

## Voices of Southern Hospitality: An Oral History Project

**Interviewee:** Jamison, Virginia

**Place of Interview:** North Charleston City Hall, 2500 City Hall Lane, North Charleston, SC

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**Abstract:** In this interview, Virginia Jamison talks about her life growing up in the Liberty Hill community, a now historical section of North Charleston. She provides details of the types of jobs, forms of recreation, and how neighbors treated each other. After telling a brief history of Liberty Hill, she sheds light on the changes that have occurred in the years since she was a little girl. She also discusses the environmental issues in the Charleston area, the housing affordability crisis, and the need for better education and infrastructure. She notes the changing times and attitudes among people, especially the youth. She ends the interview by asking questions about the humanity of the world and the treatment of the city's habitants.

**Biographical Note:** Virginia Jamison was born in 1945 in Reid Hill, a former community in North Charleston. Five years later, she and her family moved to Liberty Hill, a predominantly black area. After attending segregated grade schools, she went into the Army at 18 years old. Afterwards, she served with the 315th Airlift Wing for 15 years as an aeromedical technician. She was also a flight instructor. Currently, she serves as a North Charleston city council member for District 3<sup>1</sup>.

**Project Details:**

<sup>1</sup>See <https://www.northcharleston.org/government/city-council/city-council-members-and-districts/>

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]: A.G.**

**Interviewee Initials]: V.J.**

**AG:** Okay. This is Angus Gracey. I'm sitting here with Virginia Jamison on April 3rd, 2019 in the North Charleston City Hall. And so, my first question for you is where did you grow up?

**VJ:** Well, I was born on Reid Hill in the city of--well, it wasn't a city at that time, unincorporated area of... We used to call it the North Area (laughing), and it was very viable communities. And we had churches, we had the biggest, best barbecue joint in the whole wide world. People had little, you know, little stores--we call them little shops--that sold all of the things that we loved as children, and you could buy something for a penny, or you know, two for a penny or whatever. Don't try it there. If you know about Mary Janes and--what is the other one? Another candy that's a favorite of older people now, that was like two for a penny back then. But the Reid Hill

community again was a... And even back then we called them like settlement that were homes, houses for the workforce. So, I guess they were workforce houses that we didn't even know they were workforce houses. And the people that lived in these houses, they were not... These were not homeowners, you know. I guess the company provided the home, the residence for their workers to, you know, to have a place close to the job.

**AG:** Sure. And what would some of these people have been doing that were living in these houses?

**VJ:** Well, I specifically remember that my father worked for--and it was like a cotton gin, and they would pack the cotton and then ship it and then put it onto the barges and then I don't know where they took it after that. And I was just a little girl, so. But that was the cotton packing industry; then, the Raybestos-Manhattan. I don't know if they were doing like fertilizing things back then, but I do remember that they, you know, wore, like, aprons, and I guess the one thing about the environment that it was not a healthy environment, you know. It was a lot of caustic things. And since that time, we have... I've known--even my dad and my grandfather died from prostate cancer even before that was a word. I mean, my dad died in 1973 so that was a long time, even before we had treatments and things like that for prostate cancer. So, these were areas that I remember as a child. We moved from the Reid Hill area that had a school, it had a church and had all of the amenities of peaceful living in the South. We had the river, so I knew how to fish. We knew how to plant collard greens and green beans, and in a village, you know, you exchange things. Like if Miss Mary needed some collard greens, of course my dad had the best collard greens and if we needed those butter beans, she had the butter beans. So, we did a lot of bartering for quality of life back then. So, how do you go from having a waterfront park that you didn't realize was your waterfront park? Then we matriculated to the Liberty Hill section, which is another historical landmark. So, if I was born in 1945 and we left--in 1950 we moved to the Liberty Hill section where my grandparents had bought property in 1942. So, we have a homestead in the Liberty Hill section. Now, this was a predominantly African American community, but it was self-contained. We had everything; everything you can imagine. We had a church. Everybody had, like, little grocery stores where they had collard greens, bacon. I don't even remember how they got there, you know, the products for their stores, but I know a lot of it was grown in the immediate area,

