Voices of Southern Hospitality: An Oral History Project

Interviewee: Sparks, Don
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Abstract: In this interview, professor Don Sparks tells of his studies in southern Africa and his time and work in Charleston, South Carolina. Sparks, who worked for the State Department and studied for years in sub-Saharan Africa, compares his professional experiences with his observations and his life in the U.S. South. He discusses issues of racial inequality and its history in both the United States and abroad, comparing government policies and social responses to economic and racial injustice. Sparks also tells of the many economic and cultural changes he has witnessed and experienced in Charleston, from the early 1980s to the present.

Biographical Note: Don Sparks has a long history with Charleston and South Carolina. Born in Greenville, Sparks had a successful career in both the Civil and Foreign services, spending time working with Senator Fritz Hollings in Washington, D.C as well as time spent working for the State Department abroad. In 1981, Sparks made the move to Charleston to begin a career in academia, teaching economics first at the College of Charleston and then at the Citadel.

Project Details:

In the summer of 2018, student researchers from the College of Charleston conducted oral histories for the research project, *Voices of Southern Hospitality*. The project documents diverse opinions and stories about southern hospitality in Charleston, South Carolina, but also offers a deeper and more intimate history of a changing community. Over the past thirty years (early-1990s to 2018), the Charleston peninsula and its surrounding islands have experienced rapid economic growth and rapid cultural and ecological changes. The *Voices of Southern Hospitality* project chronicles this profound transformation with the personal histories of Charleston residents.

The project was launched in June 2018 with funding from The Committee for Innovative Teaching and Learning in the Liberal Arts and Sciences at the College of Charleston. In addition to documenting important stories, the project was designed to train College of Charleston students in oral history research methods. Five student researchers and 42 interviewees participated in the first phase of this project (June and July, 2018).

Interview Begin

Interviewer Initials: AG (Angus Gracey)
Interviewee Initials: DS (Don Sparks)

AG: Just make sure this is recording.

DS: Kind of get out all the ambient noise…

AG: Yeah, it's, it's pretty good about just picking [it] up. Okay. So, this is Angus Gracey and I am here with Dr. Don Sparks at Kudu and it is Monday, October 22nd, and it's… well let's just jump right in… So, my first question is where did you grow up?

DS: Greenville, South Carolina.

AG: And how does, how did that compare to Charleston?

DS: At the time they were similar sized cities, and they are still similarly sized. Both downtowns died in the sixties, seventies, and eighties. They both had made a

renaissance. I think Greenville actually has done a better job, which surprises me. I mean I wouldn't have thought so… in the sense of a more liberal city. Charleston has done great strides in promoting it's tourism destination. But as far as a liberal city, I think Greenville probably has done a little better job.

AG: And you said they died, how did they die? Exactly what happened?

DS: Well, the downtowns after World War II, the federal government subsidized sprawl, basically, by subsidizing interstates and then keeping gas prices low making it attractive for people to live the American life in a suburb and compounded by what was perceived to be a racial, and in fact was, racial tension. Whites left the old downtown parts, in most of America really, and really most of the South…And so the shopping malls moved out to the suburbs following the customers. Some downtowns, for all intents and purposes, pretty much died. Charleston, you wouldn't believe it, but I mean King Street was in 1972, 1975, barely any shop[s] open. Unbelievable.

AG: That's crazy.

DS: It wasn't until really the late seventies, early eighties, under Riley's leadership [we saw] the sort of redevelopment activities here. The city has, you know, done great, but they've not really addressed a lot of the issues I'd like to see addressed: housing, transportation, racial justice; those kind of things haven't been addressed as well as I think they could have been.

AG: Going back to sort of your childhood, why did you want to become an economist?

DS: I don't know. I think the way the tools you get, help you look at issues that I'm interested in… sort of social issues and give you some, very structured way to look at them, in a way that you can make, I think, better choices about private life and how you vote… I think… English is probably the most versatile major to have in college, and economics is probably the second most.

AG: Were there any historic moments or people that sort of influenced you and your career path?

DS: Mentors are important, mentors are super important. I think you'll find this out right now with Blake. Yeah, I had a mentor in college who was a Belgian guy… I went

to college in Washington, D.C. (George Washington) and so this Belgian guy worked for the World Bank, but he taught at night as an adjunct and he really just got me interested in the development of economics and Africa. He traveled in Africa all the time. He was with the World Bank, traveling every month to Africa. It got me excited about that kind of the life... mentors are super important, changed my life.

AG: Certainly. Can you tell me about your work before Charleston, before you came here?

DS: Well, I went overseas, went to University of London for Grad school and I came back. I'd worked for Senator Hollings, in college, in D.C and came back and he really helped me get a job at the State Department, which I had for about six years. In the foreign service, and then converted from foreign service to the civil service and was there for about eight years...seven years… and decided teaching was more attractive, and bureaucracy got me sort of frustrated and then I made the switch, came down to Charleston. That was 81, so 30, whatever that is, 35 years ago, something like that.

