

8-23-2007

## DaCosta, Lisa

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### Recommended Citation

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Interviewee: Lisa Dacosta  
Interviewers: Mark Naison and Oneka LaBennett  
Date: August 23, 2007

Mark Naison (MN): Lisa, start by telling us a little about your family and how they came to the Bronx.

Lisa Dacosta (LD): My family is from Jamaica and my grandparents migrated here I think I would say maybe in the '40's or 50's. They migrated to Harlem. They owned a laundromat and as they progressed they went to the Bronx, the South Bronx. My grandmother started buying property, like a couple of houses in about, when I was growing up about four or five row houses.

MN: Where were the row houses located?

LD: 176<sup>th</sup> St. by East Tremont. And Morris Ave., East Tremont.

MN: Where you born in the South Bronx?

LD: Yes.

MN: What was the address your family was living when you were--?

LD: 234 East 176<sup>th</sup> St.

MN: And what year were you born?

LD: '67.

MN: '67. When you say row houses, how tall were the houses?

LD: About three stories.

MN: And they were like walk ups? Did they have stoops?

LD: Yes. We had a porch, we had a basement, and we had three floors.

MN: Were these wooden houses or brick houses?

LD: Brick.

MN: Are they still there now?

LD: Yes. I went by there two days, two weeks ago I drove by there.

MN: When you were growing up on that block, what was the composition of the neighborhood? Was it a mixed neighborhood at that time or--?

LD: Yes, I think it was Irish and Black and Hispanic. I think the Irish started moving out around that time. Because I remember playing and seeing in the buildings across the street I used to see Caucasian people. But growing up in that area my grandmother had those four houses so all my family members lived across the street next to each other. And I had a cousin who lived across the street.

MN: So your whole family was--?

LD: My grandmother was a matriarch. She brought everyone here from Jamaica and she found a place for them to stay. So that was what was good.

MN: Was Jamaican culture very much part of your upbringing in terms of food and music?

LD: Yes.

MN: What were some of the foods you grew up eating?

LD: You know, curry goat, ox tail, rice and peas, plantains. The fruits like Tamarin bowls, I remember I used to go to my aunts house next door and just sit there hoping that they would offer me some of that because they would bring it from Jamaica.

MN: Tamarin?

LD: Tamarin bowls.

Oneka LaBennett (OL): Rolled in sugar.

LD: It's sour but they put sugar on top of it to offset the taste. My grandmother, my father was a part of the athletic club, a cricket club.

MN: Really? And where did they play cricket?

LD: In VanCortland Park.

MN: In VanCortland Park, do you have any pictures of the cricket--?

LD: Yes.

MN: Because we'd love to have pictures for our files, so sometime if you know--?

LD: My grandmother, she held the meetings in her basement

MN: For the cricket club?

LD: Yes.

MN: What was the name of the cricket club?

LD: Wembley.

MN: The Wembley.

LD: The Wembley Club, it still exists.

MN: It still exists, do they still play?

LD: My father still has his club, the club is now in the Northeast Bronx.

MN: Is your father still alive?

LD: Yes.

MN: We should probably bring him in for an interview because we have a whole Caribbean immigration component of the project and we've never interviewed anybody in one of the cricket clubs.

LD: I remember going to Jamaica in the '70's to his cricket tournaments.

MN: Was he a bowler or just fieldman and a batter.

LD: He was a batter.

MN: Yes, because I've read C. L. R. James book, Beyond a Boundary, about cricket and I got absolutely fascinated by the bowling part of it.

LD: I still don't understand the game but we used to go to VanCortland Park and, there were six of us, so my mother and him would take us to the park and we would just sit there and play and go in the pool while they played cricket in VanCortland Park. It was tight, I loved growing up,

my family it was a closely knit family, and then when I turned eight, which was in '75, we moved to the Northeast Bronx.

MN: Was there deterioration happening around your little block and compound? Were buildings being abandoned and that sort of stuff? What was that like because I know Tremont, that whole area got hit pretty hard.

LD: Right. Well there were two houses next to us that were abandoned, I remember for a while. Two row houses, there were five, the two on the end were abandoned and I remember we would be afraid to walk around the corner because it was sort of getting bad in the neighborhood, but the houses were still intact. We go now, they're still beautiful and when we moved that's when a family bought the houses and renovated the end, the end houses.

MN: Were there abandoned buildings on other blocks nearby?

LD: Not on our block.

MN: Not on your block. So it was 176<sup>th</sup> and one side is Morris and the other side--?

LD: 176<sup>th</sup> and you go straight you'll hit Grand Concourse. Like a block away from Grand Concourse.

MN: So you were near the Concourse, now I have an idea of where it is. Not too far from Bronx Lebanon Hospital.

LD: Remember when we drove by that park? That park I used to do things--if you go up that hill and make a left.

MN: Cedar Park or no not Cedar, Echo Park.

LD: Yes.

MN: Echo Park.

LD: You make a left, you'll hit 176<sup>th</sup> St.

MN: You lived close to the Concourse and close to Tremont?

LD: Yes. And there is this house over there you should look at, I think it's a historic house. We used to walk by and they would tell us stories that there was this man there that used to, don't go by that house he's a ghost and he look out the window. That house must be in the 1800's, built in the 1800's.

MN: Now what elementary school did you go to?

LD: P.S. 28 for kindergarten and then we went to Saint Margaret Mary off of East Tremont.

MN: So you did kindergarten in public school and then you went to Catholic School?

LD: For two years I went to Saint Margaret Mary and my brothers and sisters also went there and when we moved to the Northeast Bronx we went to Saint Francis of the Sistine. We all went to Catholic School for a while.

MN: Was your family Catholic?

LD: My father was, not my mother.

MN: What sort of work did your father do?

LD: He was a Housing Authority assistant when I was born and he became a district manager of the Housing Authority.

MN: Of the New York City Housing Authority, so he was supervising several public housing?

LD: So he is familiar with all those?

MN: So we definitely have to interview your father. Did he work in the Bronx?

LD: Yes.

MN: Oh my God, yes well.

LD: Yes he worked in all of those projects that you talked about.

MN: Patterson and Mill Brook and all of that. Now was he born in Jamaica?

LD: Yes.

MN: Was he your grandmother's son?

LD: Yes, my grandmothers.

MN: What about your mother's family? Was she also from Jamaica?

LD: Yes.

MN: But it was your father's family that was the major influence?

