there weren't a lot.

Jerome Hunter:

I think I was there, and I transferred from Santa Ana College, so I went in as a junior. So, some of the freshmen, I hoped to try to pull them together. We set up this organization for dances and things of that nature. Of course, on some of the campus, they were burning buildings, putting LSD in the water system. That's all kind of things that were much more militant.

Jerome Hunter:

So, we changed from Ebony, whatever it was called, Ebony Social, Political, Cultural Organization to the Black Student Union. I was selected as the first president of that group. I went there in '67, so I guess that would have been around '68, somewhere in there.

Jerome Hunter:

As I mentioned, I think when you grow up in this society, you learn to not accept it, but to understand what it is. So, I think even now, when things happen, I'm rarely surprised. I'm disappointed often, but I realize the true nature. If you're a historian, you see the same thing.

Speaker 2:

Yeah.

Jerome Hunter:

That a part of the history and the culture of this nation is racism, is xenophobia. If you read Dr. King, and as a historian, you probably go back beyond him to Gandhi, you realize particularly Gandhi's saying you almost have a responsibility to do that.

Jerome Hunter:

I had an uncle who, well, let me back up. When I finished high school in Santa Barbara, following my dad's advice, I really didn't want to go back to Alabama. My mother's youngest brother was living in Compton. I talked with him and asked him if I could live with him, and stay out here, and go to school. My aunt just passed away a couple years ago, so I told them. He said, "Let me talk with my wife." She said okay. So, I said I stayed out here because my Aunt Ellen said I could stay out here.

Jerome Hunter:

But they agreed to let me live with them. He was a minister in The Church of Christ. They moved from Compton to Santa Ana. I wound up going to Santa Ana, and living with them. He let me stay in his home for two and a half years, until I got through junior college, or community college.

Jerome Hunter:

Just in Santa Barbara just concurrent with my senior year in high school, and then Santa Ana. I actually earned an associate's degree, I think in Liberal Studies from Santa Ana.

Jerome Hunter:

Now called Civic Center Drive, but 1426 West 8th Street. It's now Civic Center Drive, but between Bristol and Pacific, on Civic Center, on 8th Street.

Jerome Hunter:

When we first moved there, the neighbors threw fruit, rotten fruit on the porches. It was pretty much at that time, still kind of a white neighborhood. So, we weren't necessarily accepted there. Other than that, it was not any different any place else that I went. I went to school. I worked first at Mayfair Market, which is no longer there, over on 1st Street in Santa Ana, and I worked at Allstate Insurance Company, which is no longer there, which was on 4th Street over in Santa Ana.

Jerome Hunter:

So, I worked 20, 30 hours a week, went to school, and went to church with my uncle, and developed some social life by the time I got ready to leave. But again, it was not an oppressive environment, but I was very much aware. I want to say, I can't remember a time frame of when Officer Sasser was killed, because I knew Michael. Not well, so it kind of was tangentially for me, with the circumstances and everything, around that. I was not involved in any of that, at all.

Jerome Hunter:

Then, as I mentioned, and I transferred to Riverside in what must have been '67. So, then I was pretty much there until, I think back, went to that, went to L.A., to CORO, then the military, and didn't come back until '71. So, that's why I was suggesting to you, looking at the time frame that you have, there was a large portion of that time that I wasn't really an Orange County resident.

Jerome Hunter:

I work on the OCCCO Board, Orange County Congregation Community Organization. I don't know if you're familiar with them.

Speaker 2:

No, I'm not.

Jerome Hunter:

I serve on that board now. I think the circumstances for undocumented here is, in my opinion, something that requires some attention. So, I devote a fair amount of time to that.

Jerome Hunter:

I'll give you the name again. You can look at it. It's OCCCO, Orange County Congregation Community Organization. Offices are over at Anaheim. I've only been on that board for about a year. I volunteered to do that when I came off some other volunteer organizations that I was working with.

Jerome Hunter:

I have no problem with military service, or government service. I was not a supporter of the war. I think history has proven my assessment to be accurate on that. So, no. I was drafted and I was in the Army. I was in Vietnam.

