L. Clifford Davis – Interview Transcript

JENAY WILLIS:
Good afternoon. Today's date is Tuesday, May 14th, and we're here with Judge Davis, Honorable L. Clifford Davis. We want to share a conversation about what it means to live a really really beautiful life. My name is Dr. Janay Willis. I am the director of the Oral History Project, and we are also here with Marcela Molina, the student intern for the Oral History Project. So we're going to get started. I ask that you take a trip down memory lane. How and in what ways did your upbringing in Wilton, Arkansas impact your life's work as a lawyer?

L. CLIFFORD DAVIS:
Well, I was born the seventh child, a sibling in the family. My parents were farmers. Daddy owned a small farm. And we all grew up in that farming community.The town of Wilton had a population of four or five hundred people. And, everyone almost knew almost everyone else in and around the town and in the community. I grew up in an environment where you knew all of the people with whom you had contact. And you learned to get along with them. Growing up on the farm, we all worked. In connection with the farming, my daddy grew, of course, cotton was the primary commercial thing, but we grew all kinds of feedstuff for the animals as well as for our family. My parents had three family gardens for vegetable gardens, plus we had spaces on the farm for livestock. We grew both Irish potatoes and sweet potatoes, corn, peas, beans, and all those kinds of things that people consume. We grew those items and we learned to work those items and cooperate as a family and work with one another to carry out and make everybody as comfortable as possible in the farming community, and we did so. So I learned to cooperate, to work with my older brothers and sisters, and other people with whom we had contact from time to time, and to get along with everybody. And that has been a lifetime practice for me.

JENAY WILLIS:
Thank you. I hear you keep saying the word community, so what did community look like in terms of the gardening coming together, but then also Sunday dinners? What did Sunday dinners look like for your family and other families in the community as well?

L. CLIFFORD DAVIS:
Well, we had a dining room table, and the table had seats. Eight chairs around it, and the dining room was next door to the kitchen so that we all sat around the table except for Mother, who sat at a position where she could go in and out of the kitchen to replace dishes and things that we needed, bring bread or things we service on the table. And we had regular meals. All of us would come, three meals a day, during the time we were there. We were all there. And that was a habit. So that we learned to have meals together. We had that dining room. Those chairs stayed in there. And then we had the rest of the house that we occupied. We learned to get along. We all shared responsibility for things to do, feeding the chickens, the animals, milking the cows,

gathering the cows, gathering wood, cutting wood. Everybody shared in that. The men did the outside work and the ladies did the inside work. But, we were taught the men were taught to do everything necessary for survival so that we could cook, wash, iron, sew, and I learned to do that, and all of us did, so that I could replace a button on a shirt, make my own repairs, everything. Of course, this was in the country, so we didn't have electricity. But we had the lamps and the kerosene lamps, and we all shared in the upkeep for the family.

JENAY WILLIS:
Right, and you did a lot of responsibility, community sharing. And then they're also kind of nurturing. So that's a perfect segue to the next question in terms of how do these values of responsibility and community and the nurturing nature of like being able to take care of yourself. How did that shape you in terms of moving from Wilton, Arkansas to Little Rock, Arkansas, in terms of pursuing your educational opportunities to become a lawyer?

L. CLIFFORD DAVIS:
Well, let me mention this. In our County, the state of Arkansas was in the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools. So we had their standards, which were a little higher than the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools. There was a high school in the county seat of Ashdown, which was five miles away. But my daddy did not have a car. There were only two black families in the community. Most of the time they had a car, so that the getting to Ashdown was a problem because the white children were provided bus transportation for the high school in Little River County, Ashdown, County C, and blacks were also provided a high school, Little Rock County Training School in Ashdown. But the white children were provided transportation by bus, but no transportation was provided for black people. So my parents ultimately arranged for the family members to go to Little Rock and go to high school. So six of the eight children actually ultimately went to Little Rock. They rented a home, and we lived together there, and six of us finished high school there, and many of us went to college, three or four of us went to college, around there.Got the benefit of the best education offered in Arkansas at that time for black people.

JENAY WILLIS:
And what were some of the benefits of that education?

L. CLIFFORD DAVIS:
Well, at least three of us went on to college. The others had some desires to make a better life for themselves and did so. Now, you talk about me becoming a lawyer. Back in the day in the 20s, there was a racial disturbance in a town called Elaine, Arkansas, and as a result of that, some black people were indicted and sentenced to share, and a black lawyer from Little Rock named Scipio A. Jones represented them, trying to get justice for them in the system. And through the years, he one time came through Wilton, and I was speaking to him, and that was the first time I

met a black lawyer, and I was inspired by him, and of course when I got to Little Rock, I learned where he lived, and saw the lifestyle that he lived, and saw other black lawyers that were there. And it made me want to follow the lifestyle that I conceived them to be living. And that indicated to me what I need to try to do in terms of education. And I pursued my dream.

JENAY WILLIS:
You spoke about Scipio A. Jones, so how did him being a role model or a possibility model, where you see him being a lawyer, a black lawyer, and you also wanted to become a black lawyer, so how did his practice inform how you practiced as a lawyer?