AG: How does that work? How did that time spent in the civil service, how does that inform your civic life in Charleston? Because I know you're very involved in institutions down here.

DS: That's a good question. I think that having the opportunity to work for Senator Hollings was an amazing opportunity as well; I got to learn how government works or doesn't work and then at the State Department on the administrative side got to see how things worked in a pretty different angle, foreign angle in a way. But I think it just gave me the confidence to understand that people who were making decisions are people and you can influence those people and they make mistakes and they are right sometimes and wrong sometimes. You've got to try to figure out a way to help educate them and what you think is the right way and I think those tools you learn, in college and Grad school, help you move whatever you're interested in along… I mean personal interest as well interest in your community.

AG: Sure, certainly. How long have you taught at the Citadel for? I mean, I know you are sort of in retirement now.

DS: Yeah, I started in 86', about 33 years, almost 33 years.

AG: Wow.

DS: Yeah, long time in one place. Never thought I'd be there that long, but it was a good run.

AG: How has it changed in your lifetime, or in your time there rather?

DS: Oh the Citadel. I would say almost night and day. When I got there, they still had a confederate flag over the main administrative buildings. There were no women there. The academics weren't as rigorous as now, didn't have the reputation it has now, the funding it has now. It has been transformed. For good. Last president, General Rosa, was a really positive influence. He put a lot of money and got a lot of good faculty and got new programs. We're doing study abroad now, which we didn't do before. I mean for 20 years we didn't do virtually any study abroad, virtually none. And now we've got a program in Greece and Rome and Cyprus, semester and year-long programs. Not to mention, you know, semester at sea, which I did last, last Spring… And the women there now are about 10 to 15 percent of [school population and] more minorities…more foreign students and it has been number one US news for colleges without PhD's in the south, I think for six or seven years straight. The College of Charleston got that once or twice, but not recently. It's just gotten to a be better school.

AG: Certainly… the Citadel is so important to Charleston its kind of like a part of the city's fabric. Was it always like that when you were first starting there?

DS: Well, you know, I'm not sure I'd necessarily agree as part of the fabric, certainly as it is. It was located here, its been here for 150 years. So it is, but it's kind of honestly… I don't think it has one of the things… I think it can do a better job… involving the community more… having the cadets go out more, been doing that more and more. They have service days now; they have service requirements that bring them into schools and you know, underserved areas in town, help clean up streets, whatever it might be. That's all good stuff. But I think it probably needs more of that.

There still seems to be a disconnect. You know a lot of people in Charleston, in South Carolina, when the battle to have… to let women come in… didn't realize it was a state school and thought it was a private school, private college, and hell, the argument was [that] it was a state supported school. How can a state supported school deny women, you know, the right to go to school there. I mean it's a state funded institution like the College, so you can't deny women or Black people or Indian people or anybody from access. So that's changed. So I think the Citadel probably has gotten a better reputation than it had. The hazing is down. Used to be

really horrendous hazing. Kind of like the worst fraternity pranks you can think of on campus here. That was normal at the Citadel. That's been straightened out a lot and done a lot to make sure that the bathrooms, the oversight with the cadets is a lot more thorough now. It used to be they left them alone. And just the upperclassmen just tormented these kids, I mean, the freshmen, just tormented them and they still get a little tormented and that's part of it, but not nearly. It's not, it's not a cruel place. I think it was, might've been even cruel. I don't know. I can't say that, but what I heard and stuff, it was still pretty cruel back in the seventies and early eighties. By the time I got there, I think it was kind of reforming a little bit, but it certainly is reformed now and is a much better place…. Much better place.

AG: Did you, when you first started teaching there, did you envision that you'd spend most of your career there?

DS: No. I didn't. In fact I tried to finish that story… I came down to Charleston on a temporary assignment for the State Department, was at the College of Charleston and that's when I decided I wanted to leave, you know State, and live here. And there wasn't a tenure track job opening at the College, but there was at the Citadel. When my two years was up, I took the... as you probably know, tenure track means you get on a track and then once you've got tenure then you've got a very secure job as long as you want and it's super important for keeping a stable faculty and attracting good people. And you know, I got tenure, they treat me very well. I've had several sabbaticals and several Fulbrights. And so I spent probably a total of those 33, probably about five of them were, you know, off campus, or you know, out of town, out of Charleston.

AG: So you just mentioned to me, Fulbrights, I understand that you've got, you were awarded a Fulbright in South Africa…

DS: Swaziland. I had a semester. I mean I had a year, academic year, in Swaziland and then had another… it's called a specialist grant which was two and a half months, some years after, to look at helping them develop a master's program. Then [I] had a Fulbright in Slovenia for a semester and took a year off, a year leave, and taught at American University in Cairo, in Egypt for a year and then another Fulbright in Addis Ababa about three years ago, in Ethiopia. So I've been away a lot. It's been a good experience. I mean Charleston is a wonderful city. I think in many ways, a lot of ways, but I'm glad I've been able to use it as a base and get away as much as I can.