especially collards. So, then at five years old, of course we had a school, Liberty Hill Elementary School, that was, again, segregated back in 1950. But it produced quality and quantity of people who contributed much to our society. The one great thing about Liberty Hill was that... Again, it was a self-contained community, so I grew up never having ridden a bus to school. Like, all the children wanted to ride them. I said, well, I never rode a bus to school. I kind of hated that. But so, we could walk from our homes to elementary school. And then, as we got older, that school was demolished and then they created another Liberty Hill Elementary School in the same community. Now, back then--and, I had to go back and do some research on this--the Sears and Roebuck Foundation, they did a lot of these schools, they built a lot of these schools just to ensure that these communities would have schools. The Rosen... Is it Rosenthal or Rosenbloom or Rosen-something Foundation, that was a product of Sears and Roebuck. You know, they were big merchandisers back then. So, then... Now this is all in one community, and you should drive down there. It's right here off of East Montague. As soon as you cross the track, you'll see the Liberty Hill community. It was a community that was created by freedmen back in 1792, just after slavery. And again, it was self-contained. They had carpenters, just electricians, plumbers, painters, and these skills were gotten in apprenticeship programs at the navy shipyard. But they brought those skills back to this community, and they used them to make livability accessible and to help create. We have a littering problem now. We never had a littering problem when I grew up because that was our thing to pick up trash wherever we go. So, you asked how did it change? How did it change?

**AG:** Yeah, so it sounds like it was a fairly tight-knit community when you were growing up.

**VJ:** Yes. Yes.

**AG:** What is it like today? Is it still a close community?

**VJ:** It's not. It has been transformed into a lot of rental properties, a lot of... The [inaudible] store. They have a... It's not a Dollar General. It's a Dollar-whatever store. And again, it's not what it used to be. The upkeep of that community has just kind of fallen through the crack; another blighted community by transformation, by neglect, by whatever.

**AG:** Sure, and when did you notice Liberty Hill and the surrounding area beginning to become blighted?

**VJ:** I guess I really noticed that 'cause I lived there in 19... I guess the last time I lived in Liberty Hill was about 1973, and I guess after that it just kind of spiraled down. So, this is the same time that North Charleston became the city and these areas were annexed into North Charleston. So, I know that you got to have a voice that speaks to certain things. Everybody can't speak for the same purpose. So, I try to find areas that nobody is talking about to be that voice. But even in the Liberty Hill community, we have the Amtrak train station that has been revitalized. Now where we had John C. Calhoun housing project that was maybe created for the navy base housing, it became, like, I guess middle-income families live there, but again, these were segregated communities. John C. Calhoun was predominantly white, and the Liberty Hill community was predominantly black. And all of that has changed. I mean, they have, you know, demolished all of the homes that were there that could be workforce homes or could be affordable rentals or whatever. So, all of that's gone now. So, we have the new Mixson that is a high-rise complex with all of the amenities for an HOA environment. So, that changed all of that.

**AG:** Okay. What is HOA?

**VJ:** The Homeowners Association, you know, like, if you purchase a home and you have this covenant that says you will abide by all of the rules and regulations as far as upkeep, as far as structure and all of those things. Well, they don't have an HOA in Liberty Hill. We do have codes, a Code Enforcement Ordinance that says you should keep your property a certain way. So, that has gone awry.

**AG:** Sure. What was--before I turned the recorder on, you mentioned a couple industries that moved into the community, a couple of corporations. Can you remember the first big industry to move into Liberty Hill or the areas around it?

