IV= Interviewer

DM= Debra Moore

CM= Class Member

IV: Today is october 18th 2018, and we are in 515 Lamar hall to learn about cultural life, religion, and social justice in oxford MS. Would you begin by stating your name for the record?

DM: Debra J. Moore

IV: Where were you born?

DM: Tupelo Mississippi

IV: Where did you grow up?

DM: Tupelo Mississippi

IV: Can you tell us a little bit about your family life?

DM: um… It was my mom and dad, they were of course both African American, very poor, my mom had a eleventh grade education, my father had a 4th grade education, we had a farm, they both worked in factories, and they pushed me and my sister to get an education so we could have the opportunities that they did not have, and so education was seen as the way to rise above racism and so if you got a good education you could rise above it.

IV: So that was a major emphasis growing up?

DM: For them, yes.

IV: How long have you been living in oxford Mississippi?

DM: I moved here in ‘92

IV: What brought you to the University of Mississippi?

DM: To obtain my PHD in psychology

IV: We know you’ve lived outside of Mississippi because of the article, can you state a couple of places that you’ve lived?

DM: Denver Colorado and Fort Leonard Wood Missouri

IV: How was living inside the south been different from living outside it?

DM: The south, the racism is more pervasive, the discrimination… I mean, it’s just kind of like people go “Oh well that’s just the way it is” in missouri it’s kinda like a mix, it depends, it’s right there like a blend of the two. Denver had some racial issues, but it was more tinged with the socio economic, rather than just race, so it was kinda hidden in some way, but once you’ve experienced it, no matter what they call it, you know when it’s there.

IV: Can you tell us a little bit about your educational background?

DM: I have a bachelors in social work, a master’s in social work, a masters in psychology and a doctorate in Psychology

IV: So we know the doctorate was from here (University of Mississippi), Where were the other degrees from?

DM: The masters in psychology was also from here, the master’s in social work was from southern mississippi and the bachelor’s was from Mississippi state

IV: So you said your schooling as a child was super important to your parents, what was your schooling like as a child?

DM: Before integration, people think it must have been so horrible, but we had great teachers who were really invested in us getting a great education. They don’t do it now, I don’t think, but corporal punishment was a part of it, you know, if you didn't get your work in, you got your butt busted, and they would call your parents, and when you got home your parents would whip your butt. They were all really invested, because remember this is the 60’s, so they wanted all of us to do well, and all of us to graduate high school, and if you could go to college that was amazing, but at least get that high school diploma, but the schooling was great, and having the whole community embrace education. I can remember in the little church I grew up in, Red Oak community baptist church in tupelo, whenever children graduated, they had baccalaureate services, where the person who’s graduating stands up there, and then everybody bought them gifts, it was like christmas in May, everybody was so happy, the elders would become emotional, and if you were going off to college you got gifts again from the church, to help you with your dorm and whatever else you needed. Getting a good education was the key to rising above racism.

IV: So you were on board and invested from the beginning?

DM: Oh yes, I love learning. You know when you live out in the country, and you don’t have a phone… books are what I had. So I learned to love reading, and my sister, who’s older than me, who became a school teacher, she went to college at alcorn when she was 16, and she was teaching and had her liscense by the time she was 20. So she was sending me books and encyclopedias, and I was reading every one of them. Science was my favorite subject, reading all the different kinds of science books that she sent, it was very important to me. It was a way to learn about my world. It was also a way to escape from the South. And so reading was very important to me.

IV: So even though the racism was so pervasive and you grew up in it, you had a kind of safe haven in education. Just how big of a deal was it?

DM: Oh yes, my grades were everything. You know in school back in those days you had the jocks and the cute girls, the athletic girls who play basketball, I was none of those people, but I was smart so I got my props to. So there was a place in school before integration where black kids were encouraged to do their absolute best in school. I don’t see that now, but that’s the way it was back then.

IV: What inspired you to pursue social work?

DM: Well I have to say that I didn’t know what it was called, but I knew what I wanted to do, helping people. It’s just my niche, nurturing and helping people. I always go for the underdog, but I didn’t know it was called social work. My high school counselor, mrs. cornell, I said to her “You know what I really want to do is just help people and I see so much going on” And she says “well you want to be a social worker” and I was like “I do” and she says “That’s what that’s called” and I’m like “Ok, that’s what I’ll do” and so I went on to mississippi state, and they had a social work program, and I went into it, and then I had people like “do you know what social workers are? They just take people’s babies” “There’s no money in social work.” and blah blah blah, and so then I changed to economics and took a few economics classes, how to figure out a budget and all that kind of stuff, but it wasn’t for me. It wasn’t a calling. So then I went back to social work. Then I went into psychology, that’s another track I got onto. Do you want to hear about that now, or…

