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INTERVIEW WITH:

The Honorable Harold James (D)

186th District

Philadelphia County

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Heidi Mays (HM): Good afternoon.

The Honorable Harold James (HJ): Good afternoon.

HM: I'm here today with Representative Harold James who represents the 186th District from Philadelphia County. Thank you for being here with me today.

HJ: Well, thank you for having me. I appreciate the opportunity.

HM: I was wondering if you could tell me a little bit about yourself, specifically your early family life and how you got into politics.

HJ: Well, I guess I'll start, you know, when I was a police officer. I was a Philadelphia police officer. I started out in 1965 as a undercover police officer, and I worked undercover for almost five years in the Special Investigation Squad under Captain [Clarence] Ferguson, so I didn't really learn too much about police work then by being undercover, but I did learn about – I was working on buying narcotics, you know, from different people, and then after so many months, we'd buy narcotics, and then we'd come back and arrest them and that kind of thing. I did that for almost five years, and then I went back to the Police Academy in 1969 and then – start all over again learning how to be a, you know, a real police officer because when you go undercover, they take you out of the Academy within your first week, because they don't want you to gain no habits; they want you to be just like you would be in the street. So, by coming on

the force then, there was then, active in [19]66 and [19]67, we had the civil rights movement, so by being undercover I was involved in a lot of the civil rights activities, and one of the biggest things we had in Philadelphia was Girard College. We had Girard College [which] did not allow African-Americans to go into the college, and it was right there in the heart of the African-American community in North Philly. So, we had marches around the wall, et cetera, et cetera, and I, you know, participated in that and at the same time being a police officer but still keeping contacts in the community. So, then I got involved, going on the force and then became active in, what was called, the Guardian Civic League, which was a organization of African-American police officers, and their focus basically was that we wanted to bridge the gap between the community and police, because you had a lot of friction with police and community riots starting in different cities throughout the, you know, throughout the country. So, I became active in the Guardian Civic League, and of course, we had our clashes with the FOP, which was the Fraternal Order of Police, which was our official union, so we, you know, and had different encounters and different engagements, and then one time the FOP President who – at that time he was the city president, the state president, and the national president all at the same time – made some kind of statement that was insensitive and racist, you know, talking about black people don't do anything except on Sundays they go to church and eat chicken and ride around into the suburban neighborhoods looking for housing. So, we took that as being insensitive, and the Guardian Civic League we went down to the FOP to protest against this racial statement, and one thing led to another, and so that's when I became real active with the Guardian Civic League and said that we needed to be part of this organization so that we can bring some sensitivity to the FOP, and so that we were all supposed to be police officers, we really need to all get along and to fight crime, not supposed to be fighting each other. So, that's why I became active, and then all of a sudden I

became active, became a district leader, and then I eventually got elected to Vice-President, and then, I think, in about 19 – well, after we did that, and we had a big confrontation with the FOP, got over that, and then we started forming – found out that there was other organizations like ours in different parts of the city and different parts of the country, so we started trying to form a national organization. So in 1972, we formed the National Black Police Association. We all met in St. Louis, different organizations throughout the country, because we figured that was the middle of the country, so we met there because on the East Coast you had one organization called COPS, which was the Coalition of Society of Police Officers, and then in the Midwest they had a group, and in the West they had a group, so we all met in St. Louis to try to form a national – we came up with the National Black Police Association. So, we formed that and I became active in that. I became a regional Chairman, and so that's how I became involved and active in championing African-American and rights, and civil rights, you know, by being on the police force and trying to make sure that everybody be equal and fair, because at that time there was a lot of unfairness and unequal justice in the community and with police departments.

HM: Very interesting. So, is that how then you decided to become a House Member?

HJ: Well.

HM: Did that kind of roll into – ?

HJ: That kind-of worked into where we became active and understanding dealing, because we started filing lawsuits against the city for discriminatory practices in hiring, discipline, and

promotions, and so we started doing it throughout the country. And at that time, the Federal Government was giving out, what they call, Law Enforcement Assistance Grants to municipalities throughout the country and cities for increasing law enforcement activity. Then so we started saying that if they're unfair, we started suing and winning those lawsuits that the money from the Federal Government could not go to the city because they were discriminatory practices, and so that made the city start enhancing to trying to adjust to the fact that they had to deal with racial discrimination, and so that's what happened. Then along came – we had a guy named Rizzo [Frank Lazarro Rizzo, Mayor of Philadelphia, 1972-1979] who became the Police Commissioner in Philadelphia among some politics, and, and he was very controversial, to say the least, and so then he was very popular in terms of dealing with police and said police couldn't do no wrong, and so then I think the Philadelphia Police Department got sued by the Justice Department for abuse. I was questioned because I was active with the Guardian Civic League in terms of the abuse, because every time I would see abuse, I would report it, you know, to authorities or to the hierarchy in the department, and they would say, "Well, why didn't you take no action?" I said, "Well, how can I take action? You know, my job is to report it," and so we started doing that. And then as our organization started to grow, they would harass us and threaten to suspend us and give us disciplinary action and made us feel as though that we was going to get fired, and so some of the guys got together. We all formed to say that we might get fired, but we're going to be able to make things better by continuing our activities. So, we continued the activities and took out lawsuits, and we became successful in dealing with those lawsuits, and so the city had to back up. And then one time, I had to take out a lawsuit against the police Commissioner because, by that time, Rizzo had become the Mayor, and then I had to take out a lawsuit against the police department for harassment because I felt as though there was

