

Interview with Chris Toussaint  
April 14, 2016  
Petworth, Washington DC

Interviewed by:  
Kip Lornell  
with students: Catherine Mejia  
Jared Fein

L: How long have you lived around here?

T: I've lived here for about 18 years. Well, in this house, about 18 years. I've lived in DC for going on 34.

L: It's real interesting to go up 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> Street and see a lot of white folks around here...

T: [laughs] We now live in a white neighborhood.

L: Do you really? Is it really majority white nowadays?

T: Pretty much. It's at least 50/50. When I moved in, there was one white couple down the street, but they had been here before. I guess after people couldn't afford Columbia Heights anymore, they moved here.

L: So we're in Petworth, but we're not in the heart of Petworth. You know I always wonder where does a neighborhood begin and end?

T: Petworth begins right around Quincy, but this is kind of the heart of Petworth. This is the high-end portion of Petworth, because of it's proximity to the Metro, the Safeway, and to several restaurants. It makes this the core. As you head up Georgia Avenue, the prices start to drop off. We just did the condos next door, the top unit sold for [\$730,000].

L: If someone had told you that five years ago you would've said, "ehhh...not for a while..."

T: Well, my wife and I laugh now because when I was buying this house she looked at me and she said that the house cost too much and it needed too much work.

L: And that was 18 years ago?

T: Yes.

L: So what is your involvement with music?

T: I went to school for architecture, but I was always interested in music and the entertainment industry, so I went to Omega [Omega Recording Studios – Rockville, MD] and studied recording engineering. Although I had to have a career, I still, you know... we do what makes us money and then we do what we enjoy.

L: And sometimes they end up being the same thing.

T: If you're lucky, they end up being the same thing. You know, had I been younger during these times, I would've stayed in the entertainment industry, because that's where I'm happy. What I do now is very stressful. I own a design/build company. So, a lot of these things that are going up around town, I'm building, and that is very stressful.

L: How did you get into the build part of it after being an architect? Was it kind of a natural flow out of designing into the building aspect of it too?

T: Well, I left designing full-time after four years, and gradually got into environmental. So in the late 80's, the company I was working for, a lot of the contracts we were encountering needed asbestos inspections, because we were doing government facilities and military facilities. So I was like, what is this? So I started investigating, I went and took classes, and got certified in the hopes that it would be another service that the company I was working for could advertise. That company was going through some issues, so I left and went with one of my buddies, who was working for an environmental company full-time. And we did that to the point where we landed a contract with US Public Health Service. And that took us to Puerto Rico, Panama, Maine. We basically went almost everywhere there was a naval security station and did their inspections. I've been to places that US citizens are not allowed to go.

L: Restricted military facilities, yeah?

T: I've been in the basement of the White House, four floors down.

L: That's the secured area, but that's the bunker...

T: That's the belly of the beast [laughing]. I worked on the Capitol Dome the last go around, where we took 100 tons of lead paint out of the Dome. But, that caused my blood/lead level to go from three to 16. The threshold, when you need to start get monitoring, is 20. And, at that point my wife said, "it was nice, but go get a real job." So I went from that into construction management. I left the construction management company I was working for, and went to be the

facilities manager for DDOT. When DDOT got a new director and we didn't see eye to eye... you know I was one of those employees at will, so one day I was told "on your way out today leave your keys and your ID." I didn't like that feeling, and so...

L: How long ago was that?

T: That was 2007, nine years ago. Well, the end of 2006, October 2006. So, I laid in bed and whimpered for about a month, and then another agency, a friend at another agency wanted to pick me up but then he got fired. So that's when I said, you know, I'm not doing this anymore. So, I had my company registered, and I started doing basements and small projects. I eventually met a developer who was interested in doing green development, LEED. So I am now the top producer of LEED platinum homes in the District, and so I serve on some of DC's green committees.

But I still like my entertainment, so from time to time, once my workload is not too heavy here, I would leave right after Christmas and fly home to Trinidad, and work with a company that I worked with since 1977 producing events in Trinidad. Specifically for Carnival because the construction industry tends to relax during the winter. It hasn't relaxed in the last two years, but generally it relaxes. So around December, January I can get on a plane and go to Trinidad.

L: Just in the last few months before Carnival starts up. And of course your work around here with LEED and with building in general, fits into one of the themes that keeps cropping up here, and that is gentrification, and building and renovations.

T: Yes.

L: I remarked about how it's interesting to see so many white folks in this neighborhood, which you wouldn't have seen until relatively recently. One of the byproducts of gentrification, has been exactly that. You see white folks living in parts of DC that hadn't had white people to any great degree for decades. But, it also implies folks of color having to move out, and other small businesses being affected, and I'm sure you see a lot of that here, too.

T: Yes. In the last year I made a decision that if I'm going to stay living in DC, I'm going to get more involved. So one of the ways I got involved is the Mayor's Advisory Commission on Caribbean Community Affairs. So I now sit on that board, and my main focus is the loss of Caribbean businesses in DC. DC, back when we had the Carnival... one of the reasons why Carnival was held on Georgia Avenue was because there was a significant number Caribbean businesses there were along the avenue. That demographic has since changed. A

lot of the major Caribbean establishments don't exist anymore. They're just not there anymore.

L: They haven't moved they just don't exist?

T: Right. They just don't exist.

L: And these tend to be smaller, family-owned businesses.

T: Right.

L: I'm certainly aware of carnival and Georgia Avenue, and where it went. Where did the Caribbean businesses stop as you went further north? It's got to be just south of Missouri because there aren't that many businesses. It's got to be north of here, somewhere between here and Missouri. Kennedy maybe? Somewhere around there?

T: Right, right around Kennedy. There are some further up, but it's just one or two. There is still one up close to Walter Reed, Teddy's Roti. And then a block up from there, there is another Guyanese place. So there are a few north, and that was one of the things, that the upper Georgia Avenue businesses always asked us to do, to move the Carnival further up to Eastern, because the businesses on the lower end where the Carnival went-- for the most part-- they said that they were able to do in one day what it would normally take them six months to do.

L: I would have guessed a month or two, I wouldn't have guessed six months.

T: Because at the height of the carnival, we were bringing in three, four hundred thousand people...

L: And the height wouldn't been, the 90's?

T: Mmhm. We started the Carnival in '93, and the first year it was two, three thousand people. It just kept growing and by '98, '99, we were packing a good four, five hundred thousand people along the avenue.

L: And usually over a couple of days, it grew out to be a long weekend?

T: Right. The parade was one day, and then we had community events at Banneker on the second day. But, it got to the point where the police fees, grew exponentially, and the Carnival... what most people in the neighboring community didn't understand is that the Carnival, the organization that ran the Carnival, did not necessarily make any money. There were ancillary organizations, promoters who had parties in different places. They made money. So, everybody around the Carnival made money, but the core entity that promoted the Carnival didn't

make any money. There were years where members of the board, me included, physically paid for stuff out of our pockets.