IV: We’ll hear about it now

DM I got into psychology, I was working as a therapist, and my boss at the time was our clinical director, he encouraged me, said he would like for me to replace him one day but I would have to go back and get a doctorate degree. And I had two small children, and he was like “You just need to consider it” and so then I had a niece who had just graduated from here with her bachelors in psychology and she said “Auntie I’m going to apply, why don’t you apply” and so I did, and I never did go back to be the clinical director. And in fact my supervisor at the time told me “You know if you leave and go to Ole Miss you’ll never come back.” and I said “how could that be, I hate Ole Miss, you know I’m a mississippi state bulldog” but she was like “no, they’ll get you over there and they’ll keep you, I know this is the last time I’m going to see you.” Well he knew more than I knew because 21 years later I’m still here. So while I was in the program, I started teaching social work classes here at the university. So I started in ‘95 here as a lecturer, and became faculty in 96. So I’ve been here ever since.

IV: Can you tell us about any discrimination you may have faced growing up, in school, or in your career?

DM: Yes, when I was a kid there wasn’t so much discrimination because of Segregation, you were kind of removed from it, in the fact that you know, you could be living in the country and have white boys driving in a truck and come by the house and call everybody a nigger and that kind of stuff. But we were far enough out in east tupelo that we were in our own kind of enclave and we were protected there. When the school was segregated we didn’t really have to deal with that either. And you knew where you could go and where you couldn’t. Like, restaurants, blacks could not go in the front under Jim Crow, so you always had to go to the back and you could never eat inside, you could just go to the back or side and get your to-go or whatever. Years ago Tupelo used to have a huge county fair, in fact it was Mississippi State, Mississippi/Alabama… Something, it was a huge thing. School would let out for it. Just, kids everywhere kind of thing. And on Wednesdays it was kid’s days. And all the high school bands would march in the parade. Our school, Carver, which was the black high school, was the last to march. So we were at the very end of the parade. But everybody stayed to see Carver because it was the absolute best band. So even though they had to march behind the horses, in the poop and the whatever else, they just kept on marching and they always put on a fantastic show. Those kind of things and like being afraid of the police. I’ll never forget one time I had a cousin who lived in indiana and he and his sister had come to mississippi because their mom was in mississippi, and he was with the grandmother in indiana. And he took us to the drive-in theater. It was him and his sister and then another sister and myself and a cousin, and it was my first time going because my parents were very afraid for me to go places because of the racism, and you gotta remember this is coming through the time of integration, James Meredith, and all of that, so it was a scary time to let your kids out, but they got the courage to let me go to the drive in. But I remember we got pulled over, just as we were getting ready to pull in. And the police office came up and asked to see his driving license and he said “is this your car?” and he said “Yes this is my car” and he says “Boy, you can’t say yes to me, you gotta say ‘yes sir’” and it just hurt me, to see that. But I guess he just wanted to see who was driving in a car with an indiana tag. Those kind of things like that, you know. Just about power, abuse of power. Just seeing things like that, there were just certain places you couldn’t go. If you went shopping you couldn’t try on clothes, whatever you bought you had to buy it and hope it fit when you got home, because nobody would buy clothes that a colored person had put on, had even tried on in a store. It’s just the way it was, it wasn’t a happy time, but as black kids you just knew that there were certain privileges that you could not have, that were not afforded to you.

IV: As a kid, what was your outlook on the future, in terms of like, how did you think in terms of was this a fear now, or how you thought it would be forever?

DM: You gotta remember that when I was a kid looking at the tv I was watching dogs and hoses being used against children, like the birmingham march when all the little kids were attacked, looking at Martin Luthor king and crosses being burned. So that was my world, and it was a very frightening world to live in. The birmingham bombing of the little girls at church, all of that was part of what was coming on the news that I was seeing as a young child, so we were very afraid, we were very afraid of white people. But we still had to interact with white people, you still had to go to work and go to the grocery store, but we realized that a white person could give you a very bad day. That you could be telling the truth and the white person not, and you would not be believed. And so, that’s just the way that it was. I can remember one time, working with my aunt, she had a little business cleaning churches and businesses and stuff, and so she would let us come with her sometime. And invariably there was always a dime or a nickel or a dollar left out someplace. And she was like “Whatever you do, don’t touch that. You can dust around it, but don’t move it, don’t touch it, because the last thing you want to be accused of is stealing” and then it could be a very bad day. You had to be mindful of that at all times. Where today you walk in a room, someone’s left a dollar in a room, you don’t think anything about it. But as a kid, no, uh uh, don’t break the rules, because jail was a very bad place.

