

Interviewee: Edward Jones

Place of interview: 155 Jackson Street (Charleston, S.C.)

Date of Interview: June 30th, 2021

Interviewer: Emile Charles, Historic Charleston Foundation

Videographer: Quintin Gay, Historic Charleston Foundation

Transcribers: Emile Charles, Quintin Gay, Kelly Ray, Shuhud Mustafa, Emily Smither

BEGIN INTERVIEW

EMILE CHARLES: This is Emile Charles and I'm interviewing Coach Ed Jones on Wednesday, June 30th 2021, at the Martin Park Community Center. Could you say and spell your name for us please?

EDWARD JONES: Edward Jones, that's E-d-w-a-r-d J-o-n-e-s.

EC: Great, and then Coach Jones, where were you born?

EJ: I was born at 313 East Bay Street right here in Charleston, South Carolina.

EC: And raised at the same place?

EJ: Yeah, raised in Marsh Creek in the Ansonborough public housing. So I raised all my whole 62 years up on the Eastside.

EC: Did you move when you were a kid at all?

EJ: Yeah, we moved multiple places. We moved from public housing from Marsh Creek to Morrison Drive, which is East Bay Street, then back on Alexander street, and then on Cooper street, on Hanover street, on Amherst street. Almost every street on the Eastside we've been living on once upon a time.

EC: Why were you moving?

EJ: Well, moms. You kids, you have to go wherever moms said you had to go at, so we was moving from place to place.

EC: What did your mom do?

EJ: My mom's at owned a couple of businesses in the Eastside. One of the place they used to call White Turkey. And then she'd run the laundry and own the laundromat on the corner of Columbus and Hanover Street. Which is now the NAACP Bowden office.

EC: Do you have any siblings?

EJ: Oh, yes. I have three loving brothers and one loving sister.

EC: When you were young, what did y'all do in the neighborhood?

EJ: Well, you know, very many of y'all living in the neighborhood and mom's was working cause you was living in a single parent home. So mom was working and, you know, good neighbors, which is the village, kept by on the kids while she was working until we get out of school, so, you know, that village worked out pretty good.

EC: What school did you go to?

EJ: Columbus preschool, elementary/middle school was Courtney and then Charles A. Brown High School.

EC: And are any of those still around?

EJ: Well, Columbus preschool is still there. It's abandoned now -- not abandoned, but they closed the school down. Courtney School is still there -- still Courtney about to become to be Charleston Progressive. And Charles A. Brown High School, which is C. A. Brown High School is now Trident Tech Palmer campus but all three of my buildings still there, so we still see.

EC: Can you talk a bit about your schooling experience?

EJ: Well, elementary school was real, you know, real easy. Going through transitioning from elementary into middle, I've gone from teachers take me from class to class you have to get there on your own a certain time. That's a typical kid who had little time to play between classes. Middle school boys good, but high school boys a serious part of it. And so went through complete high school at C. A. Brown. Never did made it to college though. So took my career and run with it. I started coaching as a junior in high school, my first job. First job I could file a tax on.

EC: What were you coaching?

EJ: I was coaching baseball, basketball, and football. Those were the three most popular sports back then.

EC: So for high school-aged kids?

EJ: Well, it was what we would call today travel-age kids, but it was more into middle and elementary and middle school.

EC: And what kind of other work would you do once you finished?

EJ: Well, I started my own general contractor business. I was taking up carpentry. So I started on general contractor business and kept that going on maybe about 20 -- 20 plus years. Still do it now, but not as much as I used to. I get a chance to choose what I want to do and what I don't want to do is the good thing

about it. But I also was maintenance tech supervisor at Bayside apartment complex on Huger street -- I mean, on Romney street -- and also at Volunteer of America, they have the two complex on King Street. So I was the maintenance tech supervisor over there. Up capping the Bowden base I'd had 310 units, and at Volunteer of America we had like 65 units. And one place was scattered site, so I to oversee all of the boaters, keep it up, keep everything fixed and I had a pretty dependable crew of people.

EC: In general, what was the work experience like?

EJ: Well, you know, by experience what I had and had on Bayside, I had an 18 man crew, so as people move out, the flood powers had to do plumbing work, order all my materials supplies, save the company as much money as possible. And I did that because you get a bonus on the end of the year, so you always look at your own bonus. And you know I keep everything upgraded. Having people moving in and out -- easy turn around fast. We get apartments vacant, I give them three to four days to get it ready for somebody else to move right back in. So we got to keep all empty units, you know, occupied. At last with me, I left in 2005. Yeah, I left in 2004-2005. Was restless with the city. This is way overdue.

EC: And why did you leave?

EJ: I just got tired of it. No personal reason, I just got tired of it. And then Volunteers of America -- they were a nonprofit group, and they had some scattered-site housing, but they ended up losing their contract, and I could've gone with the other contract, but when they left, I left right along with them.

EC: What kind of work was the Volunteer for America work?

EJ: They were more like a real estate. They had like subsidized housing -- you know a section eight unit apartment complex like that -- they had the one on Norman Street, they had one on King Street ended up on Barnes Avenue, they had one up on Sumpter Avenues. Were like five/six scattered sites and then had one over on James Island on Central Park Road. So had to go to all of these and Harborview Road. Had to go to all of these places and keep the apartment complex out and running.

EC: And then when you were doing your own contracting work, what was that?

EJ: That work was general contractor you know. Addition, add on, plumbing minor electric and I would recommend based on like HVAS, so I was working on some air conditioning units all that you know it play a role, so we're more like more like handyman type because you can do all of that under one umbrella, you know.

EC: Where was that work?

EJ: That was all over as far as Jedburgh by no doubt 17 mechanical orange all over Green Bay fall up Mt. Pleasant and six miles 10 miles North Charleston. A lot in the city, but I used to love doing my work especially for older people because you know they on a kind of like a fixed income. So therefore I love what I do. So I would do it. I get a choice, it depends on who the person were. If a person look like you, you know, you real financial ready, I can I'm going to take their price to you. And if you look like a

grandma or a mother struggling, you get adjusted and he would say that to a point where they can make payment to you but they still get the same top quality work by just you know I say this at a lower price you know so you really got remote kind of like like helping those unfortunate people. What I did miss was training so many kids that I was working with right in the community how to do carpentry and plumbing work, installing cabinets and, you know, waterlines where your refrigerator, you know, stuff like that. So I was kind of like giving them the on-hand training and also working with tools I was given. Training them and paying them at the same time, you know. It was getting a treat because it took all the trade out of school.

EC: How old are those kids?

EJ: Now right now, they ain't over 16/17 years old. Now then, you know, two of them growing into the same field. And then two of them -- Julio working in a warehouse and Daquan is in The Tattooed Moose up on Morrison drive. He's a chef up there now, so all that pushing them to work and getting them in the workfield so they know about being, you know, dependable so forth and so on. But that was good.

EC: How did that influence any of the work you do now?

EJ: Well that influenced me. It just goes to show you that if you give them the time where they need to influence them and get them into -- you really got to get them involved in whatever you're doing. So if I can get them to do work like that, when they step out into the real world and go out on their own, they're gonna learn about on time, you know, trust. People depending on you. So all that play a factor in establishing the business. Because you can't get a business if you gonna be half an hour, 30 hours late, or if you give a person your word and then you know, somehow you change up, you know, person just can't depend on you. Say I could be there and then you don't show up til a week or two later, well, you know, that don't work. So, you know, that's why we're always kind of like, leaning towards you know.