L: Not surprised.

T: But, when you looked at the community blogs, the statements that were being made, especially once we started having trouble paying the police, was that the board members were taking the money and not paying the bills, but there was never any money to take.

L: And that was really the downfall of the Carnival four or five years ago, where the city said, "pay up or were not going to provide police, and if we're not going to provide police, were not going to have a Carnival."

T: Right. Every mayor before that, we paid whatever money we raised. We basically went to them and said, "this is it," and they wrote off the rest of it. In the election of Mayor Gray and Fenty, Gray used the fact that Mayor Fenty wrote off the expenses of the Carnival against him. It wasn't just the Carnival. With Fenty, well, and Williams did the same thing-- events that he thought benefited the city, if the organizations weren't able to pay all the fees, I think there was a triathlon that Fenty participated in and he wrote off what they couldn't afford also. But the Carnival became a feature in that. So. Although Gray in his campaigning and meeting with the Caribbean community, promised to support the Carnival, once he became Mayor, he basically said, "you have to pay to play, you're on your own."

L: The commission that you're on now, remind me the name of the commission again?

T: Mayor's Advisory Commission on Caribbean Community Affairs.

L: And your interest is primarily in businesses, and those businesses would of course include something you're interested in, at least have in the past: entertainment establishments. Those have got to be impacted by gentrification and changes as well, I would assume.

T: Yes. Somewhat in a good way? The Caribbean businesses not so good, but we now have sit down, white-table-cloth, eating restaurants around here. One of them, Chez Billy's, which is the old Kaieteur restaurant, which was a Guyanese-run nightclub. They no longer exist but now that's Chez Billy, you know? And on a Friday night, if you don't have a reservation, you have an hour and a half wait, which wasn't something that existed.

L: And of course, that's been one of the things in far Southeast: restaurants and grocery stores.

T: Yes.

L: And that's slowly changing too. Of course again, money and race.

T: Money.

L: Money's the major thing.

T: More than race. I think money. Money doesn't have a color. So if you have the money you can... you know, I have always, sitting on the board of the Carnival, folks would complain that other events didn't get the same kind of rough or mistreatment that the Carnival got, right? And my answer to them was, other entities-- Gay Pride Parade. When the police quotes a figure, someone walks in writes a check and gives it to them. When you can pay for what you want, you have negotiating power, you have a certain sense of, "I deserve this." When you have your hat in hand, then you have to take whatever abuses [are] meted out to you. If I can walk in and tell Chez Billy I want the whole first floor, and here's my check-- yes, I can get the first floor. If I walk in and say I want the first floor but I can only give you 100 dollars, they'll look at you like, "maybe on a Monday night, when nobody else is here." Having money and political backing helps. People say that change comes when white people move into the neighborhood. That's true, but not for the reasons that most people think. It is not a matter of skin color. It is a matter of a white person moves into a neighborhood and they feel that they are entitled to certain things, and they will not stop until they get what they feel they're entitled to. So they will call whomever it is they need to call, over and over and over until they get that response. Black people, we may call once, twice, maybe even three times. But if we don't get the response by that third time, we just go in a corner and grovel. Right? So yes, they get what they want because they fight for it. So, when you see different services, and Caribbean people, unlike any other group of people, we melt into the society, to the point where you don't even know that that person is from the Caribbean. I deal with people in business on a daily basis and don't know that they are Caribbean or have Caribbean heritage. I met a young lady at DGS, I had a meeting with DGS. And we had a conversation, she said what we needed to do to register for this, to be on their list of contractors, and it was not until I gave her my business card and she looked at it and said: "Toussaint, where you from?" Right?

L: If it was in the United States I would have first said New Orleans, and then after that I would have gone to the Caribbean.

T: Right. She said, Haiti? I said no, Trinidad. She said, oh because I'm from Haiti. Until then, I had no knowledge that she was. So we melt in. So there's a downside to that. It works for us because then we were not discriminated against as foreigners, but then, we have no strength as a community, especially in a city like

this where your political strength is significant. Right? So we are, the Commission is working very hard to harness and show the district how many Caribbean people really live in DC.

L: How long has that particular commission been in existence?

T: This group of commissioners got sworn in in September, but there was a group in there for a 3 year period before that.

L: Now I assume, you came here to go to Howard?

T: Yes.

L: Okay and what year was that?

T: 1982. The year you were born?

Catherine: Nope, '94.

L: I have two daughters who are in college, so I'm used to seeing kids who were born in '94, '95. Well, I got a Masters' degree in '76, so I'm much older than you, young man.

T: I was still in high school then!

L: And why Howard?

T: Because, well, I had a girlfriend that went to Howard, she had studied architecture. Up until then, I wasn't even thinking about university, but she encouraged me to do it. I was going to a technical college, doing drafting in Trinidad, and so we started hanging out and she said you should try and go to Howard.

L: It seems, in watching Howard over the decades, the impact of a wide variety of students from outside the US has been profound. It seems like there's fewer students from outside the US at Howard now than there would've been 30 years ago, but I may be wrong about that.

T: No, you're not wrong. Because in my class of architecture students I think there was 13 of us. I don't think there has been a class of that size in architecture school since. In the 80's, there were a few core schools that stood up, of prominence in the Caribbean, and Howard was one of them. So, it was one of the places where, if you were not going to England, and you were coming to the US, Howard was one of the preeminent establishments. The first prime minister of Trinidad taught at Howard. So Howard had some girth. Now what has

happened, is, the opportunities are more widespread. So you would find a lot of kids going off, especially athletes and stuff, who get scholarships to other places, so now the focus is not on Howard or Columbia or NYU, because while there were 3 places Caribbean people went mainly – New York, Miami, and Washington DC. Those were the core areas. Now, you can basically find a Caribbean person anywhere.

L: When you came here in the early 80's, of course you were doing architecture, but you were interested in music though?

T: Yes.

L: Did you get involved in the music scene here at all when you arrived?

T: Yes. The first band that I played with was a Guinean band, as a percussionist. The language was different but the core rhythm was similar, so I did that. I got involved with a couple other students; we started a band on campus.

L: Trinidadian students?

T: Trinidadian students, yes. But, then the band grew and we had Jamaican and other Caribbean students as part of the band. We still get together and play occasionally, and that's what 25, 30 years later? I also played in a steel band here.

L: That's one thing I don't see much of around here are steel or pans.

T: They have them.

L: I'm sure they do, just not one of those things that I've really seen around Washington. You know, you would think that with this many people from different Caribbean countries around, that steel bands would be more prominent. And maybe they are but I just don't see them.

T: They are. Now there are about 4 in the immediate DC / MD area.

L: Where do they perform?

T: The band that I played with, Panmasters, we spent a lot of our summers in Virginia. Blue Mountain Concert Series, Luray, Berryville.