IV: That’s really eye opening. If we had more time I’d definitely like to talk more about it, but I think we’re going to have to transition to religion and the Underground Church. So, What were your Parents religious beliefs?

DM: Christian. Baptist. Little black church, red oak missionary baptist church. It was all “holy ghost, hell fire, eternal damnation, you’re going to hell if you’re bad, fire and brimstone” that’s what we were taught. But we were taught that when we died, it was gonna be paradise. It may be hell on earth, but one day you get to go to heaven. Love jesus and everything is going to be all right.

IV: After growing up was religion a part of your life?

DM: Yes, it’s always been a foundation in my life even as a kid. Even as a kid I had some powerful conversations with God. I remember as a child asking him “Why am I black? Why am I a negro. Why out of all the things I could be did you make me like this.” Cause he’s all-powerful and why would you make me somebody that everybody hates just because of the color of my skin? So my father God and I always had wonderful conversations. He didn’t answer it, but now I know why I’m african american. Because, my belief is that we all start in Heaven and we get sent back. Because in the scripture, god says “I knew you before I placed you in your mother’s womb” and so now I know that I’m african american because because not everybody is strong enough to be african american. Does that make sense?

IV: yeah, kind of like “God saves his toughest soldiers for his toughest missions?”

DM: Yes, that’s how I look at it.

IV: So you were talking about praying to god and asking him about like “why am I black”. When did you go from that outlook to “I’m strong enough to be black”

DM: I think some of it happened in the 70’s with the black power movement and “I’m black and I’m proud.” It was like you can stand up and wear your afros, and being dark skinned was good, because there’s colorism in the black culture, the lighter you were the better you were, and then in the 70’s my grandmother used to have this saying “The blacker the berry the sweeter the juice” and so black skin in the 70’s was something to be proud of, and the curlier and kinkier your hair was the better. It was really embracing of our african roots. It was tremendous. And so I was like “Ok, I’m black, I’m in this body, but I’m going to be as strong as I can, learn all I can, and help as many people as I can. So I knew that was why I was brought here on this earth.

IV: So, obviously your parents shaped your religious beliefs. How? And have they changed at all?