EC: Can you tell us a bit about what you do now, what kind of work?

EJ: Well I do right now I work for the city of Charleston on the mayor's cabinet. Community resource specialist, quality of life. So therefore, that mean if you walkin on your street, and you don't know who to contact if you see the drain overflowing with trash or whatever, you call stormwater, and stormwater place you back to somebody or somebody else, so they got a direct number who you can contact our office, and then we will make a direct contact to whoever needs to go and get somebody on there quicker. Because we can get it we can get it moving quicker than you could. As you know as a resident they'll tell you "yeah" and then walk past ya, walk past ya. But we will just go screaming to the director from whoever it is and get it done more quicker than them.

EC: How long have you been doing that for?

EJ: I've been doing that now for going on about 12 years.

EC: And that goes all year long?

EJ: Yeah. Only think about that is that is like 24/7. That's 365 days out of the year and then 24/7. So even if something happened with the between the police department or whatever, sometimes they get a call of violence or homicide. I'll get a call, especially if they're coming in and they trying to get to the victim whatever and the community they just gathering around. No one no go, so always got that one you can call them to get in get their piece and you know crime scene is the crime scene or whatever, you know. There's a lot to it, so it's not just like a job description with like, you know, "your job description is this," you know, your job description to this right by squeezing the sidewalk now I can be street lights they can be a tree leaning over on your property. It can be down to the street sweeper coming through. It can be with a policeman. It can be multiple things that come back into what's coming to our office before we get to the mayor's office. So we look at it and see you know, then we prioritize it, you know, like okay, we need to get this done quicker that's gonna wait on a certain length of time. I mean that's a pretty hectic position to be in sometimes, but then I'd rather be in that position because my boots on the ground more than what they really expected.

EC: And so you like boots on the ground work?

EJ: Yeah, definitely. Definitely that.

EC: Why?

EJ: Because why I like my boots on the ground? Therefore you're interact with people, all right? And when I say interact with people, it's hard for me to go into a community and say, you know, let's do you -- know we want to do I mean it's something I just listed we wanted to have this like the Juneteenth we just had and you're gonna go and they ain't gonna buy into it. Because people, now, people today look at previous years leading up into what are you doing, and it become to be more like trust. It really based on trust because right now you make do you may do mostly our elected officials and everybody who come around every four years and make promises that they can't deliver. So therefore that put up a big wall that so people don't trust them. Once people see your boots on the ground every day, you in a community, you really going to, they don't know who to talk to. Let's contact Coach. Let's call Mr. Jones. He know where to get us to. And that's more my like, you know, I kind of like that I'm more like a people person. I am approachable. Again, no, I six foot you know, I six-three and a half. I mean people always say, you know, you got a real calm voice because you got to look at the scenario, and then kinda like, work it out. You know, I mean, a lot of times I can be like real. I mean you can like blow your whole top off. But then what would you be getting back out of that? You know, you approaching me and you upset and arguing and then I upset and arguing and that go lead to another thing, so someone got to be to kind of like calm it down. Now I take a lot of beating like that, but then I'll go sit down by the water. Fishing something like that just to get the calm and the peace back. Right? They see you consistent, and you know, you consistent and you calm with it, you might have no problem. And that's the good thing about it.

EC: Yeah. You mentioned building trust. Can you talk about how you? Are there other ways that you can build trust with people?

EJ: Well, like I say, I was with the City of Charleston Parks and Recreation from 1972 to until now. So like 47 years running it. And the consistency is that some of the kids that I'm still coaching and working

with now, it's like an ancestor thing -- you know it went back like three to four or five years, generation. And so some of them still want to come back and 'Coach you can't leave because I got my grandson coming up' or 'my grandson's son saying he wanted, I want them play on you, I want you to do this. And then we do it with my son went home,' so forth and so on. But you know, then you could in a way, but you can't because time changes now you know, and they didn't had all the modern technology stuff where they got now. They didn't had all these video games and computer. They didn't go on Snapchat and, you know, Facebook and all that. Those kids back then didn't have it. So they had to get it by getting outside to do it. But now, you've got kids are sitting home all day long playing Fortnite. They don't want to come outside. You can't get mad with them, but this the way it does now. You know, trust is a continuous thing. When people are imaged when they down -- when they to their lowest point, they feel like they got some more they can talk to you know, a lot of times people talk to me like very confidential. I won't even first bring it back up towards them, but I know exactly what you're going to do. You know, so I feel like you hear all the time you're in the community all the time, and you're the face of the community.

When something's going on. I always get called, "Coach you need to come to me. Johnny won't clean up his room, he won't even first make up his bed, you know, okay, that's happening, you know, mom should be able to get him doing the house. So, somehow then they... trust plays a, trust plays a...no, but they trust me that much, feel like I get their kid to do things where they can't get them to do, that make me feel good just as well as get him to accomplish that. So, you know, I mean, just--in the Eastside, especially in the Eastside, trust play a, trust play a...I mean, a huge, huge role in it, you know.

EC: Could you tell me about some other things that you think play a huge role in this community?

EJ: Well, there's so much, there's so much in this community. First thing you can look at, at gentrification kicking in, in the community, the community is changing. Alright, the young people don't understand that. All right. So, it's a push back, and the big pushback is that they trying to take over our community, we can't do things we used to do, you know, and... I mean, and these are mostly coming into the young adult. And late night, early 40s and mid 30s. And growing or up. These are the ones really got the spiracy going on, and then how you got to try to work through all of that is, is by making coming up with compromise for them. You know what I'm saying, same thing what they're doing outside, you got to try to do it on the inside, you know, we got to take care of our community. We--let's go, you know, let us go walk and let's go clean up the community, let's do such and such thing in the community. A lot of times people think they don't want to do it, but they will do it. Alright. But then, if you give them the opportunity or the chance to do it. I mean, they would do it. And a person that nobody in the east side of town, on the Eastside of Charleston, I can get to do anything.

If it from going from volunteering, cleaning up your community, picking up trash, going taking all the trash can home, help them take some bags home and whatever. I mean, my success rate around here is real high because I never had a failure around here. Because this is where I come from. This is where I'm born and raised up at. So, I know what I went through as a kid, a teenager, and a father now grandfather of five, you know, and I know what get me through, so I tried to get--not trying to--but I'm working other people to take that kind of same path too. I don't look at where you come from, but it's where you going, you know. If you got a plan, you know, long term goals, short term plan, you got you two plans and you can work on it. Like, I always tell them, if you got a five-year plan, at least you got to look back in two and a half years and see what you get accomplished. You can get a lot of things started it, but what about getting accomplished, you know. So, I always talk to them all the time, through the organization, through sports, you know, whatever. You got to have a plan. What is your plan? What are you going to do after high school, you know? What are you going to do after that? You know, so, you

know, this kind of conversation we keep going on just like three weeks ago, graduating from Burke High School, I had about 13 kids from the community graduated and I know three of them is a knucklehead, you know, graduated and had no plan, what they want to do, what the next step is.

So, I don't need you stand on a corner. You don't graduate the high school to stand on the corner. Right. I know your family ain't got the money, what you going to do next or what, what could I do Coach? Alright, here's what we do. Right?

Go to the selective service, you know, go to one of the recruiters. Sign up to go in the military. You know, go basic training. You know, go through your basic training.