LD: Yes. We lived, the network was mostly my father's family. And my mother's family came a little later, we didn't really, with my mother's family my uncle who adopted her. She took on his name and her aunt that took her in when she came to America they were the ones that we knew for dinner. My uncle was a chef so we used to go to his house and have like six course meals and we had to sit there and wait, he'd have like fruit cocktails you know with the nice glass. You had the pig in the middle of the table with the apple, so my mother used to dress us up. My brothers and sisters are a year apart so my mother used to dress them all alike.

MN: Where were you in the birth order?

LD: I'm second to last.

MN: And there are how many?

LD: Six.

MN: Six children. How many boys and how many girls?

LD: Two boys and four girls.

MN: And you all went to Catholic school?

LD: Except for my older sister, she came to, she was born in Jamaica and she came later. She went to art and design high school. She didn't go to Catholic school but my brothers and sisters they started out at P.S. 28 and then we all transferred to Saint Margaret Mary's.

MN: What was Saint Margaret Mary's like as a place to go, do you have good memories of it?

LD: Yes, it was nice. My parents, I think my parents got married there.

MN: What street was that on?

LD: East Tremont, a block away from Grand Concourse.

MN: On the east side or the west side?

LD: West. If you go across the Concourse.

MN: Across the Concourse, the other side of the street.

LD: Yes.

MN: In terms of, did you play in front of the house or did you mostly play in the back yard?

LD: We played both. We played in the front yard, across the street, we played hand ball against the building wall, and we played around the corner and in our back yards. We had the three back yards back to back. My aunt's, my grandmother's and ours and we had a little concrete pool.

They would make these pools in the ground it's for like toddlers. We had a pool there we would just fill it up with water.

MN: Did you feel safe on your block growing up?

LD: Yes. Yes it was nice.

MN: Good.

LD: Yes, I loved it. My cousins used to come visit, if they lived far away they would come and stay. My mother used to take in, for some reason my aunts and uncles would drop kids off at my mother's house, because I guess they felt like she could handle it. Drop them at night, oh she'll take care of it, they don't even ask they just drop them.

MN: For how long?

LD: A weekend. She used to say that all the time.

MN: Now did your mother and father and grandmother speak with visible Jamaican accents?

LD: No my parents--.

MN: They were pretty Americanized?



LD: They had a accent, but they weren't like now Patois. They spoke English in fluent they don't speak that. But my grandmother on the other hand, my uncles, my grand uncles and aunts when they'd get upset then they'd go off. But it's not like the same, like Jamaicans now and back then. The thing about it, they used to play in the basement, they used to play dominos and play cards and gamble poker, gambled all the time.

MN: Men and women?

LD: My grandmother gambled all the time. Gambled all the time. And we would go in the basement and she would scream at us, who is that? All of my uncles, and they lived till like their nineties and they just drink liquor all the time. Never had a health problem. For every cure drink some rum. Everything the cure is drink this put this on it. I used to love, when we had a fever we'd rub the white rum on our bodies, it'd bring down the fever. I used to love the smell of it.

MN: Is this something—Guyana also?

OL: Yes, in Guyana. We rubbed Vick's for a fever. Vick's was the cure for everything.

LD: My grandmother was like rum, white rum.

MN: When you played, did boys and girls play the same games in your neighborhood or did the girls have their own separate--?

LD: In the South Bronx?

MN: In your particular, like you know state?

LD: When I was younger my sisters and brothers were playing whatever they were playing. I used to play with my cousins, the girl cousins. I don't know about my brother and my sisters, I mean if it was like you needed a lot of kids to play, like hot peas and butter and all those things it would be co-ed.

MN: Did you do any double Dutch?

LD: Yes. Double Dutch is the greatest thing.

MN: And that was in front of the house and at school? Did you do that at Catholic school also?

LD: I remember double Dutch only on my block. I mean I'm remembering in the school yard there wasn't enough time. I'm sure we did do it. But at Saint Margaret Mary's I don't remember because I was only in 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>. And then I moved uptown, it was more prevalent. We used to play on the street all day, all day.

MN: What sort of music do you remember hearing when you were in your early years? That was being played in your house and around your neighborhood.

LD: The reggae, the beginning reggae--?

MN: Ska, rock steady.

LD: Ska. But my sister was an artist. She played guitar, she danced, so she used to play music. Carol King I loved, I used to listen to Carol King all the time and I would just there. Because I should have been an artist I used to dance and play the guitar. And I still love Carol King now, she used to listen to that, all the male black artists, The Manhattans and--.

MN: The Dells, The Delfonics. I just got my Dells and Delfonics greatest hits album.

LD: I never remember the names I just remember the songs.

MN: I love those romantic groups. The Stylistics, Metro by Galy Gall, that stuff.

LD: One song stuck in my head forever, I associated a piece of candy that I ate with the song. I'll have to think about it later. Something with the husband, the guy is messing around with the married woman.

MN: If loving you is wrong I don't want to be right?

[Laughter]

MN: So you were exposed to the American R&B as well as to the Jamaican music?

LD: Yes, my parents, my father was big into music, we always had a record playing, we always had music in the house.

MN: Did people play musical instruments other than your sister?

LD: My cousin was a singer, and yes we played piano. My grandmother had a piano.

MN: You had a piano, your grandmother had a piano?

LD: Everyone had to take piano lessons.

MN: Where did you take piano lessons?

LD: My sister took piano lessons in my grandmother's house. My aunt next door had a piano so her kids took them.

MN: So you brought a teacher to the house to teach kids?

LD: Yes. We still have the same piano. My aunt took it over and she refurbished it.

MN: Was it an upright or a grand?

LD: Upright. We all took piano, of course we stopped. I didn't take it until we moved up north, my sisters took it. My mother always said you have to do it, you have to do it. I think all Jamaicans had to take piano.

[Laughter]

LD: Everybody took it. My uncles sang, my grandmother's uncles always would be singing in the house, and my uncle, my father's brother was singing.

MN: What would they be singing?

LD: You know love songs and just, songs we'd never heard of they would sing.

MN: Were they pretty good?

LD: Yes.

MN: So it was fun hearing them sing?

LD: Yes. I would be like why does Uncle Peter sing all the time, Uncle Donald? They would sing to you like serenade to you.

MN: That's kind of cool as a kid.

LD: I know of course we were like why is he always singing? We all had nicknames, everybody had a nickname.

MN: So what was your nickname?

LD: I don't think I ever had one. My sister was Cheeny-Wee.

MN: Cheeny-Wee?

LD: My mother is half Chinese. So they would just say Cheeny-Wee, and my brother's was Wee-Wow. So they called him Wee-Wow, Uncle Donny used to go Wee-Wow!

MN: Was any of the Chinese influence in cooking, did you mother cook Chinese as well as Jamaican style?

