



COLLEGE OF
ARTS AND SCIENCES
**Geography and
Environment**

In collaboration with
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Vice Chair of the Warren County Environmental Action Team

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Interviewer(s): Madeline Keogh, Sophia Sload
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00:00 **Sophia Sload** **Alright, so, I think we'll get started now—Maddie, are you all set up?**

00:04 **Madeline (Maddie) Keogh** **Yeah—**

00:04 **Angela Dunston** **—And just one question: We're not doing all these questions? Are we doing just the highlighted ones...what are we doing...?**

00:10 **S.S.** **Yeah, so, we just pulled out a list of eight questions or so, from, primarily from the ones that we highlighted, and we'll go through that. And if we have more time, then we'll probably have follow-up questions from when we hear from you. So, we'll just adjust it according to how everything goes.**

00:29 **A.D.** **Not a problem.**

00:30	S.S.	Alright, cool. Then let's get started!
00:36	M.K.	Yeah! I'll kick us off. So, maybe we could start off, if you could paint us a picture of what it was like growing up in Warren County, and these origins of your activism in the EJ movement.
00:52	A.D.	Well again, good afternoon, and thank you all for inviting me to be a part of this effort. I am very touched and appreciative of it. So, thank you for that. I don't know if you guys have—you do know, because you told me that you have studied Warren County, so you know that Warren County is in the North Central Eastern-ish version, or portion of the state of North Carolina. We border with the southern tip of Virginia. I grew up in, as you know, Warren County, which is somewhat known for Kerr Lake and Lake Gaston, and so my family literally lived on the lake. And I'll just share at that time, living on the lake was not considered the prestige that it's sometimes considered now. That part of the lake, just to do a little bit of history for you, was known as an area that Native Americans had settled. And so, my family has some Native American heritage in it as well, and so we, my family had been in that area for hundreds of years. So, [I] grew up on the lake. The lake was very much a part of our history, our heritage. It was how my family lived. We fished a lot, because again, we lived in a lake area, but at the same time, Lake Gaston was not what it is now. And so, the area now has probably million-dollar homes on it. When we were there, they clearly were not million-dollar homes, but [it was] an area that was considered somewhat impoverished in Warren County. And so, again, as I said, being a part of the lake, and being a part of water, and in significance, not only in my family, but in the historical heritage of Native American families was very important. Again, as I said, it was an area that was settled in some parts of it by the Native American community. There were a lot of African American families there as well, as Warren County was and still is majority African American. We were considered just everyday people, who, as I said, fished, farmed, hunted, and lived what you

		would call an agricultural life in that region of the state. More? Is that enough? More?
03:31	M.K.	That's perfect, yeah.
03:35	S.S.	Yeah, thanks for sharing that! So, I was wondering, shifting more into environmental [advocacy], when did you first get involved as an activist, and what and who inspired you to step into this role, in your community? How did the natural—your connection to the lake and different aspects of nature really play a part in this?
04:00	A.D.	And I'll say that the word 'activist' didn't come into my vocabulary until many, many years later. Because clearly, we didn't see ourselves as activists, but as people who were working to save their history, save their environment, save their home territory. And so, it probably wasn't until, and I'll be honest, maybe <i>I</i> was in college, that I realized that I was an activist. I was just doing what I saw, and I'll just say most of the women in my community and in my family [were] doing to help save our, again, piece of what we thought—or what still is—paradise, our home. We were trying to ensure that the quality of water, air, food was preserved and healthy, and was something that [not only] we could continue to live off, but future generations would have an opportunity to live off. And so, again, being an activist was not what I thought. We were just doing what we were told, which was the right thing to do. That our community had been, basically poisoned by an unscrupulous corporate or business entity, who decided not to properly dispose of the chemical PCB, but to dump it along the side of the road in fourteen communities, or fourteen counties in the state. And Warren County was just unfortunately the area in which the state of North Carolina decided to dig up the soil, and put it in our landfill. And I don't know if you guys were aware, but Warren County was one of many sites that was initially proposed as the area in which the soil would be dumped. I was told through other elders that Chatham County was also one of the options. Now are you guys now familiar

with all the things that are happening in Chatham County? So, Chatham County is now considered, I'll just say the energy or industrial economic development site in rural North Carolina, in the state. And so, we've often had this conversation about 'what if Warren County hadn't been chosen as the site'? Would we now be the Chatham County of the state, and have all the economic development that is currently there, and is proposed to come there? Instead of Warren County still continuing, even after 40 years, to be deemed an environment that is economically unproductive, and it's not a site in which economic development can blossom, and grow, and develop.

06:48 **S.S.** **Yeah, that's really interesting to hear because Warren County is pretty similar in distance, I'd say, to the Triangle and to Durham, and could easily be a location, like a Chapel Hill, or Chatham County.**

07:00 **A.D.** Yup... All of the, all of the above. But unfortunately—I won't say everyone—but I still believe Warren County suffers for the, from the stigmas of still being considered, number 1, a minority community, a rural community, and an impoverished community. And as a result—and I'm sure there are other factors as well—it has not had the opportunity to develop economically, as it deserves to.