harassment because we started holding in the community what we called rap sessions, where we did this off duty. And so, we would have meetings in churches and invite the community in to share what they needed to do in terms of dealing with police abuse or police irregularity or unjust, unfair treatment. So, the Internal Affairs division would call us down and ask us why we did this and why we did that and, you know, and we would say we did this on our own time and off duty, and they would say that, "Well, you, you can't do that," or, "You can't do this," and finally, when the one of the lawsuits was settled, they said that they would stop harassing us, and they said even though they weren't harassing us, they would stop, and so they backed up, and we backed up, and then they came out with a – I think Rizzo came out with a – where he wanted to run a third time as Mayor, and there was a referendum or a question that was going to be on the ballot, and so it was nonpartisan, so people could be active in that that really were civil servants, so we became active in that, and we was against allowing the third term, you know, on the ballot, and that, that was defeated back in, I think it was in, oh, might have been the [19]69 or [19]70, 70 – no, [19]79. Yeah, that's when that was defeated, so Rizzo couldn't run again as the Mayor. And at that time, that's when we became very popular among the community because of our activity and the fact that we had challenged the system with the threat of being fired, so our credibility became real high, and then at that point we had recommended an African-American to be deputy commissioner and that was accepted. And that's when I started learning about politics, and even though as a civil service person they said you couldn't be involved in politics, but you understood that politics controlled everything. And so, then I looked at that and my friend, John Green – I became president of the Guardian Civic League in 1977, and I became National President in 1976 of the national organization, and so Chicago had already faced their African-American Police League out there, and they was very advanced in their lawsuits, so we

went out there [to] learn how they did their lawsuits and came back and copied and did the same thing in Philadelphia, and so that's how we became very active and popular, and then my friend decided that one day that – and then in the [19]80's, we decided that maybe we got to get involved in politics.

HM: Okay, so who approached you about maybe getting involved in politics?

HJ: Well, John Green. After I was President from [19]77 to [19]81 in the Guardian Civic League, he took over as President, because we had first ran against each other, and the election turned out to be a tie, and, you know, 400-some people voted and the election turned out to be a tie, so we had to run again, and I won by two votes the next time, so he worked with me, and we decided to work with each other. He worked with me for those four years, and then the next four years he became President, and so he started talking about the fact that he might want to run for office. At that time, back – and then in 1979, I was off duty, and I saw a police officer in trouble, and I went to his aid in a robbery not too far from my house, and I got shot in the line of duty. I got shot when I was off duty, but I got shot trying to help this other police officer, and it broke my arm, the bullet broke my arm, and they shot at me again, but fortunately, it didn't hit me, but the guy's was caught within, you know, so many minutes. Then after that, I had to go to special rehab, and I was injured on duty for a while, and then he decided that he may want to run for office, so in [19]80 – I think it was [19]87, he decided to run for Sheriff of Philadelphia, and he won. You know, we beat the Democratic Party for the Sheriff, and he took over. He took over Sheriff in [19]87, ran in [19]86, and so I said, "Wow, he ran for Sheriff. I need to look at what's going on in my area," so I looked at the person who was the State Representative in my

area, and I saw there was not a lot of activity, and so I said, “Well, I think I might try that” – and I was already looking at the fact that – because, my injury where I got shot in and also had a knee injury, and they had had a operation on my knee, so looked like I was going to be able to get a disability, you know, for my injuries, so I decided that that’s what I would do. So, in [19]88 – in [19]87, I retired from the police department. I was 45 years of age, because at that time you could retire [at] 45, and with 20 years in, and so I retired, and I had 22 years in, and on my birthday I went down and retired, and then I started helping my friend John Green run for Sheriff because he had won the Primary, and then he won the election in November, and then I helped him, and then the next year I decided to run for State Rep[resentative].

HM: So, the experiences that you gained by helping your friend helped you, ultimately.

HJ: Oh, yeah, oh, definitely, definitely helped me in terms of understanding, you know, because I didn’t understand the election process at that time, but I did learn the process real quick, you know, when he was running, and then it was very exciting.

HM: Well, what influences do you feel shaped you to become a Democrat?

HJ: Well, the fact that the Democrats was the ones I – I come from a Democratic town, Democratic background and family, and it seemed like the Democrats was always trying to help the little person, help the person that tried to – with the jobs, with the unions, et cetera, and that’s what I wanted to do. I wanted to continue to help people because that’s why I went into being police officer, to help people, because even though you saw so much wrong and unjust, I figured

that if you're ordered to make it right – and I came along during the Martin Luther King history and circle, talk about if you wanted to do something about changing a system, you need to be part of the system, so that's what I learned, and that's what I wanted to do.

HM: Was anybody in your family involved in politics?

HJ: No. Nobody in my family was involved in politics. My father worked for the Philadelphia Gas Company. My mother worked in a factory, and then she, you know, she stopped working to take care of me and my brother, and then 16 years after my brother was born, we had a little sister, but nobody involved in politics. I was the first one.