**VJ:** Well, I think the first thing that happened was the train station, and it's situated in a place--well, the tracks, if you know this, the train tracks always run through the African American communities no matter where you go. You go to Chicago, if you go to wherever. So, then you have the trains and then you have the train tracks and then you have homes that are right on that track. I mean, you know, right on that corridor. So,

these people right here probably suffered all of their lives. And so then, this is Montague, so right on across that road, again, you have homes right here and the train track right here. And that has always been a negative impact for quality of life. And so after that, then we got a grocery store, a really big grocery store that was like [inaudible]; that was the big store back then in the 50s and 60s. And then they came and left and then all of a sudden it was just a lot of, you know, little things. The Mixson started creating different things. So, I think that was the biggest impact. And the communities started changing hands, and the older people who originally purchased property there had started dying out. So, that changed a lot. And then the megachurches came. (laughing) I don't think... I think that a lot of people were kind of taken aback when the megachurch just took up a whole big arena. And then there's about six churches in that small community; churches everywhere. That's not a negative, but I'm sure that to build a megachurch on properties that were created in--I said 1797, but it was probably 1897. I'll have to check that. It displaced, you know, families living in those communities. It displaced a lot of homes. Maybe it's for the good or maybe it's for the bad.

**AG:** Did you know any families that were displaced by these mega-corporations moving in?

**VJ:** Well, a megachurch, again... So, family names. I think I could name some people like the Gaillards, the Abrahams. The Abrahams were like the founding father of Liberty Hill. So, their property is now the Life Center for a big church. Let me see. So, all of those things kind of play into changing that community. Maybe it should have uplifted, but I think it kind of, you know, caused it to spiral down. I'm not sure about that.

**AG:** Sure, sure. So, how does... Sorry. Do any other projects stand out? Like, any other developmental projects stand out in your mind as being disruptive? Say like I26 being built or anything of that nature?

**VJ:** Well, of course Liberty Hill was, like, a two lane--well it was just a dirt road originally and then it became two lanes and now it's like four lanes going through a residential community. And I think--and they spoke about, you know, maybe changing it back to two lanes, but I don't know how you do that 'cause now you've got... Okay. So, we had

schools: Liberty Hill Elementary School and Bonds-Wilson High School. So, none of that is there anymore.

**AG:** And this is all because of the roads just being built and dividing the community?

**VJ:** Well, I think it's just changing times. Segregation was gone, integration was there. A few, you know, people started going to North Charleston Elementary and another school at the back of Mixson. So, I guess it was just the changing time. But it did, kind of, change the quality of life.

**AG:** Can you give an example?

**VJ:** Well, you have kids who were walking to school, and all of them lived in the same community. So, you probably didn't have that people coming from different places, you know, gathered at one place. Like, we had that awful incident down in Walterboro. We didn't have the bullying, we didn't have the pushing and shoving because somebody was always--that community was so close-knit. Somebody was always watching. I scoped the school in the morning and come home in the evening. There was always a grandmother on the porch. Can't [inaudible] grandmothers anymore, so you know they're not sitting on the porch. (laughing) And we could say that with progress comes change, but I think the change has not enabled a lot of cultures to be the best that they can be, whatever that means.

**AG:** Sure. So, just going on environmental issues, can you speak to some environmental issues that are affecting your community or have been affecting your community in your lifetime? Maybe pollution from the plant or some things like that.

**VJ:** Well definitely if you're running a railroad three times a day, that is environmental and I don't know how you control that, but it is environmental, a negative environmental impact. If you don't upgrade your infrastructure, I mean put things in place that would--and we have this problem now down in the neck area where we're building so many things and all of the contaminants that were left by the [inaudible] Mill and all of those areas down there. Truck traffic! In a lot of major cities, they've always found a way to loop truck traffic around the city rather than through a city. We have... Now we're going to have the Hugh Leatherman Terminal that's going to be right there on my waterfront park. So, I think that's going to grossly impact us

negatively... did and will. Did, even, not so much that terminal, but a lot of the environmental things that have come into play in North Charleston and the Charleston area has not been in control for years and years and years. We lived with something called the paper mill, which is the--have you heard of the paper mill?