07:30 **S.S.** **Yeah, thank you for that perspective.**

I just had a quick follow up: When this was happening, when the dump was proposed, and the PCBs were coming into the community, what was the conversation among community members, about them choosing Warren County? Did people feel like it was very targeted, or was it more just an overall concern in the community for the health and well-being of everybody?

07:55 **A.D.** Well, I can't speak for all the elders; You have to remember, I was a preteen at that time, and so my perspective will be very much different, because, of course, I wasn't privy to all the conversations that were happening among, I say the adults or some of the elders. But I do, from those that I've talked to now, agree with what I said.

That it was because it was considered [an] impoverished low-income, majority minority community that we were chosen.

And also, because, and we can talk about this now, especially with what's going on with politics, that people didn't believe that this small rural community had the political power to serve as an activist or advocate against the landfill and the soil being dumped there. But, and I may be jumping ahead, so you guys use what you need, but what clearly came out of this was not only was Warren County—and we always say it was the David and Goliath fight, and at the end of the day, maybe we didn't win the battle, but in some sense, we did win the war, because I think what happened to an area like a Warren County, elevated the importance of communities working together, elevated the importance of activism and activists coming together. And it, of course, clearly elevated the environmental justice movement, especially in North America.

And so, at the end of the day, I think that we did win in that sense, but, as you know, the landfill was located, and still is located in Warren County, and many of the challenges that are associated with an area like that still exist for that area and for the region.

09:47 M.K. **Yeah, absolutely. That's a really great point you brought up, and so interesting. I do kind of wanna go back and kind of connect this to our next question—when you said the term "activist" isn't something you really came into until your twenties. What, at what point did you realize that is—"I am an activist, and that is something I'd probably label myself as," if you ever even have reached that point? That's also a different discussion. Was it something that you learned about it and you were like, "Oh did I—I've always been an activist!" or was it like, did you kind of, was there certain roles and career moments that you came into it and you were like, "Yes, I am an environmental activist, this is something I definitely identify as"—that's different from advocacy, I suppose, advocating for your rights?**

10:38 A.D. And again, I'll say, that's the beauty of it—and I'm not saying that college or higher ed[ucation] is for everyone, but once you oftentimes leave home, you get exposed to other people. Often you

get to hear about other histories, and you read about others who have done work that's similar to what you may have done, and you're like, "Oh, wow! That story is similar to mine". And I think it was being at somewhere like a UNC Carolina, in which you learn about others'—again, as I say, history, but also other cultures, other individuals who've done advocacy work, and you realize, "Okay, yeah, that is what was happening in Warren County, and I can connect the dots, as to the connection between what's happening in a South Africa, what's happening at Love Canal, or in Appalachia, North Carolina, to what has been the history of somewhere like Warren County."

And I don't think I've ever called myself an activist. I think maybe other people have labeled I think all of us, including many of our elders, as that. But for us, it was, again, preserving your history, keeping a legacy alive, ensuring, literally, that people stay alive. When you think about, what you know now, like I said, sometimes knowledge is scary, but when you think about drinking water from an area like that, who—you think about NC State and other places now, PFAs and all kinds of environmental toxins that you may be breathing or eating. It's almost scary to think about, 'Okay, that could have been me, that could have been so many other people.' But once you're exposed to knowledge—which is why it's so powerful—once you're exposed to knowledge, then you learn, and you understand better: This is why this has happened, this is why we must continue to fight.

As I said to you all, the landfill is still there now. The impact of the landfill is still now. We've never had any kind of health study, or environmental study done in Warren County, that could look at the impact of PCB on the soil, on the food that we eat, on the water that we drank... or continue to drink, on the air that's being breathed in that area. And so, when you think about what that could mean, as far as implications of full circle connection to what's happened to people's lives, it's probably even more devastating than we wanna think about.

But, the whole idea of being an activist and advocating for whatever the issue may be, whatever the challenge may be, I don't think anyone sets out to say, "Oh, I wanna be an activist." I think

sometimes situations just require you to step up to the plate to be that. And if you're a person who's willing to take the mantle and do what's necessary and do what's right, you become that activist. But again, I don't think the average individual says, "Oh, you know, today I think I'm gonna go and"—Well, sometimes, I'll take that back. But I think situations create the opportunity for you to serve and to act and to be an advocate in certain areas.

14:17 S.S. Yeah, I really appreciate that you mentioned there hasn't been very thorough health studies in Warren County, even though this is like a known issue, and a very, I think a widely known one in the EJ community. Which makes me think how many other communities and locations have lots of pollution, and they're being exposed to these things, but there's just not a thorough health study done. Which, I don't know, that just, that's kind of crazy to think about, so I really appreciate that you shared that. And—

14:49 A.D. —And Sophia, I don't think that is unusual, when you talk about poor, low-income, and rural areas. Oftentimes that's the norm, unfortunately. Because, again, sometimes people don't feel like the people who live there are worth the additional resources or dollars that it may take to do such a thing. But oftentimes people don't know that they can demand and require that something like that takes place, as well.

And I will say, there may have been smaller studies done, but countywide, statewide, there has not been a health assessment done, connected to the impact of PCB, so I'm not saying that—there may have been health studies, I mean heart studies done, diabetes studies done, but nothing that was, I will say, countywide to look at the impact or implications of PCB on [inaudible].

15:50 S.S. Okay, wow, yeah, very interesting.