HM: Well, once you decided to make a run for the State House, did you like to campaign?

HJ: Yeah. I think it was interesting, because by me being active with the Guardian Civic League and out there in the community, I had achieved a certain credibility with people in starting programs, because I started a program with the Guardian Civic League of having these rap sessions in the community. I started a program of helping people to become a police officer. We studied how the test was done, and then we would give classes for people to be that at it was called the Police Applicant Program. I started that, so I was used to trying to help people and so it wasn't nothing to go into politics and say, "I want to do the same thing we did in the police department to make the police department better. I want to make politics better and make it better for us to understand how politics work and how I can help with it." In fact, with the Rizzo

days we knew how he controlled everything through politics and everything, so we definitely wanted to make sure that it trickled down in our community.

HM: Well, your first run was against an incumbent.

HJ: That's right.

HM: His name was Edward Wiggins?

HJ: That's correct. Right.

HM: Was that a difficult challenge to defeat an incumbent?

HJ: Yeah. It was difficult because, you know, you figure you was running on your credibility. There was not a lot of visibility by him in the district the last few years, and so I went to him and asked him about running and saying that, you know, did he want to retire, and I would run. He said, "No, you got to run for it," because I knew you had to have ten years in order to retire. So, I ran, and I had a good name recognition, you know, from the Guardian Civic League, and then on Election Night, on the Primary night, they said that I lost by 75 votes, and I figured if I came that close I couldn't have lost, you know, because there was another guy that ran, and his name was Sam Jones, and he was first on the ballot. I think I was third or either second, and so I figured that he took some votes away from me, because he got more votes – because he had ran some time before – he got more votes than he ever did before running, and so that night we

looked at the returns, me and a couple of my friends and John – I told you that I helped John; he became the Sheriff. He was already the Sheriff then this year – and so, we looked at where some of the numbers was wrong, and the numbers were turned around, and so we said, “Wow, it looked like somebody didn’t do some things right.” So, we went checking and checking, and then I talked to Congressman Bill Gray [William Herbert Gray, III, U.S. Representative, 1979-1992] at that time, and he asked me, you know, did I want to get a lawyer, and I said, “Yeah,” and so we got a lawyer. At that time Representative Louise Bishop [State Representative, Philadelphia County, 1991-present] had ran, Representative [W.] Curtis Thomas [State Representative, Philadelphia County, 1991-present], and Representative Anthony Williams [State Representative, Philadelphia County, 1991-1998; State Senator, 1999-present]; all four of us had ran at that time, and we all were successful. So, after we challenged the election returns and looked at the machines, it came out that I had really won by 35 votes – or, 52 votes total.

HM: That’s very close.

HJ: Yes, that was close, because before we counted, I was up by seven. We would go up, down, up, down, and then we went in to count the machines, and it come out that I won by 52 votes, and we had 63 divisions, so I won by less than one vote per division.

HM: Wow. Well, can you describe the 186th District, please?

HJ: Yeah, well, the 186th District covers parts of South and Southwest Philly, and we had about, at that time, 63 divisions, which now, we grew to 80-some divisions based on the two census

periods that have been in since I've been in office, and is basically a working district. The average age I would say is about 40, you know, we have about a third seniors, a third, you know, poor, and a third, you know, middle and upper, so it has a variety spread of the districts. It goes from, like, maybe South Street to Passyunk, you know. It's from the Schuylkill River to Broad Street and a little bit out Southwest Philadelphia going out, down Gray's Ferry Avenue over to Woodland Avenue from, like, 49th to 54th.

HM: Have you seen many changes in your district through the years?

HJ: Yes. I've seen the property values have really gone out the roof now, in terms of where I've seen neighborhoods where they were devastated and poor neighborhoods that now houses selling for 200,000 dollars and a half million dollars are in the area of Carpenter Street, where there was a real notorious gang problems back in the [19]60s and the [19]50s. Now those people have moved out, and they've built new housing. You've seen way out in Southwest Philly they're building up in terms of housing. Back in South Philly, there's the building of houses, so I seen a lot of changes in the area. In fact, it looks like now Center City is moving south towards – they calling it South Center City, Southwest Center City.

HM: So, positive changes.

HJ: Oh, yeah, positive changes, definitely.

HM: Great. Would you say your district is unique or similar to other districts in nearby Philadelphia County?

HJ: I would say similar to – basically, mostly districts are pretty much similar in, you know, to your adjoining district, you know, my adjoining district is, you know, covers, you know, Center City and further out. I'm in between Center City and further than South Philly, and so I would say they were similar.

HM: Okay. How do you feel you represented your constituents by providing them with what types of services?

HJ: Well, I think what I did was accessibility, and the fact that one thing I started was to have office hours on Saturday, and I would – you know, because I figured that a lot of times people couldn't get to the office during regular, like, nine to five, so I would keep my office open till six o'clock on Thursdays and sometime on Fridays and open later so we can close later and then open on Saturdays. Then I started providing, you know, where I noticed people would come out on Saturdays, and I would do, like, three hours or four hours on Saturday, and then I started providing where we would have an attorney we're he would be free of charge, he would come in the office on one Saturday a month to hear constituent concerns, and it would be at no charge. Now, of course, if there were other legal services that developed from that, then there would be a charge, but it wouldn't be as much as it was if the person walked in off the street, so that was, I thought, was successful. And the fact with being able to get – once Dwight Evans [State Representative, Philadelphia County, 1981-present] became Chair of the Appropriations

Committee, and he started sharing with us about Legislative Initiative money, that was very helpful in terms of bringing money back into the district and to community-based organizations.