Jerome Hunter:

I was in Vietnam from, I was only there 10 months, because by the time I got over, the war was winding down. So, I was in the Army from '69 to '71, went through the various basic training, and then radio school, and then teletype school. I was a radio teletype operator. I was stationed with an infantry battalion, so I was on a fire base out in the middle of the jungle. I think probably near the Laotian border, when I would get [inaudible 00:39:00], for a little less than a year, for about 10 months.

Jerome Hunter:

You have to realize, you've got Birmingham, you've got The Watch Riots. That's life. It was an adjustment that I had to make. It's like everything else. You do what you can, and then you work your way through it. I still have at least one friend who's now in Panama, that I served with in the military, that I still have some communication with, but not anyone else.

Jerome Hunter:

Part of what, as I mentioned, the primary concern I had was because of my feel about social contracts and all that. I'm a poli sci person. I felt like there's an obligation that you have to citizenship. To me, military service was a part of that. The Vietnam Was was different. When I was first drafted, I though about that, but I went in. I said, "Maybe I won't get 'Nam," but I did.

Jerome Hunter:

When I got Vietnam, I went to talk to my commander. I said, "I have some problems [inaudible 00:40:11] war." I thought they were just going to throw me in the brig and say too bad. But he told me, he said, "If you've got problems, you need to think about it now, because once you get over there, you'll be there."

Jerome Hunter:

So, they sent me to see a psychiatrist, and they sent me to see a Jag Officer, legal people to talk with them about what my concerns were. When I went into a lot of detail on that, going through that process, I'll say it again. "Well, I'll go, but I will not do anything that's unethical or immoral." I said, "I'm not going to kill anyone."

Jerome Hunter:

I went and talked to the Company Commander. He said, "What's different now?" I said, "I'm going. I'm not being taken." Believe me, they changed the orders pretty quickly for Vietnam.

Jerome Hunter:

What I realized, and probably as a historian you've seen, the death rate among people of color, Blacks and Hispanics were very, very high. Higher degrees of folks serving in the infantry, which again, for whatever reason, I'm not sure, I wound up not getting infantry, but serving headquarters company with an infantry battalion.

Jerome Hunter:

So that was still a large number of African Americans that I worked with who were infantry soldiers, that worked off the fire base where I was. I can say things, when I received my orders to go to Vietnam, most of the people that finished teletype school when I finished were going to Germany or Korea, so I was the only one that got Vietnam. It didn't, I didn't not think about that, but you can't wallow in that kind of thing.

Jerome Hunter:

Plus, I remember the reason that my people, African American people were made slaves in this country, was because we could endure the heat. Other cultures couldn't get out and pick cotton. So, I was very much aware of the fact that the melanin in my skin made me a stronger candidate for going somewhere, where the weather was going to have that kind of impact.

Jerome Hunter:

I wasn't naïve about the fact that there were a disproportionate number of folks of color that were going over there. But again, I also felt that as an American, I had an obligation. I said, "I'll do what I think is my responsibility as a citizen, but I'm not going to break [inaudible 00:42:34] part of what I feel, or anything like that. That's a topic for a different story.

Jerome Hunter:

It's real interesting. I'm involved in a Zoom meeting with some friends of mine, people that I've known for 20 or 30 years. Each week, we kind of highlight our background, things that we've done. Last week was my week. Interestingly, when it came up some people said, "Hunter, we've been knowing you all these years and we never even knew you were in the Army!"

Jerome Hunter:

I said, "It's not something I talk about. It wasn't something that I was proud of, necessarily." The fact that, particularly when you look at the Ken Burns Documentaries, things about the Vietnam War, and you see the reality of what I learned in the political science department at Riverside, it's pretty accurate.

Jerome Hunter:

It's a kind of different story, but I was gusted off. I had an injury to my arm, and I had to be taken back to a military hospital when I was in Vietnam. Long story short, the hospital in [inaudible 00:43:35], which was the closest base to me, was full, so they took me back to [inaudible 00:43:40]. When I went in, I went in on an emergency flight, although I just had a sprain.