**AG:** Yeah. I've actually been doing some research on it.

**VJ:** Have you really? Okay, so you know what I'm talking about. So, that was one of the worst things that ever happened. But it did provide jobs and it did because I guess they came from different places. It did provide quality jobs, you know, that had good salaries for the time. That Raybestos, and again, I don't even remember what they did, but that was another source of environmental contamination. And you know, when I look back, I wonder how did they clean up these sites? Remember so many times they'll say, well, "We're going to tear this building down because there are contaminants there." But then five years later you see them come with a high-rise or a similar situation down in Charleston off of Calhoun street. They had the Housing Authority there, and then all of a sudden they were tearing it down, but then they came back with high-rises. So, then you wonder how did they clean up the supposedly contamination?

**AG:** Sure. Do you remember when the paper mill was first built?

**VJ:** I don't. I don't. I know it's been there all of my life. And so, that means it there in 1945. Yeah.

**AG:** And was it--do you remember when you became aware that the paper mill was having negative effects on the community?

**VJ:** Oh, all my life. And that was one of the things when the city became incorporated, they really went after the paper mill to try to find, you know, to find a way to control that. And I think it was the odor was just... God, it was awful. But it's a different story now. I don't know how they did it. Maybe they put in a lot of, you know, filters that kind of kept down that odor.

**AG:** Sure. You mentioned previously that you spent a lot of time on the water as a child fishing. Do you still find that to be present in the community? Young people fishing? Just being on the water and being active?



**VJ:** No.

**AG:** Why do you think that is?

**VJ:** Well, the children don't even play outside. Our daily summertime, we were outside all day long. You come to the door to get a drink of water or you come to get your lunch or whatever, but you were actively doing something. And that's why I was saying that we've never had litter because you'd be out there raking the yard, threefold. Okay. And I think that our society has changed so much, and we didn't, like, specify times for doing certain things. All of the time now is spent on our iPads or our smartphone or our whatever. And so... Sun is so important. Outdoor--well maybe not the paper mill air, but--and quality air outside is so important. I mean it kind of gives your body that extra part of living. So, I think that has impacted our lives as far as the time we spend outside, the time we spend doing activities. You know, like my dad was, like, a caster. They had the casting net that you could just throw it out and then you'd bring in all of the shrimp, all of the fish all at one time. So, we don't do those kinds of things. I tried to get my granddaughter into going fishing, so we went down to the pier at Mount Pleasant. And we had a great day, but she never wanted to do it again. I even bought her a fishing rod and all, so I don't think the kids get out and enjoy the natural things that we do have.

**AG:** Sure. Do you still see men like your father fishing in the community?

**VJ:** Not as much. Not as much. Again, and the reason we fished and the reason we went crabbing because those were meal things, those were food, you know, food things. That was a meal. So, I don't see people doing that because they can go to the Captain D's or they can go to the Burger King or whatever, something like that. And again, people who really have money, maybe they could, you know... They live on the water, so they'll do it, but I don't think they do it as much anymore. Fishing and those kinds of things. Do you?

**AG:** I fish a little bit.

**VJ:** You do?

**AG:** Yeah. But I mean definitely not for, like, self-sustainability. It's more just like a hobby.

VJ: Yeah. Right.

AG: Do you remember when that started, kind of, going away in the community?

VJ: Probably in the 70s. I mean, I saw it and I think the 70s was probably a time when I saw a lot of things change, and maybe it was because, you know, that I was growing, getting exposed to other things. But I think it was the 70s, mid 70s, 80s was the time of big change within communities and especially the Liberty Hill community, it seems like. And the other thing was the Vietnam War and all that, that was in the 60s. But in a small community like Liberty Hill, eight young men under the age of 23 died in Vietnam.

AG: Wow.

VJ: And so, I think all of that played a part and we don't think about the mental bags that we carry around, but I think that was a debilitating time for that community also.

AG: Sure. So, basically it was developing and, kind of, getting polluted and young people are being shipped off to war. And do you think that sort of left mental scars in the community?

VJ: I think so. Yes.