HM: Did you have a newsletter?

HJ: Yes, yeah, I did a newsletter, well, you know, once or twice a year.

HM: Do you have a Web site?

HJ: Yes, we have a Web site. I think it's: www.pahouse –

HM: Okay.

HJ: (slash) /james.

HM: Yeah. We're just also thinking about in terms of changes, since you probably were first elected. I don't know if you had a Web site whenever you're first elected.

HJ: Oh, no, no, we didn't have that when we first got elected. No, we got all of that, you know, I think we adapted to the times. The House – yeah, we always did have a newsletter, and the Web site came along, the computer age came along, and then emailing, and so that where we used to have, the last couple terms, we have what we call the email blasts where people wanted to be informed of information, and I think education and information is power and knowledge,

and so I always thought it was very important for people to have information, because it was not for our committee people and our ward leaders that help us get elected each term, we would not be, you know, elected. And they would not be involved with our churches, and I've started a ministers' breakfast where we would meet, you know, maybe once every couple of months with the different ministers in the neighborhood and the community then deal with that and trying to improve community activity.

HM: You're talking about accessibility. Now that you have, probably, a Blackberry –

HJ: Oh, yeah, right.

HM: And a cell phone.

HJ: We have the Blackberry and the cell phone, and, and that allows us to get our E-mails and be able to check E-mails, because your emails get full up so fast if you don't go ahead and take them out; they bounce right back on you.

HM: Well, do you feel being a Representative is a 24-hour a day job?

HJ: Oh, yeah. I think it is more than a full-time job because you – I mean, when you walk the streets, you see people, and people see you. They need, want something, asking you questions. You go in the grocery store, you go to church, you know. In fact, there was a program that I adopted from the Sheriff. The Sheriff had started where he would go to churches every fourth

Sunday around the city, so I started a program where I would go to a church in my district and set up, after service, where people can ask me questions about the State, you know, like, every fifth Sunday we would do that at a different church.

HM: Well, great programs.

HJ: Yeah.

HM: Well, whenever you first came to the House, what were your first impressions of the building, of the job?

HJ: Well, the building was awesome. It was just – I mean, the architectural work, the way it was crafted, I just think it's awesome. It's still awesome, and I just, I love the institution. You learn about the institution. You learn how to – you learn about politics, and politics is about giving, you know. It's not about always winning. It's about giving up some things in order to gain what you need to gain.

HM: Whenever you sat down in your seat for the first time, do you remember who you sat beside?

HJ: I remember who I sat behind. *(laugh)*

HM: Okay.

HJ: I sat behind Dave Richardson [David; State Representative, Philadelphia County, 1973-1996].

HM: Oh.

HJ: Who was a institution in himself and who's always been a leader in our city in terms of dealing with African-American issues and injustices. So, you know, sitting behind him was like a learning – I knew him from being active in the police department, so definitely, sitting beside him – and also one of the Hispanic Members, I think it was Ralph Acosta [State Representative, Philadelphia County, 1985-1994] at the time. I sat beside him, and I think that's, that's what I remember at that time.

HM: Okay.

HJ: Oh, and then, you know, and then, of course, Tony Williams and Curtis Thomas because we all came around the same time, and Louise Bishop.

HM: Okay. Whenever you took your office here in Harrisburg, did you share an office with anyone?

HJ: Yes. When I first took my office, Representative Tony Williams and myself shared an office: 101, on the first floor.

HM: Do you feel that anybody served as a mentor to you whenever you first came to Harrisburg?

HJ: Oh, yeah, Dave Richardson, Dwight Evans. I learned a lot from them two. I think Dwight Evans is about one of the most smoothest and sophisticated elected officials I've seen. About the most honest in terms of sincere and working, trying to get things done for the people, and works behind the scenes a lot and doing it, and, you know, across the lines; Republican, Democrat, you know. He really knows how to work it.

HM: How long do you think it took you to learn the system in Harrisburg?

HJ: I think about my third term I really started to understand the process, because it seemed like in the first term, you know, you seem to, like, left the field on your own, though your Caucus, you can always go to your Caucus for different help and that kind of stuff. And then you have some of the Members that had time like Dwight and Dave, they would share – and also Representative Hughes [Vincent; State Representative, Philadelphia County, 1987-1994; State Senator, 1995-present] at the time was a big help to me who I sat, you know, right next to, also, was a big help in terms of us being able to accomplish what we need to accomplish and learn how to exist in this here new field.

HM: Throughout your tenure you had introduced numerous pieces of prime sponsored legislation.

HJ: Right.

HM: Of which legislation do you think you're the most proud of?