So, kind of circling back to your college career: So, you said you went to UNC, an alum of our university, so we love to hear that! I was just wondering, so if you could explain a little bit about your time at UNC, and maybe what was your major? And how

did you get more, were you, did you—sorry, did you get more involved in activism, or just learning more about other communities experiencing this, and just explain more, if you could. That would be great.

16:25 A.D.

I'll say, my days at Carolina, of course, was like every college students'. I worked hard, but I played just as hard... You can bleep that if you need to. But I will also say, though, it was a time of enlightenment, because again, coming from rural, small—I don't know where you guys are originally from—but rural, small North Carolina to Chapel Hill being exposed to people from all across the country and the world, as you well know, who come to Carolina and love Carolina for what it brings to their, not only education portfolio, but their entire exposure, when it comes to education and culture.

For me, and I'll just say, in spite of being engaged with the PCB environment, I still was also very much still a quiet student, very much into my studies. And I think for me, I think the problem—I'm trying to think about what I focused a lot of my time on beyond my studies... I actually was [an] economics major, believe it or not; Doing nothing near economics right now—oh well, in some vein I'm still doing work that impacts economic development, but, I think the biggest thing for me that I focused a lot of my time on... I'm trying to think about clubs. Not a lot of clubs, not a lot of that type of work, but still focused on issues that impacted marginalized communities.

And so, being engaged with voter engagement was something that I was very much a part of—ensuring that people were registered to vote, ensuring that people understood the importance of voting. Access to education has always been a big issue for me because, again, oftentimes coming from small rural areas in which school systems often don't have the same resources as a more urban and wealthier environment, students in those areas oftentimes aren't exposed to the same sort of resources. I remember being in my, I think it was a biology class, and we only had one—what's the thing where o you, the burner, the thing where you get to analyze the specimens... it's been so long, y'all should be closer to this than

me... telescope, whatever kind of scope, what's the thing, you probably didn't even do it and I'm aging myself, right?—

19:05	M.K.	No, I'm so far into liberal arts, I'm like totally—
19:07	A.D.	—Okay, so you don't even remember. But, again, I mean limited...but especially when it came to science, having limited resources and equipment in which students had to pair in, not just two pairs of two, but pairs of groups, in order to participate in science projects. I remember, and y'all probably don't even do this, we had to dissect a pig, for whatever reason, and we only had two pigs in the whole class, but 35 wanted kids to be able to dissect. So, just things like that, to me, have always been important, when it comes to education, [and] again, voter engagement, which are interesting stuff that I'm still passionate about. What it looked like, again, for students who, again, who were in rural areas to not have access to the same resources as others, but now has resonated for me, from students to adults who don't have access to the same resources. And so, in many ways, [I] fully understand now what activists and advocacy means, and the importance of that, and how you must continue that if you wanna make change and make the world a better place for everyone.
20:31	M.K.	Yeah, absolutely. And I really love hearing all those stories about Carolina. But yeah, everything that you—
20:38	A.D.	—You'll hear about Franklin Street, you don't wanna know all that part, but anyway—
20:45	M.K.	[Laughs] Not on the recorded Zoom—
20:47	A.D.	None of that, we gonna bleep all that out!
20:51	M.K.	But, yeah, it's definitely really amazing to hear about how your time here [at UNC] has kind of influenced you, exposed you to so much in this world, but I do wanna kind of touch back on your—it seems like the elders in your community, and in the

movement as well, have really influenced you on your journey. Can you speak on that at all, if—about how they've played a role in, not just the work you've done for environmental justice, but your life and everything like that?

21:21 A.D.

And I'm glad you brought that up because, Madeline, at that time, and I hope that the situation is still the same, the elders were very much a part of not only your personal life, your spiritual life, your community life; These were the people who helped educate you from a professional education perspective, but also educate you about life. And so, I think you guys said you already have—someone who is planning to talk to [Dollie Burwell](#).¹ And so, I always have to shout out people like Dollie Burwell, former Congresswoman Eva Clayton,² Miss Jenny Franklin, many of the pastors who are also—or ministers—who were also a part of this movement, or also people who ensured that, if there were other needs that you or your family had, they were there to help. They set the example. They were the mentors, they were the heroes and the She-roses that you looked up to, that you wanted to be like, that you wanted to have their, I'll say 'seal of approval', and so you tried to do the best that you knew how, again, in your personal life, but also in your community.

And so, having those people having laid the foundation and set the pathway and set the framework, for, no matter where you are, you still care about your community and you still continue to work to help your community; And even if you're 2,000 miles away, there are other ways, whether that's through philanthropic giving, whether that's supporting in some other way, you always wanna make sure that you don't forget home, and that you take care of home to the best of your ability.

And so...still continues. I'm very thankful that people like Dollie Burwell and former Congresswoman Eva Clayton are still alive. Many of those elders have passed on over the years, but those who are still there are still continuing the fight. They're continuing to educate others who don't have the history, which is why history is so

¹ The Mother of the Environmental Justice Movement in Warren County

² North Carolina delegate to U.S. House of Representatives 1991-2003; first Black woman to represent North Carolina in Congress

important, and ensuring that history remains in schools, whether you believe—whether you wanna support a certain group or don't support a certain group, the facts are the facts. Taking Black history, Native American history, whatever history out of schools is a detriment not only to the students who are being exposed to that or not exposed to that, but to how a culture and a society and a world continues to develop.