Jerome Hunter:

Long story short, you get to see the underside of the folks that are there. Believe me, it's not something you forget. It's not something you forget. Where I worked on the fire base, when we would sit around at evening, and I would talk with some of the guys that would come in from the infantry, about things that they did, or even the reports that I sent, which were secret. Reports from the forays that the units took when they went out. It was all about body count. So, it's not a pleasurable experience or pleasant thing to think about.

Jerome Hunter:

Initially, when I got out of the Army, that's where my uncle was. I had been working, as I was a student at Santa Ana College, I had been working at Partners for Progress with Wyatt Fryson. So, I had some guarantee of some kind of work. This is once I got out of the Army. So, I went back to live with my uncle for a short period of time, until I got my own apartment, and was working at Partners for Progress.

Jerome Hunter:

I can't remember. Wyatt's younger brother, who's now deceased, I actually met him down where Lambert and a bunch of us guys used to play basketball, down in El Salvador Park, down on 8th Street in Santa Ana. But anyway, I met Noah, Eddie Fryson and we became friends. I'm going to say that was probably when I was still a student at Santa Ana. Yeah, it would have been because I started apartheid work at Partners when I was still a student at Santa Ana College. So, that would have been in the late '60s.

Jerome Hunter:

Part of it was, I'm going to try to say this quite candidly. It's kind of like what you're seeing now, as a reaction to the Black Lives Matter. I think after some of the things that happened in the '60s, there was kind of an upsurge in the dominant group community, to reach out and do things for African Americans.

Jerome Hunter:

Quite a few companies, Aerospace was real big here in Orange County at that time, in addition to companies like Hunt-Wesson. I know Adeline talked with you about that. So, the companies actually came together and were trying to reach out, some of it not necessarily altruistically from my perspective, because some of them had government contracts that mandated [inaudible 00:46:22] served that need for reaching out into the community and helping people.

Jerome Hunter:

They wanted to get particularly Blacks. There was a group called SARE, that dealt primarily with the Hispanic community. A guy named Ray Villa that may have come up in some of the things that you looked at, that worked. We had to work with whoever came, but our focus was primarily on the Black community.

Jerome Hunter:

Actually, Adeline may have shared, that's how I met her. She was working in the training center over at Hunt-Wesson. From Partners for Progress, we would send people over there to be trained to work at

Hunt's. There were the folks on the board at Partners were primarily from, at that point, were large companies in Orange Count at that time.

Jerome Hunter:

Shoot. What to say? It was more professional than anything else. Actually, the woman that worked in the Partners office, Miss Bonnie Barry, was surprised that I had not met her, so she introduced me to her. Then Adeline invited me to go to a party that someone was having out in the Irvine area.

Jerome Hunter:

But she was a very attractive young lady. I tease her now. I say, "When I first saw you, I knew that you had potential." I tell her often, our oldest daughter is from her first marriage. What I would see when I would see her with Crystal, when I would tease her about having the potential, I knew obviously she was professional and she was intelligent. But I just watched her parenting skills and what she was doing as a single mom. That communicated a lot to me. So, time frame is kind of hard to say, but once it came together, it's lasted now for, I guess almost 48 years.

Jerome Hunter:

I think I realized as a CORO fellow that I don't really have the temperament for it. It's like being a lawyer. There are certain things you realize, that's not really your calling. I thought about it, but it's a jealous mistress. It demands a lot of time. I'm oriented a lot towards my family, and having the time to do that.

Jerome Hunter:

I realized, because I did work, I would have to continue to work until I got up into upper management, where it just wasn't wise to have partisan visibility. I work in partisan politics with the Democratic Central Committee, and the Black Democratic Council, and things of that nature, again, before I started moving up.

Jerome Hunter:

Then I realized I could support those things, but because of what I needed to do, particularly as a college president, things of that nature, that wasn't appropriate to have that kind of visibility. But again, I realized I would not want to have to give the time that was there.

Jerome Hunter:

Also, the fundraising. I'm not sure what you know about politics, but I think anyone that tells you the folks that make the big contributions don't expect some kind of quid pro quo, they'll probably mislead you about other things.