HJ: Well, I think that the latest I've done is as I've introduced earned time legislation over and over again, but this last term the Speaker [Dennis M. O'Brien; State Representative, Philadelphia County, 1977-1980, 1983-present; Speaker, 2007-2008] introduced some legislation on prison reform and included the earned time aspect of what I had introduced before in there, so, you know, I didn't mind not getting the credit, because I think what's more important is that the results you get, the effect of what you want done, and the effect I wanted was earned time to be accepted in terms of people being able to use that in terms of being able to help their prison correction department in terms of helping people, because there's a good tool in effect, and so I think we got that passed, and I'm not sure where it is in the Senate, but that was one. The first bill I passed had to do with a lot of – back in the drug, you know, when we had a lot of drug activity back in the [19]80's when we got the forfeiture in terms of money laundering. I introduced a bill then that dealt with money laundering that was accepted into law.

HM: A lot of your issues, I think, stem from your experiences as a police officer.

HJ: Oh, yeah.

HM: So, with the things that specifically dealt with police issues and corrections and criminal justice.

HJ: Right. A lot of criminal justice stuff, because I had went to our Leadership about being on the Judiciary Committee, because there was not many African-Americans – I'm not sure whether there were any on the Judiciary Committee when I first came on – and so, the Leadership, and I think it was under, yeah, under DeWeese [H. William; State Representative, Fayette, Green and Washington Counties, 1979-present; Speaker, 1993-1994] I definitely got on it. That's when I got onto there, because there was a takeover of the House Leadership from DeWeese from O'Donnell [Robert W.; State Representative, Philadelphia County, 1973-1993; Speaker, 1991-1992], so.

HM: Did you ever get frustrated by the process?

HJ: Yeah, you get frustrated because in terms of legislation that you want done and – but you think, that frustration is easily erased by the fact that the people in the community that you're able to help the constituents in terms of going through state services, or helping with a lot of city services. Most people come to the offices not for State services; for city services. But, you're able to guide them through, with your relationships that you have with your council people, which I had a good relationship with Anna Brenner, who subsequently became the council president and now the council president, and so our office always worked together, and that time our Senator was Senator Hardy Williams [State Representative, Philadelphia County, 1971-1982;

State Senator, 1983-1998] whose son was serving with me when we came in. Anthony is now the Senator in the District now.

HM: One of the issues that the Legislature is looking at currently is the gun reform. Do you have any thoughts about that?

HJ: Well, I think that's really hard. I mean, we tried to – dealing with guns, you know, ever since, you know, we've been here and how it's been such a problem in Philadelphia, but just seeing that the Legislators here don't understand that or don't care. I think it's more the fact that they don't care because it doesn't impact them or their district. We even tried to deal with reporting stolen guns or lost guns, making that – there's no law, but just making that a law, getting that reported. So when the city became so frustrated that the city passed a city ordinance in terms of that you have to report that, lost and stolen guns, and so it was really – but I think that we just have to keep doing it, keep working it, keep looking out for the other Members, hopefully that they will understand, because at least now the violence and the shootings have went down in Philly this year, but every year prior, like the last four or five years, it was going up, and so, you know, and in fact, my district four years ago had one of the highest rates of young people killed under 21 years of age. So much, in fact, that Mayor Street [John F.; Mayor of Philadelphia, 2000-2007] had community meetings with people and then to say, "What can we do to make changes?" So, which was good; he came to the community. As a result of that, people who met community leaders talked about the fact that there was too many young people out on the streets late at night. So, he came up with this idea about curfew centers, and where we started a curfew center at one of our community centers, called the Dixon House, under the

direction of Diversified Community Services. We had the Dixon House, which was a community center, and so what happened is people that would get caught after curfew, instead of being arrested, would go to this curfew center and the services, there would be city services there to help people, whether there was a problem with their family, or a food problem, discipline problem, whatever, and that they would contact the parents that would have to come get them from this curfew center, and it would not be an arrest, and that worked. And then if nobody came and got them by the next morning, then they would be turned over to the youth authorities – I mean youth workers of the child youth services, and we didn't have too many people do that, but it did have a impact in terms of reducing the violence in the South Philadelphia community. So, the fact that Mayor Street, at that time, then started opened up curfew centers throughout the city.

HM: So, maybe, it just makes me wonder if legislation is needed. I mean, because the community is certainly being very proactive in these issues. I mean, the issues are so complex.

HJ: Right, the legislation is needed to help. When we talk about certain legislation is needed to help the city, I remember that Dwight Evans brought the Judiciary Committee. We came around, had meetings all around the city. He even met before he ran for mayor. He met with little, small group around the city trying to address what the problems were, where we met with the police officers, we met with the community leaders, we met with ministers, in trying to address those problems. So, the legislation is needed that's going to help the city. When it come to guns, it was not happening here in the Legislature. They would not adhere to dealing with guns, even though we had Governor Rendell [Edward G.; Governor of Pennsylvania, 2003-

present] make a strong appeal before the Judiciary Committee trying to do it, but they did not want to deal with anything with the guns. But, when you talk about let's add years onto sentences and mandatory sentence, they're quick to want to do that but not do things that we say need to be done in order to help. So, we got to still keep working at that.

HM: Well, some of the other things that we had found as we researched you that you also fought for African-Americans and other minorities during your terms. Over the last 20 years, have you seen a change in people's, you know, perspectives or, you know, is there anything that you'd like to share about that?