LD: A little bit. She didn't do too much. As we got older she started experimenting. But she grew up with mainly, mostly she grew up with her mother's side because her Chinese side they wanted to take her but my uncle said no. And that's when he adopted her, because in Jamaica I guess once you go to the Chinese side they initiate everything. They take you, you have to become like Chinese. You have to learn the ways, and you have to do all that stuff. My uncle, I don't know what it was, he didn't want that happen.

MN: He didn't want Chinese to become the primary influence, culturally. So it sounds like a great growing up time you had. With all the singing and the playing and the food and the cricket clubs and school was fun for you?

LD: Yes.

MN: Was education emphasized in your household?

LD: Yes. My parents always said we didn't have to do anything with you kids you just knew that this is what you were going to do.

MN: Was there much political discussion in the house, like around the dinner table or that wasn't emphasized that much.

LD: Not so much political but we had to all sit at the dinner table, never separately. My father is very political and you really should talk to him because he knows, he thinks he knows everything. He loves to read he has all these, growing up we'd have a bookcase full African books. He studied--.

MN: So there was a lot of emphasis on African history?

LD: I don't remember him teaching us.

MN: It was just that he read all this.

LD: He read all the time and he should've just influenced us like had a discussion at the dinner table about Africa and Jamaica. I think Jamaica more he would talk about.

MN: Did the adults read the newspaper?

LD: Yes. My father reads all day.

MN: Did they discuss current events? Were you aware of things happening in the world when you were growing up?

LD: Yes they did. I don't remember too much maybe my sisters and brothers do but my grandmother always had on the, I remember sitting on the porch and she would read the paper every morning, every morning.

MN: So you had a porch?

LD: Yes.

MN: So this is a brick house with a porch. Was the porch wooden or was it brick?

LD: Brick. With the tiles on the--. We would all sit down on the porch, it's connected like you could see everyone. So my grandmother and her uncles, my grandmother there were three floors in her house so her brothers lived on the last floor. Three of her brothers, a cousin and two brothers lived on the last floor. Second floor she lived on there with the kids, her kids. And the basement was just the basement.

MN: Before we move to the Northeast Bronx, Oneka or Loretta do you have any questions about?

OL: I was actually going to ask how old were you moved, and why did you move?

LD: When we moved from the South Bronx?

OL: Yes.

LD: I was eight. Since we lived, the house had three floors, we lived on the first floor and the basement and our cousins, we called them cousins because we knew them for so long, lived on the middle floor. They had three kids. And then my aunt, which is my brother's sister she had three kids and she lived on the top floor, so my mother she wanted something more. She was like listen I'm not going to live here forever with, she would say to my father with your whole family. I want a better life. So she was like I already looked, she told my father I already looked, I'm going to put down on this house and my father was like why, we have everything here we can save and do what we want. My mother, she was like you're a fool, I'm leaving. I'm telling you now I'm signing and you can stay here with your mother if you want.

MN: Did your mother work also?

LD: Well she worked and then she stopped when she started having kids. She went back to work after I was born.

MN: What sort of work did she do?

LD: She was a lab technician. At Jacobi Hospital.

MN: What level of education did your parents have?

LD: My mother, as I was in high school I think she received her second masters. She went back to school after.

[Pause]

MN: Your mother had two masters degrees. Did she get one of them before you were born?

LD: No she went back to school after we were born, she went back to school. She got her bachelors. She went to the College of New Rochelle and NYU I think she did her second masters. She said she's not going to let anything hold her back, so she just went back to school. That's why she gets mad when we don't accomplish what we say we are going to accomplish. Or women with children say they can't do such and such. She's like I don't know what's wrong with these women today, I went back to school and I did whatever and I expect you kids to do the same.

MN: She sounds like pretty much of a powerhouse.

LD: Yes, she's great. And my father he just has his bachelors from City College.

MN: Now did he get his degree before he had children?

LD: Yes, before.

MN: Now did he have his bachelors degree when he met your mother?

LD: I'm not sure about that. I think so, I think so.

MN: Now the name, Lacosta, did anyone talk about the origin on of it?

LD: Dacosta?

MN: Dacosta, yes.

LD: Yes, it's Portuguese. My great grandfather is from Spain, the Sephardic Jews. They migrated in the 1600's I guess from Portugal started working. Growing up we didn't know any Dacostas but now we usually hear a lot of them. In Kingston you know.

MN: So you have all these different nationalities in your traditions.

LD: Yes. And even on my grandmother's side it's weird because my grandfather was a Dacosta and my grandmother she's a Desuso, which is also Portuguese. You have a Guyana or Trinidad. And then her cousins have influences in Syria, you have Syrians, Portuguese, Chinese and Jamaica.

MN: Anymore questions about the area?

OL: One.

LD: We moved because my mother got tired of the South Bronx. It started getting like, it started the abandoned houses.

OL: So do you still have family that live on that street or is everybody moved away?

LD: Everyone is moved away except for I do have a cousin. We call them cousins because she had a daughter with my cousin, so we call them cousins. They're still on the block, the mother died recently. The father I don't know if he's there. Two or three relatives in that house across the street. They're not blood relatives but they are still there.

OL: And what happened to the houses that your grandmother owned?

LD: When she died, which was about five years ago my aunt inherited her house, she automatically wanted to sell it because she always lived in that house in the South Bronx and she didn't want to be there anymore and she sold it. The house next door that we grew up in, my cousin and my aunt inherited that house, they tried to keep it up for a little while and they decided to sell it because they had differences about what they wanted to do. The other house next door where my aunt lived, my grand-aunt they sold that before because they moved, they moved years before my grandmother died. The house across the street that also got sold before she died or when she died. My uncle lived in that house, you know they rented out space. And the house on Morris Ave. was sold before she died. So unfortunate, even to this day my parents, my brothers and sisters say we should've taken over those houses. The cousins should've bought the house from my aunt because there is so much history there and it's all gone. When I drove by there two weeks ago I was like, it was terrible.

OL: It seems like your family had a tradition of women owning and inheriting property which is very distinctively Jamaican. How did that one aunt come to inherit property over other siblings?



LD: I think my grandmother had it all set out. Kids received things while she was alive, or siblings received things. I think my father, I don't know what he received. My aunt Sisley she got a house, my grandmother bought her house in the Northeast Bronx for her, she came back to New York from San Francisco. Norma, my aunt Norma, Uncle Melvin I don't think they received anything so whoever didn't receive anything during her lifetime inherited the houses when she died. And they fought over that it was terrible. We're upset because those houses, people are now trying to move into the South Bronx buying these beautiful homes.