DM: Yes. My religious beliefs have changed tremendously. I realize now that there are two jesuses that people pray to. Now I know that sounds a little strange, but hey, since I got y’all here I’m gonna tell you what I think. I saw this as a kid when I saw things about ku klux having their klan meetings in the church and I’m like “Wow, how do you having a meeting in a church and then decide to go out and kill people?” or sunday afternoon get together after church and lynch somebody and it was all good. How do you take the symbol of Christianity and burn it? Even as a kid I was looking at all this stuff and I think my reading caused me to think critically and question- even though I didn’t have any answers to it, even as I child I was thinking about it and realizing something just wasn’t fitting here. And so I went to church when we were in missouri, being a military base churches were integrated fully, and so I started going to an integrated church and having pastors who were white and they were military people, and it was kinda like a family everyone getting together. And so then I moved to an evangelical church. And my daughter tells me to this day “Momma you scarred me putting me in that church.” and the reason I went to that church was because they had a parochial school that I wanted her to go to, because I wanted to get her started in school early. But, some of the things that they were taught that later on I found out about, I thought I had hell and brimstone as a kid, but the videos they showed them… I remember when I took her out of school, it was fourth grade and she told me she wanted to die because she was so scared to live because Satan was going to come to earth and do all this stuff… the end of days. And she’s considering opening the car door and just jumping out and dying. A fourth grader! And I was like, “Ok Debra Moore, you’ve got to get out of this church” and the other thing that came to me one day, the final blow, was this sunday I was in church and the preacher is preaching, and he’s preaching about Noah and his sons. And he talked about Ham, which is always used, you know ham? The three sons, Shem, Jacob, and Ham, and Noah got drunk after the flood and Ham walked in an saw him naked. Do you know the story? And he came out and told his brothers. And Ham was cursed, and for that he was cursed to serve his brothers. And that’s who black people were. And so we were cursed from Ham to serve everybody else. And that justified racism. Because it’s a church you have to find a reason to justify it. And so this white man’s preaching this and he said “That’s why you look at black families and they’re all destroyed and they can’t have this” and I’m looking at him like “there’s a bunch of black folks up in here” and I’m also looking at him because I know what’s going on in his family, you know I know that his son is a drughead and you had to raise his son. And immediately I was like “I’m not going to send my daughter to that” because it was that evangelical thinking. That’s not new. If you look at the writings of the christian church in the united states, you have to have a biblical support for what you’re doing, for slavery, for the genocide of the native americans. And as long as Jesus says it’s ok, it’s ok! I started just looking at that and looking at what I believed, but I was still drawn back to the evangelical- because there were black people! And there were black pastors who were evangelical. And I would listen to them. I realized there were two jesuses, There was two movies that came out which really helped me. Twelve Years a Slave, where sunday morning the slave master gets out and reads his bible and always reads about “slaves serve your masters and you’ll be blessed blah blah blah” and that was the message they got. Then Birth of a Nation, you need to see that movie. Anyway, matt learns to read, I think the slave mistress might have taught him, and she didn’t want him reading the bible, because of things that might have woken him up. And he says “look at this about god loving and protecting everybody, and even the children of israel how he had to punish them but he always came back when they had been punished and enslaved by the babylonians. And he was like “Look at this, we’ve been lied to!” And I think the crowining moment for me was when he is called in and all the white people around the table and he was called in to say the prayer, and they’re all bemoaning about “oh lord please don’t take away our wealth and let us continue this way because it’s the way the lord wants it” and he had to pray this prayer of slavery and then come back outside to his wife and they’re all praying “Lord please get us out of here, we don’t want to be slaves” and it’s just like me as a kid if I go back to that if we’re going to civil rights movement, we’re praying that we want to be equal, that we want to go to school, and other people are praying “segregation now, segregation forever” It’s The same damn thing, you know, and I was like Wow and then I really just started looking at the church and how the church has just been used to foster a separation of people. but I don't know how we come together and we're supposed to be apart here on Earth, but when we get to heaven were gonna all be together we gonna be happy ever after and everybody's going to love everybody. the Nazi the KKK the Jews and blacks, the what ever are we all going to come together in heaven? And it's going to be glorious? No, I don't think so. If you can't love each other here, you’re not going to make it to Heaven. I mean, that's just where I am now. and that's what the underground churches about. It is a safe place for people to come and love each other, care about each other, comfort each other. So many people have been hurt in church. put out of churches in the name of God, in the name of Jesus. And this is a church where everybody is welcome. You can be an atheist. You can be whatever, you can be just curious to see what's going on. You're treated with respect and dignity and that's the way church should be about .church should be simple. Christianity should be simple. that we love of Jesus love. I mean it's simple as that. love who Jesus loved and who did he love? Everyone, you know the sick the dying the orphans the old the young, people with Leprosy the blind lame and crippled. He loved everybody not now! If your lame and crippled and blind or whatever can't work nothing like hey, I got mine you get yours! and the church has been used,we've lost the focus of church. church should be about the safe place. It should be the place where the wounded go or the sick go, not for “I got all of mine” and you know, you can stand around and whatever, that's not what church is about, church is about loving. and that's what Tony is doing, bolstering a community of people who love each other, who care about each other.

CM: About Ham, I always remember that story because we studied in class, and I've never heard that interpretation of it at all. I thought it was a really silly funny story, but that puts the really Sinister tone on it.

DM: right and what people don't understand when they retell that story. They'll say, you know, God cursed him and his children will forever be servants to his brothers. Well, you know God didn't curse Ham. Noah cursed Ham and any of y'all have ever been cussed out by anybody Yeah. Do you have to accept it or not? Now you don't have to and and say for instance I curse you out and years later your children... They don't have to accept a Debra moore. What's your name? Scott Scott. They don’t have to accept that Debra Moore cursed out Scott So now we can't do so, So when you tell a group of people, you know, you can't have what we have, because what your forefather ham did so you can't go to school. You can't have wealth. You can't have privilege. You don't have rights. biblically. It's not possible for you. So, how do you go back and undo the Bible? says that fatalistic stuff that that African Americans the Agenda they were pushing. Yeah. Yeah, so I was glad when I read it for myself to understand no. Noah cursed ham not god, like and then I'm like, okay. So God would forever condemned a whole group of people to be in servant and slaves because one boy walked into a tent saw his daddy naked, laughed and told his brothers. I mean, but that's the same God who, let’s see, Abraham lied and said that Sarah was a sister half-sister but not his wife. He still brought the Jewish Nation through him, right, David did many things. God didn't curse him, you know, Peter denied Christ three times, and he went on to establish the church, but one man looks at his daddy and laughs, and forever a whole race of people are condemned to be servants and slaves? bullshit.

CM: Absolutely!

DM: absolutely, but that's what people did to God's word. And it angers me.

IV: people throughout history have always used religion, God's word, to do evil the most inhuman things.

DM: Yes. Yes

IV: Crusades racism. Yes. Yes. That's why I like the idea of the underground Church, For first time. I see a church That's actually teaching what Christianity should be not what men has made Christianity to be. It's Unity not The fundamental idea of subjugation.

DM: Right? Right. It's beautiful.

IV: So on that note. So what is your connection to the church underground Church.