AG: Sure. Did you deliberately go to South Africa or did they assign you there?

DS: No. For a Fulbright, you have to, you definitely apply. In fact, one of the weaknesses of the program I think is that you apply only for one country, maybe. And you may be really qualified for another country, but you only qualify. You can only apply to one and if you don't get it then you don't get it, you know. Although occasionally they'll, if you're a runner up or on the waitlist, they'll call you and say: hey, there's something open in, you know, Lithuania would you like to, would you be interested in that? But generally speaking, you apply for one country. If you don't get there, you don't get it.

AG: Sure. When you were in South Africa, was apartheid still the ruling government?

DS: No, [but] I had been in South Africa during apartheid. A lot of academics back then, boycotted South Africa because, of its you know, their horrendous apartheid policies. You know, I didn't agree with them either, but I thought that I should go see and I don't think I did anything; I know it. I didn't do anything to support the government. I mean, but I went as a tourist and also I went to do some research. So when I was living, Swaziland is an independent country surrounded by South Africa, so when I was living in Swaziland, apartheid had ended and… South Africa has changed a lot. My first visit there was probably about 1980, early eighties, and I've seen it kind of transform itself.

AG: Sort of evolve?

DS: Yeah. Yeah.

AG: I guess you've been there a couple of times, but did you see any similarities between South Africa and Charleston? In terms of…

DS: Oh sure. For sure. I've been many times, I've been probably a dozen times. A lot of similarities. I mean, they both – South Africa and the US – were founded in the "formal" country way… founded by Europeans, even though there were huge indigenous populations living there prior of course. In North America, we pretty much wiped out Native Americans through disease primarily, and the numbers [are] staggering, could be 20 or 30 million Native Americans were killed through disease. In South Africa [it] was the opposite. The Dutch came in, then the British and the climate was so bad that the Africans were much heartier. They didn't die like the Native Americans and Indians here did. But very similar. I mean, you go to South Africa and you'll see, they have a history of a wagon train culture where they, sort of

like our wagon trains going west, but they went north; the Dutch did, called the Boers, and they colonized, you know, they conquered that area and controlled it. Much like the American South was controlled basically through slavery. And at the end of… so the parallels where segregation, which I grew up with, I grew up with segregation. I remember vivid memories, I mean sort of vague memories, of "colored" water fountains. Like in Sears Roebuck, it would say "colored" on it and "white". If you're white, you're drinking [from] this water fountain, if you are Black or African American you had to drink from that water fountain. This is serious. I mean it happened.

In South Africa that of course stayed until the end of apartheid. And in South Africa I think even though it's got serious problems, more than we have in many ways, they address that past through something called the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission allowed both sides, Black and white to sort of confess to what they've done, had done during apartheid. And they were in a way absolved, if you confessed. I mean if he had murdered someone and even then I think some murderers were let off, both Black and white. We've never faced that here in Charleston. I mean we still [have] a lot of whites here. [some] Don't think there's anything wrong with the confederacy in the outh, should have won and slavery, as they say, would have disappeared and they may be right, but it'd be a long time. So, there's a lot of parallels. Segregation. I mean, and even today, look, if you go down south of Broad, I bet, if there's one black owned house down there, I'd be surprised if it's more than one. It might be five, maybe, probably not. So, you've got that sort of customary apartheid really dividing your races and once you pass Calhoun and it gets more mixed, my neighborhood is totally mixed. But you know, from really Broad Street down, I don't know that we walk around [or] bike around and you rarely, if ever, see a black family maybe. Sullivan's island, the same way. I lived in Sullivan's island for several years. I don't think... there used to be a black family in Sullivan's island and I don't think there is now. So we've still got the sort apartheid culture. It's just not formalized. There's no laws about it. It's just culturally, we've in Charleston, we've kind of stuck to that pattern of whites don't mix well in certain areas. It's certainly gotten better and certainly as you move forward more north, it gets less and less that way. And I mean, you know, your generation that appears not to care at all about that kind of stuff and which is good to me. But we still have a long way to go [toward] race reconciliation. I think one way South Africa did it better was by admitting: Hey, this is, you know, whites have said looking back, how have we lived this way. It's just crazy. But we've never said that in the South. Where are you from Angus?

AG: I'm from Connecticut.

DS: Yeah. Okay. Well there was racism out there too no question about it, but the South is where it was the most pronounced and the biggest consequences. But in the South we have never sort of faced it and said, you know, that was pretty terrible and just figure out a way to make amends.

AG: So do you think that by not addressing it, it's become almost, sort of, ingratiated into the culture?