And then they put you on reserve duty, you know. You buildin' a career where you want to go in, and then, Uncle Sam, you know, let the government pay for wherever you want a career and you got no student loan on the ending part, but you got, you got benefits and all that behind it. But then if no one sit down and talk to them about their situations, they think after high school they can't go to college, they're going to stand on the corner and that's all they going to do. But until you start instilling things into them, night after night, you know. And then look at leadership we got runnin' around the city, which is real bad but, again, you know we all politics--that's politics.

So, we trying to go, I trying to get some, some next future leaders going on around here cause no they ain't none. That's why we got senators and governors and all of them way up in age but nobody grooming young people such as y'all and younger than y'all to take none of these positions to take over. We need to change. We need to change, serious change.

But who do we have to get in place to make these changes? Nobody. Nobody.

EC: What do you envision some changes being?

EJ: Well, well, what we need...well, we need especially in the city, we need to save directly everyone. All right. Even through the recreation department is still biased and it's not funny. You can see it. For instance, we were sitting outside today. We got kids in a camp outside playing, the kid fall, and a piece of woodchip went into, went into her hand. You know, so that, you know that got the thought process rolling. Okay, one-- this playground we're down south of Broad Street, where they had big two by fours then regular lumber that they're building houses with. You cut this scrap and make it out of wood, but you put it out in a park in the Black community and think that's acceptable. You know, so it got to be fair across the board with me and I talk about that with the mayor, recreation department all the time. The department has less...we need fair. Don't tell me you can sweep, you can have the street sweeper going Calhoun Street and going South, but you can't have one going Calhoun Street going North? That's the problem.

You can't tell me. They can tell me... I'm just hitting over some, some points that were always dear to my heart. You know, why we wanted to take King be because you got college students and high school students wanting to go down King Street in the evening time on a weekend, but then you're trying to find a curfew out there for them? No, no, no, no, no. So, we need a city that can work for everyone across the board. You know.

Seniors being misplaced, mistreated by the game. Every four years, come down to election time, they come in the community and want to be with the community, they need their vote. Well, we need to stop giving these people our power. They are not serving their constituents. You know, you take an oath when you stand up there and you take an oath. And they're all telling you that you supposed to be representing them. Like I always say, all right, we as, we as registered voters, we choose you to be our

voice. So, you work for us not we don't have to come to you all the time. We can tell you because we give you that right. I tellin' you to go talk to the President, you know, or the Vice President, the governor, you know, the senator and all up, all way down the line. We give you the right to be our voice. So, you, you can't come and tell me, or they can't come at them and be coming, telling us what we--what they want us to know. No, we puttin' actions on the table you need to address as a school board. Constituent school board representative, the consolidated school board representative. From your city councilman to your county councilman to your state representatives to your senator to your Governor, you know. I mean, and go on and on, and even of the President of the United States. We vote for them, we give them, we give them the power they would have. We choose them to be the person to speak on our behalf. And then when you look back and then, you know, you just (UNKNOWN).

Just ain't fair, you know. It ain't fair. And especially when people live in, like in public housing, then...

Some people call it the projects, I call it public housing cause that's what really is public housing, and all these are the people that get treat the worst, I mean the worst. But then again, you got 413 units right there. We got six, we got 300 units, 357 units in Bridgeview. We got another 275 units on Alexander Street public housing. You got probably like, down in Robert Mills Manor, we got probably another 96 units and then Gadsen Green, we got about 175 units, and all are registered voters. All registered voters and in their house, they got the 17, the 18-year-old and in some, some houses they gettin' five to six votes out. These the people that are getting treat the worst.

EC: Why do you think they get treated the worst?

EJ: Man, it's just, it's just so much. Because again, because they lookin' at section eight subsidized housing, and then low, really low low-income people, you know. So, people who then were up on a ladder, you know, midway of life and just come to a sudden stop, you know, for whatever reason something happened in life. They might have went through an abusive relationship or, you know...you know, it can be multiple things, and then they fail. So that's supposed to be the next avenue to help them to get back on track to move out. I disagree with them moving in and living there for like 20, 30 years, but it's a short-term thing to help you get back on track. And then, it don't look at it like that. They just look at, you know, people living in the public housing and planning, you know. They done raised three and four generations of family, kids nearby. If that's the only place we got to go to have a roof over our head, then that's what it is.

They payin' their bills, you know, their lights on. Here, they get free water, but you got to pay light and gas. Pay the rent and they try to live comfortable, but they still beat them up on that. They make them feel like down the bottom of the totem pole. It's not right. It's not right.

So, some of them sick, you know? (pause) Some of them are sick to a point, some of them, of them cannot, some of them cannot get a job because they're shy on pen and pencil. They don't want you know to know that they can't read, and they can't write. They don't. So, a lot of that, they never understand because they're so busy on their, you know, day to day life that they forget about the little people, you know.

EC: Do you work with many of the children who live in the public housing?

EJ: Yeah, that's about 100%. I would say probably like 90, 90...94% of the kids I work with are public housing. And that's because single parent, you know, mama's mid-20's, grandma's 30's, maybe early 40s. Great-grandmama's 50 year's old or you know. I mean that's what we're seeing now but that age never did before I was coming up, you know. Mom was up in age, your grandmother was up in age, and your great

grandmama's was up in age if you ever got a chance to meet them. But now, you getting to see generations. It's just so young. I mean, having kids at a young age and knowing. I mean you'll be surprised what goes on behind some of these doors in public housing. We have children sleeping on a mattress. Some got their mattress on the floor. Some ain't--they don't know where the next meal is coming from. So, these are things that are going on in the public housing that people don't know nothing about.

So, what we do with it is we trying to convert that and make it easy for everybody, you know. It never---no one ever tell me the challenge that I took on 40 some odd years would have been easy. But it just were like Dr. King said, he had a dream. And I kind of use that to motivate me, you know, to have a dream. And that dream was to never have another kid that went through went to because I know we been through some struggling times. So, the kids today, we try to keep them from going through what I went through, I know we went through some scrambling times. So, the kids today we tried to keep them from going there and not. Can we save all? No. But there are a lot of them that are worthwhile to try and save.

EC: What do you think some of the attitudes are of the kids who have either graduated or finished working with you or you finish working with them?

EJ: Well, they graduated. I had, like I said, I had a group that just graduated. One of them's mother live back in public housing. She caught me in this store about, maybe about, about five weeks just before the end of school, before school closed. She caught me in the store. She said, Coach. I said, huh. She said, I need to talk to you. I said, yeah, what's going on. She said, about, about my son. I said, which one? The one that's supposed to be graduating this year? She said, he going to graduate but he's going to end up getting a certificate showing that he completed 12 years of school. I said, why that? She said, well, he don't log in to do none of the work on Zoom. He had, he had, he wasn't completing none of his class and one of the principals from the school called me. He said, Mr. Jones. I said, yes. He said, you know, a student I work with--he know I work with him real close--he said, man. His science teacher and about two or three other teachers saying that he wasn't logging in none. He wasn't getting the scores, the credits that he needs and if he don't get it all done by the fourth of June, he wouldn't have been able to march.

So, the moms talked to me, and I said, he home? And she said, yeah and we went there to knock on the door. And she's go on up and she said, Mel. He said, uh-huh. She said, Coach out here to see you. He walked outside and I said man, what going on? He said, man, I working. I said, where you working? He told me and I said, woah. Hold up. We got a problem right there. Your employer know that you are a school-age kid and he got you working in the morning when you supposed to be logged in and doing your schoolwork. I had a problem with that. So, I said, I need to go have a talk with him. He said, no, no, no, no. I said man, listen. Mr. Smith just call me up. You ain't logging in. You ain't doing your classwork. They got you doing class online. You ain't doing it. Man, Coach. Man. man. Mom's have been working and you try me.