Jerome Hunter:

Wyatt Fryson's aunt passed away. Her son, who was another friend of mine, asked me to be a pall bearer in his mother's funeral. I was just back from Vietnam. I was still in the master's program up at Oxen Hill.

Jerome Hunter:

Anyway, I was coming back, and there was a gentleman in there, a guy by the name of Johnny Williams, who was a counselor at Valley High School, but was doing some part time work down at Santa Ana College. Long story short, he asked me who I was, what I was doing in the background. When it turned out that I had been a student at Santa Ana College, and I was getting a master's degree, he said, "They're

hiring some teachers down at Santa Ana College." He said, "You should go down there and apply." I said, "I've never really thought about going into education."

Jerome Hunter:

This is a quote. He said, "They've got white folks down there no smarter than you. They're teaching." End quote. So, long story short, I applied. I didn't get a job as a part time teacher in the political science department. There's a long story behind that, as well.

Jerome Hunter:

Then, once I got into that, doing, I want to say Adeline was pregnant, probably with Jamilla, with our first child, but our second daughter. I was looking for, she was going to have to stop work, or she was going to stop working. I was in the personnel office, going through big notebooks. They didn't have electronic searches and things in those days.

Jerome Hunter:

Richard Snee, who was one of the Vice President of Student Affairs, who had interviewed me for the teaching job. I was working as a classified employee, but also still part-time teaching, came in and said, "You're going through those notebooks. Are you looking for a job?" I said, "Yeah. We're getting ready to have a baby. I need to make some more money."

Jerome Hunter:

He told me. He said, "We're going to be reorganizing here," because they had gone through [inaudible 00:51:25] collected bargaining community dollars. They established a level of entry level management positions. He said, "You might want to apply for something here." I said, "You know, I've never taught full-time, so I don't know how competitive I would be as a candidate." He smiled and said, "Well, if you don't apply, you know you won't get it."

Jerome Hunter:

So, I applied, and I got it. So, I kind of stumbled into teaching, and then wound up in administration. Then he asked me at some point what I thought about education. I said, "I enjoy what I'm doing. I think I'd like to make this as a career." He said, "Well, if you're going to make a career of it, you need to go back and get your doctorate."

Jerome Hunter:

So, that was then part of my decision to go up there and see in the doctoral program. It wasn't anything I thought about. It was almost, but once I started doing it, I enjoyed it. One thing then kind of led to another.

Jerome Hunter:

I like working with the kids. It's something, you're teaching. You get instant gratification. You're making a difference, or at least that's the impression, even up until the last few years. You may have seen it if you looked at my background. Once I stopped working in the community colleges about 12 years ago, I actually taught over at Cal State Fullerton for eight years. I had a different set of expectations. I had taught primarily government in community college, and I haven't done that for many, many years. I was in Ed Leadership, Education Leadership over there.

Jerome Hunter:

so, let's focus more on what I had done as a part of my career, as opposed to what I had taught, but it's still the same. I was working primarily with doctoral and master's students, and had done some work in some [inaudible 00:53:04], master's program up at Cal State Long Beach.

Jerome Hunter:

So, you're still dealing with young people, people that have a lot of potential, got a lot of opportunity, I think, to make positive impact and see them grow. I've not really had much experience other than going into guest speaker things there. But my experience has pretty much been with college students, and then of course most recently, as I had mentioned, with the doctoral and master's students.

Jerome Hunter:

It was really set up, it was called, one of the founders who was still working in the program as I was there was Donald Fletch, W. Don Fletch. His attitude was, when people come out of college with general education, they're just like doctors that come out of medical school. They need practical experience.

Jerome Hunter:

The program when he ran it was called an internship. Now I know they've adopted the word fellowship to be more consistent with other organizations. It was designed in the Dewey approach with practical exposures. So, you have practical assignments. As I mentioned, I had an assignment with [inaudible 00:54:11], which was a political assignment. Then every Friday, you'd have seminars where you'd get together. As an example, if I had an assignment with a union, somebody else in the same group would have an assignment with the business group where that union worked.