DS: Yeah. That's a good way to say it. Yeah. It's almost sort of taken for granted, changing somewhat, but look at the debates we have over memorials, Confederate generals and Confederate leaders. Who as you know, those memorials were put up during Jim Crow, roughly 1880s, 1890s, turn of the century and whites here still refuse to acknowledge that these were people of their time. But there were people that did these really bad things. I mean, and they shouldn't be honored. They should be, they should be explained, what they did, I [they] did it but not honored. So like Calhoun right here, there's a big push to have signage saying what Calhoun did good and bad, a lot of bad; he did some good too, as the Vice-President, but a lot of bad and that should be explained as opposed to just this monument that there's no explanation, and we don't do that. It's happening a little bit in other places. South, Charleston is fairly behind the curve. We're usually the last sorta thing... We're usually the last to figure out stuff.

AG: Do you think, when you were at the Citadel, was there, kind of going back to what we are speaking on now, was there sort of a push against reform, or do you think there is hope for the city to sort of follow the Citadel's path and sort of get with the times?

DS: I think it's a combination. Yeah. A combination of getting with the times. I mean we're looking around and seeing that this kind of behavior is not normal anymore. It's not tolerated on an official level. We had, I think a leadership, our most recent president until now (he retired this year) – was a, is, a very smart dynamic guy. He got stuff done and I think the board… our controlling body is still South Carolina. They're all South Carolinians. We don't bring in people from outside the state, which is weird and short sighted. So, but the change was, change was I think part of the national change, but also due to good leadership.

AG: Sort of changing tact, talking about development in the city and I'll tie it back in sort of the things we just talked about at some point, but when did you notice Charleston's economy beginning to grow?

DS: Yeah, I kind of watched it when I first got here, as I said, King street was literally dead. They were just starting the Omni complex, which is that big area of King [Street] and mid, lower-mid King, south of Calhoun [Street] where a kind of a mall, you know... I don't know the hotel that there is right now. But…

AG: You said it's on lower King.

DS: Yeah, right before, if you go down King Street…

AG: Like Belmond Place? Charleston Place?

DS: Charleston Place, The Charleston Place, ok, it's called Charleston place. It was still called the Omni because that's what the original hotel, I think it was the Omni but Charleston Place and that was sort of the anchor which kind of started the revitalization of King street and Mayor Riley was able to get federal dollars and tax breaks and special tax increment districts so that people get write-offs to re-do stuff. And it wasn't, it wasn't isolated to Charleston, eventually Greenville did the same thing. And Greenville's downtown, in many ways, is better than Charleston's, I think. I mean, as far as, bike-ability, bicycling, public space, parks, that kind of stuff. Charleston has, I think, neglected. But it, it came in the late eighties, early nineties. By mid nineties it started really rolling, and I mean when I first moved back into town from Sullivan's island about 12 years ago, the only bar on upper King Street, it was the Silver Dollar pretty much. And now there's a bar, you know, every block has three bars.

I mean, it's just unbelievable. So it's been, it's been not unique to Charleston, Mayor Riley deserves a lot of credit for sure. But it was happening anyway. All over, all over the country cities were… you had that white flight in the 50's and 60's, I talked about it a minute ago, by the 90s and 2000's, particularly young people weren't interested in suburban life as much. They wanted to be more downtown. And so were demanding more, more accommodations downtown. So we see this in Greenville… deserves a lot of credit. But the trend was that way anyway. And to me we just haven't devoted resources to affordable housing and transportation… and saying that it bites you still. Not really given any thought into it, virtually none.

AG: Why do you think... Why is it that you think that Greenville has done a better job? Better representation?

DS: I think leadership, I think they had, in Greenville, a core of rich industrialists, which is very industrial, as you know, up there or you may not know it's very industrial. That's where, we've got Boeing that's true. But other than that, we don't have a lot down here. Bosch, we've got some stuff for sure. But that whole corridor between Atlanta and Charlotte, much of, most of which is in South Carolina. There's a huge booming part of our country. I mean you got Michelin and I mean, Oh God, we have just hundreds of multinational corporations out there that have caused that area to boom. And there there's this history of people who made a lot of money in textile industry, which is now dead up there, but they had a lot of money and a lot of civic payback so that they endowed the library. There are some political, Roger Peace endowment which is called the Peace Center is huge. Probably like the Gaillard only a nicer place… And embraced I think new architectural and transportation designs, which we haven't, we stick to the safe stuff and you know, they don't want to make any waves here. We have I think odious and cumbersome zoning and in preservation laws that make it hard to innovate with the architecture here. I mean there's not many innovative architecture examples in this town even though a lot has been rebuilt the last 30, 40 years. Look at, for example, look at…there was an old library that is now the Bennet hotel on Marion square. It's just coming up right now. That could have been a cool, modern whatever and it's just, it looks like any other place in Charleston. It's very safe. It's sedate. That's what they think the tourists want. And I think a lot of us are driven toward the tourism market as opposed to people living here.

AG: And speaking of tourism. Do you think the city kind of plays into the notion of Charleston as this old historic, very well preserved city, do you think that benefits the tourism industry?