DM: My connection is through Tony and his wife. We have just kind of been on this journey for years. Tony. I love from the first time I met him. I knew he was something special, he was so wise as a young person in class, and so calm, and was a voice of reason, and you just you know, you're young white male you're in your Prime here at the University and he was like an old wise man, and he just became my baby. You know, he just became my son and so we always stayed in touch. I mean anyone off to grad school and came back and He and Missy married I think maybe before they graduated for their bachelors, but if not right after, but they went on to grad school. then when they had their first baby, you know being a part of that, and supervising them for their LCSW, just been a part of their lives and watching we would have these conversations about the church and you know, loving people and caring about people and so when he texts me about the idea of the underground church, I was like, yes, you know the Underground Railroad the underground church. It's a place of safety is a place to escape from what we've been taught and to critically ask questions, you know, sometimes for you young people being able to- just because Mom and Grandma and Grandpa said something doesn't mean it's right. Absolutely. And so you all are at the point where You all can say oh, okay. Yeah, and you don't have to worry about changing their mind, but you can say okay and you can go on and live your life with meaning that’s for you, you know, my parents would probably be appalled that you know, I'm going to church is not Missionary Baptist or whatever, but it wouldn't matter, you know, because I know that in that church is love and there is no condemnation, you know, and that's that's the thing we have used to church to condemn people and I don't want to go to a church where people get hurt. I don't want to have a message where people teach against homosexuality. I don't want to hear that. You know why we pick on homosexuality because that's not the sin that we got, you know, we don't say anything about adultery in church. We don't have never heard a sermon on fornications, you know, but I've heard it on homosexuality. Have you ever heard a sermon on fornication in your church? But you're hearing on you know, homosexuality is that biggie. why? because it's not the one that we're personally engaging in. does that make sense?

IV: absolutely people like to use it as and deflection like well, I'm not doing anything wrong right? I'm god’s man. I'm perfect.

DM: No, in fact, you're probably the worst one here to yourself.

IV: So so you've been kind of with the underground church since since the Inception?

DM: first meeting I was there, now Tony and I went to the wild goose Festiva did he tell you about the Wild Goose Festival? the wild Goose Festival is held yearly in Hot Springs North Carolina, up in the mountains, and he asked me to come and I said, yes, and he had introduced me in the spring to Shane Claybourne. Who has written a book about the red letter Christians. “What if we lived as Christians and just followed the red words in the Bible, what Christ said” and so I love that young man and I love what he had written. And so he said well Shane Claybourn is going to be there at this festival and I'm like Okay, I'm going and then I heard another one. It was a professional social worker said she was going to go and like okay, I'm in. Tony is talking about it, this ladies talked about it. I gotta go. And so I went and I went by myself. and so I'm scared to death. I'm going up in the mountains. I'm thinking Deliverance, you know, black woman in the mountain, Donald Trump era, you know like Lord, please keep me safe. Please. Don't let anything happen. Please don't let this car stop on the side of the road as I'm getting up a huge mountain near Asheville. So, you know up in the mountains of, North Carolina.

And so by the time I get there, I'm just a nervous wreck. I mean, I am turned off one road and it went down a gravel road. I'm thinking this is the end of it you're dead kid because you're going to run into somebody and they've never seen a black person you're going to be dead. So I turn the car around and finally get there and I get there and they're 4,000 people! black white Indian Hispanic. It is like hippie Jesus. It is amazing. You know, I'm so frazzled when I get out of the car they help me out with the car and get me another, and we were sleeping in tents never slept in a tent, you know, so nervous about that. I had so much bug spray. I gave myself a asthma attack, but I have never felt so loved in my life by such a huge crowd of people. It was all about love.

And there were people there who had been wounded in the church. who would come to this yearly. if you're interested, Like I think if you're interested in the underground Church, It would be something for you to look at going to the wild goose Festival in July and it is good preaching good singing and then late night They even had a band in that played R&B and all other kinds of because Jesus would have rocked too you know, we just had a good time, good food. Good breakout sessions, Tony and his son had one, then Tony had one to talk about the Confederate symbolism of the South and it was very well attended. But what I what I saw was here is a church where people can come together and love it. This is what heaven is supposed to be like everybody loving, everybody caring, everybody helping, and it was just so much fun. And I heard another Lady, Ruby sales. If you don't know Ruby Sales, you need to Ruby sales grew up in Alabama. She's in her 70s. She's a theologian and she's very much in the Progressive Movement and just wise and helping to break down many of the things that have been done to the church to stop people from coming together. And I think that's the fear of the elite, the people, the one and two percenters who own everything, that if everybody else got together then maybe the one or two percenters... but if we can keep everybody divided, even in church, that group remains in power.