Jerome Hunter:

So, we would get together and talk. The whole idea was to have people come out that not only have a theoretical background, but had some practical experience. We studied [inaudible 00:54:34], and semantics, and communication. Again, it was a program. I've been very fortunate with the kind of preparation that I was able to get because that made an awful lot of difference.

Jerome Hunter:

They had speakers that would come in, still. I had some, not as much as I used to, interaction with the current fellows group, or people up there. Actually, Adeline went through a program that they had when we were in San Diego, also. So, it's a good organization. I still support it.

Jerome Hunter:

I think when you're working in administration, the biggest problems are always personnel problems. That's just the way, for me. With respect to money, you can always find the resources to do it. If you've got a good plan, you can always find those things or ways to support what the priorities of the institution are.

Jerome Hunter:

But when you start dealing with personnel issues, particularly high ranking personnel issues of folks that may have been abusive, or people who have done things illegal [inaudible 00:55:39] where you have to get in situations, particularly in my experience in Orange County were press at that time. Any time that they could find something to pick at public education, they would do that. So, there were some choices, decisions that I had to make or be involved in that dealt with discipline; personnel discipline, or getting rid of people.

Jerome Hunter:

That's touchy, as you well know, because you really ... Again, I'm saying philosophically, there's a tendency to believe that if rational people can sit down and put their perspectives on the table, that somehow or another, they can come up with some thing that's called truth that's out there. As I get older, I'm less inclined to seek, because what I see now is the same thing you probably see, is that people can't agree on what the facts are.

Jerome Hunter:

When you sit down and you talk to someone, and you realize they're on a totally different place than you are, I'm less optimistic about being able to have that kind of discussion that gets you to wind up at, and you can see that, because basically, people agree to something and then, as you see in our own history, you wind up with the same problem a few years later, because basically, folks haven't changed the way they think.

Jerome Hunter:

Not a lot, other than, like I said, I knew him because I saw him. He's probably a little bit younger than I am, and I think Lambert's just a little bit older than I am, so I'm kind of between the two. So, I've seen him in the community. I believe he was really the cousin of one of the people that went to one of my uncle's churches. I knew the situation that came up around him being involved with the shooting of the police officer, but I didn't know him. I didn't know him in detail, at all.

Jerome Hunter:

As I saw a little bit of your interview with Adeline, she had much more of a closer, personal relationship with him, because she had gone to high school, I guess, with him, and everything like that. But I didn't know him well at all.

Jerome Hunter:

Indirectly, as I mentioned, in the early years, I remember playing ball, actually, before he was even on the police department, playing basketball with him down at El Salvador Park. But other than that, when I saw the article that ran a little bit ago, I saw a lot more about his background at that time than I had known about him before.

Jerome Hunter:

So, I didn't know him that well. I know Eddie, Wyatt Fryson's brother, I knew him better. Eddie was a little older than I am, and I think they moved in the same kind of social circle, but I really didn't know him very well at all.

Jerome Hunter:

Maybe Jesse Barry, who was the first African American that was elected. I think he's still alive. His brother is Leon Barry. T. Leon Barry could probably be accessed through Google, or something by that nature. He could probably, actually Leon's still involved with the Black Historical Society and things of that nature. Jesse is back in, I want to say on the East Coast somewhere. Leon might be worth talking with, as well. T. Leon Barry and Jesse Barry, two brothers. Everett Winters, who worked at Ford, and actually worked over at Cal State Fullerton for a while.

Jerome Hunter:

I told you a lot of, where I think hopefully I'll be able to help you. What I've learned is, once I make a decision, I don't go back to the river. So, I'm not going back to double. I give a lot of thought before I do something; whether it was leaving Birmingham as a kid, or getting married when I did, or making decisions about my occupation.

Jerome Hunter:

So, I don't do a lot of going back and saying, "Oh, I should have done this. I wish I'd done that." Again, that's just a part of what I've learned to make me feel pretty good about things, and then just move on. That's not to be "Pollyanne-ish," but it's just to say that the past is gone. There were things that came up, as I mentioned, the situation where the Swastika was painted in Santa Barbara, but that was one incident out of a very, very positive year.