DS: Sure, for sure. I mean, the danger of course is that the tourism becomes such a fair amount of focus that residents are left behind and so you see the buildings, you know, you see the conversion of shops and stuff and the hotels and B&Bs. And the very reason people come here you should take a walk up upper king sometime. If you haven't already seen that, it's a place, Reed brothers. It's an old red brick building corner of King and I think Columbus upper, what I call upper king, before the big, you know, express way comes in. Reed Brothers was a quirky old store that sold electronics and like clothing material and buttons, and it was a quirky place that made Charleston special and it's going to be gone. It's closed, it's kind of condemned. The building is in disrepair. It'll go, it'll turn into a boutique hotel, you know, two years

from now. So all the reasons you did want to come to Charleston, or made Charleston special are disappearing in our view, things like that. So I think we've, we have probably put too much emphasis on tourism and not enough on live-ability.

AG: Yeah, you know, obviously the economy is stronger than when you first moved here.

DS: Yeah.

AG: Racial polarization, like you've said, is really remained, really high in the city. Do you think it's gotten better or worse in your time here as the economy has gotten better?

DS: You know, it's hard to say. I think, I think race relations have always, have never been, at least when I've been here. Any sort of flashpoint. I mean, never seemed to be that, that racial tension you might've found in say places like Detroit or Atlanta sometimes. Washington DC., I mean, those race riots in the 60s didn't really, didn't really come to the South. But I am disappointed that you don't see an emerging, larger black middle class in Charleston. This, I think that's just disappointing, disturbing I mean. You have a place like this [Kudu], it is rare to see a black person. I mean, there might be black student. I mean maybe, but it's rare. So because I think successful black kids are leaving because they don't want to, you know, put up with the racism, I wouldn't blame them.

DS: You know, it's been more, I think it's been as much a class issue, income issues. It has been a racial issue in many ways.

AG: Sure.

DS: So, I just wish every educated black kid, this might sound terrible, but I just wish every educated kid would stay in Charleston and help make it, you know, help contribute to making this more an integrated city. I mean, they should do what they want to do, obviously. But it'd be neat if they were more inclined to stay. Not that I blame them. I said, if I were, I can never imagine being a black 20 year old with a degree in economics. But if I were, I'd probably leave to go someplace where the opportunities were. That's the other thing too. Charleston just doesn't have the opportunities of say Greenville with all the industry. Greenville's got more than a tech community, industrial community. More jobs are up there. Charlotte's got the banking, all my top cadets went to Charlotte to banking and Greenville for

manufacturing and politics they went to Washington. That kind of stuff. And so we don't have those opportunities. We have expanded, diversified to some degree for sure. When I first got here, it was military, navy base and airbase and tourism. Tourism was a pretty low level at the time and now its, you know, it's on steroids and the Navy base is closed. But unfortunately the Navy base never, unlike the airbase, going back to Greenville, you know the area I grew up in, Greenville had the airbase and in the 1960's it closed. And Greenville thought this would be the death of Greenville. It was a big important airbase. It was part of the Berlin airlift back in the 60s. Anyway, huge air base closed, is now a major industrial park with like 40 or 50 or more major corporations there. From chemicals to petroleum to aircraft manufacturing and repair: the whole range of industry. Well our Navy base? I mean, if you've been there lately or ever, if you drive through it or cycle through it even better, it's really sad. Virtually little pockets here and there, but nothing compared to how that airbase transformed itself into an industrial park and our navy base has been over 20 years now and it's still just kind of gathering dust, basically. I mean there's some stuff there for sure. Nothing like how Donaldson air base in Greenville. How it closed, it was the best thing that happened to Greenville and closing the navy base hasn't made that transformation in Charleston for reasons I can't explain.

AG: Sure, what could Charleston do to, sort of, promote social mobility? You said that's a big problem here.

DS: Well, housing, I mean, you know, it's hard for a middle income person to live in the peninsula or certainly south of say the cross town or south, south of the Citadel. You know south of there. It's hard for middle class families starting out, kids like you, it's just hard. But again, that's not unusual to Charleston. That's most cities in America, most cities, like in San Francisco where my kids [are?]. That's "not in my backyard", they don't want more buildings. They don't want more housing. But so what it does is it just drives up the price of housing. And so we haven't really figured out a way to give incentives to people who build new condos. And you should be, there should be some, I think a social responsibility to include a percentage for lower and lower middle income folks. If you're going to profit on the prosperity of this city, were all part of, you should make it more livable. And one way would be to make sure that at least some of those new apartments and condos can be afforded by school teachers and firemen, you know, and hospital workers and waiters and waitresses and that kind of stuff. Which they can't do now. And then we haven't begun to figure out a way for them to get into town. Other than by car. So if you're a waiter working at Kudu, you pretty much, you live in West Ashley, can't afford to live downtown where you're living with like five people to, you know, to an apartment. You want to, you know,