L: Going out to the Shenandoah Valley?

T: Yes.



L: What about places right around here?

T: Yeah, we did stuff around here, but we always looked forward to those summer gigs out in Virginia.

L: Well it's very pretty out there...I can see why you would want to head in that direction.

T: Warrenton. Warrenton was our favorite. When we drove into Warrington, there would be palm trees on the light poles, and women knew were coming...  
[laughing].

L: And at that point, you could see the Blue Ridge Mountains when you get out to Warrenton, out to the west.

T: Mmhm. It was fun. But now, in Hyattsville, there is a group called CAFE, I don't remember what the acronym stands for (Cultural Academy for Excellence). The founder Lorna Green, she runs a Saturday program for kids where they spend the morning portion of their day doing academics. They have tutors helping the kids, and my oldest daughter when she was 16 she was a tutor. She was the youngest tutor in the group. Because she had to do her community service hours and I introduced her to Lorna because of her GPA. Lorna took her in. So they did academics in the morning and in the afternoon they did steel drums. And they didn't just learn to do steel drums, they learned to read music.

L: And these were kids, correct?

T: Yes. And that group is still active. There's an offshoot from that called Lara, PanLara, which is one of the students and her mom, they went off and founded their own similar organization. And there's still Panmasters and there's a DC based organization called East of the River Boys & Girls. So, there are a couple around. In 1993, I brought a 45-piece steel orchestra to the Kennedy Center.

L: From Trinidad?

T: From Trinidad, and that was the beginning of the end of my promotional career  
[laughing].

L: And why was it the end of your promotional career?

T: Because we lost \$25,000 on the endeavor. Because sponsorship has always been a difficult thing, and an airline promised to fly the band here, and the person who had made the agreement got laid off and we didn't have it in writing. So, I ended up having to write a \$20,000 check for airfare.

L: That went over well at home, didn't it?

T: No. I have lost a house, I have lost a wife, one of my business partners never finished Howard because he took his last semester's tuition and invested it in a show that wasn't profitable. But, we were known for doing things that weren't typical, but it highlighted the culture. I am not someone who was big on parties, I have done parties but I don't like them. I like doing concerts. Concerts allow people to see the culture more. I remember my first solo venture was something called PanJazz, where we got some of the top Pan soloists to DC to basically, play jazz.

L: Was this from New York or from the islands, or both?

T: Robert came from California, and Ken Philmore from Trinidad. Now, if you remember... Well, there are a couple of things. There is that Earth Wind & Fire song that has steel drums in it. There's a Michael Jackson song with steel drums in it. There are a couple Eddie Murphy movies, *48 Hours*, and *Another 48 Hours* that have steel drums in it. The person who played steel drums in all of those is a guy named Robert Greenidge, he tours with Jimmy Buffett. He is one of the best soloists. He plays by ear. I mean, he can hear a note and know exactly what it is.

L: He's got perfect pitch, probably?

T: Right, yeah. So, we had him and Ken Philmore, who's another... and I think we charged 17 bucks for that show. I remember getting calls from people asking me, "how could you charge that much for two Pan men?" But when they came to the show, one of the guys that made that comment, who I knew, walked up to me at intermission and said, "I am sorry. I have already got my money's worth and only half the show is done."

L: Where did you have the show?

T: Cramton. From Cramton, we moved and we had the next two at Lisner. We brought Andy Narell and Len "Boogsie" Sharpe.

L: Did you ever do anything for Howard Homecoming, in terms of any entertainment?

T: No. That is a more recent phenomenon.

L: As a big deal, at least.

T: Yeah. The Caribbean community, we would have our little homecoming parties, but that was never featured in the on-campus activities. That was just a group of students getting together to hangout and party.

L: How much, if at all, were you involved when Kilimanjaro started up?

T: I wasn't around when Kilimanjaro started up, but Kilimanjaro became a core place for Caribbean people. It was the Kaichair, which was a small establishment and then the Kilimanjaro. And then they started to bring in Caribbean entertainment, that, you know, every Friday, folks... and when we were in school you know we didn't really hang out like that because we were on a budget, but once we graduated and had jobs, it was like, Fridays were when you went out and hung out at Kilimanjaro. My band, Fusion, ended up playing there a few times to open for other Caribbean acts. But Kilimanjaro was the core location. The death of Kilimanjaro was hip-hop.

L: Well let's see, we're talking mid-90's, it was really hot between probably around '85 and '95, so late 80s early 90s is... apparently when Kilimanjaro was at it's peak, and I was around then so I can remember how important it was. But you say hip-hop? Why do you say that?

T: Because when they started having hip-hop shows is when they started having issues with stabbings and shootings, and once you get a couple of those... and Kilimanjaro ended up being a Caribbean establishment-- in a Caribbean establishment, you have an immediate fall off of patrons. Which, they had a fall off of Caribbean patrons, so that led them to have more hip-hop shows, which made it even worse. And then Zanzibar came along around that time also, offering a new, fresh place. And you know, Zanzibar came in and their model was different, where you couldn't come in any regular clothes..

L: Right. That's a high class place, man!

T: Yes. And DC for Caribbean people... Caribbean people in DC are not really blue collar. They are more professional. New York has a high percentage of blue collar Caribbean people, but a lot of the Caribbean people that live in DC have come to DC because of university so it's a higher caliber of people. So when you bring in a place where they can feel sophisticated, that place is obviously going to get their attention. Kilimanjaro was dropping off and then Zanzibar came in and picked up. They tried to revive Kilimanjaro some years after, in the old 2K9 on 9<sup>th</sup> Street, 9th & Florida, Derrick Owens. And Derrick Owens, who, when we were at Howard -- he's an American guy-- him and his mom started a restaurant on the first floor of Howard Inn, the old Howard Inn, now the bookstore and Starbucks. Right where Starbucks is now is where he had his restaurant, and when I started my entertainment company, we approached him to use the restaurant on a Friday evening to throw parties. He looked at us like we were crazy, but we convinced him and his mom and they let us do it and it got pretty popular. Subsequent to that, they sold the restaurant and they bought that

section of 9<sup>th</sup> Street and he opened a club. So, you know, we spawned him an entertainment establishment.

L: What was the name of your entertainment company?

T: World Beat Productions.

L: And, started off...

T: 1991.

L: This was before or after the Kennedy Center debacle?

T: Before.

L: Ok. And you were throwing parties locally..

T: Right.

L: DJs, primarily?

T: DJs.

L: I know that's one thing that Tony did.

T: Right. Tony Carr. We did... my first show with World Beat, was two weeks before my oldest child was born, and I was the engineer on the show. But they had a backup engineer on the show because everyone was betting that my ex was going to go into labor during the show, but she didn't, so [laughing]. But that was one of my best engineered shows.

L: And was it mostly DJs and parties around Washington DC or really, along Georgia Avenue?