AG: Hmm. Well do you have any ideas of how to... where the community could go from here to try and, kind of, get back to being a tight-knit community?

VJ: Well, I think that in the city of North Charleston, we do a 10-year comprehensive plan. And in that plan, we look at about six different things, maybe eight things, that we focus on. Zoning and rezoning, what's going to be the best fit for our community. And so many times, I know when it's past 10 years, we had not adhered to that. It seems like the big thing is how much businesses can we draw to a community, even if we displace residential communities. It seems like now it's become all about monies and that kind of thing. And I know we've always needed money to live, but seems like it's more money, more money, more money. You got to have money, you got to have industries, but you still have to have livable communities. And where I live now, on my street we have that. We have this walking to each other's home, and you know,

sharing, you know, the thoughts of the day and things like that. So, I have that again, but I don't think we have it in some of the older, older communities.

**AG:** Sure, sure. And so, what do you think is the relationship between... Like, you just kind of touched on this, but what do you think is the relationship between, like, Charleston's, sort of, beauty and the natural ecology and it's just so gorgeous here and the influx of business and tourists? What do you think is that effect in your community?

**VJ:** Well, we've grown exponentially. We have grown so fast. Every day a new hotel open in North Charleston and Charleston. And Summerville is starting to experience the same thing. But if you notice our infrastructure and roads, our building barrier, noise barriers, our doing some things that would allow the traffic to flow a little bit better; those things are coming down the road. But it seems like we should have had some of those things in place prior to this big saturation. The other thing that has happened, and I don't know if a lot of people realize this, so we were North Charleston, South Carolina, medium income is probably low to medium-high. All of a sudden, we bring in a corporation that's just reeking money. They are hand over fist. They are big. Okay. Thinking that this company is going to supply jobs to local residents, but our educational system has not kept up with the demand. Just in basic things; basic reading, writing and arithmetic. We have not kept up with that. So, this big corporation now has to bring in those 45 people a day to get those jobs. So, now we're separating the society again, our city again. You have the haves, who works for Boeing, who works for Mercedes, who came from someplace else, and then you have the have-nots, so you create this almost separation. Okay. And so, then that's when crime creeps in. That's when disenfranchise, that happens. So, I don't know if that makes any sense to you.

**AG:** It does, sure.

**VJ:** It does?

**AG:** Yeah. Absolutely. Do you think these corporations that are displacing the community, do you think they have any obligation to put money into the education system?

**VJ:** They do, but they have an obligation to put money into the infrastructure. They have an obligation to demand that our State Department of Commerce serve everybody. Okay. You can't--and I don't know if you know how this works. Okay, so Department of Commerce, they'll go looking for businesses--maybe not--and they'll find a place that is best suited. But before they do an overall view of that area, do we have education level in that community? Will these people who live in this community get those jobs? They need to do a better job in that. Before you bring a corporation here, we need to fix our education system, make sure that our people will be getting those jobs. So, now you have an affordable housing crisis, right? So, that has a negative impact on our community. Our livability, our quality of life. And again, these people who are working for Boeing can't afford the escalation of the cost of a home, and they're probably going to put it in that same community. So, and I don't think the taxes--if you've got this land and you've got a house right here and this house is worth like \$60,000 but this person loves this land so they are going to build a house for \$200,000, I don't think the taxes can go up. But again, the taxes for this city or that municipality may go up. So, that again impacts this person right here. So again, the house over here can pay their taxes, this person over here is probably struggling anyway in their \$60,000 home that their grandmother left them. So, the first year that they miss paying this tax right here, then that property will go up for sheriff's auction and then this person has a year to recoup that property. So, supposedly that person can't recoup that property. So, now it's sold at the sheriff auction for that taxes or if it's been three years that taxes. So, now this investor comes in, buy that property. Upgrade.

**AG:** Do see that frequently in the community?

**VJ:** Yes. Yes. So, property value goes up because now this investor has upgraded some things in this house, but everybody on that street is still kind of suffering, you know, because they are living in their grandmama's property that, you know. So, it's a lot. It's a lot. And I don't think that we've really taken a close look at what's going on.