IV: I think it was lenin who said that that's what they did, the power keeps the masses apart and against each other so they don't rise up.

DM: Yeah, and I think you know, we've used the church to do that. But I love underground church. I just feel so much love. It's just great. It's what church is about is what Christianity is supposed to be. So accepting it wouldn't matter if you were Muslim or a Hindu or whatever it at the wild goose Festival. They had people there who were Wiccan and they said come you are welcome come, you know, because if we could expose them to the love of Christ, but there were no proselytizing it was beautiful. That's where Christianity is supposed to be not what man is made it, a tool for division. .

IV: how was this underground church this idea of what true Christianity is supposed to be. How's that different from how you experience religion before

DM: religion before was you know, there were so many rules, and people are always I mean you had people to go up every Saturday every Sunday and gets saved so but I see that in the church or you know, if you do something that other people don't like you could be shunned. And you know what? I don't like it I don't it's just ugly. the church that we grew up in, in America. It's dirty, but this movement and there are other progresses, but being a progressive, is a true Progressive is a difficult thing. Absolutely. It's to stand and say- you don't have to go out here and beat up everybody and holler and yell at everybody- but when there's a time even when it's just a soft voice you can say “that's not right.” You know, some people are powerful your big tall young man. but someone just said I don't agree with it. That’s wrong. Because to acquiesce and not say anything, you're going along with it,

IV: challenging the status quo is the symbol of a true Progressive by definition. I remember reading somewhere that the definition of a hero is sticking your nose out where you don’t have to. That's kind of what I thought of a progressive as is someone who's saying? Hey, that's not okay.