MN: These are brick row houses, they're priceless.

LD: So we are like we should've taken it over but we didn't have enough time to think it over, think it through because my aunt was like forget it, I'm selling it. She called and put it on the market.

MN: Actually one of my friends just bought a row house on 150<sup>th</sup> St. and turned it into a guest house. It's like a bed and breakfast.

LD: That block is a nice block. Everyone, even in the apartment buildings across the street, we all hung out we knew each other. When my grandmother died it was such a big funeral that the people in our neighborhood came out, they moved away, but they came to the funeral.

MN: Where was the funeral?

LD: At Woodlawn.

MN: Did she have a church mass?

LD: We had a mass at Immaculate Conception. A guess a cousin or aunt goes there. My aunt goes there, her daughter. But before my grandmother died, my aunt, my father and my mother bought a plot, two in Woodlawn.

MN: So you have a whole family?

LD: Not a whole family because my grandmother, my grandfather is buried up in Greensburg. I think my grandmother always said don't bury me next to my husband. She used to say that there were ghosts, she used to say that PapaDee, we called him PapaDee was coming after her. She called him Duffy, she used to leave a knife, when she was sleeping she'd leave a knife in the bed.

MN: Bob Marley had a song Duffy Conqueror.

LD: My grandmother was hilarious, she was a matriarch and she was always very strict. She used to get us up all the grandchildren. We are going to paint today, we'd paint all the houses, paint and clean up every summer time. But it's funny, my mother who was not even a relative, she's the one who held everyone together. Even to this day they look to my mother for everything. My mother goes I'm sick of those Dacostas. I'm sick of them, I'm doing everything for them.

MN: Families are so alike.

LD: My mother was the stable one out of everybody. Everybody else, my father's side they all out there.

MN: Where did you mother locate the house that you ultimately moved into? What street was it on?

LD: Bruner Ave. Bruner in the Northeast Bronx, between Edenwald and Buston.

MN: This is north of Gun Hill Rd.?

LD: You know where 233<sup>rd</sup> is? On Baychester Ave. right over there.

MN: So was this near the Edenwald Houses?

LD: Yes we walked to Edenwald, I used to go to parties there.

MN: Now what year did you move to the house?

LD: 1975.

MN: Now describe the house for us that they bought.

LD: It's a brick house, one family. I recall it was built in the 1920's or '40's. I'll never forget we bought it from a family called the O'Connors. Because we continually got mail from the O'Connors. So they were Irish. My mother she bought the house, it's brick house and it's wide. You know the houses there are like plots they are not far from the next plot.

MN: But you had a backyard?

LD: We had a backyard.

MN: You have a front yard?

LD: A little front yard with the bush in the front and also a tree. We had a gate, we didn't have a gate until later. We had a family dog which we brought with us.

MN: What kind of dog was it?

LD: It was mixed German Shepard and something else that my cousins had the puppies. We had the puppies in the South Bronx, it was very mean everybody hated him.

MN: You had a mean dog?

LD: Mean dog.

MN: Was he mean to you?

LD: No, he wasn't mean to us but he was mean to everybody else.

MN: So he was a good watchdog. You would not want to come in the house if you were--.

LD: Everybody knew, I don't know where he got this name, Brownswhit. Because he was brown and white.

[Laughter]

LD: And we called him Bruny, and it was ironic that we moved Bruner Ave.

MN: Bruner Ave. right. Now were you near, just to situate myself, is this near the Cardinal Spellman, the school?

LD: Yes. Cardinal Spellman is on Baychester Ave., I could walk to school but I used to take the bus.

MN: Was this considered a step up from 176<sup>th</sup> St.

LD: Yes. After we moved everybody moved. After we moved my aunt moved like two blocks away. My other aunt who was, she moved to San Francisco, she came back after my grandmother bought her a house, moved two blocks away. Another aunt, a grand-aunt she moved on Murdock which is about five blocks away. Everyone migrated like you said from Harlem to the South Bronx to the North Bronx.

MN: Did you neighborhood become mostly West Indian?

LD: Yes. When we moved there it wasn't. It was Italian, Irish and Southerners. Like Georgia, North and South Carolina. Our neighbors the kids we used to play with they were from all over Georgia. They said that they always wanted to go back, they would go back one day and they did.

MN: Was there any sort of tension in the neighborhood racial tension or any other kind of tension?

LD: Yes. We couldn't go to the neighborhood park, it was called, P.S. 87 was two blocks away and we called them the white boys. They wouldn't let us in the park. We called them the parkies, we can't go into the park the parkies wont allow you to go there.

MN: And this was even little kids?

LD: Yes. During a certain time like in the evening you couldn't go in there.

MN: So these were like tough white kids who you know--.

LD: They lived in the neighborhood for years. Their parents, they saw the difference in the neighborhood and you just couldn't go in there. We'd call them the parkies.

MN: Now what were the Edenwald Houses like in those days because later they got a pretty ferocious reputation.

LD: During that time they were ferocious too. I started going there I think when I was fourteen to parties in the community center.

MN: Because there was a gang there called Inter-Crime that people talked about, was that something that you were aware of?

LD: I don't remember that I just remember the parties and being careful.

MN: Was Edenwald mostly an African American Project?

LD: Yes. It was different but my school was right there Cardinal Spellman.

MN: You ended up going to Cardinal Spellman?

LD: Yes. So did my two sisters. My brother went to Cardinal Hayes.

MN: These are among the top Catholic high schools in the Bronx, you know Spellman and Hayes produced tremendous numbers of Fordham students. And the borough president came out of Cardinal Spellman.

LD: My aunt knows him, my aunt went to Spellman.

MN: What about the Catholic elementary school in that neighborhood? Was it a racially mixed school when you went there?

LD: When we first got there yes. It was black and white and Hispanic.

MN: Was there tension in the school between kids of different backgrounds? Or everybody got along pretty well?

LD: I think we got along pretty well. I think my brother, when we came in it was like boom five kids and they knew, they were like the Dacostas.

[Laughter]

LD: They were like wow, and my brother he was good looking at the time. All the girls loved him.

MN: So that's interesting. Did the Dacostas also have a reputation with the teachers?

LD: I guess that they knew us like as a group and my sisters were pretty smart. My brother I don't know he was okay. He was athletic.

MN: What sports did he play?

LD: Basketball.

MN: He was a basketball player.

LD: He did track in high school. It was nice we enjoyed it.

MN: Now what was the name of the Catholic school?

LD: Saint Francis of the Sistine.

MN: And what street was that on?

LD: Baychester.

MN: Now did you also go to church? Was your family church going?