T: Yes. We used the parties to get started, but the intent was always concerts.

L: And eventually you did move into concerts, right? Under the same aegis of World Beat?

T: Yes.

L: Where would you hold concerts, was this mostly Caribbean music or of a broader perspective than that?

T: Caribbean, but even when we did PanJazz we would intermingle. The first Pan Jazz we did, Jeff Majors came by the show to pick up the keyboard player, because I hired individual musicians and assembled a band to back up the panners. ... And I had this Japanese guy playing keyboard and he would also play gigs with Jeff Majors. Jeff Majors came by to the show and was hanging out backstage and Robert Greenridge asked him if he knows "Just The Two of Us." And Robert sent me a message that he needed an extra mic. Robert played on the original version of the song with Bill Withers. So, he brought Jeff Majors on, and with no rehearsal, they did "Just The Two of Us." And got a standing ovation. And then, I think out of that--, no not Jeff Majors, Marshall Keys, saxophonist

L: Oh I know that, he's gigged around here a ton.

T: Right, yeah. Marshall Keys. Out of that, Jeff Majors heard Robert and invited Robert to come back and record with him. Now, when I picked up Robert on that day, my ex went into labor... [laughing]

L: It was inevitable. [laughing]

T: It was inevitable! But subsequently, we had Jeff Majors on the follow up concert, so we didn't stick to just Caribbean music, and there was very little Caribbean music played at these concerts. It was jazz standards. So, basically when I do these kinds of shows, I try to show the versatility of the instrument. That yes, we know how to party, and we do that very well. But we also have the ability to do these other things. So, an event I'm working on right now, when I thought I was going to do no more events, is a Caribbean rum festival. Where the focus is to show people that rum-- specifically Caribbean rums-- is not just Bacardi, and is not just rum and coke. There are grades of rum that can match any cognac. Bacardi has a rum that sells for 150 dollars a bottle, but it's smooth and you know, just something you will sip and sip with a smoking jacket and a pipe. So, we're working on, and it's most likely going to happen next year. I mean, I started planning in 2012 and there was no sponsorship and I just said shelve it, but two friends contacted me recently and said ok, we need to do this. So we started meeting about it.

L: Where would you have such an event and what would it encompass?

T: Well, when I had the original idea, the intent was to have small tastings and pairings at restaurants and clubs and embassies, so we would go to the Trinidad embassy and they would feature some of the top rums, and then we would have chefs that would pair food with different rums, and then we would have people come in and talk about the rums. And then after we did that and got people interested, the intent was to have it at the Yards, before the Yards were as built up as they are now. They had an open area, because it was by the water and created that kind of Caribbean feel, that was the plan. The way we are looking at

it now, it may end up being in Maryland on a farm or something where we have expansive land and we won't disturb anybody, and if you drink too much we'll have some place we can throw you to sober up. But the intent is not to drink till you get drunk, it's to appreciate the different kinds of rums and of course we want an educational aspect of it.

L: If you were living here did your daughter go to Roosevelt, then?

T: No.

L: That would've been your home high school, I assume. It would have been Theodore Roosevelt?

T: Yes, well, I don't know. I have two younger kids who go to DC schools now. Neither one of them go to public schools.

L: Charter?

T: Yes. They both go to bilingual charters. The younger one goes to LAMB now, she's getting ready to graduate, Latin American Montessori Bilingual. So she's graduating and she's going to go to DCI which is DC International. Five bilingual schools got together and formed a middle and high school. My son, he went to public school for a while, he went to Shepherd, but by 4<sup>th</sup> grade.... we went to Shepherd because they promised language, and they weren't, by 3<sup>rd</sup> grade we weren't seeing where that was happening so we took him out took him over to Stokes, got him into Stokes. And so he graduated from Stokes, and he's in the first class of DCI. So he's going into highschool next year in the fall. DCI is eventually going to be one of the schools at the Walter Reed campus.

L: Yeah, our kids were in the DC public schools through elementary school, and this was before there were charter schools. And this is one of the reasons why we moved to Silver Spring was a bigger house and public schools for the kids. Those two reasons. And charter schools, no one was even talking about them, so it was really ten years before charter schools became an entity.

T: But charter schools are now forcing DC public schools to compete for students.

L: Yep, It's a very very different world.

T: Which is a good thing. Now we're going to have better public schools, that's the intent. He went to panama when he graduated, the class went, and he said "Daddy, I went to the movies and I could understand!" Because the movie was in Spanish, but he could understand.

L: Did you ever bring Calypsonians into town?

T: Yes.

L: Ok, and that would have, again, been post '91, after you started your work?

T: Yes.

L: Who did you bring in?

T: Well, I'm good friends with David Rudder, so we brought him a couple of times, Superblue...

L: Typically, when the Calypsonians came into town when you brought them in the 90s, What kind of venues were they playing in?

T: I've done Cramton, I've done Nativity. There's a catholic church that's right across from fourth precinct on Georgia Avenue, we've used there. There used to be a place out on New Hampshire Avenue across from that little strip mall with the Shoppers, it is now a 10-dollar store, but at one point they used to have parties and stuff in there, so we've used there. I've used what is now the 9:30 Club, it was WUST Hall. So we bounced around, it was whatever was available at the time.

L: You were mentioning the downfall of the Kilimanjaro, and from my brief conversations with Victor, but more from what other people have said, coincided-- they phrased it a little bit differently-- but basically, Victor started renting out the club to different people and lost control of what was going on, which was essentially what you were saying but in a slightly different way. He was making pretty good money it would seem, but once you start renting it out to outside parties...

T: You lose control. And even when they tried to start back, when they started back as Killies Two, it never really got going. In addition I think the Kilimanjaro had some tax issues, which reared it's head with Killies Two because the IRS... I think went after them because they saw Killies Two it as a rebirth of Kilimanjaro.

L: And they owed them money for taxes already so...

T: They put the squeeze on them.

L: When Zanzibar opened, and I assume that they opened up west of the waterfront, is that correct?

T: No. It ended up there.

L: Where did it start?

T: It started on 17<sup>th</sup> Street around the corner from the OAS. They used to rent out a restaurant on Friday nights and that's where it started. And eventually it got popular enough where they were able to go and get their own facility. There was another club called Foxtrap before, in the same location, and that did not survive, and Zanzibar came in and took over the space. I think they had a ten-year run too.

L: When it was up around Adams Morgan and that area.

T: No, it wasn't Adams Morgan area, it was down close to the World Bank. It was 1719...

L: Oh, so it was further down 17th Street.

T: Yes, so they were getting the World Bank crowd on a Friday evening.

L: Talk about a higher class crowd!

T: Right.

L: There you go. OK.

T: So they started out at that level so they were able to maintain that clientele.

L: So were they also booking a wide range of people? In other words, was it Caribbean /African, much like Kilimanjaro had been?

T: Yes.