DM: It's not okay, and so it's not okay to hurt people with religion. It’s not okay not to take care of people and love people. It sickens me. And when I look at our society and this is United States the richest country in the world, and we have poverty to the degree that we have poverty, right here in the LaFayette County. You don't have to go to the Delta to see poverty. You can see a Healthcare System where only the wealthy can get the best care, you know Healthcare in a political system where people were upset that we had affordable care where other people could have access to Affordable Care and they're still debating on how they can get rid of it. And I'm like what is worse is this meanness coming from you know, I was blessed as a kid. I was blessed to have parents who believed in education. I was blessed to have teachers who encouraged me. I was blessed to have supervisors who nurtured me to to move into the areas that I've been able to move and I was blessed to have a professor here on campus say, you know, I want you to join the social work department. That was all a blessing but people bless me. I don't like when people say, oh I did it by myself, you know, just pull your boot strap up. Well, some people don't even have a boot, you know much less a strap, but Nobody Does It by themself. There's always somebody who says to hire that boy. You don't give him a shot, you know a phone call that you don't even know about that speaks into your life, but we're not willing to do that for other people. “I got mine and they’ll get theirs.” The church has become so mean and it bothers me when I hear people say, oh that Donald Trump. I'm getting into I hope this doesn't bother you, but I'm getting into politics, that you know, Donald Trump is God's man and then I had to realize remember you realize that there are two different gods, two different Jesus So that Jesus said was okay for slavery and genocide whatever, then yes Donald Trump maybe his person But I don't think that my Jesus Is okay with the division that he is spreading amongst people. and I have to say I don't blame Donald Trump for that because he's not talking Jesus. He couldn't even quote a scripture. So I can't say that that's Trump's fault the church the Evangelical Church has has embraced him and it saddens me that a church people who profess to love God. That I thought highly of you know ministers and whatever and I've lost some friends. I I've lost some friends over this because I'm like No, we just see differently. Not that I treat them differently if I saw them and they were in need if they need us. No, I'm still going to be that nurturing loving person. But I realize that they have their mindset and I have mine and I'm called on this mission to love and help people and that's what I'm going to do. And I don't want to see anybody suffer. I don't want I don't want to see the Evangelical suffer. I would like from the wake up from this nightmare train that they’re on but it's nothing new when I look back to the 60s was the same group you see is nothing new. It's just that same what you've been taught and what they've been preached during slavery and the fundamental ideas that you've been taught. Yes, just keep carrying over and carrying over until someone eventually breaks status quo breaks the chains something but yeah, it bothers me and I get scared like I'm at a point right now where I'm more afraid being an African-American In the United States than I've been in a long time, i’ve convinced all my children to go ahead and get passports. Yeah, because you never know when we might need to get out of here. I don't know. I mean, so yeah, I'm really really frightened and I'm frightened for my my grandson's, you know, when you look at the police shootings and you know, somebody's running away from you. They're not a threat to you. You know, that people are okay with it the stand your ground laws. It's just well, they just frightened me or a kid the other day that knocked on the man's door because he missed the bus and he got turned around trying to walk to school and the guy shot at him and he was a fireman shot at him with a shotgun! he says well I tripped I tripped and the gun went off but people with surveillance cameras know It was not that was not the case. But you know, it's just like there's times when I think is there hunting season on black people, you know, what's going on man? What is it? And then when I and their little subtle things with it racism comes to play like you're her people say like but what about black-on-black crime, you know, it's so awful. And and for years, I mean, I was just I was drinking the Kool-Aid myself and then one day somebody was saying no, that's that's that's racist and I'm like well, how comes and I said well black people kill black people white people kill white people, white people die and they kill each other, you know, we get the mass shootings we get the whatever, you know, husbands kill their wives, wives kill thier husbands, kids come in and kill mom and dad because you know, they didn't get the money or they got mad about something or they're strung out on drugs and my God will talk about all the crime that all the black on black crime in Memphis more people died from Heroin, overdoses than gun violence and they were majority white. But do y'all know that? Nobody kind of talks about that. It's the the gun violence and there's some of that but and many of that’s fuled by drug trade, you know. So but yet the things that you you wake up to and you see more things and like I was telling you about dr. Sales one of the things she spoke to about she called The white elite culture the Empire and she and she educated us when she spoke at the Wild Goose festival and she was talking about the British Empire and the Roman Empire and the Greek Empire when she's we got the Empire system still going on today, and it's like well Hey listen to her, but you can find her on YouTube a lot of good things of doctor sales on YouTube, but she said even at your universities you have Departments of inclusion She said now, Department of inclusion that has a microaggression to it. And I was like now how could that be? She's a look at it. Empire has said okay. We will now let you come to the table. We will create a place for you at this table. But it’s our table. But we're going to let you come you said I'm saying that office of inclusion or whatever there shouldn't even have to be a school of inclusion or Department of inclusion you should have that chair by innate right rather than someone said we're going to make a space for you to come and want you to feel welcome with all make a place for you. I should have already been welcomed there shouldn't be an issue. The system should be set up such that its all one place right as opposed to places. Yes. Yeah, so she opened my eyes about that, but dr. Sales is sa l e s go to YouTube check her out. She's a wise old woman and the older she gets I think she's more bold, you know and me being 60 I talk about stuff now and say I'm getting Bolder and Bolder as I and I saw my daddy doing that the older he got he was becoming more angry and he was just like “no this is not right” and he he would get so mad at the Republicans and he always mispronounce. He called them the publicans. “Those damn publicans, you know the stuff that they're preaching and they're doing in the politics and that other” I just, you know, calm down and you know, we didn’t want to have a news on and he died before Obama could become president. But we figured he would have had a heart attack anyway, so but you know, but but I understand that rage that builds as you get older, and one of the things that other professors here at the University of we're looking at is a study of where we're going to interview middle-aged African-Americans and looking at the load of the stress of being African-American of the racism and the discrimination and remember that thing I told you my parents said about of wanted me to go to college so I can rise above racism. No. Because when you go up to the Ladder- you listen, you pay attention to this young lady. If I don't tell you anything else it’s that when you go up to the up the ladder you can go so far up the ladder where you're the only person that looks like you. when I started teaching here in the social work department. I was the only person of color in that department. Okay, you can you can rise so far up The ladder that there are no allies for you. You see what I'm saying? So when I talk to people who are in the hood and I talk to them about racism, They're like no we're fine here in the hood. And you are because there are a lot of people like you and you can support each other and care about each other. What’s Your major?

CM: Anthropology

DM: So you're going to, probably if you don't go to Private Practice, you'll be in Academia, and you can tell them Academia can be very ugly very ugly. I'm see I'm old I can say that you can't, but as you rise up the ladder with more, you you make more money, you have more titles, but you can sometimes get to a place where you're the only one, because you don't you no longer have the benefit of having the herd mentality of the people who are with and you don't match the elitist. And so you feel like you got to work harder show up work harder, work later work, whatever to prove that you're worthy to be there. No, I’ve had African American friends who wanted to hire a black person and a position but were afraid to do so because there was the oh you just, you know giving you just hiring them because they're black or whatever and they end up not you know wanting to not because the person isn’t qualified or whatever because of the fright is what the blowback to be on their own job and that's one of the things that happens when you rise above they thought that you get a good education you get you get a PhD you're set. No, it's still there. Yeah, yeah because it comes right with you. Yeah, all those sterotypical stereotypes are still with you no matter how far you get your still yeah, one of the things I taught my students and I told white faculty too is this: when a black person walks into a room. Just imagine that there are five other clones of them walking behind them and there's every stereotype that everybody has ever had about them following them everywhere, you know their experience so as a result of that, you know, so it's not just me stepping into the room, because I was scared to death come in today. Because I didn't speak to Tony and I had no clue what It would be like. Then I even asked her how many people are going to be in the room. I'm like, yeah, I was but that's the life of a black person. You know, even with a PhD six-figure salary. I'm still scared, and and then after I saw you and you you were sweet and kind and I walked out the door, out the door and then I met you and then it was like, okay and then there's an underground church and I knew I was going to be okay.. Well more questions.