Jerome Hunter:

I think Adeline mentioned to you a situation where I was stopped by the police when I was in Santa Ana, and what could have been an explosive situation actually turned out to be kind of humorous when it was all over. But I realized, had I not been a teacher, had I not had that ID, and had I not been able to say, "These are the two police officers that were in my class last night when that liquor store was robbed," I would have been locked up.

Jerome Hunter:

So, I wasn't naïve, but I realized the situation. I was very fortunate that it turned out the way that it did, for whatever reason.

Joe Zavala:

Now, we're here. Alrighty. My first question for us is, are you familiar with the Rumford Fair Housing Act?

Jerome Hunter:

Yes. Yes, of course. Of course.

Joe Zavala:

Then you're familiar with Proposition 14 that overturned it later?

Jerome Hunter:

I am.

Joe Zavala:

So, did you know of it at the time?

Jerome Hunter:

I came to California, if you saw the background, in 1963, and then Orange County in 1964. I lived with an uncle who moved into Santa Ana. We lived on 8th Street, which is now Civic Center Drive in Orange County. When we first moved into the neighborhood, the neighbors threw rotten fruit and things up on the yard, the front porch of my uncle's house, because we were one of the first African American families to move into that particular area.

Jerome Hunter:

I don't know what problems he had. At that time, of course, that was not North Santa Ana, which is where you had probably a little more restrictive housing. But again, it was not, I don't know if he had any problem buying the house, but it certainly wasn't an environment within the community, at least initially, where we were not necessarily accepted with open arms.

Jerome Hunter:

I think as I was a student at Santa Ana College, I actually did a speech on open housing. It was not well received. Again, as a student, I don't remember. That's been, as you can imagine, a long time ago. But the whole idea of something, if you put something on the market, they talk about property rights, and the fact that you should have a right to sell something.

Jerome Hunter:

My inquiry was, if you had a store and someone came in there, and you had bread for sale, and you said, "I'm not going to sell it to you because I have bread rights," it just didn't make sense. There was a large population where that was a part of their thinking, that people shouldn't be forced to sell to somebody that they didn't want to sell to. Whereas, as I said, if you look at anything else on the open market, that same pattern of thinking would not have prevailed.

Jerome Hunter:

But it was strong. It was obviously very strong. I imagine there's still some of that, that goes on, although it may be illegal to have some of those thing. I expect there's still some of those kinds of decisions that are still being made.

Joe Zavala:

Right. So, are you familiar with the Reitman vs Mulkey case, then?

Jerome Hunter:

With which case?

Joe Zavala:

Reitman vs Mulkey.

Jerome Hunter:

No. I know Ms. Mulkey, just from being here, but I don't know the specifics of the case.

Joe Zavala:

Okay. That's the case that overturned Proposition 14, I think, in California. From my research, it of course, started in Santa Ana. The Orange County Courts actually sided with the landlord and were saying that he has the right to discriminate his property based on race. Then that brought it up to the State Supreme Court, which ultimately overturned Proposition 14.

Jerome Hunter:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Joe Zavala:

So, you said you knew Ms. Mulkey, right?

Jerome Hunter:

Just having met her, I believe, through the church. Again, the name has come up, and I know it through the work I've done with OC Human Relations. I'm sure that I have, but I don't know her well.

Joe Zavala:

Okay. [crosstalk 01:04:27] I have not met her, yet. I would love to, if the opportunity arises.

Joe Zavala:

So obviously, you didn't know her at the time, during the '60s?

Jerome Hunter:

No.

Joe Zavala:

Okay. You said your speech wasn't well received. So, did you know of any committees or any groups that were pro-Proposition 14 in Orange County, or anything like that?

Jerome Hunter:

No. Actually, when I talked about the speech that I did, it was actually part of competitive speech that took place between the community colleges. Again, the judges were community college teachers, and I didn't receive an award for it because it was viewed as, the person that got the award, and I won't go into the detail of that, was a little more passive, and was talking a little more about downtrodden minorities, and the fact that they were opposing, protests and things that were in the street, rather than people using the court system, and that kind of thing.