place with a little more room or whatever live in West Ashley. You're driving into town and you've got to pay for parking, find parking pay for it and it cuts into it, you know, not making much here anyway, it's cutting into it that, so that's been a… there's no good trip in public transit and he said you can't ride your bike safely into, from West Ashley into downtown that needs to be changed and that's obvious, it should have been changing years ago. Decades ago. So the mobility, of both young people being able to come into the city, and you know, once you're here being able to find housing, you know, lots of things. I mean, a lot of places have toyed with like… London has done a great job. It's called congestion pricing, if your familiar with that term, with that concept, where basically if you come into London by car, you've got to pay a big fee. You gotta, there are cameras everywhere. It takes your picture, your photo, photos of your license tag. You pay either an annual fee or I don't know how it works. Basically you pay a fee to come into London, it's about 15 bucks. Not to mention if you get in there you got to pay another 30 bucks to park or whatever it is, to just actually come in. That'd be great for Charleston. I mean we have only about five points. You come in the city on, every time you come around as a tourist, you know slap with 10 bucks, maybe residents came in free. Maybe if you live West Ashley it's five bucks or 20 bucks or something. But some kind of charge to mitigate the expense that tourist and people coming from Mt. Pleasant or in North Charleston are using our resources; police, fire, security, all that stuff. But they're not paying for. So some way to get them to pay for it.

AG: That's interesting. So do you think, almost, that the city needs to use like almost the natural layout of the peninsula, like you said, those particular five points. You can only get, you like you need to recognize that they have that as an asset rather than like a liability almost?

DS: It is an asset, in that sense. It is an asset because you can control, you could, you know, do all sorts of great stuff like make King Street, south of Calhoun, pedestrian, they do that once a month and you may, you may have done it first Sunday, or last Sunday, I forget which one it is. And they have huge crowds. Brooks Brothers did their best day ever on the first time. It's Sunday, closed to cars, but yet the merchants resist because they think people want to park in front of their stores, which is nonsense because it only, you know, there's only so many parking lots on King, parking spaces on King street. I think the leadership, I said, I had good things to say about Riley and I do, but he also didn't take any chances, certainly not the last five or ten years of his administration, and the current mayor Tecklenburg, who I like a lot, won't take chances. He won’t experiment with stuff like that. And so I think really, you know, Charleston kinda follows national trends and it comes in usually late, if at all.

You know, national trends, things like housing, look at flooding. We just now are waking up to the fact that flooding is a big issue. A 3 million, 3 billion issue to make it, to fix it. There's no way we can come up with that kind of money. And at the time periods, you know, by the time sea level rise hits us. There's no way we were going to put in $3 billion worth of infrastructure to help mitigate that, so it's discouraging. I think, and you see this downtown, a lot of people are, people I talk to, lived here a long time and are living here. So, you know, I'm not sure I want to live in this place as the flooding gets more pronounced, more common, more destructive. The hassle of it, the hurricanes are getting stronger. The hassle of that and the destruction. I've had several friends moving to Asheville and Greenville; just couldn't be happier, and it's crossed my mind as well. So, it's crossed my mind, even though I love Charleston for many reasons. It's a very walkable city. It's very European feel to it. I love the fact that a lot of tourists, because it gives us great restaurants and then we have probably more great restaurants per capita than anywhere in the country probably; maybe don't have the best restaurants. We don't. We have really good ones, and a few award-winning, a few nationally award winning restaurants. People come to you for, you know, from New York or San Francisco to visit. So that's a great thing. Tourism is a great thing in many ways. It's just that if all the attention, resources and majority of that goes towards accommodating them, then sometimes forget…. It's putting the tourist cart before the residential horse [inaudible].

AG: When did you notice the tourism industry picking up? When did it become obvious that the city was paying more mind to them than…?

DS: I think by the mid-nineties you had stuff like the Southeast and Wildlife Exhibition. So SEWE I think it's called Southeast and Wildlife Exhi - - - yeah SEWE. It's good. I think it's been going on [since] the late eighties, early nineties and because before that kicked in, tourism was pretty much spring and summer here and now it's year-round, now it's year-round. People come for weddings, it's a number one or two wedding destination in the country, huge. And it's yea- round, if you want a good venue for weddings, you may sometimes have to plan eight months to two years out to get that, you know that day and that time where you want it. Like the Citadel chapel for example, or you know other parts of town that are very desirable to have a wedding. You've got to really plan it out because there's such demand for it, which is a good thing. Except if you live here and you want your daughter to get married and you know, it's kind of hard to reconcile that but I think it is overall a good thing. And it really kicked in, I would say about the mid nineties and then by the two thousands we got on the map and now it's a premiere destination, you know, voted Conde Nast magazine, Travel magazine. The last six years voted number one small to medium

town destination in the US, I think six times in a row, seven times in a row. Number one. We've got that new direct route and it's in the paper, new direct route to London now. It's going to start in April I think, or May, Charleston to London twice a week. That's huge. I mean for a city our size to have a European [connection], you know Orlando has got one because of Disneyland, Disney World. But I think I'd be hard pressed to find a city of our size that has a European connection like that. Greenville certainly doesn't, Columbia certainly doesn't. Charlotte does. Charlotte does as a hub, that's unusual. Asheville doesn't, Wilmington doesn't, Savannah doesn't. You know go down the list very few do. Jacksonville doesn't; I'm sure it doesn't. So these are all cities our size or bigger.