17-years-old. I remember when I was 17 years old when I take my first job with the city. And he was 17 years old and he worryin' about his other younger siblings that coming under him and, what going to happen when Moms can't make these payments to Housing Authority. So, I said, listen, man. All that's good but let me ask you a question. He said, what's that. I said, from when I met you in second grade at Sanders Clyde up until you getting ready to walk across the stage at Burke, have I ever disappointed you now? He said, no. I said, have I ever lied to you? And he said, no. I said, I tell you anything that was not true. He said, yeah. I said, no. And I said now, why get to the ending part of our journey and--I said, man. I said, man, you break that bond. He said, why. I said, listen, you did not order your cap and gown. Right? You ain't gonna walk across the stage. So, tell me why. He finally told me. And I said, well this is what I'm going to do. I call the assistant principal up on the phone. Mr. Smith, get on the phone. I said, listen, I put it on speaker.

I said, Mr. Smith, tell me what Mel need to do. I need him to run but about ten things correctly. And so, he said, man, Mr. Smith, man. You got that? He said no. He said that's the reason why I call Coach Jones. Because if anybody going to get you to get it right, he would. So, we talked. I mean, I'm talking to him the next day. I said, we're going to get some breakfast and so, we went out to IHOP. We set up then and we ate, and we talked, and we talked.

I said listen, man. The one thing I need you to do, you, you are the last, you know, him and Demonte. Y'all just, y'all who coming through now is my last group I got coming through high school right now. I said, got another year or two to prepare for it, I said. But man, I need y'all boys to come on through. I said, I had four of them within the last five years got right to, right to 12th grade and just quit. Alright, so I said, listen. I don't need you to be Rail, Marcus, Quez, or Daquan. I mean, we'll be calling him Q-tip--I mean Q-tip. So, I said, I don't need that. They are the only four out of all of the kids I work with from 2015 to now, these are the only four that didn't graduate out of high school. So, I said, Mel, I don't need you to fallin' in with them boys anyways. You'll be standing on the corner of Jackson, Jackson and Hanover Street selling drugs. I don't need that. You got to get it. So, well, maybe about two days out from graduating, he came across the parking lot. He said, Coach, I got something for you. What you got for me? He reached into his pocket pulled out the band. 'Hey' I said, 'What is this for?' He said 'That's for you to come to my graduation.' I said I'm not gonna, I'm not coming to the federal stadium to sit down there to see you receive the stuff he gets denied you complete it to everything. He said 'No, I got my thing. I'm gonna get my diploma.' So I called Mr. Smith, Mr. Smith, I said 'Did Mel complete it?' He said 'Yeah, Mr. Jones.' And he say, he said yeah he, you know he's a, yeah, he completed, he got all his class he got this you know everything up and you're going across the stage. So I got, I got 12 bands to go to 12 different graduations all in the same high school so everybody want to give me a band to come to the last [graduation] to, you know, they graduation. But just to say that, imagine of, of the trust vise doing how many is doing me and we didn't have that. That kid made ran to the door and decided he wanted to quit. You know?

But now I, next week Monday I supposed to be taking them the Monday after the fourth I'm taking them over to on Sam Rittenberg to meet the recruiters and then him and D'Monte decide they want in the military for me, so that'd be great. I know them, from the neighborhood, you know, they could do the work. They wasn't like book students if it were something that they didn't do or have they're gonna get it if they can get it. So that's why those ones like that. I gots, oh man, Kevin Frayer, D'Andre Taylor, Dequan Craw -- Dequan Golf, Brian McNeil, you know, it's about it's about 15 or 20 of them that I get them going in the military, man, to get them off the streets because again these were kids that were struggling in school. Chris and Cory, take them boys 'cross the clock get them kids backups so they can graduate with they graduating class. I mean there's, I mean there's just so much, but again, you know, I do what I do because for the simple fact, like I keep saying, I don't want a kid to go through what I went through, and so if they trust you they trust you enough they'll let you get to know all about their whole life history and all that, you know, so my last were a bunch of dumb ones, okay, graduation you got your diploma you walked off the stage, you walk past your family come and give me a big hug. I said guess we'll be giving y'all the funds. Guess what? Thank you, now, I said did I complete what I had to do, I said yeah Coach, but I had one more thing left. What's next? What can be my next step, that's up to you. I get you to the 12 years of school so after that, what do you do after this is on you. You did what I asked you to do, you know, you got your diploma. You walk across the stage you good, I'm fine with that. But you know, where, you know, again whatever career they choose afterwards that's up to them I didn't ask them

for another four years after that. I just asked them to walk 'cross that stage so that mean that they did that, they graduate. Yeah.

Somewhere in the back of the mind with all the mix-up going on. You know, they be still thinking about, damn, if I don't finish this, what Coach gonna think 'cause he gon' think I'm a failure. I ain't never fail y'all and nothin'. We try to come to you always and have these conversations together. So if I don't fail you then I expect for you to not fail me back. So, you know, that's the kind of concept, I'm not gonna say but that's depending on how, who you run and when you run them and then the situation they in. The Lord, Amen. And, and, and, and the domestic violence home. You know, some of them in home where they have to kind of like, raise the young sibling because mom's strung out on drugs. We got a bunch of this in public housing. You know, it's serious so many people in and out the house, you know, different fellow in and out the house. I'll see some of the younger fellows in the street now, you know, and the house with moms and that's, I mean these are things with the young kids seeing. And that's peer pressure on you. They don't know how to deal with that. So how, what they do? They react, you know, they're gonna act it out. Because they, I mean, what they can do? They can't fight Mama. No, they can't say what they want. I mean, they can say what they want to say, but they try to be respectful of they mom's. So do they come out in the street? You know, so they take advantage of everything. So I mean, I just, so much go through they mind I look back then and say nice in class. Right now, man, I won't even tryna think about trying to have another kid, not right now. Not, not, no, not in these days, man. It is ridiculous. These kids got too much impression on them, man. Too much, they can't focus in school. They can't focus. They just, they just can't focus, it's too much.

You walk in, you walk in the average school, the school without, you know, white teachers they're afraid of the other boys and fourth and sixth and seventh grade because they talk out loud. Or they, you know, they need, 'We need to put them on meds', this or that. No, no, listen, go to the neighborhood. Go to the neighborhood store. All right. Who you hear, when you walk into the store, everybody loud. They go home, loud. In the neighborhood where they livin' at, it's loud. So, so now, they think that's a part of everyday walk of life. You know, but not most of them aggressive nowadays. You can't tell me, a, 10 or 11 year old kid go walking in and be loud. Asking, I said, 'Boy, shut up and sit down in a corner. That's it. 'Cause they know and they know how to respect authority. But I mean, you know, man it's just so much, it's just so much behind doing, ya know, doing what you do for so many years, man it's just, it's just so much, so much stories behind it man.

EC: Can I ask you about other advocacy you've done or are working on now?