LD: Yes, we had to go to church. You know in a Catholic church if you didn't go to church I think your tuition was higher or something. You had to give money and they knew if you didn't come so we had to go to church.

MN: Now what did you do for recreation in the Northeast Bronx?

LD: That was probably the better half of my life. We were always on the street, that block. We played, the sun came up we were out. We played all day until dinnertime we went back out until your parents called you. Everyone knew, my mother was like Sharon, Diane, Lisa, Wee-Wow it's time to come in. If you didn't know someone's parents would call you. Like my friend Sharee her parents were Jamaican, her mother used to have this squeaking voice, Sharee! And then we would just, you know like Sharee would be like, oh brother.

MN: Were people friendly with each other, neighbors?

LD: Yes.

MN: So everyone looked out for each others kids?

LD: Yes. We had a block association.

MN: And what was it called the Bruner St.--?

LD: The Brunell Association, which was Bruner and Ely, Ely was the next block over. So we had a block association and the main people that started were the ones that lived there for years. They started it and we threw picnics every year.

MN: Where would you go to the picnics?

LD: F.D.R. Park.

MN: Now where is F.D.R. Park? Upstate?

LD: Yes, but not far, it's off the Taconic. You go straight up it's not far it's about a half an hour.

MN: I think I know where that is.

LD: F.D.R. Park. I don't remember the other park but I remember that one. We would go pack up and all drive up there and it was--.

MN: Now did you go to the movies at all?

LD: Yes, we used to have, Whitestone used to be an open drive-in. Before we moved to the Northeast Bronx we had a LTD, a yellow LTD so we somehow all of us fit in that car and we would go to the movies.

MN: Was it a convertible or --?

LD: No it wasn't a convertible.

MN: Did you ever go to Orchard Beach in the summer?

LD: Yes. I think we didn't go there too often. We would mainly go to VanCortland Park to the pool. I remember because my father would play there.

MN: So you would go to the pool while he was playing cricket?

LD: Yes.

MN: Now you know originally, we were talking about the music and the hip-hop and it turns out that we have sort of a gold mine of other things. When did you first start hearing about outdoor jams and like musical events.

LD: Well since I moved in 1975, so I think it was like '77. Around that time I started seeing my brothers and my cousins, you know started dressing differently and you hear the music. You know when that Sugarhill Gang came out. I remember going to Hetham Park.

MN: Was that walking distance?

LD: We used to walk everywhere so we probably did walk. We walked to the store over by Pelham. I forgot the name of it. We would walk that far to go shopping, so we walked to Gun Hill Rd. which is near [inaudible] Park is. But I think we did walk, back then it was no big deal, kids today won't do it but we did everything. Hetham Park it was usually Sundays we would go there.

MN: How would it be set up? People would have turntables and speakers?

LD: There were turntables. I vaguely remember but I was into talking to my sisters and brothers and cousins and they remember everything. They set it up, and my cousin who I spoke to today said that at one side there was Flash and on another side they had the Jamaicans and they would battle each other. And they said one side the Jamaicans would be by the bathroom.

MN: I know Hetham Park because I play tennis there.

LD: And then on the other side you know there would be Americans or whatever, and battle. I just remember that. He said that you drain the lights, you know you plug the lights to the poles and it would get dark because you drain the electricity.

[Laughter]



MN: Now did any people around you do like break dancing?

LD: I'm sure my brother tried to break dance.

MN: Now did you think of this as, this is hip-hop when you were--?

LD: Yes we lived.

MN: So you called it hip-hop?

LD: Yes we called it hip-hop, not rap. But hip-hop.

MN: Because it was more deejaying music?

LD: Yes. It was just all beats. All beats. Not so much words, that's what I remember.

MN: Did it make you feel like moving when you heard it?

LD: Yes we just--.

MN: What would you do, would you dance or you just shook?

[Laughter]

MN: Did you clap your hands?

LD: We did everything. I think we danced, tried to break dance but we didn't go on the floor I don't remember going on the floor, we just do whatever.

MN: Pop and Lock or?

LD: There was always a dance of that era.

MN: Like you'd go to the Edenwald Center, would that be like a phonograph or would there be a DJ?

LD: Dj? There was always a DJ?

MN: With two turntables?

LD: Yes.

MN: So they would do that at the center?

LD: Either the center or the corner.

MN: And they'd be scratching as well, so this was all over the place?

LD: The reason why people were geared to these places was because they wasn't being played on the radio. It was being played in the parks and the centers.

MN: And they were doing two turntables all these people?

LD: Yes.

MN: With mixers?

LD: You know my cousin told me, Curtis, and I'm going to give you his number because he knows everything. Curtis Dacosta, there was a way they did the turntables he said they would put one record on, and then they'd put the felt on top and then another record and that's the way they would mix, they didn't have the mixers and that's how they would mix. He remembers, I'm like how do you remember all those names, even my brother.

MN: Yes, because people were saying we interviewed this amazing musician Will Calhoun from Living Color who grew up there and he said that they were having outdoor jams in Hetham Park in '72 and '73 with a guy they called Pumpkin.

LD: Pumpkin, he's the master, my girlfriend told me that.

MN: So she mentioned Pumpkin also?

LD: King of the Beats.

MN: Pumpkin, King of the Beats?

LD: They were all over in the Northeast Bronx. There were parks that she went to Olinville Park.

MN: Where is Olinville Park?

LD: 216<sup>th</sup> and Barnes Ave.

MN: And Barnes Ave, okay.

LD: Olinville Park, my brother went to P-A-O.

MN: There was a PAO center up there?

LD: 183<sup>rd</sup> and Webster.

MN: That was the famous one, 183<sup>rd</sup> and Webster was even Herc used. So he went all the way down from the Valley to 183<sup>rd</sup> and Webster?

LD: Yes, him and his friend.

MN: Because that was a major center because Herc started holding parties there in '75, '76.

LD: Right. And he said that they wanted to go another place but they were scared because they'd get shot, the Bronx River Houses.

MN: The Bronx River Houses were where Afrika Bambaataa used to hold parties the Zulu Nation.

LD: They wanted to go there. My brother and his friend wanted to go there but they were afraid to get hurt. So they stayed north.

MN: Most of the stuff was around the north. Now did any of your cousins or brothers have their own DJ equipment?

LD: Curtis may have.

[End of Side A; Begin Side B]

LD: Curtis's mother's boyfriend, he was part of all that. Like the groups, MC's, and DJ's.

MN: So you remember outdoor jams, stuff in the Edenwald center.

LD: Yes.