**AG:** Do you think people are beginning to wake up to these problems?

**VJ:** I don't know that they are because, come January 2020, you can go to the Post & Courier and you can pull up delinquent taxes and you will see all of those delinquent

taxes. And if you kind of know the neighborhoods, then you'll know. Like, one time I even saw somebody that I knew, and I was so upset. I said, oh, you cannot allow--that property has been in your family forever to get, you know, taken away. So, I think they did something, they probably found the money from someplace. But then if you have to borrow money this year to pay those taxes, then what's going to happen to the next year if nothing changes in your... So, I don't know if that's a system that we maybe need to take a closer look at. But it's working, you know. Even right here, we have a movie theater on this, you know, right here at City Hall. But that movie theater is going to be torn down, and they're saying that they are going to put homes there. I mean, I guess a high-rise apartment kind of complex. I think they're going to put a hotel there myself 'cause that would kind of even out the whole thing. But if you don't--and because we have such an affordable housing crisis--if you don't put 10% of that, make it affordable housing, wherein you'll get a mix, a blend of people, then we're always going to have that affordable housing crisis because to build a basic house...

**AG:** It's expensive, right?

**AG:** It's expensive. I kind of volunteer, and I try to be informed. I volunteer for Habitat for Humanity. So, I got to talking with the guys out there and some of the people who actually work for... let's see. Well, they work with this nonprofit organization. So, I asked them to just break it down, to tell me how much would this basic, no glitz, no big, no granite counter tops, no hardwood floors and no--you know, just a basic house. And listen: the cost was astronomical. So, if you don't have the education, if you don't get that good job at Boeing, how do you keep up?

**AG:** Yeah, it's impossible.

**VJ:** It is?

**AG:** Well, I mean it's just sort of like this cycle of disenfranchisement.

**VJ:** Try the area. Go down Montague and as soon as you cross the track and as soon as you go through Mixson and Montague, then you'll see a big old change right there. That's really, that's really sad. So, these are environmental things that... And probably environmental... But money, education, all of those things that you know, work together to create. So, where do we go from here? We're working on our education

system. That's going to take a long time. I'm going to go back to mentoring people, caring about other people. It doesn't matter what ethnicity they are; they are human beings. We got to go back to knowing that everybody deserves a chance. We've got to go back to considering what's best for this community. How do we keep livability for our citizens and productivity or economic growth and development for industries that are coming here? Why can't you have everybody else on the perimeter? No. I don't know. I don't know the answers.

**AG:** Sure. It's all very complicated.

**VJ:** Yeah. Maybe that's why they never wanted to take oral history from other people. Did I give you any information that you feel is--?

**AG:** Yeah, this is great. I mean, very insightful. You know, you've lived here all your life, so who better to talk about it than someone like you who's lived here and seen it all change?

**VJ:** Yeah. And again, when I was 18, I went into the army. So, that gave me a different perspective. Then I came back, and I wanted to make everything better. I just wanted to make everything better. And then I served with the 315th Wing for, like, 15 years as an aeromedical technician. And I was a flight instructor. And so, I worked in healthcare for all my life. And again, I'm looking at it through different lenses. I've seen where we were. I know how much I benefited from having that community type atmosphere. I know how I felt secure and nurtured because of that village that I lived in. And I know that kids don't live in villages anymore, that kind of support system. So, those are all things that I feel. Air quality in Charleston (laughing). How we bring different businesses or corporations to Charleston. How we're not looking--the one thing I do want to say is that, going forward, something that we better take a close look at is how our military community is being treated in this locale, in the city of North Charleston.