EJ: Well, we do so, man. Well, what we, what we're working on now, we're working on now is working on getting ready to kick off our 16th annual school and uniform giveaway. We're working on meeting on that on July 9th. Again, still working on the Community Food giveaway which is every third Thursday in the city of Charleston every second Thursday and a month over on James Island because the James Island the same way too. We work in that area. This is where we do and, you know, like I said, we do the school giveaway then we could be working on an Angel Tree list because we have so many kids around here. We like the one right there to the window right now that we know it ain't gonna be ready for school. We know nothing going to be there for Christmas. So you imagine the child waking up on Christmas morning and nothing under the tree for them. So we put up two big trees in the park on the bottom of the Angel Tree.

We get the other people to buy a gift and then we also have gifts ready for them and then do Bingo with Sanders or, you know, so again, working on 2022 plans right now so we gettin' ready to start 2022 in the next couple of months. We gon' start plannin' in 2022.

EC: Could you tell me a bit about the summer camps you're running right now?

EJ: Oh man, summer camp, the summer camp we running this year is our ninth year doing it right at this site. And we want to try to keep it small. Small is probably like 12, 12 kids is the max. Unfortunately, that ain't work out. We right now have 29 kids in this site. We got 15, 16 kids down at Mall Park, which is from 4, from 4 to 10 we got up here. Then from 11 to 14, we got down there. And then I got another camp on James Island, which got like 32 kids and in the same age, all age group and no one over there could. 'Cause they only have one facility that they can use. But the summer camp, we thought about the summer camp because we had, you know, some grandparents raising their grandkids, and they are working. So the City offer a camp for them, which is extreme too high for them. Live in a public housing. You're on a fixed income are you working in, you know, in the hotel industry, you turn in, you know, there's stuff in the back. I'm working in the back of the hotel you, you cannot afford to put three to four kids in the camp for \$150 to \$200, you know, I can't. So I talked to the board. We sat down we brainstorm on let's see how we can help these people.

So we, I mean basically we do a free summer camping. Alright, from June until August, which is two and a half months. We run a summer camp for \$25. What is \$25 and nothing to compare to what other people getting off 'em. But, you got to look at it for the purpose of what we doing it for. Everything we do is not doing it for money because for money for say then we would have been, we would have been gone. But we'd look at a single parent, two to three kids. Like, I tell you this now the last parent pick up her kids, she had five kids, she work in a beautician she's a, she work in a, she work in a beauty parlor, but she got five kids. So what she do, she bring her kids here. She raises her five kids. She paid for three the group pay for two just to help her out. By now she workin' all day from, from eight in the morning 'till six then that night. She always said this, 'Coach I sorry I runnin' late I know I supposed to be here at five o'clock. I know late pick them up.' I understand that, 'cause you might have a client coming in, you might have a client coming in at 4:30, you gonna be a little late getting there. No, we ain't mad because she was late getting here, but she always say, you know, could you imagine if you the only one's been running this camp. I would have to been on my job. Until my phone ring I would've been jumping and nervous because I felt like something happened to one of my kids. But she says since y'all started that camp, she's gonna have to write with my phone ring. I have to get my kids something to eat today. Obtain a safe environment. This what we get get every parent come in and they be, you know, a little late after five o'clock and wanna apologize.

The thing about it is we started that camp just for that reason. Have you got like, like I said, if you've got five to six kids and you workin', and if you ain't got no place for them to go, in over there they out here on the street, runnin' wild. You know, whatever they can get to eat they're going to try to get it, if they got to steal it by any means necessarily they're hungry they're going to eat. So what we do here we opened this up and we give them breakfast in the morning, nine o'clock. Then we get them lunch at 12 o'clock. Then at three o'clock we give them, you know, we give them another meal before they're ready to go home. And then on Friday, we, we will go to the store with them and we will buy and we will pack

them a bag to take home for the whole weekend. So, you know, so that that kind of like keep them flowing because again, we know what we dealin' with these kids in public housing. So, you know, it's a lot of them ready to get home, there ain't nothing there for them there to eat, especially on them weekends. So we make sure we sendin' something home for them on the weekend. The food bank will work with us pretty good but they're there making sure we know and the schools we got you got you know, healthy food going home with them for the weekend so they can have for the weekend. But you know, but again, if we didn't step up as a group as a community-based organization, and say these are things we're gonna do to help this community, I don't think it would have never happened. But again, we got big plans going on coming around and right in May 21 of, you know, looking at 2022.

So our school giveaway, what we wanting to do August 18th, when they walk in school, alright, we want to make sure that y'all got a book bag of the supply they gon' need. You can't go to work on a job if you ain't got the tools and stuff that you need, so we can't send a child back to school if they don't have the requirement supply they need, so we make sure we get that. And, you know, if you're going to school in your tennis and you done wear your tennis the whole summer and you have to wear it the first day, you ain't gon' feel good, somebody's gonna tease you. So we make sure we get them a complete uniform. We got some partners out there at barber shop and beautician that will fix they hair, the barber cut the little boys' hair, you know, whatever they want done to them. Some girls in the beautician would twist they dreads or whatever. But for that first day, that very first day they step back in school they feeling good about their self because they clean, they got on sneakers, they got on a new uniform, they got book bags, and they look like their presentable. Now what happened after that? We can't guarantee, but that first day, that first impression on that teacher, that's what they gonna see and that's what we look at, you know. That's, we want, so that first impression so what we do throughout the whole week, maybe first week in school we go visit all of the schools, you know, so again, I, again. Just play in all those factors, we can sat that's the maximum and say, 'Okay, we finished with that. That's what we're working on.' You go visit them in school, let them know of they will come into shared responsibility. We the community here, you know, my organization, we can walk up to Sanders-Clyde, we can walk into Simmons-Pinckney, we can walk up in James Simons, we can walk up in Charleston Progressive. We walk up in any school that we have to walk up in and normally we got kids in those school, and once they see our presence there it's a smooth situation.

Even at the high school. I get more invites from Miss Swinton at Burke and Mr. Nelson, at, well, he done left now, from Simmons-Pinckney. Always callin' up, 'Come in, Mr. Jones,' you know, when y'all, if y'all is coming down to the 'Good morning, Mr. Jones,' and you shake their hand when they come to school, I think they have a better day. Hold up, wait a minute, I always asking myself, how can one person, you know, can make, can, you know, can have such an impact on people, you know, again, it ain't nothing that, that I had planned that I'm trying to do to try to get some brownie points by doing it. It's just something like deeply rooted on the inside, man, you know, and I might lie to you, but I'm not gonna lie to me. You know, I'm saying, I ain't gonna lie to myself, you know, so that's something deeply rooted on the inside. And it hurt a lot many nights, cry, tears. Wonder where them kids at, wonder where this one at, especially the ones runnin' around here right now at the age of 12, 13 years old smoking weed. That irks me, man. I'm not mad 'cause they smoking. I'm mad about the damn adult who's selling a kid that. I am mad at the stores on the corner, the Arab stores in the community are selling these kids blunts and lighters to smoke weed with. Come on man, where our community at, you know what I'm saying? That's my

concern. The person that's selling them the weed and the store that's selling them, you know, the lighters and the blunts, but they smoke the weed. But I got a problem with that. So I don't support none of this. I don't go to any highly anonymous donor community, because they just, they just messin' up, they making the situation worse.

EC: Could you briefly just describe what the organization is, the name and who else is involved?