CM: Because the Underground Church only meets once a month, is there another church you attend?

DM: Yes, I do go to Clear Creek Missionary Baptist Church see it’s in my roots, but I’m the youth director there and so I work with the kids there. Encourage them and work with their parents and pushing that they get their high school and go to college, you know and being kind and I talked to talk to young boys about safety, you know Police pull you over, you know, don't run. Whatever you do. Don't go out of the car and run even if you got something in your car should have, don't run, you know of even had workshops for young men have police to come in and talk with them. There's an organization here in town called Straight Talk that work with young boys and girls working with them, that's the church and so I'm the youth director and I don't have any kids here. They all groan don't have any grandkids here and I'm like I'm too old to be youth director. So this year I'm going to give it up but I will continue to work with our church. We just took them to the Civil Rights Museum because as black folks We don't like to talk about the ugly part of racism and slavery or Whatever. Have you ever been to that museum in Mississippi? And yes, the new one that opened up Mississippi did it right now my to say Mississippi has done a lot of things bad, but they didn’t there. You got to go.I am proud. They didn't try to sugarcoat. The dirty Ugly Truth is laid to bear and it's and of course going through that looking at make me sick. And as I was getting ready to leave I told the police the guard assist and I'm just I'm sick. He says many people have that reaction when they come through here, but it's a sickness We need to endure, we need to do, so I encourage you all to go to the to the museum. I'm going to go back again. And because I didn't even get to miss the history museum, so they're both right there together, but I don't even get to the other part, you know. and it's not just Mississippi, racism is everywhere. Absolutely people think oh, I’ll go to California. Well, you know, even when they were integrating Ole Miss they had people that came from California just to fight against James Meredith got them a bus and truck Mississippi to to you know, stop it, Mississippi State came up to help. They can't get together about football but they come together to get James Meredith from integrating the school, So racism is everywhere and you know what we can do better. Yeah and let me tell you the story. I'm going to tell you this, one of my daughter’s works for the VA and I won't say which one but I guess y'all to figure out if you want… Well anyway this is her story. she met a man who was in his 90s and he said he told her that she reminded him of a black woman that he loved years ago and that they were not able to marry and she married somebody else and he married somebody else and he found her so she's in a state out west. He found her. She's a widow now and he's he's asked his wife for divorce. He wants to go marry this love of his life that he could not marry. He's a white guy like, okay could not marry could not love because of you know, 90 years old and Still that heartache still, you know, and I just want people to be I want to be able of free to love whoever you want free to love, you know, but so many people are miserably married Because they loved someone else and their families said no we can't have that. We can't have that. How can you be against love? I mean they're both old and he said I just want my wife to give me a divorce. I'll give her everything. No, I don't blame her. She's probably think he's delusional. You know, we've been together all these years and you’re gonna leave me to run off to California to marry some black woman. I don't think so. You know, she thinks it's alzheimer's or something. how many more stories are there like that? How many more? Because we let somebody to tell us that it can't be no reason. Yes. I'm so everyone can do that. Nothing's going to change right? And so I encourage you young people. You know, I'm not asking you to go out here on the streets and march or whatever, but when you're in the company of someone and someone has said man, don't you think that you know... whatever woman like. Just no. Just saying no. It could be just as simple as that. It doesn't have to be all fit with my thinking you make more of an impact kind of just speaking your mind nonchalantly. Anyway, instead of getting all riled up in emotion people just kind of roll their eyes and be like, they're not even thinking I just they dismiss you then but if you're if you're calm and completely rational about bringing some I don't like wow, so I encourage you to find your voice. It doesn't have to be a roar. You can be a little meow and you can still have an embed but you live your best life and you live it loving people, caring about people, because I tell anybody you all, you right now are young and healthy and vibrant but only one slip of the bathtub and sustained a traumatic brain injury, and everything changes, right? You might need permanent care. So just kind of think about that any day, a trip on the sidewalk, Paralyzed. humans are incredibly fragile. Yes. Don't ever think it won't be me, I couldn’t be in need. I'm healthy. I'm whatever, it can all change just like that, and then you're looking for someone to help you. Make sure you get Medicaid or disability or whatever service.

So, I love you all, if you need me you call me, and y'all be blessed.