L: So similar kinds of music. OK...

T: Because I had David Rudder there one time. So yes, they would rent out to promoters but they kept a tighter reign on what kinds of shows came in there. I mean, they did R&B shows there too, but they... I guess seeing how Kilimanjaro went, they kept a better control on what kinds of artists came through.

L: What do you, in terms of work with the commission, in the ideal world, what would you and the commission like to see happen in terms of a more vibrant business scene for folks from the Caribbean.



T: Well one of the things, I think Caribbean people shy away from dealing with the Government, dealing with the bureaucracy. So one of the things we want to do is to have more workshops showing them what things are available from the city. Because, like along Georgia Avenue and in some other parts of the District, there's something called Great Street Grants, where the city gives business owners a grant to do renovations to their facilities. It is paperwork-intensive, like any government opportunity. But I think if we are able to show the Caribbean community how this could benefit them and their business. Because nobody is going to come into your establishment if it looks run down. So the aim is to get them to go do the paperwork, put them with people who can help them go through that paperwork and keep your businesses vibrant.

L: Now we've been talking mostly generically about Caribbean businesses but of course, you know better than I... Jamaica, Trinidad, Tobago, the VI, etc, DR... those are all in the Caribbean but they're very different places as well. From my little knowledge it seems like Trinidad and Jamaica are probably the best represented in terms of people from the Caribbean or countries.

T: Right. Jamaica has the size.

L: Because itself is large.

T: Right. And Trinidad is the richest, in terms of wealth. Trinidad supports the rest of the Caribbean from time to time, when oil prices are correct. Right now they can't even support themselves.

L: I was going to say, this is not one of those times...

T: This is not one of those times [laughing].

L: No indeed. So in terms of tensions among people from Jamaica and Trinidad, differences, nuances... I guess I'm looking for nuances, because it's like saying "people from the South", well Shreveport, Louisiana is a very different part of the South than Charleston, South Carolina.

T: Right. A lot of the tension, as you would call it, goes away when we get here because then we have to ban together. We can't survive as individuals, so we have to come together as a Caribbean community. A lot of the discord is fostered by politicians.

L: Discord when you're in the Caribbean, or discord here?

T: In the Caribbean. Which, when you first come, you know, folks come with that discord. But after you are here for a while, it's like, you know what ends up

happening is there's a lot of intermarrying. So, my wife is technically from Jamaica.

L: Technically, what does technically from Jamaica actually mean-- it's an interesting turn of phrase.

T: Well if you ask her where she's from, she says Jamaica. If you look at her birth certificate, it says Tobago. But, her retort to that is: if a cat has kittens in the oven, you don't call them bread.

L: Think about that ladies and gentlemen.

T: Her mother is Jamaican. Her father is Bajan.

L: Bajan? You've got to tell me what that means.

T: From Barbados.

L: Gotcha.

T: Her father is a Methodist minister. He was assigned to a church in Tobago. So, she was born in Tobago, she has one sister born on St. Vincent, one sister born in Grenada. After a while they all moved to Jamaica. So, all of her high school years and university years are in Jamaica. She left Tobago when she was two. She has no relatives in Tobago. The first time she went to Tobago was after we were married. I took her back and we went and saw where she was born.

L: I'm going to Denver in about three weeks. I was born in Denver. I lived there for 11 months after I was born. I'm a native Coloradan, but right, so it goes.

T: Right. Right. You know, I have lots from where the husband is from one place; the wife is from one place else. You know, after a while, you know. You end up staying in the United States as a way to avoid any arguments as to which country you're going to move back to.

L: How did she end up in the US?

T: Um. Her parents came to Delaware. Her father got moved to Delaware.

L: Oh, from Jamaica probably.

T: Yes. So, she resisted it for a couple of years, and then moved to New York and worked for the Conference Board up until she met me. Then she came down

here and she worked for Smithsonian for several years and then took care of kids for some. Now, she is helping me with my business.

L: And, I'm assuming that your construction business is the main thing that you do. In terms of taking up much of your time and where the money comes from. It's not the side gigs.

T: No. It's not the side gigs.

L: It sounded like you were doing mostly earlier, government and commercial stuff right? But are you doing more residential stuff?

T: My company, as it stands now, does primarily residential. I am also a consultant to a larger construction company. So, that company does commercial and institutional stuff. Like I have five projects going on now at the NIH for them. That I'm running for them. But my company does residential.

L: So how far a field do you do residential? Is it around Petworth? Is it around DC?

T: DC.

L: DC in general?

T: Um, you know I have people all the time that ask me about Maryland and specifically Baltimore and I don't do Baltimore.

L: Right. It's got to be business of course.

T: Right. And, I tell people, the only thing that would make Baltimore attractive to me, is if I was able to get a city block. Because going up there to do one house or two houses, it doesn't interest me. If I can take a whole city block, do them more energy efficient, almost to net zero, that would interest me. Cause I have done one net zero building, which we have won an award for from US Green Council.

L: A residence or a commercial?

T: A residence. I've done several gut rehabs and then I've done two LEED platinum homes from scratch, ground up. Hole in the ground.

L: In 1976, my dad built a passive solar house. It was probably it wasn't L.E.D. It was relatively close to that. It was in 1976. So, a man ahead of his time.

T: It was a lot more difficult. It's still difficult now because I just got my passive builders certification and just passing the exam was... yeah. But I haven't done a

passive house yet. I've done one net-zero, but you know, that is where the industry is going. That's a goal of the City to have the housing stock 100% energy efficient by 2032.

L: That's a worthy and hard to reach goal. But, something at least to strive for.

T: Yes. And I sit on two commissions now, where our task is to strategize how to get there. One being Code Review Committee. So, they say that they have me there to keep them sane. Because when they start going off into things and I say that can't be done, you know. You know, because you have bureaucrats who come up with the idea.

L: But practically speaking, you can't do that.

T: They want someone in there that's going to tell them no.

L: Now, if the two fine folks over here wanted to hear good Caribbean music around Washington DC now, where would you send them?

T: I would tell them to turn the radio on, on a Saturday evening from 7-9pm to PFW and listen to Von.

L: Von Martin?

T: Mmmhmm. There is nothing consistent that I can say. Well you know, this place we have, musicians who come out and play once in awhile.

L: There are events around. But nothing as you said, consistent.

T: Right.

L: I had a feeling that was going to be the answer, but I wasn't sure.

T: The commission was tasked by the mayor to do something. So we are currently working on a Caribbean festival for June, which is Caribbean Heritage Month.

L: That's in three months from now. Ok, so that's a short timeframe.

T: Yes. Well the mayor originally wanted us to do Carnival.

L: That would have been...

T: No.

L: That's not happening.