And so, the whole thing—I'm getting off on a tangent, but still, the whole thing of banning books and not teaching certain things because you don't want people to not know it, or, as someone said to me, because it'll make them feel bad. It's not about making people feel bad, but it's about educating them, so we don't continue to make the same mistakes we've made in the past.

24:26	M.K.	Yeah, absolutely. Just a super side note as well, but my mother's a fourth-grade teacher in Georgia, and she's definitely dealing with that all the time and she's like, "I cannot believe every year I feel like there's something else that we can't talk about"—
24:39	A.D.	—[something] else gets taken off the list right, or added to the other list.
24:41	M.K.	—Yes... Exactly. She's like, 'it's so unbelievable, and it's—' Yeah, I'm really glad that you brought that up, and it's so, it's an interesting political landscape that—
24:52	A.D.	It is, it is. But it's also sad, because it also means that we can't sit down and dialogue and talk about what the history has been or what the challenges are—or we're not willing to do that, and we don't wanna have change, and we want the world to continue to have the same challenges and problems that it's had, and not figure out how to work with the next generation or help the next generation of leaders understand how to get past those impasses or challenges that they face.
25:21	M.K.	Yeah. And I think that's what's really cool about this project as well is that we get to continue the oral tradition of the movement, and can talk to people in the movement in a much

		more intimate and relaxing way, that I think this is—the fact that we get to do this for research is so important, especially in, I think, political movements, so—
25:42	A.D.	—I know.
25:44	M.K.	Yeah, I'm really happy that you were able to contribute—
25:47	A.D.	Ah, and listen, y'all don't know how bad I felt, but I was like, I cannot cancel on these kids, because I had to work last night till 10 o'clock. Dealing with this cold, and you could hear my throat because I feel like—but I'm gonna take some Nyquil when I'm done with y'all and I'm going to sleep.
		But no, I'm so happy that you all are doing it, and again, that we're continuing this legacy of the importance of the environmental justice movement. And it's not just environmental justice, but just movements in general, and how do we continue to educate people, to put the history out there, to put the facts out there, and then let people, as I said before, have discussions, have dialogues, have disagreements—that's okay; America and the world was built on that. How do you then come together to come up with solutions?
		And as we think about, now I'm gonna get political, and y'all can bleep this if you want to; And as we think about what is happening now, with censorship of speech, censorship of thought, not having diverse people a part of leadership. DEI is basically a bad word now. And so, when you think about that, not having that diversity, whatever the diversity is—religion, race, sexual orientation—what does that do for a culture and a world, when we talk about not being a homogeneous environment, in which everybody looks alike or thinks the same? How do we, as I said before, address challenges, address problems, bring people to the table to talk about how we resolve these, and prevent the mistakes from the past continuing to happen in the future?
27:30	M.K.	Yeah, absolutely. I think that's so important, especially given everything going on right now and the recent elections, that we

need to kind of be able to have bipartisan conversation on the major issues, especially like the environment.

But I do, I think, in an optimistic [inaudible]... I am curious, what has been your favorite memory throughout your career, in the EJ movement? And maybe this is a specific role that you've undertaken, or if there was a specific moment, I'm really curious to know what's been a very big highlight, looking back and reflecting.

28:12 A.D. Hmm! I would say maybe a couple of things. And again, this past—or last year, two years ago was the 40th anniversary of the Environmental Justice Movement in Warren County. And we had the EPA come down to North Carolina and actually sign a...I don't know if it was an EO, an executive order, but signed documentation to create the Civil Rights Division or Civil Rights Unit of the EPA. And I'll send you some information about that. But having Secretary Michael Regan, and leaders from not just North Carolina, but across the country, who have continued to work on environmental justice over these 40+, 50+ years, 60+ years convene, come together and say, we're gonna continue to address this work and address these challenges was one of the highlights for me. Because I got to see it from the lens of an adult and not as a child.

And so, again, people that I've read about, I've heard about, people who had been mentioned in circles all the time, to come to Warren, to little old Warren County as we say, and to see them catch up. Many of them hadn't seen each other in 30 years, in 20 years. And again, as I said, some of them who had passed on didn't have the privilege of being a part of this moment, but those who were still alive got to enjoy this moment. And for me, that clearly was a highlight.

I will also say, just having, again, and I have to lift them up, because oftentimes women are not celebrated and aren't elevated—whether it's a movement or just in general—but to have many of the women who were a part of my life when I was in my teens or preteens, and who were part of the movement, still alive, still around, still asking about, 'what are you doing next, and how are you addressing this'?

Many of them still telling me what I'm supposed to be doing. Some of it I can do, some of it I can't. But to still have their passion and commitment for addressing the challenges that we, as a state, a country, and a world face, to me is worth more than any amount of money, goal, prestige, or opportunity. To me, that's something to be celebrated.

And the third piece is, again, that Carolina is continuing to do this work, and continuing to address these issues. Especially in this environment in which that's not happening at every higher institution. That is something also that is significant and needs to be celebrated.