EJ: Well, the name of the organization is the Concerned Citizen, and I always say the Concerned Citizens of the Peninsula/Lowcountry. So therefore, this, this organization is a grassroots-based organization with people that were born and mostly raised in this community. Some of them were fortunate enough to move out of the community and go, some will go, latching, jet bird, you know, a nice go. I love it. But they still come back downtown to help me out, to help us out with this organization. I guess, as, as a community based organization we have no ties with none of the organizations inside of the city. We have no ties with the City of Charleston. For the simple fact, we are a grassroots-based organization. Grassroots mean you work from the bottom up, not from the top down. So, we down in the trenches knowing that, we know exactly what you need, how you need, when you need it. And so, that's what we're there for, to put the hands out. And that's what we do.

We do neighbors helping neighbors. We do mentoring with young kids. We do round-table discussion. We do food giveaway. We do mother's day stuff, you know. We do 12 days of activities, but again, we do it mostly based off of sweat and tears. And sweat and tears come from, we work our fingers to the bone to raise funds to get things done. We don't go begging nobody to get things done for the community. Because, you know, it was me that started the organization. Like I said, in 2003, I started the organization. I started the organization because we were having too many young people under the age of 25, black and white, were being killed on the street of the city of Charleston. Like the story I always tell people; I went to church to bury my little boy and another kid says, "man, if anybody can change us around, Coach can do it." So and from then in 2003, we formulated this group in 2003/2004, and we had it going together, we had it working ever since then, and so we always look back, I were looking back to see all our success. And we'll be accomplishing, and our gain and goals that we reaching it, let me be said, I am be honest, be frankly, honest with you. We reach every damn goal we set. We reach- we reach every goal we set.

So, you know, that's another big plus plus, but I say now, it was a many nights of crying in tears and, and all that and we have people trying to attack this organization.

So if you wait out the five year plan, then the 10 year plan was kicking in. So you take going to city council meeting, you take a look at the way they set their plan, you set your plan the same way too. So that's why I got a five to 10 year plan, I got a long term and a short term plan, you know, so my five year plan were to get it out, you know. And I'd be honest with you being black, alright, starting a grassroot based organization in the city of Charleston, ain't nobody gonna give you nothing. Because they ain't gonna trust you. So for the first- I would say for the first four years- everything we were doing was coming out of my pocket. From what I done to my general contract and had bank and had set up beside, were coming out of my pocket, because we, I refused to go in front of anybody and beg them, you know, try to persuade them No. So that's how we did it. For the first four years

and everybody see the success coming from, when everybody was trying to, like, buy into what we was doing.

And so we don't let any and everybody get in. So if you contact them and say we want to do such and such things, say "we need to talk to Mr. Jones first". Because I don't let any and everybody in because people have their personal gain behind it. And you are not going to come around here and you're not I refuse to have you to come in and use our kids around here in the black community for a poster child for you to get your gains and your you know, you write for grants and you get it and then you up and you go and you leave them and they still in the same place. We don't have time for that. We're talking about young people who got life you know, you know, lovable lovable people. They don't just give them a fair chance you know, just give them a fair chance. That's all that's all they asking. That's all I'm asking. I gave you a chance to prove yourself, you would prove yourself, but if nobody gives you a chance, what do you got? You got failure. Failure for yourself. No, so a one, I mean just one of you got enough- have I got enough confidence in you that you're going to achieve something you're gonna work at that. Because you know why? "I don't want to let coach down," and I get that all the time man; "Coach, man I just don't want to let you down man."

No, but I mean, I mean this, so this organization is dear to me to my heart, day and night. The summer camp we run right here right now? \$25. Only \$25. Then if you ain't got it, guess what? You know how many kids that I scholarship myself? I call it a scholarship. I just pay for them and let them come in, because they got to have a safe place they can be during the summertime. We run the city, the city [of] Charleston run man. Them boys, man, right off of this tourism man, the money they make off tourism is ridiculous I mean I'm serious just that tourism by itself we ain't talking about the hotel and all the taxes they paying in culinary tax and all that that what they get then. Right and there's no excuse. There's no excuse. We, if you look at it, we are the number one destination place, and one in the nation everybody coming here? To see what we got to offer. Then when you get back down in the black community, you got shit to offer? I got a problem with that. I really do. I chastize them every time I get a chance in council, man. You know, so don't use them, don't play with them. You know I'm saying man, that thing will, thing go on and on and on and on and on. It's dear to my heart, you know. It's dear to my heart. Until one day you walking here, you walk among those public housing and you've seen that damn kid sitting out there eating a pack of dry frosted oodles and noodles. That's dry oodles and noodles. Then you walk up in their room and you see them pads on the floor, you know? Look in the closet and there's nothing there to clean, look in the closet for something to eat and there's nothing there, brah. That shit hurt. Every day. Every day, that's why everybody is praying to god man we keep something in this place for these kids to eat, man. You got to. Do I'm, I'm looking for a reward from anybody? No, I don't. Again, coming through a single single family home mom raised the five boys and two girls I knew what the struggle was like.

I knew what struggle looked like. And then we had a little bit more leniency. What about right now there ain't none, man. And so what? the grandparent raising them? Come on, man. These people 60, 70, 80 years old. They can't deal with an 11, 12 year old little kid that are younger than that. These people want to sit back, relax and trying to just make peace for the rest of their life. When time for them to depart from this side of the Earth, they're ready to go. They can run behind these little kids all day long every day. So what do you do? Everything set up is for a pipe system up a pipe-pipeline for the prison system,

man. I mean basically, that's what all it is. I mean I call a spade a spade and that's what you get in the black community, man. You know there's no lovey, nobody care. You don't see Skylar Wilson and come around through here, man. Shit, we barely see chief Reynolds come through here. The mayor only come back through here every four years. We see the councilman and the state representative when you get your Marlon Kimpson and Henry Darby, I'm, I mean I give it to you from school board straight to DC. These people 'round here never see Clyburne. Never did. They see him on TV, but they ain't never seen him.

No contact, call you back later. Some of these people never seen Clyburne no more than they see him on TV. They hear about Marlon Kimpson, when he'll come round every now and then and bring out a bunch of turkeys along with us and pass out a bunch of foods and Turkey to the community. What good is a turkey if you aint getting no dressing going along with it on Thanksgiving Day. So I mean this, this is then we had kids again and I've gone all over the place but you want the truth. We had kids used to go downtown making and selling palmetto rose. They find a way to stop that, and one day I was sit down and think about why that kid been earning, making money, and make the rose to put food on the table for his little siblings, for his little brother and sisters. You cut that out from them. All this money the city of Charleston got, What does City of Charleston got for these kids to do during the summertime? Not a damn thing. No baseball, no soccer, I mean absolutely nothing. June, July, August when they're out of school. That's just I mean we should have program program below going on home. Nothing going on. The only thing we got going on to the basketball tournament we supposed to be having going on down the street at Martin Park.

Any right this baseball season these little kids should be on these parks right now playing baseball in evening time. You look at the baseball diamond, grass growing in the middle of a baseball diamond! I ain't never seen such damn thing man. Come on, man. I'm serious. Who cares? Nobody cares. So what is our chance of getting six students out of Burke to go to the College of Charleston at one time? It will never happen. It could, but it will never happen, no. Charleston is something, you know? What I would get everybody go to community college, come on man. Trident don't take enough of them.

I don't know man. But you hear all that screaming out there right now? That's what we hear every day man. When this place, get quiet and all the kids go home that's what you hear. Or that happy, hungry scream. Or what? But you gotta listen to the scream you can tell what that scream is about.