AG: Do you think Charleston tourism industry, like when it picked up, did that really play into the city developing economically or did it just sort of happen to come together at the same time?

DS: I think tourism drove it. Tourism drove it. And with tourism they're could come some industry. Boeing, Bosh, Volvo. So we got some growth in this industrial base here, but it's tiny compared to Greenville and other parts of the country. So I think tourism drove and then of course as tourists came here, they liked it and started buying up property. We've got quite a bit of, you know, what we call trophy houses, where if people like you, from Connecticut come down and buy houses and that drives up the prices because it's the second house where someone from Connecticut or wherever, San Francisco and they, cause they came as tourists, they like the place, lots of them like it, but by them doing [this], it reduces the amount of real estate available to sort of full-time residents. And to me that again, that's an issue that can solved or not solved, but mitigated by a very high second home tax. I mean, you're rich enough to buy a house on the Battery [then] should be rich enough to pay a pretty hefty tax, you know, for that privilege as opposed to someone's primary house, which his tax should be, I think obviously a lot lower.

AG: I guess that kind of goes back to gentrification. How do you think that's helped or harmed certain communities within the city?

DS: Well, that's a tough one because you know, you want housing stock to be maintained and safe and attractive and appreciate in value. At least I think, at least I do, I think most people do. And so as you see lower income housing then converted into you know more, you know, paint jobs and, and it pushes, it certainly pushes low income people out. Which is not a good thing. But again, there's tools to try to mitigate that to try and mitigate that we have not tried. So you see a lot of, usually

poor in downtown, but it means black. The majority of people who are poor on the peninsula are black people, by far, and they're the ones being pressured because as taxes go up, as rents go up, then affordability, able to afford living is harder. But again, there are ways to mitigate that and there's ways to do that. To try to help ease that burden, keep those folks in their houses. But it's, I mean in general…. cause upper King Street gentrification has been amazing. I think very positive because it's brought life in that part of town. I'm telling you, you just can't believe you got to, you know, as you know, I'm sure you've been a lot of time on Saturday nights up there. It's like a mob scene. 10 years ago there was nobody up there, 10 years ago in that sort of time, certainly 15, 10, it started to happen 15 years ago. Nobody, it'd be kind of crazy to be on upper King street, even still by yourself. Fairly dangerous. I mean nothing really dangerous, statistically compared to a lot of other places. But not a place you want to hang out, now it's just, I don't, I don't get out past midnight hardly at all. But in the rare occasion I am on KingSstreet, it floors me it's like Mardi Gras or something, particularly when school is in session.

AG: It's definitely, it's a zoo up there sometimes.

DS: It is, you know, that's cool. I'm all for it. I think tourism and all this is connected, you know, the culture, the history, economy, the climate, topography, it is all interconnected and there's no one sort of issue that's I think the problem solver or the problem, all interconnected.

AG: Do you think, do you think poor people are taking more of the burden for the Charleston development? You know everyone, obviously, a lot of people benefit from it. Do you think people being pushed out…?

DS: Oh sure, no question about it, poor black or white for sure. Because, like I said, people who want to live, live downtown can afford it. Black or white. And people who want to work downtown, it makes it real difficult because of no transport options, except your car. And so it's...it's in a way, it's been unfair to the locals on the low end of the economic spectrum. Typically unfair to them, in the sense of, you know, them pushed out or not making them not feel as welcome, and we are still a segregated place, it's discouraging, still so segregated here, going back all full circle to South Africa, you just don't, I mean South Africa is still segregated, but, obviously the racial component is different. There is majority black, here is majority white and you have a huge black middle class now in Cape Town and Johannesburg, the big cities. And here, much to my, yeah, we just don't. It's just not that big a black middle class in Charleston. Even though [there are] a lot of black people. They haven't gotten out of

that almost trap of disenfranchisement of blacks not having opportunities that the white people have had, and it's something that, you know, for example, here's a quick, a quick example: If you were, in the fifties and sixties, blacks were denied. Basically it was apartheid because the banks wouldn't lend money to a black family to live say south of Broad. You can't, can't live, there was no law against it, but it's all red line. Did you actually give a red line and drawing the map. You're not gonna live there. They didn't say that to them outright, but when they came into to apply for a loan you're not gonna get it. So if you, if you have a hard time owning real estate, one is, one, it's the biggest asset most middle class Americans have are houses. You pass that wealth down to generations. It gives you the ability to help your kids and grandkids out. If you don't have that built up, then you can be at a disadvantage and your kids and grandkids with the disadvantage, their whole lives too. So you know, we've had that, that was really bad. I mean discrimination of housing kind of was very similar to apartheid where in that case it was an official policy of government. In our case it was pretty much, it was illegal, it still was, still is illegal, but I still don't, I mean still see black people discriminated here in Charleston. We still, I talked to people, I've got a few black friends, not many, two or three close black friends. But you know, they'll tell you. Yeah, it still is around.