MN: And how many people would come to a party at the Edenwald center? Would it be packed?

LD: Yes. Packed.

MN: So now everybody was dancing?

LD: Yes. That's all you did. It's nothing like now you just danced. Mostly back then everyone would just listen to the music and the beats and everybody was battling.

MN: So it would be like one DJ battling another?

LD: Yes. And the MC's. The DJ's would come with their own MC's so they would battle. We just listened and there would be some people dancing.

MN: Do you remember any of the names of the groups that were battling?

LD: I wrote this down. Funky Four plus One, Rock Steady Crew, The Breakers, DJ Islam.

MN: DJ Africa Islam.

LD: Breakout, DJ Breakout, Hollywood.

MN: He's a famous DJ, DJ Hollywood.

LD: You know Flash, Furious Five.

MN: Did the Cold Crush brothers come up?

LD: Yes. I heard Cold Crush, Chaos Crew.

MN: Chaos Crew?

LD: My cousin told me about these Rocky and Johnny J, DJs. DJ Breakout and DJ Baron and Funky Four Plus One, KBJ and Timmy Hall MC's. You know they had something in Hetham Park this past Saturday.

MN: Yes my friend Nathan Dukes lives across the street he says that there were hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of people and the park was filthy and the park person got in trouble because they had to bring in crews from all over the Bronx to clean it up.

LD: Yes, they do that every year.

OL: When you said there was a side in the park that they had the Jamaican music and then they had rap at the other side, did you or your siblings feel more drawn to either side. Was there any kind of conflict with you in terms of being West Indian?

LD: No because I think when we, I guess we became a little Americanized. There wasn't like the West Indian music in the house all the time. But because we grew up in that era with the hip-

hop and our block was mainly not West Indian, there were maybe three or four other families that were West Indian, it didn't bother us.

MN: It was interesting because my friend Nathan Dukes's family is from South Carolina, and there was a whole bunch of people from the Patterson Houses that moved up there that were from the South. Did you ever try rap?

LD: We always, growing up, we always had a group like the girls. We had a girl group, Brunell Chicks.

MN: Now the Brunell Chicks, were you more dancers or rappers?

LD: We were just a group, just a group of girls. I'm sure my cousin and my friends could rap but I couldn't rap.

MN: Did you throw parties?

LD: No. Sweet sixteens, there were always sweet sixteens going around. I remember going to Edenwald Projects to a party. You know Edenwald is two blocks away, two blocks away and I can remember my mother driving us. She was scared.

MN: I don't know if you know, but Edenwald had a reputation.

LD: But the thing is my mother was driving so slow, because she just started driving, we had that green Dodge. My friend Monique in the back she was like knocking on me in the front seat like, we could've walked, we could've been there by now. But we got there and you know my mother was like I will be outside you better be there. It wasn't as bad as people made it out to be, but I guess it could've been because there were always shots, you would hear shots or something.

OL: Was your mother more protective of the girls than the boys, did the boys have greater freedom?

LD: Yes. My brother always had freedom. He would go all over the place. He was outgoing, music wise, basketball, he's always all over the place getting hurt. Got a motorcycle got burned

on his leg, he was just accident prone. But my mother, what could you do with boys you just let them be.

OL: Did you feel like in terms of being on this block, in this area with all these other kids who were mostly African American that your parents had different rules for how you guys were raised or were they more protective? Did you feel like because you were West Indian your parents were more strict than other parents?

LD: No actually they weren't because the other parents were just as strict if not stricter. I remember a friend Gabby, and Dana they did one little thing they were on punishment for two or three weeks. Or they could do was look out their window and see us playing. They'd sneak out the window to come see.

MN: Now the kids who grew up on your block did most end up going to college and becoming professionals?

LD: Yes.

MN: So this was a group of very motivated, successful kids.

LD: Yes. There were a few, like three or four boys that ended up being messed up. They just went into drugs or weren't on the right path. But mostly in general everyone went to college. I remember even the older people, I guess when I was in high school, the older kids they had good jobs. They went away or it was just instilled in them. Very strict and what I did notice, the African Americans on our block they had more. They had a pool, we always used to want to go to their pool. Nice house, their house was gorgeous inside, well put, neat, and we would always say wow look at that. But with my family, everybody wanted to come into our house because they thought it was like a museum. Like a circus, there were so many kids, it sounded like we were arguing but we were really talking so they used to say let's go to the Dacosta's house.

MN: Now when you say it's like a museum did your mother or father collect artwork or sculptures?

LD: My mother collected a lot of antiques. Antiques and Chinese little things, but mostly vases.

MN: So she kept the connection with Chinese culture in terms of artifacts?

LD: Well just antiques. The vases were China vases, she loved to collect those things. My father had his cricket trophies up.

MN: Did he have a cricket bat that he displayed on the wall?

LD: No, he didn't have that but he had a bat in the basement. You know what a lot of things got damaged in our garage or in our basement when we had floods. So I don't know if he still has it but I remember he used to have all his trophies above the bookcase.

MN: Did you still hold the meetings of the Wembley Association in your house?

LD: No, once they moved. Like after they started in my grandmother's basement they got a place.

MN: They got their own clubhouse?

LD: Yes, their own clubhouse. And they moved up to the Northeast Bronx not far from us. They still held it and they had parties there.

MN: Now when you were at Cardinal Spellman was hip-hop part of that experience at Spellman or it was more your neighborhood?

LD: I think it was the neighborhood. Cardinal Spellman I went there in '81, there was still hip-hop but it wasn't like, it was a mixture. The crowd in Spellman was different so that's why we used to go to Edenwald Projects across the street so you go to all the parties over there. My sisters and brothers were headed to college then. But you know and Hetham Park. We used to have for some reason, we called it the valley, Hetham Park was the Valley.

MN: Everybody talks about that as the Valley.

LD: The Valley would fight Co-Op City all the time. I mean really bad like have shootings and baseball bats. One of my fellow students he was in a coma because--.

MN: Now was this both groups African American? This was African American, African American? The Co-Op City kids against the Valley kids.

LD: Yes.

MN: This was boys?

LD: Boys, yes. But I'm sure they had girls too. My cousin said that he still has fliers, he still has some fliers from the parties, I was like wow.

MN: So the live time was like the late '70's you would say?

LD: He said '77, '78. Flash and The Breakout and the rest of the Jamaicans.

MN: Were the Jamaicans, what were they doing? Were they doing reggae were they doing dance? Dancehall?

LD: They did dancehall, they say that hip-hop stems from Jamaican music.

MN: So they were always you know rhyming over beats?

LD: Yes. Beats I think per say. The beats were a big thing for Jamaicans.