31:15	S.S.	I love that you shared that memory about that 40-year reunion. That sounds like it was such a special event—
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31:22	A.D.	—Yes, and I gotta find y'all that—you probably can Google the clip, and I'm sure there's some pictures somewhere, but yes, to have Secretary Regan come to North Carolina. And I don't know if you guys know, but he's from Goldsboro, North Carolina. And so, he, they came to North Carolina for the 40 th —I think it was the 40th anniversary, or one of the 40s—just to say that the EPA is still engaged, there's still work being done. Now, who knows what will happen in the next administration. But at least in the former administration there was still a commitment to addressing civil rights, and what needs to be done to ensure that people who are impacted by environmental issues have some recourse or some body of authority who is looking at it.
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32:15	S.S.	Yeah, for sure.
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And I really liked how you talked about how the community was able to come together. So I was wondering what your perspective is on the role of community connection in furthering movements like environmental justice, and especially how you see that evolving in the modern day, where we're very online and it's just a different community, kind of—I don't really know how to word that, but just—

32:44

A.D.

Yeah, but I get what you're saying. And... I'll say this, community can have various definitions. Community can literally be 'those who are in my physical presence.' Community is us; We've never met each other but we're passionate and we care about environmental justice, so we're a community. And community can be people from all across the country, all across the world who collectively are passionate about an issue. So, whatever your definition of community is, it's important.

Community engagement—and that's another word I didn't even, as an 8th-grader, 5th-grader, had no idea what community engagement meant, but it was what we were doing all along when we were working on environmental justice issues. And so, community engagement to me is important, no matter what the issue is that you may be trying to address; Whether it's voter engagement, whether it's making sure that there's a quality education system for individuals, whether it's making sure that people have access to health insurance, engaging communities around these types of issues is what we need to have, and should have in order to address them.

And I already shared with you about having diverse thought leaders, having diverse individuals from whatever perspective, coming together, bringing all their tools, skills, and knowledge to the table to address the issue is what's important and that's the role that community needs to fulfill—need to play, in order to address the challenges. As I, as you well know, when I was a young person in Warren County, the radius of my community was probably 30 miles. As I've grown now into an adult, the radius of my community now includes people who are in Ghana, but they're still my community, because they care about issues that I care about. And so, community is very important, having people who are educated and understand the issues. And I'm not necessarily talking about formal education, because for me, lived experience—and lived experience is what you've gone through—that's education as well. And having those people at the table who can participate in a process, and participate in an exercise of how we address an issue, [is] just as important.

And so, of course you know advocacy—now that I know what the word is, this many years later—is also something that's very

important, and advocacy includes everyone. I was the preteen at the time that the Environmental Justice Movement was happening in Warren County, and you had people who were in their eighties, nineties, who were also advocating or activists trying to bring about a resolution, to that challenge that we were facing in Warren County. And so now, I'm the adult, and I'm working with younger folks—particularly one of the things that we've been doing is still bringing the history and the experience of what happened in Warren County into our local school system.

And so, this past summer, or two summers ago, we did a summer camp...educating young children about the history of Warren County and the importance of the Environmental Justice Movement. And there, there's a push to work with our local school system to create a curriculum around what happened in Warren County, and how important it is to continue to create those, what do you call—community scientists or folks who are still engaged around those issues. And so, the work continues, and unfortunately, the need for the work continues. But it's something that we have to do, and everybody has to be a part of that bigger ecosystem, and that larger community that will come together to address the challenges.

36:46	M.K.	Yeah, I think, I really like what you've brought up—especially, I'm really interested to hear about this community history and the way that you're adding this curriculum to the local schools of Warren County. I think that's so important in preserving the fight and preserving history, as you said, and making sure we can continue the fight until things get much better.
37:10	A.D.	Exactly, yeah.
37:12	M.K.	I am curious, on a career note, kind of how you've been able to bring your personal history with this movement to the different roles you've had in your career, and how it's led you to your current position.
37:29	A.D.	And it's funny, when I was getting prepared for you, I was kind of thinking about that: So, how have I weaved this web together in some way. And I think the one thing, or the one skill, or tool that I

have continued to bring, no matter where I am, has been community engagement. And so, I've had roles from government relations, public—I'm now doing public relations for a utility company—but community engagement has been a common thread throughout my career, and helping to ensure that communities have facts and firsthand knowledge, no matter what the issue may be, which is important to me. Once you give people the information, it's up to them how they use it, or not use it. But I would never wanna work for an organization that doesn't at least do that.

And so, in my current role, I do community engagement work for an electric co-op. And in this space, one of the things that we're working on is addressing the issue of clean energy and renewable energy. And so, looking at how we can ensure that energy sources like solar battery energy, EV electric cars, how are they an opportunity to address the issues of carbon, zero emissions? How do we look at clean energy from a rural perspective and ensure that folks who may not traditionally be exposed to those types of energy resources have the information and have access to the tools.

Prior to that—I mean, I've always been a community organizer, no matter what you want, no matter what I call it. Community organizing is, in essence, what I've done in all of those spaces. And, as I said, to me, what's important is making sure that people have the facts, and they have the information, and once they have that, allowing them to have the ability to address the issues and challenges that they—[audio cuts out].

39:50 S.S. Wow, yeah. That—I really like how you say how important it is to have the facts, and just your emphasis on education and not just formal education, but all aspects of education. That just seems like such a significant part of your life, and then also what you wanna just give to other people. And even just from this conversation, we could really tell how that just seems like such a major goal of yours, and I'm feeling inspired to—

40:21 A.D. —Oh good!