Jerome Hunter:

So, it was more of an attitude. But no, there was no personal animosity or anything that was directed towards me as a result of that, as a matter of fact. Other than the people in my class and the judges, I doubt anybody else ever even heard it.

Joe Zavala:

All right. So, while we're still on topic, did you see any other, you have any other experiences with housing discrimination, either personally or other people you knew, in Orange County?

Jerome Hunter:

I knew that there were people that were doing tests. Again, I was not directly involved in it, where they would send out a white couple to go to a place and see if it was for rent, and then a Black couple would go. Or the Black couple would go, I guess they would reverse it. The Black couple would go out and the people would tell them it had been rented. Then the white couple would go out and they would say that it was still there.

Jerome Hunter:

So, I knew that type of thing was going on, but I was not directly involved in it, nor do I know specifically of any of the folks that were involved in it, but I knew those things were happening.

Joe Zavala:

Okay, interesting. All right.

Joe Zavala:

One other question related to this. Did you ever make your way to the beach cities very often in Orange County?

Jerome Hunter:

I went. From time to time, we'd go down to, more so to Newport at that time in history. Again, from the time that I went down there, basically, I'd go down there, park, go to the beach. From my experience, never really experienced any discrimination or anything at that time, personally.

Joe Zavala:

Interesting, okay. No issue with the cops or anything like that?

Jerome Hunter:

No, no, no. Not at that time. Maybe moving a little bit forward, once I graduated and came back and was teaching at Santa Ana College, I actually taught a class over at Santa Ana called Minority Groups and the Law.

Jerome Hunter:

So, I actually, quite frankly, just had a friend of mine that had gone through community college with me, who was a lieutenant down on the Newport Beach Police Department. I had people come up to speak at the class, and things of that nature. So, my experience probably was different than what it was with a lot.

Jerome Hunter:

The same is true in the city, even in the City of Santa Ana because, I'm not going to go into a lot of detail. I have had an experience with the police in Santa Ana, but once I showed them identification, and they realized that I was someone that was "in the system," and knowledgeable of the police department, I expect the treatment I got was different than it might have been, had I not had the identification and things that I had.

Joe Zavala:

Interesting, all right. So, moving on to my next set of questions. I've watched your other interview with Sharon, and you say you've only heard of the John Birch Society through the papers. I want to ask you to elaborate on their reputation in Southern California.

Jerome Hunter:

Again, I lived first in Santa Barbara, then in Santa Ana. In both places I think the John Birch Society had a reputation for being hard edged conservatives. In Santa Ana, at the time that I was here, which would have been initially from '64 to about '67 or so, the police department even had a reputation of being [inaudible 01:09:01] inflitrated by the police.

Jerome Hunter:

But that was chit chat. Again, other than the one experience, and I'll give you more detail on that if you want, the interaction I had with the police department, I never saw. I remember, there was, I think Officer

Sasser, I think, a police officer was killed. Actually, Michael [inaudible 01:09:24], which Sharon talked about, was kind of involved in that.

Jerome Hunter:

I remember, because we lived on Civic Center, on 8th Street, I remember a procession of policemen driving through the community, either as a part of the funeral procession, or as part of a demonstration at that time. But that's been many years ago, and I don't remember a lot of the details of it.

Joe Zavala:

Okay. So, any notable political groups similar to John Birch, could be progressive or liberal, citizen committees basically, of note at the time?

Jerome Hunter:

Not off hand. Sharon, I think, was talking with Wyatt Fryson, who was involved with the Orange County Partners for Progress, which was really more around job development and things of that nature; not so much political involvement.

Jerome Hunter:

The NAACP, obviously, was active at that time, I think probably more with respect to political kinds of issues. But as a college student, I wasn't really much involved. I did get involved with that when I came back after I finished school and started teaching.

Jerome Hunter:

As far as other groups, I'm not, I think probably there was an Orange County Opportunities and Industrialization Center, OIC, which again, was more around job development than I think it was around political issues.