MN: I'm trying to visualize that, if you wanted to make a movie set, I know what the early hip-hop sounds like. What the Jamaican side stand up, could you do a Jamaican beat? Make a beat and then we could rap over it or something.

LD: Maybe my cousin could if he remembers. I don't know if he remembers that, he seems like, I just remember Curtis and my brother, I used to call them Run DMC. Even after the hip-hop stage they were still wearing chains and they had the glasses on.

MN: Do you have pictures of them in those outfits?

LD: I may have one picture.

MN: And the Adidas, the unlaced Adidas and all that.



LD: I'm sure he has that, but I said that stage is over with. Even now my brother will wear a chain over his suit.

MN: A chain?

[Laughter]

LD: He'll wear a gold chain with a cross, I was like Wee-Wow what is that?

MN: Wee-wow.

LD: Even in the court. Both of them are court officers.

MN: They are court officers?

LD: The judges say, you're Wee's sister? They call him Wee, the judges.

MN: Are they down in the Bronx?

LD: Yes, they're down in criminal court.

MN: Wee-Wow.

LD: And I asked my cousin Peter, who's a couple of years older than Curtis. He's like I really didn't do the hip-hop thing. I'm like what you didn't do the hip-hop thing, yes I think he's almost fifty, maybe forty-eight. I said how come you didn't do the hip-hop thing? He was more into music, like singing in a band.

MN: Were there kids who were in bands who did instrumental music? There were people who did live?

LD: Live music. My sister's boyfriends were all musicians. When we lived on 176<sup>th</sup> St. they'd come down the block.

MN: Now what sort of music were they playing?

LD: They were playing soul and funk.

MN: Funk, so they were funk bands?

LD: Yes. And Peter too, my cousin Peter.

MN: Were you listening to Michael Jackson and that stuff?

LD: Yes, Michael Jackson was a big thing in the house, we watched all the Michael Jackson shows and cartoons that was it. I remember just sitting there like nothing else mattered we just watched that. Good Times and the cartoons. There were only certain cartoons you would watch. I didn't watch all of everything, like you hear, they'd use some of the beats from the cartoons in the rap music.

MN: It sounds like you had a great childhood, like you just had a good time both places.

LD: I loved it. We played all day, everyday. I remember, I don't know why we stole hubcaps from the cars, but I remember taking these silver hubcaps and I'm like why'd we do that? We'd see who had the most and then we'd play the Skellies or whatever

MN: Skellies yeah.

LD: Put the stuff in the top of a can. We'd play hot peas and butter you know what that is?

MN: Describe hot peas and butter.

LD: You get a belt and you hide it and whoever finds it. You get to tell them you getting warmer, you getting warmer, you're hot, you're cold and when you find it, you find it and you start chasing everybody and hitting them.

MN: Talk about hitting games, did you play games where you slapped palms in front of the school? Where you put your hands over mine.

LD: Yes.

MN: So you'd play that.

LD: We played kickball, kick the can.

MN: Was Ringalevio still being played?

LD: Ringalevio, yes.

MN: What about capture the flag or no?

LD: I don't remember that one.

MN: Johnny on the Pony, or did they ban that from the schools?

LD: What's Johnny on the Pony?

MN: Johnny on the Pony, I don't know if girls played it. You'd have a line of like thirty guys. One guy would be on his knees against the wall, each would get behind and then the other one would take a running start and jump on top and try to collapse them.

LD: We did that.

MN: You did that? Yes, we did that every day in junior high school and I heard at some point it got banned because of the punching and kicking.

LD: I think it got banned for some reason, and there's nothing wrong with a little fun.

MN: No one ever got really badly hurt.

LD: We did everything. Double Dutch was the thing, double Dutch every day, we was the queen of Double Dutch, we didn't do any clips and stuff we just--.

MN: You know but what's interesting is there's all, most of the time when people talk about the Bronx they talk about it entirely in negative terms and here with you, you're on 176<sup>th</sup> St. you had this great experience, you move up to Bruner Ave. you have this great experience. You had fun at parties at Edenwald, which is you know--.

LD: I know that's why I tell people I would never exchange my childhood, we had so much fun. Even my brothers and sisters, when we moved to Bruner Ave. it was just such a family. There were fights all the time, you know everybody wanted to be who fought who, but the next minute you know you were friends again. And you're playing cards you're playing games, it was just like if you were sitting there what was wrong with you?

MN: It was very active?

LD: And yes we used to go to the next block, we'd have competitions with blocks, who had the most kids on the block.

[Laughter]

LD: Bruner Ave. we thought we were the it block. Everybody wanted to come to our block. Because we had the most kids on the block.

MN: So being a Bruner chick gave you major status?

LD: We had our skateboards, rollerskates.

OL: Were you unusual in that both your parents were still married? Were your friends parents also married or was that uncommon.

LD: Yes. Two of my best friends, one her parents were still married, the other couple, the one's that were always on punishment, their parents were strict they were married. My boyfriend at the time when I was sixteen, his father died when he was young but you know his mother was still there. But all the parents they were still married.

MN: Was your boyfriend West Indian?

LD: His mother was from here but his father was from St. Thomas.

MN: So did the West Indians and African Americans socialize pretty freely?

LD: Yes.

MN: So there wasn't a big division?

LD: No, because the block, you had to know what was going on with the kids. That's why you couldn't get away with stuff on the block because someone is going to tell you something. Even a neighbor who wasn't African American or West Indian would say something to your parents. You know your child came by my gate and the dog almost bit them because they weren't supposed to be there, things like that. Very strict, across the street too, Mr. Tarbey, he's still there, he was there a long time.

MN: Now is your family still in the same house?

LD: Yes.

MN: And where do you live now?

LD: I live in the borderline of Mount Vernon and the Bronx. BElyeve me if I could buy a house I would buy a house right there in the Bronx. Not my block, except for a house across the street from my mother, I loved that house, I would definitely buy that house, but what they are doing to the Bronx now I don't like. They're breaking down solid houses and building three or four family houses.

MN: Yes, I know I saw in the North Bronx. I was up by this guy Archer's place up in around 244<sup>th</sup> St. and they were putting up all these houses everywhere. Every vacant spot.

LD: Families are selling their land, they are selling their backyards and side houses and yards from their house.

MN: It's just going to be so crowded, and there's no place for the kids to go either. There's no recreation area, there's no gyms, there are no parks. Just packing in the people.