T: I told her no. It's not possible. The Commission is not set up. The rules we have to follow as a Commission, um, we can't do something. We are struggling to do the festival. Because everything has to basically go back through the Mayor's Office on Community Affairs. We can't go into contract ourselves. So, just the structure... it's difficult to make anything happen. We are trying to finalize the location. We were given a suggested location and I didn't think the location was appropriate so I suggested a counter location. Because I live in this community, I know. We monitor Prince of Petworth pretty actively. My wife, when we were doing the Carnival from June 1<sup>st</sup>, she monitored Prince of Petworth on a daily basis.

L: You better explain Prince of Petworth to these folks who don't know.

T: Prince of Petworth is a blog, a community blog. And our new-found neighbors did not understand Carnival. Did not understand the history of the Carnival and Georgia Avenue and all that, and so they had some pretty nasty things on an ongoing basis to say when June came about and when Carnival came around. I remember one comment that somebody suggested that the participants in the Carnival were mostly prostitutes. My wife had to kindly inform them that the lawyers and doctors that they might run into in the course of their activities are those same participants. You know, Carnival is a pre-Lenten activity, where you basically let loose and then on Ash Wednesday, you go to church, and hopefully, get absolved of all of the things you've done the days before. You know, some of the groups in Trinidad are pretty high-end and they get their costumes basically in a pizza box. And those costumes run, I mean my sister. The exchange rate in Trinidad is 6 to 1. My sister would basically pay \$6000 for a costume, which is basically \$1000. And when she came, that is a headpiece [points at headpiece]. So you got that, you got something to put around your wrist and you got a two-piece bathing suit.

L: [To students]: Have you ever been to a carnival at all?

Catherine: No.

T: That is \$6000. Well, no I shouldn't say that because along with that... Now these groups, the groups she participated with, they would have on average 10,000 people. They would have like eight to 10 music trucks, which is basically a flatbed, a 40ft container truck without the container. With music. They would have 10 of those. And then they would have four to six containers that had been cut out from the side to create a bar, right? So for that \$1000, the Carnival parade is two days, Monday and Tuesday. You get your costume and for the two days that you're parading on the street from like seven in the morning to seven at night you have your fill of whatever you want to drink. At lunchtime they had

catered lunches where they would go to a designated area and folks would get food. But for the rest of the day, you would dance to the music on the streets and drink.

L: And you can see why something sort of like that in a changing neighborhood would not go over so well.

T: Right. In two-piece bathing suits and some of them wore thongs. But, Carnival has also spun another industry in Trinidad: gyms, fitness centers.

L: Ah, gotcha. To look good.

T: Because, from September, folks are in the gym. My sister restricts her diet. From December till Carnival because their bodies got to look right. So, and some of the groups have workout sessions, you know all of the groups that have to participate in the band, they meet every Saturday and they go to these big fields and they exercise. They walk and run, all about Carnival.

L: Of course here the Carnival was early June?

T: Last weekend in June.

L: So you could count on pretty warm weather, cause you would not want to do Carnival here in January or February. Not Pre-Lenten. It's a little bit chilly most of the time.

T: And there's a circuit. So basically, New York's Carnival is September. Miami's Carnival is October.

L: Is it in October in Miami?

T: Yep, Columbia Day Weekend. Um, Toronto's Carnival is first weekend in August. So you know, everybody knows their place and position in the Carnival and there are people who travel from carnival to carnival.

L: So we are looking towards having a small version of Georgia Avenue Day's carnival this June? If you can pull it off?

T: It's going to be a festival. Yeah.

L: Will it have the usual accoutrements: food, vendors and music?

T: Yes.

L: What will be the musical aspect of that?

T: Um, we are going to have some local groups and it is not going to be Calypso. We are going to have Reggae, Calypso if we can find a Zuke band.

L: Is there a Zuke band at here at all?

T: Yeah.

L: There is!

T: And I know, I think, we are trying to get a Cuban band. We are going to get a featured artist, hopefully from Trinidad.

L: Yeah, I would assume you would try to work as locally as possible for logistics and money.

T: Right and then just get one headliner.

L: Where are we likely to see that in June?

T: In Ward 4.

L: Somewhere in Ward 4. You should let these folks know where. Do you know where Ward 4 is in Washington?

Jared: No, (Laughs) no idea.

L: Ok so, can you explain it to them?

T: Ward 4 to start is where the mayor lives.

L: Ha, oh I did not know that. (Laughs).

T: Before she became mayor she was the Councilman for Ward 4. And she fought tooth and nail to bring it back.

L: Where does she actually live? What street?

T: I don't know what street, but I know she lives in Ward 4. Somewhere in Northeast, but um, in Riggs Park, which is like, off Riggs Road somewhere. They had suggested a school, which has an Astroturf. Which, I told them it wouldn't go down well with the community if we were to use that school. So I suggested a field that is grass because I told them that grass is a whole lot easier to repair than Astroturf is. So we are waiting to hear back from the mayor's office if we can get access from that facility, and then we can move forward. But, Ward 4 is

Petworth, Riggs Park, basically Georgia Ave all the way up to Silver Spring, Eastern Avenue.

L: Which is the Maryland-DC line,

T: Right.

L: So kind of from here up to by Takoma Park. Hmm, that's the first I've heard talk of such an event again. Ok. The Carnival in June. Georgia Avenue is huge and you said several hundred thousand people attend at its peak at this event. And you can see why if you weren't part of the community, you wouldn't understand, it would be a pain in the ass and you can see where people would react that way.

T: Yes. Parking was a nightmare for residents and it was just... and Caribbean people have a tendency after these events to stay longer and not go home. So you know, the parade was over generally at six o'clock. 10 o'clock people would still be hanging out on Georgia Ave. And we tend to drink openly in the street. Which DC doesn't really like too much.

L: Nope, that would be a no-no.

T: Right. So in the 19 years that we had the Carnival, there were two incidents. One a guy, who had too much to drink, tried to climb up between the cab and the trailer of a flatbed and fell and got run over. He survived. He sued the Carnival and lost and the other incident was the last year we had the Carnival. The Carnival usually ran by Missouri to Banneker, which is down by Howard. The police said since you cannot afford the \$175,000 for police, how about you cut the parade in half? So, we said okay. Half a Carnival is better than no Carnival. So they cut the parade in half and started at Kansas, basically Upshur. But the price went up from 175 to 210.

L: Even when you cut it in half?

T: Mhmm.

L: That doesn't add up.

T: No it doesn't. And then although they told us we had till six o'clock. The police basically rushed it down and by three o'clock, it was over. People were standing out on the street and asked where's the rest of it? Two knuckleheads from the neighborhood who had a beef, started shooting at each other. But, guess who got blamed for that?

L: The Carnival of course. It happens in Go-Go stuff, too.



T: The Carnival got blamed for anything that happened within a 10-block radius of Georgia Avenue of the day of the Carnival. Any incident that happened within 10 blocks of Georgia Avenue on the day of the Carnival, it was put on the Carnival. Cause I had a policeman say, yeah you all had an incident last year. I was like, what incident? Over on...