AG: What steps did South Africa take that Charleston, I guess the rest of the country didn't take that has sort of made the difference that has created that middle class?

DS: I don't want to paint too rosy picture South Africa. It's got a lot of economic issues going on. Perhaps even more serious than ours in most ways. But this idea of sort of this racial mix. I think they've done a better job in general since the Reconciliation Commission and I think it's kind of cleared the air in a little way and let the white, let both black and white, sort of, put it behind them in a way that we haven't done. We need to do, they gave a lot of… sort of… what's called black empowerment legislation to mandate that certain industries have a portion of black ownership. I'm not positive that's the right way to go, but it certainly is a way to go. Might be the best way to go. I don't know but it is something to think about to make sure that minorities make up for past discrimination and negative, you know, sort of affirmative action in a way. It's got a bad name now, but I still think it can work if you selectively [use it] right to help enterprises, you know, get the contracts and get the business…

AG: Okay. Sort of, on a lighter subject, I'm just going to ask you some questions about southern hospitality and everything along being southern. So what is southern hospitality, in your opinion, very broadly?

DS: I think it's somewhat of a myth. I don't know that it exists any more than, I mean you go to other places. I was just in San Francisco two weeks ago, you know going to places, people go to shop you know, people are friendly to you, got to a hotel, check in they're very friendly to you. I do think that we have a culture here of being more openly friendly or superficially friendly in the street. We'll see a load of people that you don't see in the north or the West, 'how you doing,' you know, just a stranger, you don't see that. And more of a slower lifestyle, slower pace, definitely slower paced and you have time to talk to people. They're used to be a culture of people sitting on the porches and talking to the neighbors. You don't see that quite as much as you used to. But that was a culture here. Southern hospitality is somewhat a myth, but there's some truth to it. In the sense of more genteel, sort of slower pace of life and maybe manners. We have, we certainly have, our manners are different here. We'll open the door for a woman and in some parts of country the man might be accused of being a chauvinist or something why would you to do that? And actually I'll, I'll open the door for a man or woman if I'm at the gym or something until they're coming I'll open the door, just think it's good manners. So I think we have probably that's, manners, manners are different, certainly through. Excuse me, pardon me one second.

AG: Yes. You mentioned that it's sort of a myth, but there are certain distinctions between southern folks and people from the north like myself. Do you think, at least you know compared to your generation and mine, are young southerners less inclined to be overly polite and stuff like that?

DS: I would guess so. Although my experience is a bit skewed because, you know, I had that 30 years at the Citadel and those kids are indoctrinated in being polite. And so, I mean, there's a part of their, I mean, they gotta be, they gotta stand up and they got to, you know, greet you and that kind of stuff. So that population is pretty, I won't say weird, but it's not weird. It's just, it's unusual to have that kind of politeness. When I taught there, I mean, no talking in class, where people are generally respected, you know, professors respected, no disciplinary actions. I mean I didn't have to, you know, rarely I'd say, you guys you know, I need to, you kinda need to stop talking and then they stop talking. So that's different, but I would guess there's less of that now, you know, sort of say at the College of Charleston where a southern 20 year old is probably less formal and less sort of polite or manners as my generation. I'm guessing. But I don't hang out with that population that much. So it's hard to say, but I seem to say probably a bit more than other parts of the country.

AG: Sure, sure. You are, you think that that has anything to do with sort of like my generation not caring much about race? Like you think discrepancy in like being super polite and most of genteel? Do you think that was almost like a socioeconomic thing or like a class structure?

DS: Yeah, to some degree, yeah. To some degree. Someone was fake. I mean, no, southerners put on a good show of being friendly. But you know, a lot of that, as I said, I think it's somewhat superficial. I think that's a part of which is class and race. People need their places and you know, you stayed in your place and part of being in a place was having certain social norms like, you know, addressing someone. How, how are you doing? You know, showing interest in your family, that kind of stuff, which is less now. And your, you know, your generation, I think don't have those constraints, which is generally speaking a great thing not to have those constraints of race and, and, and in class, I think it's still there, but not as, not nearly as bad as it was in my generation. I mean, we had a lot of bad luggage. My parents' generation, your grandparents' generation, a lot of bad luggage, baggage of, how we treated, you know, Native Americans, blacks, asians. Everybody. It's got a lot better; so it's still a long way to go.

AG: Certainly. Well, that is all the questions I have. Any final thoughts or anything?

DS: No, it was fascinating. You got great questions and you were able to tie them together really well and go back to stuff. I think you did a great job. I'd be curious. I hope I'll be able to see some kind of… initially my stuff… but you know, I'd like to see what others, you know, you publish. I'd like to see… where it finally comes out.

AG: Certainly will. Thank you for your time.

DS: My pleasure.