LD: Yes, we had a great time. So many stories you could tell. As I got older we started hanging out in the basements of everyone's house and they wanted to play spades all day. I was like I don't want to play spades let's go outside, do something different. We'd ride our bikes up to Murdock Ave. where all the cute boys were supposedly. And those were the bad boys, they had a store on the corner of Edenwald Ave. where all the boys would hang out. I guess there might have been drugs sold over there but all those guys, a lot of them got in trouble.

MN: Do you think that girls in your neighborhood ended up doing better than the guys, you know professionally, career wise?

LD: Yes. The boys, like my brothers friends they ended up getting in trouble. One got killed, another guy who we loved to death he got killed on a motorcycle. But two others started selling

drugs. One boy, his family moved back to South Carolina or North Carolina and we heard he got killed. These are guys that we played with all day on the street, it was sad to hear what happened.

OL: So what about you, after you graduated from high school, what'd you do and what kind of work do you and your siblings doing now?

LD: Well after high school I went to SUNY Albany for two years. And I didn't like it too much in the cold, and another reason also, I used to make every excuse to come home and go party. I was like the dance queen. I used to go to the house parties, that after hip-hop it was house music.

MN: Now give me some examples of, who were the key figures in house music?

LD: House music was the DJ's. DJ Levine, Larry Levine, and my cousin Curtis's cousin actually. He used to DJ on BLS but he was also a DJ. They still, well Levine is dead you know a lot of these good DJ's are dead.

MN: Did they create their own tapes?

LD: No, they come into the parties and DJ. It's house music, its straight, it's mostly derived from disco.

MN: So it's like Groove is in the Heart, that kind of stuff? Groove is in the Heart--.

LD: Yes. Remember that song we played with the women from the projects. The Girls are Sisters?

MN: The Shantels? No, ESG.

LD: Yes, they played that all the time. They'd mix it with the hip-hop beats from the '70's and then with the disco, that's what I remember.

MN: Like Lisa Lisa Cult Jam, and what was it they used to call that, some people call it Latin hip-hop?

LD: Yes, they played that.

OL: And then in the '80's there is like C&C Music Factory.

MN: C&C Music Factory, yes.

LD: The '80's was house music. For people that were into hip-hop, moving towards that. You know there was a hip-hop, LL Cool J, I was into that too. But I was also, my sisters introduced me to the house music and we used to go to all the houses, underground clubs and move around. You know ABC, Alphabet City.

MN: So you went into Manhattan a lot too?

LD: Well we did go to Stardust Ballroom. Boston Rd. had the hip-hop parties in Stardust.

MN: The Stardust Ballroom that's on Boston Rd. Because there was one down, further south many years ago, it was on Tremont and West Farms.

LD: Right, it moved up. Then I transferred to New York Institute of Technology. I don't know why I went there. I just picked a school and I said this one.

MN: Was the house music more to attract the college crowd do you think?

LD: Yes. Mostly my sister's friends were in college.

MN: So was there almost like a class difference between the people who stayed with hip-hop and the people who listened to house?

LD: Yes, that's true. There was a difference. Because my sisters were in college and their boyfriends were in college, and my cousins who didn't--.

MN: The music I was thinking about they called freestyle, you know like the stuff they play in KTU and stuff like that.

OL: The clubs you were going to were they the kind of clubs where you had to be picked to go in? What was the scene like at the clubs?

LD: Well, the Garage which was open for years before I started going there. You know the Garage in the Village on the West Side? You had to have membership to get in there. So my sister or her boyfriend had membership and once you had membership you could let a certain

amount of people in with your membership. Otherwise you couldn't get in. Before it closed down like in '85 or '87 people from all over the east coast used to come up here and go the Garage because it was open from midnight to six, seven, eight in the morning. A lot of things were going on inside. The music it was just awesome, so that's what I felt, I went from hip-hop to the eighties hip-hop to house music and after house music I don't know what happened.

MN: Where hip-hop went, I guess there's Public Enemy, and then into the west coast stuff.

LD: I didn't get in to all that because I just didn't feel it. It wasn't dance music for me. When I went to a club we would just dance. There was no battling there was no fighting, they started fighting in the clubs with the hip-hop, rap. So when we went to a club it was all dancing until you're sweating. And the music was great. There were no, oh you too cute to dance, it was nothing like that, just dance, people would just grab you and dance.

MN: Was there gay and straight people in the clubs?

LD: Yes.

MN: Yes, so everybody together?

LD: Yes, there were a lot of gays.

OL: You were saying before about the DJ's?

LD: The DJ's a lot of them were gay. Levine died from AIDS, some of them are still around.

We used to go see the shows too. Ten city, that guy who dressed up as a woman?

OL: RuPaul?

MN: RuPaul?

LD: I would've liked to see RuPaul, that was the end of it.

MN: RuPaul, my God memories, memories.

LD: Yes, but music was always a big thing. Even my friend, Sheila and I, best of friends we'd talked about music was a big deal in the house. We always had music playing, we were cleaning



the house, everybody had chores. You had the music Saturday morning playing. You had the old furniture, you know you use it as furniture now, the record player, my father had all the 45's. He had all the 45 and they'd just play.

OL: I know Mark knows this but just for the purposes of the transcription, will you say what you do for a living now?

LD: Yes, I'm a teacher. This is my seventh year, before that, before I started teaching I went to law school. After college I worked as a housing assistant, my father was like you better start working somewhere. I was like okay, I worked as a housing assistant for like three years and I was going to court all the time, you know taking tenants to court for non-payment of rent and then a judge and a lawyer said you know have you ever thought about going to law school? And I was like not really, because you'd be good at it, you know you're doing your court all the time, and I said you know what I know. I don't want to be housing assistant or a district manager like my father says, you can become big if you just stay in there. I said I don't want to do this. So I went to law school and CUNY School of Law. You know you kind of get lost because, you should have an idea of what you want to do, you want to do criminal law you should do that. I came in there thinking I could be a housing lawyer or a public interest lawyer or entertainment, because my boyfriend at the time he was a jazz musician, so I was thinking I could do entertainment. But after I graduated, took the bar and didn't pass, I took the bar a couple of times and didn't pass and then I had my daughter. '96 I graduated and I had my daughter in '97 so that side tracked me, after that I said you know what I don't know if law is going to be for me because I want to be with my daughter, so I just changed up. Started substituting, teaching so that I could stay home with my daughter.

OL: What grade do you teach now? I was teaching 7<sup>th</sup> grade and now I'm going into high school, 11<sup>th</sup> grade history. I'm kind of scared, and college advisor, so I'm doing that.

MN: Okay, Loretta do you have any questions?

Loretta: No.

MN: Well, Lisa thank you so much this was wonderful.

[End of Side B, End of Interview]