HJ: Yeah, I think, I think we always, as African-Americans, we always have to – it's a shame – but we always have to fight for equal rights, unfair treatment, injustice in the justice system. They did a study here, a Supreme Court study, on racial and gender bias, was done several years ago. Something that we had been saying all along; that there's unfair and there's unequal treatment in the justice system. We have been saying that African-Americans in the police department – when I was in the police department, when I first came here, but then the study came out to affirm the fact that it is, and as a result of that, they started a task force that now dealing with – though it's real slow, it's not funded properly, so by not being funded properly, it can't really address the problems properly, so – but it is slowly being addressed by some of the people, and I think the Supreme Court Justice, you know, who was part of it when it first started was very helpful and now, as long as they continue, and I think that [Ronald D.] Castille who's the Chief Justice now, as long as they continue doing it and working in that area, I think that that would help in terms of the justice trying to make it equal and make it fair to the fact that I didn't

think Obama [Barack; President of the United States, 2009-present] would come this far in terms of being the Democratic nominee for President because of the racism that continues to exist in the country and in the state, and so, I didn't think it would come this far, but I'm glad and proud that it is, and hopefully, we can get those fears out and maybe make him President. *(laugh)*

HM: The Pennsylvania Minority Business Development Authority was an important organization to you. Could you describe your relationship with it?

HJ: Yeah, that was an organization that encouraged and helped minority businesses as they continue to grow. I was really sad that they reduced it to almost nothing, and they, you know, like, merged it in with another, I think, DCED [Department of Community and Economic Development] or even Commerce. But, I think by it being by itself had more impact in terms of influence on businesses. I was able to use that organization's help to get a funeral home in my district. The Mitchum Funeral Home on 20th and Reed was able to get money from that Minority Business, and to where they redeveloped their whole front, and they turned, like, almost a quarter of a block in terms of to a beautiful place, and I think that even though there's some now under the Governor Rendell, there's some power, some levee, that seems to works on increasing minority and women participation, it's still not enough as it needs to be.

HM: Before I turn my attention from your legislative work to your committee work, is there anything else you'd like to add about?

HJ: Well, I can't think of anything at this time, except the fact that one of the other pieces of legislation that I continue to push, that I got from the Sheriff, was that there's money that's left over from Sheriff sales, and that if the people don't get the money – it stays in the city for five to seven years – and if nobody claims that money, it then goes to the state, and that money is always available if any of the family members ever wanted to come back to get that, and that's something that I continue to share with the community, because they didn't realize that and that people get that. So that, I proposed a bill with the Sheriff's advice, John Green, that if we would take some of that money that is kept in the State and make it under FHA [Federal Housing Administration], just use it like the GI Bill to help people in terms of home loans and being able to help with mortgages and repairing the homes. That might be helpful in terms of this crisis that's going on now.

HM: That's very pertinent.

HJ: Yeah, so, I'm going to share that with someone.

HM: Well, you were involved with several Committees during your time, some for just one Session, such as Finance from 1995-96, and others for much longer, the Judiciary when you were the Subcommittee Chairman on Crimes and Corrections from [19]93 to 2008. Did you have a favorite Committee?

HJ: Yeah, my favorite Committee was basically Judiciary Committee, because so many bills come through the Judiciary Committee dealing with crime and criminal justice matters, and the

fact that I became the Chairman of the Crime and Corrections, dealing with a lot of issues as relates to prison and incarceration, et cetera, so that was basically my favorite Committee. I remember one time when they first put me on Agriculture back in the early [19]90's, and I said, "Now, what I am doing on Agriculture Committee?" But, then I learned the relationships and build relationships with people that had other kind of problems. But, in my district one of the things that people come to my office for more than anything else is for food; food referrals and to get food from food banks, et cetera, et cetera. So, we do a lot of that, so that was interesting, and then I, of course, after a short hiatus from that, and now I'm back on the Agriculture Committee now again, so.

HM: Well, you were the first Chairperson of the Gaming Oversight Committee.

HJ: Right.

HM: What has that been like?

HJ: Well, that has really been interesting and trying. I think that when we passed gaming I didn't realize that I was going to become the first Chairman of that Committee or that it was going to become a Committee, but I think in the light of what has happened here under the vision of our Leadership Bill DeWeese, Keith McCall [State Representative, Carbon and Luzerne Counties, 1991-2010; Speaker, 2009-2010], Dwight Evans, the seniors found out that, that they going to need a special committee just to deal with gaming oversight, and it was successful, even though the Senate hasn't come around to that yet, but, but we have done that with the Tourism

Committee, had done part of that, I think, before. But I think that where it showed that we've gotten the revenue more than we expected, even though all of the facilities are not up and running now. We're dealing with the two from Philadelphia, which needs to be up, but what happened now we was able to give a lot of money back to taxpayers and property tax benefit and some into the city of Philadelphia in waste tax benefits, and I think we'll be able to do much more as they come online. There's been a very interesting – we went to all of the gaming facilities that has been open now. I think it's about seven now, and we recently started going back to the ones that have racetracks, because there's been some problem and concerns with the race horsing part of it and building up the back – they call it the back stretch or something like that – the backside, that's what they call it – and trying to rebuild that up because it was horrible before in terms of – but now that because of the revenue that's coming in from slots and the revenue that's coming in for the racehorse industry, they're able to start doing that, building up, and it's looking good.