And that's what. That's what this organization do in this community, and then we break it down CCPLC. We call it children caring people loving the community. That's what we use CCPLC for. It's not for the Concerned Citizens of the Peninsula/Low Country, that's what it's for. But the name were too long so we just went by CCPLC. We gotta come up with something better, we got the CCPLC as those Children, Caring, People, Loving the Community. If we don't love this community we got, then who got? We got development coming up all up around here, man. And we know the city getting all these taxes for all these buildings being built around here. Where the money going there? Come on, let's be real, let's be real. So who next? Who's grooming, who's grooming the next set of leaders we might have the next scientists right here living among the public housing we might have the next president of the United States, you know? Future President of the United States, future Governor, we don't know. I guess, well I got that trust in them that they gonna make it. I got one fella right now and I will take you and you can

talk to him any day. I met this kid, Paul was about seven years old. And Obama had just got elected for President of United States. And Paul said he gonna be the next black President of United States. And I hold him to that and guess what? He's a rising senior this year. And I know he's gonna be smarter, nobody in the projects and public housing, but guess what? He's going to be valedictorian of his 2022 class. The boy's smart. Very smart. And right round in public housing right now right on East Bay Street where all the noise at, all the trash and overflowing in the rain, they can't come out they house, that's why we love it.

That's why we're here. And I got doubt no, son if you want to dream you're gonna be the President of United States. then guess what? I challenge him, do what it takes. First, you know, you gonna make sure you keep a clean record. Because they're gonna dig into that when you get into politics. You got to watch how you walking and carrying yourself in a certain meeting. Let him sit down and see how they supposed to be professional elected people right? It's a damn circus sometimes. They really be acting like a circus sometimes. But that's life. That's life. That shit hurt. It hurt now. I aint drop no tears today now because y'all boys ain't gonna get me like that, but it hurt. Deep down inside, it hurt. These people living a life of the rich or famous and these little kids, man. Little kids, little Innocent, little things, man. Right now. They got a pool they spent near damn \$6 million on to get it renovate and my little kids got to stay outside and play on the swing 'cause they weren't allowed to go into the pool, because they got other people from different areas using the community pool. It's a community pool? Where the councilmen at, where the mayor at? Where the director for the recreation the director of the recreation department at? Someone should be able to come say; "no, let these little kids get in the pool in summertime," What they got to do? I'll tell you one thing. You can talk to anyone running around it and ask if you got a chance to change anything in this community, man and they tell you and I guarantee you both y'all bring tears to your eye. You know something these little kids ask for? just to have one night in their neighborhood without hearing a damn gun fly. That's what they ask for. They ain't asking nobody to go build them a condominium public housing. They just want quiet and peace at least one night. Don't get that. I mean little kids see there's someone laying in the street dead with bullet holes in they body. And guess what, what you know, happen the next day? They send them to school. The school district don't say nobody dead, the counciling, so they got to deal with that and trying to learn, and teachers yelling at you. Do we expect to get- you expect a child to snap off on you. All that pressure, pressure, man, that's pressure, pressure. It's a lot man, I'm telling you, that shit break me down at times. That's a lot. And like I said I feel them man, but again, nobody cares. Nobody cares.

EC:I think this might be one of the last questions I have for you, but...

EJ: Okay.

EC: I guess, what- what's your vision? You know, if, and you spoke on it a little bit before and I think you've kind of, you've laid out a number of things, but, and that can be for you, for the neighborhood, for the kids, Charleston community. Just if I asked you What's your vision? What would you say?

EJ: What my vision is, is to see every young adult and teenager and youth be treated fairly across the board. That's my vision, I want to be with, my vision is see, let a black kid that live in public housing will be able to go into this pool with some kids that live on Dunes West. Places like Wild Dunes, you know

Dunes West, that's where they come from. Kiawah, Seabrooks island to come and swim in they community pool. I want to see them be able to get in the pool swim with those white kids, the same day, at the same time and have fun. I wanna see those kids, you know, I just want to see kids in general, just breaking bread, man. And I'll be going and we, and we're in the new millennium right now know all the separation. The black and white issue we got going on around here, discriminating, you know? Gone. You know? We just need a point where, we're going, we're gonna love each other as sisters and brothers but like we supposed to, you know. Damn, if I cut him, and cut you, and cut me, guess what? We gonna bleed red. Ain't no different than that. Until people get down on the inside. And learn it, see? And it's a big big red behind it. You know what I'm saying? Nobody know how to love nobody no more man. People take love for, I want to see people get out there and love each other, embrace each other. And let's be there to help each other out in hard times. Know how many people we got homeless right now were doctors, lawyers, big people. [unintelligible] down this block in they life. And they fall and guess what everybody do? Put their foot on they neck? Naw, man. Anyway regardless of that we got to love them. We got to show them a way you know they our way. You know. They got to know that they got people they can trust. I mean hard times they got somewhere they can turn to.

EJ: I don't want to see a man standing under the foot of the bridge with a sign saying "Will work for food". A man living in United States should never stay hungry. I'm sorry. Nobody in United States should be hungry. Nobody United States should be worryin' about have to have a place to stay. "Homeless" - that shouldn't even for us be in our vocabulary. But the same. Living under the bridge, tent city. Black, white, hispanic and all and we look down them, naw. So I just wanna see a day like, like that wall, my famous wall right here. And I look at the wall every day I walk in here. And Martin Luther King, he said "I had a dream that one day man, that, man, I want us as people just to be people and treat each and everybody fairly you know from the top to the bottom, man." And these little kids runnin' around here. Looking for somebody to love up on them, someone who they feel comfortable with that's what I want, man, you know. I want to see all these community advocates and all these community leaders, man, sit down with some revolution, bruh. Let's put these damn guns down. That ain't solvin' nothing. We know they got it coming all right. Come on. State agent and local agent. Oh, we can stop these things man. They don't want to stop it they don't want to stop it until it hit they doorstep. Then it become to be a problem. But until then they don't care. So man, brah, I'm gonna close out with this line man. We we just get people to love each other man you know and like they might be laughing at Nino Brown on the movie New Jack City, but he, he made a bold statement and he said "Am I my brother's keeper?" How many people out here we got can say that they they brother's keeper? We don't have none.

We have very few. If I can clone myself at least 25 times I would man. I pretty sure it can, it might not make a whole lot of difference it we you know we can put a real dent, a dent in the situation, right. I mean basically I mean man, listen. When I get through with y'all right now I going to sit down to the water man first then I go pray.

I'm telling you man, love man love you think about, you think about it. We got Emanuel Nine, we got Charleston Nine which are Charleston nine firefighters and then you look at all right on Wilson in that plant blow up, it killed nine people so that tell us nine is a, we worrying about sixes but we got to watch these nines, man. 999. Come on, man. I mean we ain't talkin' about [unintelligible]. So the three biggest explosions, the World Trade Center been when? September, right? Ninth month, what happened? So

these nines, and now talk to people. I mean, you really got to sit back and you got to think about all that. Everything that happened, tragedy, big tragedy as always got to do something close to nine uh, nine somewhere in it. It's telling you somethin' man. So my, my thing with that, with this closing man is that we can only teach people how to love and don't look at a man because he down or kick him cause he down. Know what I'm sayin'? Lets reach back down and help that brother come up, man. You know that brother next to us, we you know that's what we got to do but until we get there, we gonna see this cycle over and over again, you'll be set now in the next 20 years you'll probably be sitting in this seat right here and somebody be question you about, and a journalist in the area where we go from here. And one thing I can tell you before I go I ain't gonna stop what I'm doing. The only way I'm gonna stop this is the day when God decided take me from this side and I finish. If I live to see 102 years old I still will be doing the same thing and ain't gonna change it. And again I'm not looking to get no, I don't even know, prestige behind what I do. Because if that, then I doing what I'm doing for the wrong reason. I'm doing it for people to look at me for who you're doing it and coming from in here (gestures to heart) you coming in from here, then you're doing it for the right reason, but so.