L: Over on 14<sup>th</sup> and nowhere near the Carnival.

T: Right. That's not us! So, um those were the two incidents that happened in the 19 years of Carnival. Now, anywhere you got where you can have an event for 19 years, where you can have as much as 300,000 people and you have two events in 19 years, I think we did a pretty good job.

L: Last Carnival, this is 2016. Was it in 2012?

T: No 2010 or 2011.

L: '10 or '11 was the last Carnival?

T: Yes.

L: Are you going to be the person who will be suggesting the music for the June event?

T: Um, I am on the committee organizing the event.

L: And the one with the most musical interest as well? Or are there other folks?

T: There are other folks, yeah. I mean it's three of us and we have a certain amount of entertainment experience.

L: That would be interesting. I'll be around in June, so I'll look forward to that.

T: I mean we plan to have quite a bit of activities in June. I know that there is a promoter looking to do Jerkfest in June. I think they are looking to do it Downtown.

L: Okay can you say that more clearly?

C: Jerkfest.

L: Oh Jerkfest. Such as Jerk chicken...

T: Mhmm. Jerk everything.

L: And that would be again encompassing cultural, musical food event?

T: And that is going to be downtown June 19 and it's sponsored by Grace Kennedy Products.

L: That same weekend at Anacostia Museum, they are doing a couple of Go-Go things. I'm doing something that day, some kind of symposium, and they're doing it on the 18<sup>th</sup> as well.

T: Oh, and on the 18<sup>th</sup> that's when we have something scheduled for the festival.

L: The 18<sup>th</sup> is actually going to be at American History on the mall. The 19<sup>th</sup> is going to be at the Anacostia Museum.

T: That's Folklife Festival?

L: No, no, it has nothing to do with the Folklife Festival. Utterly separate from that. It just happens to be something like that. It's interesting to hear you talk about these things because, I think about the Go-Go the book Charles Stephenson and I did, and you know some of the people have very similar kinds of attitudes of being blamed for everything. Of course it's the colored people who are running crazy with the music. It's all their fault. Doesn't matter if it has anything to deal with it or not, they're a scapegoat. Actually, one of the people suggested talking to Frank Smith. Who was one of the leaders in the late 90s who was trying to help Go-Go make more restricted. I did not realize he is now the head of the memorial.

T: Civil War Memorial?

L: Yeah

T: Yeah, I did not know that.

L: Somebody mentioned that recently. I think it may have been Roland. I did not know that. That's interesting. Cause we was quoted widely in the book because there's a lot of stuff in the press about hearings done by ANCs and similar kinds of topics.

T: Um, I'm trying to remember his name, the council member from Ward 1. He just lost the last elections.

L: I'm sure I can recognize the name. I'm not sure if I can recall either.

T: Um, but he was a very good advocate for the Carnival. And so was Fenty and Bowser and Charlene Drew Jarvis. I mean the Ward 4 and Ward 1 councilmembers have generally been very supportive because their constituents, they needed businesses to benefit significantly.

L: If they were actually getting anything remotely close to six months worth income, over a weekend, you could see where they would be generally supportive.

T: But, then there were other businesses that lost money.

L: Because people couldn't get to where they want to.

T: Because businesses like hairdressers and laundromats they couldn't get. But the grocery stores and liquor stores, they made a killing. McDonalds, that McDonald's down by Howard University-- we have known, and you probably you never heard this anywhere else, where McDonald's had to close because they had no food, nothing.

L: All gone. That would not happen very often.

T: All gone.

L: That would not happen very often. Now you pointed out, Carnival accoutrements. That reminds to ask about something else, and that is: old flyers, photographs, ephemera, business contracts stuff like that you might have around related to your entertainment stuff here in DC. Do you ever keep stuff like that around here?

T: I have some in the attic.

L: OK. because at some point, I'd be very curious to see that um because one of the things of course. You almost made my point, there: "well, it's up in the attic." So it's there. I'm sure you guys made lots of flyers in the 80s because these folks don't remember a time when you had to flyer everything. Did you keep stuff like that, too?

T: Yeah.

L: Good.

T: I actually just started whittling down my drawer, because I used to have files, because I also had a recording company. I was telling my son, under that basement stairs there are boxes of records, vinyl. You know, and one of the

downfalls of Caribbean music is people like to make mixtapes and they did not like to buy a lot of records.

L: Right, understood.

T: So, you know, I was explaining to him that the ability to download music has saved certain industries. Because for Caribbean music, lots of artists were not able to put out their music consistently because their producers never recouped the monies from previous years' work. So, one of the problems David Rudder had when he went on a major label was that he wanted to put out music every year. And, record labels don't like you putting out music every year. They look at every two to three years, because they want time to sell that first album before they start looking to put out another one. But, if you participate, in Carnival they have fresh stuff every year.

L: Right. An annual event. Especially if you're Calypsonian, you have new stuff.

T: And you know, that caused them little bit of tension between him and Warner records.

L: Well, don't throw anything away. Seriously!

T: No, I mean, I still have, I show my kids my original cell phone.

L: Probably looks like mine right now.

T: It was the size about that green case.

L: Oh. People laugh at mine.

T: It was big, because it had the physical handset. It's a bag phone, you had to zip it; you pop up your antenna.

L: 'Cause one of the side things we are kind of interested in is things like that often get tossed away. For the DC Music Vernacular Archive, that's exactly the kind of stuff we are interested in having and preserving so when you and I are a long dust in the wind and these people's children are researching Carnival in Washington DC in 1997, they will have those files. So, I'm actually serious about that 'cause we're talking with WAMA, and collecting business cards and business records. I already talked to Mike [Schreibman] about doing that. WAMA stuff, is mostly separated out and organized. But most of Mike's stuff and one or two other peoples' stuff are in there. But when their stuff is segregated out. I've already been down to his house so I know it's there.

T: Well, all of World Beats stuff is upstairs. The things I've had multiple copies of, I sent to my business partners. One of them who lives in New York, I sent him this stuff so he can show his kids and why he did not graduate...

L: Why he didn't graduate from Howard. That's his downfall.

T: So um, yeah and I show my kids stuff. There was a time when, the embassy would call me.

L: The Trinidadian embassy?

T: Yeah, when folks were doing research on stuff. You know, I would go through my videos and stuff. A lot of that I never got back, but...

L: That was one of the intents of doing the DC Vernacular Music Archive, is you know you look at Go-Go, you look at Punk and all the kinds of music around here.

T: Punk. Oooh. I was a teenager then.

L: And the days of spring, the Rites of Spring. Yeah, you would've been here at the right time in the mid-to-late 80s when punk was at its height. And you know, we've been talking to Dera, we got interested in Operation Caribbean Cruise.

T: Caribbean Cruise!