HM: What special issues do you feel this Committee faces as far as – I mean, you've had everything leveled with Mr. DeNaples.

HJ: (laugh)

HM: I mean, seriously. Gaming Anonymous, you know, you've had all kinds of issues that I'm sure you've had to deal with –

HJ: Right.

HM: – in this Committee, and it being a brand new Committee, you don't have anyone to really look to; so tell me, how did you – ?

HJ: Well, I think that the Gaming Control Board – I think that we have to give credit to the people that really put the law together. The staff people that sat down and made it the way it did because it looks good in terms of that. Of course, there may need to be some things in terms of tweaking it and that that come along, but at this time I think that we need to work on what we need to work on in terms of doing that. I think the Gaming Control Board is doing a good job in terms of what they doing. Of course, you have these political issues where the Republicans are trying to say this ain't working, or that ain't working and trying to bring out the DeNaples issue, but I think that the Gaming Control Board has been successful, and that what we're hearing is the political side of the certain people that want to either run for office or wants to be Governor or wants to run for office at sometime, making certain issues, trying to create some concern when, I think, as the Committee we are dealing with those concerns and are going to deal with them.

HM: Well, you have a very formidable task, I must say. *(laugh)*

HJ: Yes.

HM: You've also served as the Chairman of the Pennsylvania Legislative Black Caucus.

HJ: Yes.

HM: What was your experiences with that?

HJ: Well, that was very exciting. Unfortunately at the time, Dave Richardson who helped me in terms of achieving that position, he died. I think I got that position in [19]93 or [19]94, and he died in [19]95, so that was a real loss, you know, to the Caucus at that time, but of course, we got John Myers [State Representative, Philadelphia County, 1995-present] who came in under Dave. But, my experience as Chair of the Black Caucus was to try to enhance more perspective of terms of being in government and, and Secretaries of the different branches of government, to understand what some of our concerns was as it relates to the African-American community, and I think we had several meetings with the Secretaries so that we can bridge those kind of gaps, and so they can be much more understanding as to some of the concerns and sensitivity that we needed to share and have, and I think that it did help and work, and we continue to do that.

HM: So, it was an active Caucus.

HJ: Oh, yes, we were very much active.

HM: Thinking about your relationships, you mentioned several people. Do you feel a special bond with any one person or a group of people?

HJ: Well, I think my bond is with a group of people. I mean, of course, we have the Philadelphia delegation, which I'm closely related to and an active part of because of Jewell

Williams [State Representative, Philadelphia County, 2001-present] who was the delegation leader. Before that, we had Louise Williams Bishop, who was the delegation chair at that point, and prior to that, you know, going all the way back before Dwight was the Appropriations Chair when we had Dwight Evans was the chair leader in that. But, I think I have a close bond with Dwight Evans. You know, I supported him. I thought he would have been the best Mayor for the city of Philadelphia, because of his relationships with the state and the way he was able to bridge that – in fact, he had ran for Lieutenant Governor and came in second or third, because he had those kind of relationships. So, I think I have a special bond with, with all of those, particularly the members of the Pennsylvania Legislative Black Caucus, a special bond with people that I share a district to border on: Representative Babette Josephs [State Representative, Philadelphia County, 1985-present], Representative Bill Keller [William; State Representative, Philadelphia County, 1993-present], we border districts in terms of that, and so I think I share that. That's why I say it's a group of people.

HM: As you look back on your time here, are there any stories that you'd like to share whenever you think about your time here? Maybe on the Chamber, or something that may have happened in Committee? Is there one particular story you like to tell people about your, you know, time here in the House?

HJ: Well, there's so many stories, and I just don't know which one to start with, but the one story I can remember now that I thought stood out was Dave Richardson again. Dave Richardson – when there was something that came up on the Floor that impacted adversely on African-Americans, Dave would bring out these books, and it would almost be like a filibuster

on the Floor, where he would read from this and read from that, and then we would hear some of the Members talk about, oh, he's filibustering, you know, but, and he would say, "No, I'm not filibustering. I'm going from this and going from that," and I just thought that he was a champion of leading those fights and those causes, and that was a story in itself in terms of that, so we definitely miss him, and the fact that they had talked about three strikes, and you're out. I remember that was a famous saying when people was locking up, throwing away the key, and, and then so I came up with, "How about four balls, and you're on?" And so, I made that in our comments and my remarks. When we had his memorial service on the Floor, I stated that, and so I just thought that that was a story in itself that I will always like to remember.

HM: We often talk about – in my interviews with Representatives – about their relationships with the media. Did you have a positive experience with your news coverage?

HJ: Yeah, I think that – I didn't have too much of a problem with media coverage. I always thought it seemed to be okay with me, you know. Whatever I had to do I did, and, you know, whatever they wanted to report on, they report on.

HM: Okay.

HJ: You know, I just figure that you do what you're supposed to do. Do right and working, and that's it.

HM: In your time here, were you witness to any major events that shook, you know, the House of Representatives up? For example, September 11th. Were you – ?