40:22	S.S.	[Inaudible]. Yeah, just education, and further doing activism, especially of these—I don't know, it's such a privilege to be at [University of North] Carolina, and to be in a class like this, and learn about so many different communities and issues and needs for people, in North Carolina, but also across the world. So, it has been great to hear about your perspective on all of this.
40:49	A.D.	Will we be able to see some of the other projects, or hear? So, it'll all be posted?
40:55	S.S.	Yes, it'll be on, all in one website eventually. I'm not sure exactly when that'll happen.
41:01	A.D.	Okay.
41:02	S.S.	But hopefully, sometime in December or January. Once we fully wrap up our class portion of the project.
41:10	A.D.	Gotcha. And have you guys seen the film by John Rash about Warren County?
41:17	S.S.	I am not sure if we have—
41:20	A.D.	Let me...keep talking, but I'm gonna look for...John is gonna bring the film—I don't know why it didn't go to Carolina, but he's going to do a viewing next year at Meredith [College, in North Carolina]...
41:31	S.S.	Okay—
41:32	A.D.	—and somewhere else... He's had it—it's been international, so that's why... it may not have been, maybe he's just bringing it to the States.
41:47	S.S.	Yeah, I would love to see that and I think that would be a great thing for our entire class to be aware of.

41:51	A.D.	I was about to say, would, in your class—'cause you won't, you won't be in that class next year, right?
41:56	S.S.	I'm not sure if she's teaching it next year, but I would hope—
42:02	A.D.	—Keep talking, I gonna see if I can see what John's—
42:05	M.K.	I think Dr. [Shorna] Allred would be interested in having it, for sure, 'cause we did watch...
42:10	S.S.	The Uniontown?
42:11	M.K.	Yeah, Uniontown.
42:14	A.D.	Okay—
42:15	S.S.	Yeah, that was a really interesting documentary.
42:18	M.K.	Yeah, and we kicked off, I feel like, talking about Warren County in, pretty early in the semester. So, I think definitely if you can get that to us, whenever—
42:27	A.D.	Oh, and he's gonna be viewing [showing] it on the 26th ³ at the Carrboro Film Festival.
42:32	S.S.	Oh, cool!
43:26	A.D.	So let me send you...
42:35	S.S.	...Okay!
		Well, yeah, we just wanted to close out. And also do you—I should have asked this at the beginning, but do you have a hard cut off at 3:15?

³ January 26, 2025: <https://www.carrborofilm.org/events/our-movement-starts-here>

42:42	A.D.	No, keep talking. And...once the dogs start barking, your time is up. But keep going.
42:52	S.S.	Yeah, so we just wanted to close out with a couple of questions on, basically, the progress of EJ, and some future-oriented questions. So, but I could, I'll wait until you're ready, to ask the actual question.
43:07	A.D.	No, keep going, and I'm just gonna hit here, FYI—you'll see “Invitation [to] Warren County film screening.” And just, John sent it to everybody and then he asked me which one was I coming to, so overlook that. But keep going, yeah.
43:21	S.S.	Well thank you so much for sharing that with us.
43:24	A.D.	Mhm! ...Okay, what's the next question?
43:28	S.S.	Okay, so the next question is: how do you feel about how far the EJ movement has come overall, from where it started to now?
43:37	A.D.	And I'll say from where it started to now, I would have hoped 40-plus years later, that we would be further along in, not just Warren County's story, but in addressing some of the challenges, as well. There's a whole environmental justice network, not just in this state, but all across the country, and it has almost seemed as if it's been taboo to talk about environmental justice, which to some degree it has. But now I think that you have had some folks who have elevated the conversation and elevated communities that have been impacted by it. And so, I think progress has happened, but my hope, as I said, would have been that more would be happening. And I do think that it <i>is</i> institutions like UNC—I've been doing some work with the other blue [Duke University] that we won't talk about, but the other blue has been working on this issue, as well, and doing some work around it. And I know that App State [Appalachian State University]

in Boone, North Carolina]—many of those institutions as well, have talked about the whole issue of environmental justice.

My hope, though, is that, more—number one, more will be done; That you all will continue to elevate these conversations and educate people. I definitely want, if it's possible, and I don't know if it is, if maybe this is a class project, that you guys could go see John's film. Warren County is just one piece of it, but there are other communities, as well. And continue to educate and inform others about the movement—but about movements in general. Environmental justice is just one; There are so many other movements, unfortunately, now, that we need to continue to advocate for and address.

And the hope is that, the more people like you all, who are now young adults, will become older adults like me, and continue to raise the flag, and raise the conversations, and raise the opportunities to bring about solutions.

45:52	S.S.	Yeah, for sure. And I like that you talk about the importance of universities in research and bringing awareness; Do you think that a lot of—if we look at universities, local government, and state government, or just any level of government, and then, community-based activism—what do you think the future will look like in terms of just the different players in that? Do you think it'll mostly be university-based, especially following this election? Or do you think local governments will play a big role in furthering this research and raising the voices of the communities?
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46:32	A.D.	You know, I think that one of the challenges, oftentimes for smaller local communities is having the resources to continue to elevate these conversations.
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And because institutions often have access to those dollars that small communities don't, when we partner together, with the university bringing its—I'll say, young kids say 'its bag' or 'money bag', and

the community bringing its lived experience and its knowledge together. That's an opportunity for engagement.