Again, man we could get a little bit deeper but I don't wanna get in all that with y'all [unintelligible]. I've seen so much of dirty things happen around here man. But again, different story. Another time. I'm telling you if you don't want it, I tell you and everybody else, if you don't want the truth, then don't come talk to me. I ain't sugarcoat nothing. I ain't sugarcoat nothing I call a spade a spade and I ain't gonna sugarcoat nothing. You're wrong, you're wrong. You're right, I stand with you. You're wrong,

I can't stand with wrongness and I'm not going to support wrongness, I don't care who you are. So now don't get me wrong now, on my closing I get more calls right now (pats cell phone) because this election year. Getting a lot of calls. We want to come in, and they want to come in the Black community. They need the Black votes. Where the hell were you four years ago? Where were you when, man, you look out the window right now and across the street four families, four families's furniture sitting on the side of the road, bruh, they got to evicted today what the Councilman at, where our county Councilman at, where our State Representative at, where our Senator, now what these people and kids going at tonight? You look out there across the street before four family got evicted today man. You've seen these, any elected official out here? Not a bit. So now what happened to these little kids? Where they going at tonight? That's what you got to look at. I'm telling you brah, you live in the Black community, the shit real, that's what you see. That's what it is. All right.

EC: Is there anything that I didn't ask you that I should have?

EJ: Many. But right now, I think you kinda cover it all again. That's why I gave you the article straight from that news and from that Post and Courier. I bring that for you to read. I want you to read that and then let that self, and that's self explanatory. That will tell you exactly about it. That was the article right here, they was going around the community talkin' to people, I ain't had a clue what was going on. Wonder why these people Christ and on my journey you got some people to talk to these kids. No, no, no, no, no. Everybody popped up somebody snappin' pictures, "What going on?", you know. And finally I get the article and I see what was going on. So we OK, a youngin living right across the street, senior in high school she ready to quit. Thought she was pregnant she was ready to quit school. Talk her into it. She

talked to the Post and Courier of course she said "Well wasn't for for Mr. Jones. I wouldn't have completed high school I was ready to drop." Man. So the article, I don't even first, be honest with y'all, I ain't even first read the article in there. I don't. I read it the first time I ain't first read it. Every time I read it, he hurt because I still see the same thing. Right? And every five years, six years later, he's still seeing the same thing, right.

That's why I did my board the way I did my board. President Barack Obama, a little kid, right from the community. I'm serious with everybody you see up here, This one of mine, graduate this year from Burke. He gonna be Malcolm X, I don't know. But you got, you got to put them, let them see themselves with somebody famous. Community person right here? Put her with Maya Angelou. Ralph Johnson was living right here in the Eastside, would die. Chester went through the same thing with it. Now you see right there, look in the corner. Jim Clyburn and Representative Gilliard. I put them two together and put them in the bottom of my board I mean they should have been somewhere up on the top, that's where they deserve to be at. So I got people here that's the man is the aquatic manager across to the pool. I put him with Owens, he's the Olympic winner, shit he won the Olympic in the community. So we, you've got to use your community people and let them see them and this is this is my way of showing them you know, polite thing to goal you can reach by letting them walk in here and see theirself up here, alright. Uncle Phillip Simmions, this man got ironwork all over the world, this young man ready DeAngelo Rouse, this man walk 'round out here and fix the part where the city don't wanna fix in the Black community, that's what he do, you know what I'm sayin'. It's all, I mean we got to utilize what we got. So you think like these famous people and put local people with them, alright, put local people with them. That's my way of kinda of, and right now, where you at? Right here. Them are busy now, you know where this kid at right now? Go down there two blocks on the corner. Them boys come, "Man, coach I know you ain't got Numsey on your board!" Yeah, and tell him to come in here, and see himself on this board. Let's put you next to Denmark Vessey, by pullin' off the corner from sellin' damn drugs. Who knows, you know? I see, these are my these are my concept or vision to make them change themself around, man. And that's, so that's what I want to see. I want to see changes like this happen man. Who tell me Ronald can't be another Malcolm X, you know all means necessary, you know? Shit Boss might, he might end up havin' to he might the, the only one to get a bunch of the kid that right under public housing to be on the Olympic swim team.

We don't know. So that's how you got to think. I mean, that's how I think, be ahead of it. I tried to get a lot of 'em in, a Ralph L. Johnson, man two blocks from where we at right now, he been born and raised in the Eastside. And if he can do that right here and get that much on on it, then why can't have the whole bottom full of little kids that live in public housing with the same thing too. And then putting other people who know them right next to them, see what I'm saying? There's a plan and a purpose for everything I do but a lot of times, they don't understand what I doing, cause I don't explain it to them like I explain to y'all just now but, but, that's my dream board.

EC: That's an awesome board.

EJ: Mhmm, yeah. They call me Geechee. Sometime I let, sometime you know, mean some, some time I let the Geechee part come out of me, but, it be all right. What next? I could do after this.

EC: No, I think that's it for now.

EJ: Yeah, man. Appreciate y'all fellas' time.

EC: We appreciate your time. Thank you for that.

EJ: I ain't got nothin' but time. Got about 12 to about six in the morning to sleep, and right back the phone will ring in between and right back at it the next morning full bloom ready to go. That's how they work man. But she just said I gotta bring something. So as well. You know, gonna be honest with ya man, you know, so again, alright, Charleston, you know, city people. Surely, you know, city people it's something kinda hard you got. Man, listen I ain't got time for that. I got it when, man Ed Robinson said "Mr. Jones, you know, you make the city paper?" "No." And I get a call from the NAACP, "We want you to be we want to nominate you for our, um something Brown award first time ever been presented to a person that, in the Black community. Ok, I'll be there. Who's this? Oh, Joe Biden's the keynote speaker. Okay, we down there breakin' bread. And here we come some years later, he the President of the United States. You know, shit if I know that, I would've, we will probably did a little bit more other things before that. You know, we probably went in the White House right now having a barbecue in the backyard man. Yeah, man. But then I took one of the kids with me. When I went to there. And he met, and he met Biden and he voted this year and he's "I votin' for that same man, coach, who we meet down in the auditorium." Life experiences. I didn't know Biden would have run for president, you know, and won. Shit but I know he been down there when I received my reward, he shake my hand, I shake his hand and he congratulated me. Congratulate him and thank him for being the Vice President of The United States and we move on to the next level. That's it. Well here he comes some years later, shit he the President of United States, now, I shouldn't never washed my hands after we, I shake our hands after that dinner, let me cut that out man. Otherwise say you never know. You know, you never know.

So now Julio remember that. He met the man who President now, he met him when, when he been a freshman in high school. He remembered that, and I got the picture in my phone to prove that, so that's cool with him, yeah. Yeah man, but anytime man, anytime, anytime. Anytime you want to keep it real, now.

EC: Of course. That's why we're here.

EJ: To keep it real.

End of recording.