Jerome Hunter:

So, I think Partners for Progress, NAACP, OIC were probably the ones that come to mind that were there, particularly dealing with the African American community. Then of course, there were always the churches that, in the Black community, as you probably are aware, stayed on the forefront, some of the ministers, of social justice kinds of activities.

Joe Zavala:

Okay. It is interesting that you mentioned that a lot of these groups are involved with jobs because in my research, I looked at all the L.A. Times, and that was their big push. That was their solution to racial tension was just, "Give them jobs. Just give them jobs."

Jerome Hunter:

Orange County was a big Aerospace industry. So, there were lots of openings and things that were taking place. Again, from my memory, and why Fryson would be better at this, I think because of the government pressure to have, to engage and involve minorities in some of those government contracts, there was probably a more conducive environment for some of the companies to reach out.

Jerome Hunter:

The organization that I worked with, with Partners for Progress, that's primarily what we did. We went into the community, and we were a conduit for getting people from the community into some of those companies that had government contracts, in order for them to have minority employees.

Joe Zavala:

Mm-hmm (affirmative). All right. Did you know James B. Ut?

Jerome Hunter:

Who, now?

Joe Zavala:

James B. Ut?

Jerome Hunter:

Oh, Congressman Ut?

Joe Zavala:

Yes.

Jerome Hunter:

I knew who he was, but no, I never had any contact or personal interaction with him.

Joe Zavala:

So, what did you know of him?

Jerome Hunter:

I'm sorry?

Joe Zavala:

So, what did you know of him?

Jerome Hunter:

Nothing that I can say that would have any substance to it. I knew who he was. That's pretty much it.

Joe Zavala:

Okay. Because I've researched him and he's said some pretty nuts stuff. He was basically claiming a conspiracy theory that there were Africans training to overtake the U.S. government and everything while he was a congressman, basically representing Orange County.

Jerome Hunter:

I think the thing that, and this probably may have come up in the interview with Wyatt. At one time, Orange County would not accept any federal funds for augmentation of programs. It's still a conservative environment, but I don't think it's as conservative now as it was at that time.

Jerome Hunter:

Of course, if you look at the current political environment with respect to conspiracy theory, you've got a lot of other folks that are out there now, not just in Orange County, but throughout. If you look at what's happening, you're from the beach cities, from down in Huntington Beach area right now, with respect to the attitudes and everything about minorities, and conservative politics, and that kind of thing. That's pervasive and it's always been that way.

Joe Zavala:

So, a lot of my research has also gone into Ronald Regan. Can you tell me of any notable influences Regan had during governorship in Orange County?

Jerome Hunter:

Well, I think two things that I recall. One is, when I left Santa Ana College, I went to the University of California. At the time I went there, it was tuition free. As I recall, the imposition of a tuition at University of California came in under the Regan administration. Again, that's from memory. That's not factual documentation.

Jerome Hunter:

The other thing I think was the impact on mental institutions, because a lot of what existed in California at that time, and I think under Regan administration was where a lot of the state run mental institutions were closed down, and people were referred back out to local institutions, and to their families.

Jerome Hunter:

From my perspective, again, and others may disagree, that probably has contributed to the number of people with mental problems that are homeless, that are out on the street now. Because there's really not a state wide mechanism, other than the prisons unfortunately, for dealing with those folks.

Jerome Hunter:

So, for me the impacts of the administration were not necessarily positive. Those are the two things that I remember.

Joe Zavala:

Mm-hmm (affirmative), okay. Finally, just to end this line of questioning, was there any notable political changes or legislation going into effect in Orange County during the 1960s and '70s that would particularly relate to our exhibit?

Jerome Hunter:

I think you talked about the legislation outlawing the housing discrimination. As far as schools, that stuff had happened way back in the '50s. Although, again, just by virtue of the reality of where people lived, I expect there still was a fair amount of segregation in the schools.

Jerome Hunter:

But as far as actual legislation, I think, again, it's just from my recollection, Fair Housing Administration, and then at the federal level, Affirmative Action. Things around allowing race to be considered in factors of education, and in some instances, employment as well.

Jerome Hunter:

So, again, just talking from memory, those would be two areas that I would share with you.