I want to know, if—are you guys familiar with UNC Rural?

47:15 S.S. I have not heard of that group—

47:17 A.D. Okay! And I'm not gonna get the story completely straight, but here's what I remember: So, UNC Rural is out of Carolina Impact. Does that sound familiar to you? Okay.

And they've been doing some work in communities, working to address issues. They partnered with a group called Community—CCP, Campus Community Partnerships. The original focus was during the pandemic, on how to ensure that people who didn't have access to COVID tests, or weren't educated about what COVID really was, had an opportunity to engage around that.

I would challenge you to look up Dr. Giselle Corbie⁴, what is Giselle—[she] is over this initiative. But look up Giselle Corbie, what's Giselle, and let's see what's gonna come up. Okay, look up UNC Rural, which is at UNC, and Community Campus Partnerships, was an opportunity for the university and the community to come together around certain issues. COVID was one. I'm not sure what they're working on now. It's a perfect example of how the university used its resources and those who had connections to those in the community to address a challenge.

I have not heard from, let me see if I can pull up Adam...Adam Sotak⁵. I haven't heard from Adam in a while, but I'm gonna send you “UNC Rural Impact report and survey”. They did a report on—this was specifically on rural North Carolina, but it was also around the impact of partnerships with the community in UNC. And that might be something that you're also interested in learning more about, and how—Mad, Maddy? M-A-D-E-E, there [it is, UNC]—

⁴ Distinguished Professor of Social Medicine at UNC-Chapel Hill

⁵ Associate Director at UNC Rural

		...So, look at that, and there may be some opportunity for some of the work that they've been doing—I don't know if environmental justice was one of the issues; I know housing was and other challenges that rural communities face—but it might be an opportunity to see how a campus partnership and a community partnership has come together to elevate and address some challenge.
50:09	S.S.	Yeah, thanks for sharing that resource with us. Sounds like a really great partnership program between the—
50:15	A.D.	—A small group. I don't know if they had a lot of funding to do the work that they were doing, but it was a way to bring Carolina out of, I'm just gonna say, 'the ivory tower' or the 'ivory walls' and into actual communities who were addressing issues, or working on issues, and showing that Carolina [University] cared about the people all across the State. Just look at that, and see if there's some opportunity to connect with Adam or Dr. Corbie-Smith—and some other folks, but anyway.
50:51	S.S.	Yeah, I think UNC is a great place to have that, since we have so many in-state students—
50:56	A.D.	—Yes! Mhm...
51:46	S.S.	So, so many of our students come from these rural communities so they could—
51:00	A.D.	—Yup, exactly—
51:51	S.S.	—bring their lived experiences and connect it to their communities with this research and funding that we are so privileged to have here. So, yeah, thank you so much for sharing that, yeah, that resource, and [it] sounds like a great, great group.

And then also, so looking forward, more to the future, so what is your vision for the future of the Environmental Justice Movement, or just other important movements as a whole?

51:32 A.D. You know, and I'll just be honest, right now: I—I know what I have my hope is, but then I also know what reality could look like; I'm not gonna say what it will, but *could* look like. And my hope again, I've already said it to you, is that you all will continue to carry the mantle, or carry the tool, and educate people about these issues and understand that just because you're doing good or I'm doing good doesn't mean that we aren't supposed to look out for our brothers and sisters who aren't doing well, and that we continue to elevate and raise the issues that need to be addressed.

Again, as I said, one of the challenges that we don't wanna happen is a homogeneous society, where everybody looks alike and thinks alike. That's a sci-fi movie. We don't wanna live that. We wanna live [in] a community—we wanna live in a world and in a community where people can bring their diversity, whatever diversity is defined as, to the table and talk about how we address issues.

I think the Environmental Justice Movement is just one of many movements. Again, as we look at what public education is looking at right now, that's a movement that needs to be addressed. The issue of people being able to have affordable housing is absolutely unheard of; I live in a community, when I came here my house was \$200,000. My house is now surrounded by 3 million-dollar mansions. So, imagine, you and me both, okay, so imagine the impact of me and my income on a community that surrounds me when my property taxes will probably triple, but the value of my house is still what it is.

So just thinking about, and I hate to say it, it's the *Tale of Two Cities*, the 'haves' and the 'have nots'; When do we say that, 'just because I can afford a 3 million-dollar house'—and there's nothing wrong with that, I wish everyone could—but let me make sure the man or the woman who can only afford a \$200,000 house also has what he or

she needs, and their children has what he or she needs, in order to be successful in life.

And so, again, my hope is that institutions like Carolina will continue to be places of knowledge, of thinking, of opportunity. But even if it's not, those of us who know better will continue to try to do better and help everyone. What do they say, 'a rising tide lifts all boats'? We wanna lift all boats—everybody's boat, and not leave some folks behind.

And so, as you all continue to not just do this—and I shared this with the other, the other blue, at a class that I spoke at—I want you to be the President and CEO of some billion-dollar company. But at the same time, I want you to have a philanthropic arm of your company that says 'for every million dollars that I profit, I'm gonna give 10% of that to some deserving organization or cause or society that can be positively impacted and help someone else in the community wit' it.