**AG:** And why is that? Why you feel that way?

**VJ:** Well, with Boeing came a lot of money and we gave them a lot of incentives to come here. But the military has been solid--the Air Force Base since the navy shipyard left has been a solid provider of jobs, a solid good neighbor thing. And when we do encroachment, you know, the Air Force needs a different runway, a different lab, a

different safety factor. And we're already looking at Boeing and all the stuff that happened in Ethiopia. And so, those are things we better consider. Every couple of years, the Air Force looks at, are we sustaining our mission in this locale? And they have something called the BRAC Commission or Base Realignment Commission and they, you know, they can opt to leave or stay or whatever, or downsize what the mission is. So, those are all things that I've been privy to know because I was with the military. And I wonder with private industries, they can open and close those doors so fast. But with the military, it takes an act of Congress to. So, yeah.

**AG:** Okay. Well, that's all the questions I have about environmental issues. So, I think we can just wrap up with some later issues about hospitality, which you mentioned a couple of times in your community. So, for you, what is southern hospitality?

**VJ:** Southern hospitality to me is living in a place where, you know, it's kind of laid back. Everybody is nice, everybody is smiling, everybody is speaking the same language or the same dialect. And you know, we have that here. Arthur Ravenel was like a product of the Gullah Geechee. Do you know Uncle Arthur? (laughing) So, those are the things that I had become accustomed to with people being so friendly, the atmosphere. You can always rely on your summers. You could always rely on your mild winters. You can always--but it seems like the more we disturb everything, and you know that global warming, it is true although some people are vacillating about that. So, those are all of the things that we had here in the Lowcountry. The other thing is the criminal element. I never experienced that attitude in my city until recently. But then we have the haves and have-nots, so, you know, that's not anything that I want to accept. I want you to know that if you--and in my life, I didn't make like a lot of money. And so, I just got a part time job that helped me to make that difference. So, hard work is not, you know, it's not something that we should forget about. I think everybody should work hard. And southerners do work hard, and we pride ourselves on giving more than what we get.

**AG:** And so, do you think that's a big component of southern hospitality is just sort of giving to the community?

**VJ:** I think so. I really do. And not just in the community that you live, but in the--and when you're meeting people, when you're dealing, you know, like, in this locale. When

the guy came to my house, and I was going to do some vertical blinds. And we became instant friends. That's rare. That is rare anymore. The man that... So, even in segregation, people would come to bring clothes to your house. And before you know it, they were sitting right up in there drinking a cup of coffee or water or whatever. And you would know their names. I knew everybody. I knew all the white people. I knew all the black people. And that's rare anymore. And my daughter lives in Atlanta, and she served for 20 years in the United States Army. She was an EA, so she knew everybody. She had to deal with people from everywhere. And she was like the flight recorder for Black Hawk helicopters. So, she knew all of those things. And she admitted to me just the other day, she said, "You know, Mom... I really don't have any white friends." I could not believe it. So, what has changed?

**AG:** So, do you think even everything that's happened in the community, not just in Charleston, I guess even in Atlanta and places like that, do you think it's had an effect on people's generosity and friendliness?

**VJ:** Oh, definitely. Yeah. And there's that trust factor. You know, we listen to fake news. We put everybody in the same barrel, you know, no matter who they are. So, there are a lot of things. And sometimes I just sit down and try to put it into perspective, And I don't know. I can't even get my arms around it because it's so big. So, in 2019 and in 20 years, when somebody go back to hear this, "She said all of these things are still happening!" People change. Industries change. The need for money changes. But basic principles should never change. You know, your core values should never change. I see people's core values changing every day for the dollar bill.

**AG:** Sure.

**VJ:** Are you going to change?

**AG:** I hope not.

**VJ:** You hope not.

**AG:** Okay. Well, that's all the questions I have. Do you have any final thoughts?

**VJ:** No. I just think that when you look at environmental injustices, it's not just what the air is doing or what the, you know, what the temperature changes or--it is a



conglomerate of things. It's livability. It's--what is my quality of life? It's--how am I being treated or how are the masses being treated? What happened to the criminal? All of those are our environment.

**AG:** Sure. Okay. Thank you for your time.

**VJ:** You're welcome.