L: The ill-fated. We were thinking of doing a symposium on that but there wasn't enough music, so that's the thing. So that's simple, so Kilimanjaro. So that's the thing, well, Kilimanjaro that's why we are focused on that type of music and Caribbean and West African popular music and the Kilimanjaro scene. It seems in some ways a symbol, in some ways. It leads you into so many different directions, Caribbean music, West African music, gentrification, Zanzibar, serious, all kinds of things. I'm seriously thinking two years from now. I'm actually finishing my book on Bluegrass in Washington, DC, that's my next book. So there's a lot of bluegrass stuff. My office at home is probably a little larger than this, right here. I have a ton, not just the interviews I've done, but old issues of Unicorn Times, which was a predecessor to the Clty Paper, that has a lots of articles of bluegrass that Richard Harrington gave me. Um, so I've just got a lot of stuff. All of that stuff will end up in the DC Vernacular Music Archive. Some of it's unique some of it's not, but it just seems to me, that flyers about music events that you put on or involved with with here in Washington, that involves the Caribbean community, that's really important stuff and that needs to go to an archive somewhere. And you know I don't see any place else really interested in it. So I know filed that in the back of my brain and also you are a very thoughtful and articulate guy and I'm thinking, to think about the symposium, probably

Carnival time two years from now about looking at Go-Go and gentrification, Caribbean music and just a whole range of things. I'm trying to think of the theme, but I think it's going to be Black Folk Music and Gentrification. It's just so many different tendrils, and it's becoming more and more of an issue, I think, especially the gentrification part. But you know, we said, where would you hear Caribbean music now? Where could you have gone 20 years ago? There would have been more venues.

T: Well, even five years ago there was Crossroads, but I guess, you know, I guess they got caught up with that Jack Johnson fiasco.

L: The money in the freezer. Hahaha. He was the executive of Prince George's County. He had thousands of dollars in the freezer.

T: No, no it was in the wife's bra. He told her to hide \$70,000 in her bra.

L: Yeah. Yeah. When the police were going to come and arraign him.

T: The police were knocking on the door.

L: Stuff it in your bra.

T: I want to know what size bra she wears.

L: Apparently one that can fit 70 grand in there. Hopefully, they were in large denominations. So you have seen two older guys from talking. As you guys know from our experiences in class, you are free to hop in at any point, which I know you would. Any questions that you guys have?

Catherine: How much different was the music in Howard much different than the music that you heard in Trinidad? Was it sort of like a culture shock to you when you came to Howard or was it sort of similar?

T: No. When I was growing up, the only time I heard of Calypso was at Carnival time. The rest of the year, it was all pop. I mean pop, rock, we had country. All music is diverse. Trinidad has a very large East Indian population. Trinidad is 45% Black, 45% Indian, and 10% of everything else. Well, that's how it was growing up. It is a little different now, where that piece in the middle is a little bit bigger. It's probably 20% now. Like, my sister, my next youngest sister, was married to a Chinese guy. So her last name is Lee-Wing. In Trinidad there is no race box on any questionnaire. So, she had two kids with him. So what are they? So you know, and I think one of them is dating an Indian girl, so what's going to happen with their kids? So you know...

L: It's the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

T: Right, so they generally don't ask race on any questionnaires cause it's just convoluted. But, you know, we grew up looking at Indian movies on a Sunday, because when I was growing up there was one TV station. So it's either you're watching what's on TV or you're not watching TV. So, and you know so, you know, you listen to Indian music, you look at Indian movies, you look at whatever was playing the US at the time, you listen to rock music, you listen to country music, and you listen to, um, R&B. That's just how it is. Um, now you hear more Calypso throughout the year, that kind of thing, but it's still a good mix. We now have crime problems in Trinidad, like everywhere else. But my view is since we've had cable, 'cause the kinds of stuff that they show on cable, well folks think that's how it goes in America; we want to be like America.

L: That's an interesting statement: "We want to be like America." How significantly different is that, if it all, now than it would have been when you were as a kid?

T: Significant. Um, we held tighter to our culture then. You know I couldn't see myself growing up without my parents hanging off my butt. And I grew up in a time where, if you did something out it would be known at home before you got home.

L: The neighborhood would let the home folks know.

T: So it's not like, I tell my son-- there is nothing that he attempts to do now that I haven't attempted to do in my youth. Right? And I was probably more skillful at it because I had more eyes watching. Because I mean, neighbors told on you if they saw you doing something, and neighbors were allowed to talk to you. Now, people get offended if somebody speaks to their child. No, I mean a neighbor can hit you upside of the head if you were acting a fool. A neighbor can tell your parents. And if a neighbor told on you, you had no defense. There was no explaining. You was getting beat. Because the fact that person had to come tell me that you did-- you done, you guilty. There is no explaining it away. So, the discipline was a little bit stronger. So, and there were certain things that we did, it was more cultural. Now, everybody is, you know, they are looking at what is the trends in America? The trends in England? So, we are losing what is home to us. Much like happened to black people when desegregation occurred. Because during segregation, black people had their own stuff. Their own banks... So what happened when they desegregated, they dropped all of their stuff and ran to Main Street, and their entire community just ceased to exist.

L: It changed. You mean you still, I'm thinking about education and thinking about especially private historically black colleges and universities. St. Paul's closed a couple of years ago. I mean Howard is doing ok.

T: No they're not.

L: It's doing ok, it's not doing great, it's doing ok, but they're struggling. Um, and a lot of it has to do, I think, with desegregation, as you said. You know you look at, where this is the anniversary of when Texas Western won the NCAA tournament, the first all black team. You know, you can't imagine the SCC or the ACC, not having black basketball players. But until the late '60s and early '70s when all of them did, it's a different world. And yeah, there's a lot of truth to what you're saying about it. I'm not sure I'd say it's changed, but it's different, and maybe gone. But everywhere that you grew up in, 50 years from now, it will be different inevitably. But I can see where especially with the Internet and satellite television and stuff, the ability of being able to see immediately what's going on everywhere has changed your perspective. Final question, because I know these folks usually go to bed by 9pm, I'm sure.

T: What kind of students are they?

L: They're my students! Any Reggaetone scene around here, that's not DJ. Any live Reggaetone. Again, I simply don't know.

T: I don't know.

L: Don't know either, okay.

T: I play with an Afro-Cuban group sometimes, so I would go with them. And I can't even remember what that music is called. But sometimes we end up at clubs, coming back home from gigs.

L: It's not a jazz oriented group? It's really an Afro-Cuban pop music group? Afro-Cuban? Okay. We can leave it at that, we talk about the problems in our class about classifying music and I can see you going, well.... ' Cause people like putting things into easy niches and it doesn't work that way.

T: Well it's Afro-Cuban more on the religious sense.

L: Oh so we are talking about Santa Rita. Okay. That's a whole different world.

T: That's a whole different conversation.

L: Say no more, that's a whole other discussion. All right, um, that's it for today then.