So, for me, that's the hope, that's the hope; That again, like I said, you're as successful as you can be, but at the same time you don't forget those who haven't been able to achieve that level of success—whatever success may be.

55:06	S.S.	Yeah, for sure. And I really like how you talk about just the diverse group of people who could be involved, because I feel like, sometimes in environmental science—I know I was an environmental science major and now I'm focusing more on planning, but it could be like a silo. <i>We</i> know a lot about these issues, but then I talk to people from other majors, and they don't really know anything about these issues, even though it could very easily be implemented in the careers that they're pursuing, too.
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55:35	A.D.	Oh sure, oh sure! And I'll just share with you all, because I feel comfortable—I mean, not feel comfortable, it's the truth: I'm in the energy space, and oftentimes I walk in the room and I'm the only
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		Black woman, or one of maybe two Black women in a room of a hundred, 200 people.
		That shouldn't be—whatever it is, doesn't have to be energy; It shouldn't be. You need that diverse thought. You need that diverse representation in order to see what's the other side of this. What haven't I thought about, when I think about clean energy? What haven't I thought about, when I think about affordable housing? And so, I'm proud of you all, as young women—if you, if you identify as a woman, whatever it may be—but as young people who understand the importance of having your voice being heard in a room that doesn't look like all the same people. And that's important for us to continue to fight for that.
56:31	S.S.	Yeah, and thank you for the work that you're doing, and being that person in the space that you're in.
		And hopefully, through, I mean from the smallest perspective, sharing your story can inspire other people to see if you're doing it, then they could also do it—
56:47	A.D.	‘Why can’t I?’ That's right.
56:49	S.S.	Yeah. So, very...yeah, so thank you for all that you have done in your career and are doing in your career, and for sharing that with us today.
56:58	A.D.	Thank you all, I really, really appreciate—see, in spite of my snuffle-uffle, because I feel like my head is <i>this</i> big, and I can't hear anything, you guys have made me laugh, anyway.
57:09	M.K.	No, I wanna second that a hundred percent. I'm feeling—I don't know about you, Sophia, I'm feeling very inspired...
57:16	A.D.	Oh good!

57:17 M.K. —And I'm really gonna leave this interview with a big smile on my face.

I think what you've talked about in terms of community and diverse thought and valuing these things, and open conversation is so important to just have shared and promoted right now. And yeah, it's been really great hearing you talk through your career, and your takes on the movement as a whole.

I think, as we close out, Sophia and I are curious, is there anything that we haven't touched on in this interview that maybe you wanted to bring up, especially in terms of the project, anything like that?

57:51 A.D. No, again, like I said, I think you shared that—'cause I wanted to hear other people's stories, so I definitely wanna, whenever that opportunity comes, would love to be a part of it.

Hopefully, if I can convince, if you guys are in class by then, your professor, somebody, that you all should come to this, this showing. I'm gonna try to make the one—see now, I may try to make the one in Carrboro. I told John I was gonna go to one at Meredith [College], but I may try to make the one in Carrboro as well. And I don't know if you guys have had guest speakers. Have you had guest speakers in your class?

58:25 S.S. I don't th—

58:27 M.K. —We have not.

58:28 S.S. —I don't think we have. We heard from the people who are in charge of this whole oral history project, but that was more just to hear a little bit about their background and their motivations for the project.

58:40 A.D. Okay. Well, I just know at Carolina, when they were doing, I was part of Energy Week, and then they did an Environmental Week, and they had guest speakers come in, did a little roundtable thing that

was really, really nice to hear from people who were addressing the issues at various angles.

And I think the students just, I mean, again, enjoyed, rather than someone just talking to them from a book or from a lecture, having actual people who had lived experience come in and be a part of that. So, I'll just say, if that's something that your professors or your leadership is interested in, I'd be more than happy to participate in that, and maybe pull together something in which we can bring some other folks together as well.

59:25 M.K. Yeah, we will definitely talk to Dr. Allred, who is a really cool person, as well—

59:30 A.D. Oh good!

59:31 M.K. She's perfect. We'll be in lecture, and she'll be talking about something going on, like—she used to work at Cornell, and she'd be like, “Yeah, so we talked to this local community, so here's me with the community.” I'm like, “You're hands on, you're so cool!” So, I think she definitely would be interested in that. We will talk to her about it, for sure.

But yeah, I think we are going to kind of wrap up here. We are so grateful that we got to talk to you—

59:57 A.D. Thank you.

59:59 M.K. —And inspired, and we thank you so much for this incredibly important work that you're doing. I know it's a defeating climate to be in right now, but...

01:00:08 A.D. We don't accept defeat. We always say, when we fight, it may not be the 1st battle, but we win, so—

01:00:14 M.K. That's right... Yeah, so we are just, yeah, I think we are absolutely buzzing about this interview, and we are so happy

that we got this opportunity to speak. And yeah, I'm just very grateful and thank you so much.

01:00:26 A.D. Thank you, guys. Look forward to hearing from you. Bye, take care.

01:00:31 S.S. Thank you so much!

01:00:32 A.D. Buh-bye!

01:00:33 S.S. Bye...