HJ: Oh, yeah, I was here. In fact they, they told me to get out of my office, and I remember September 11th my secretary at the time, her name was Martha [Lee], and I was meeting her over here because I usually come over between nine and ten, and of course, you know, everything started around eight-ish, I think, and everybody was glued to the television and I called her over here and told her I was coming over, and I was coming over about the same time as they didn't find the third plane, and, and there was a question as to where this third plane was going, whether it was coming here to Pennsylvania or hit the Capitol or going to Washington. So, I got here in the Capitol, and the Capitol Police said that I had to leave the office, and I said, "Well, why I got to leave the office?" And they said, "Well, we don't know where the plane is coming," so I said, "Okay, well, maybe that's a reason to leave the office." So me and her, we left the office and went and had breakfast and watched it on television. So, I was here for that, and that was really a very sad occasion because I had just came back from Egypt in August. I had participated in a program called the Dessert Club where they take young African-Americans to Africa, and you participate in a two-year program, so two of my children had participated in that program. In fact, one, my son, who I just had on the Floor today who just graduated from the Marines, he went to Egypt, him and my daughter who, at that time, had her tenth birthday over there in 2001, and so I had three children over there at the time: Dawn, Ebony, and Jamal. And we went there, and we just got back the middle of August, and then this happened, so we was fortunate in that sense. But, it was one of the most fascinating trips I ever experienced in

terms of being over there in Egypt for ten days. It's fascinating just seeing the history and what it was like and experiencing it.

HM: Thanks for sharing that. Do you have a fondest memory of serving here?

HJ: Fondest memory. Well, I think my fondest memory is every time I get Sworn-In. I think that, that is the most get along day. Everybody gets along that I've seen since I've been there, except when we had the time where the Democrats took over the House again. You know, that was a little controversy the last time when we put in a Republican Speaker. That was really interesting. That was exciting, and that was different, but other than that, I think every time you get Sworn-In, having your children here holding the Bible and getting Sworn-In, and of course, the day when I was able to announce my son's graduation from Paris Island, South Carolina and in the Marines, and by Bill DeWeese being a former Marine, I thought that was great. And I guess my next finest day will be my remarks when I leave. *(laugh)*

HM: Well, that's something we actually didn't touch on. That was kind of a major historic event, a Republican being Sworn-In as Speaker.

HJ: Oh yea, and nominated by the Democrat. *(laugh)*

HM: In a Democratically controlled House. Were you involved in any of those discussions prior to that occurring?

HJ: Yeah, I was involved in the – myself, Representative Jewell Williams, with Representative Dwight Evans – we were, like, a couple days before that, we was talking about what the different probabilities were, and at that time, it hadn't got to where it would be a Republican at that time, but until the day before, I think, there was some discussion going on along that way and, you know, but it was really interesting and exciting and different and unexpected. *(laugh)*

HM: So, you were surprised as a Member, as well?

HJ: Well, no, because I knew before it happened at that time that, a few hours before that that, that was going to happen. We just didn't know how it was going to go. *(laugh)*

HM: Okay.

HJ: I wasn't sure.

HM: Okay. Do you have any regrets looking back?

HJ: Well, none that I can think of, except that I wish I could've – always wish you could do more. Wish I could have provided more money. I was real proud in terms of being able to bring Capitol money into my district. I was able to bring in 750,000 thousand dollars to the YMCA for remodeling. I was able to bring in one-point-two million dollars to Diversified Community Service, Capitol money in order to rebuild the Diversified Community Service, right along the Point Breeze strip. I was able to bring in, you know, almost two million dollars in terms of

legislative initiative grants to over 125 community based organizations. So, you know, I just wish I could have done more. *(laugh)*

HM: Do you think you'll stay active in politics?

HJ: Well, I think I will be active in politics to some degree, because once you get it in you, you always have it in you. How active you be, you know, remains to be seen, remains to be whether or not you have a lot of money or not a lot of money, et cetera.

HM: Well, we look forward to always, so, do you have any thoughts as, you know, people will be soon being Sworn-In again. Do you have any, I guess, insight as to what would make a good Representative?

HJ: Well, I think what makes a good Representative is doing constituent work. I think that doing your constituent work and listening to the people, being there for the people. I think that gets you elected over and over and over again. In terms of me maybe not being reelected this time, I thought I did a lot of constituent work. I put in the time, went there on holidays, on Saturdays, on the weekends, but of course, you got to be out there in the community. You got to be out there. I was sick last year, had a major illness and a major operation that kind-of slowed me down this time, and I think that I might regret the fact that I didn't campaign more or harder, but sometimes you can't just rest on the fact that you have done a lot of constituent work and not being out there shaking hands and meeting the people like you need to be, in terms of being reelected. You got to continue to do that, and you can't forget that, and I think that makes you a

good Representative in terms of listening to the people, adhering to them, and trying to do what the people want.

HM: Well, I always let the Representatives have the last word, so is there anything else you'd like to add?

HJ: Well, I just think that I just want to thank you. I want to thank the House of Representatives. I think it has been a fantastic experience, in terms of the support services that you provide, that the House provides, that the Caucus provides. The support staff is just phenomenal here, and I really thank all of you for all the help, and hopefully, that we can continue to help each other as we proceed.

HM: Thank you very much for taking the time out of your busy schedule to have this interview with me.

HJ: Thank you very much.