L. CLIFFORD DAVIS:
Well let me say it to you this way. He worked in the community, he represented the community. He and the other lawyers were advocates for equal opportunity back in the 30s and 40s. And we felt that and we were taught that. As a matter of fact, done by high school, part of the policy at the school was each student was required to belong to a club. And on a Friday evening, fourth Friday evening usually, of the month, classes would be suspended and you would go to your club and you all would discuss things. Well, I had been inspired by a history teacher, Ms. McConnico, and then I saw where Mr. Scipio Jones lived. And the automobile he drove, and read about him in the local newspaper all the time, the covered paper, as we called it in those days, read about him, and I saw him from time to time. And, you kind of get the attitude that I want to be like him, and when you saw the house that he lived in, the two story brick house. You kind of wanted to live like that too. So those kinds of ideas impressed me to want to do that and the study of the history and the civics and the Constitution that we served in the Civic Club, which was sponsored by the government history teacher, Ms. McConnico. All of that combination inspired me to want to be a lawyer. And Philander Smith College was right there in the town of Little Rock. So that when I finished high school, I finished high school one week, and a week later I was enrolled in Philander Smith College in 1942.

JENAY WILLIS:
So in the same way that Mr. Scipio inspired you, in what ways do you imagine that you have inspired other black lawyers that are lawyers now because of you?

L. CLIFFORD DAVIS:
Well, one, I finished Philander in the spring of 1945 and I attended Howard University Law School in the school year 1945-1946. Because in those days, Philander was not accredited by the North Central Association, it limited the schools that you could go to. Mr. Philander had been admitted to Howard and had been good students so that we could go to Howard. So, the two of us in the class of '45 went to Howard in the fall of '45. Arkansas paid our tuition because it was a custom at that time, as a result of a constitutional requirement, that if Arkansas, a state, offered a

course of professional training for white people for a career, they would pay the tuition for black students if they could get admitted to a school in some other state. So Arkansas paid my tuition. In the fall of '45, I was in my first year at Howard, and I was reading the newspapers. I learned later about the effort of Sweat in Texas, and a lady named Sipowell in Oklahoma, and I've forgotten the name of the person in Louisiana that was trying to get in law schools in those states were being denied, and in Oklahoma and Texas, there was litigation going on. So I applied to the University of Arkansas. Of course, the dean advised me that they didn't admit blacks to the law school at the University of Arkansas. At any rate, I continued and finished my first year at law school, but I carried on correspondence with the dean at the University of Arkansas, and I got information from him that they were going to make some arrangements for my admission.

In the school year '46-'47, I went to Atlanta University graduate school studying economics, but I continued my correspondence with the dean. Before '47, I went back to Howard for my second year and, of course, we still carried on the correspondence with the dean at the University of Arkansas, and he informed me that they were trying to work out plans for my admission.

In October or November of '47, I got a letter from the dean saying that they were making arrangements to admit me in January of '48, the second semester. But he wanted me to pay tuition in advance. Because he didn't want to have to go through all this arrangement for my attendance if I were not coming, he wanted me to pay tuition in advance. I took my file for the first time and carried it to the dean at Howard Law School, and we reviewed all of the correspondence. He dictated a letter for me to respond, which succinctly said we had read the catalog from the University of Arkansas, and they didn't require anybody else to pay tuition in advance, and I declined to pay tuition in advance. I signed and mailed that letter. I heard nothing else. In January of 1948, I was in my second semester of my second year at Howard. When I got home that evening, I had a call from my sister in Little Rock and a call from a local newspaper, the Washington Post. I called my sister, and she informed me that they'd had a press conference at the University of Arkansas and announced that if I showed up, I would be admitted to the law school. That evening, I called the press reporter there in Washington, and he gave me a brief summary of the press conference and wanted to come out for an interview. So, I arranged for him to come out for an interview. He came out and he gave me a summary of the interview that had been conducted, a news conference that had been conducted at the University of Arkansas that day. I later learned that a lawyer from Pine Bluff, Arkansas, a black lawyer named Harold Flowers, who's very, very active in the civil rights area of practice, had carried a fellow named Silas Hunt up there in response to that press conference and Wiley Branton and wanted to try to enroll Wiley in the undergraduate school of business and Silas Hunt in the law school. So, they told Wiley he could get a degree in business at Arkansas Planned Wealth where he lived. And they admitted Silas Hunt to the law school, but it was on a segregated basis in January of 1948. And Arkansas became, as far as I can remember, the only southern state to open up without litigation. But he was on a segregated plan. I understand the way it was, they had a classroom downstairs in the building, and the professor who gave the lecture in, say, for instance, uh, Providence, upstairs, would go downstairs later that day and give Silas Hunt a lecture in his

room downstairs. Well, some of the students. I learned about that and the attitude that if they heard a lecture once and got a certain percentage of understanding, if they heard the same lecture a second time, they'd get a broader understanding. So they'd go down and listen, one or two, and it finally got to be a pretty good number would go down to all of his classes and listen to him. He listened to the lecture from the same professor who had talked to him upstairs. That went on the spring semester and the summer semester. And Hunt, health failing, and he was unable to go back. But in the fall of 48, another student named Jacqueline Shropshire from Little Rock applied for law school and was admitted. But, In the meantime, a young lady had applied for the med school, and she got admitted. The med school was located in Little Rock. It was the University of Arkansas Med School, but it was located in Little Rock. So, she was admitted there. So, we had the law school was admitting at least one or two blacks, and the med school had this one black. That continued, and that opened the gate so that that is what I contributed at that time to the opening of educational opportunities on an integrated basis at the graduate and college level in Arkansas. So, my attitude was, I opened the gate. But did not go into the playing field, but others went into the playing field and ultimately they were able to knock down the fence and not only finally did they offer open training there, but they integrated at other levels and in other colleges and ultimately in colleges and universities throughout the state. Finally, they opened a housing so that by 1951 or two, the blacks were able to stay in the dormitories and the law school and what have you. Now. Ultimately, they started, and some blacks got employed in the faculty, and a good number of blacks went in. And Wiley Branton went on back to Pine Bluff and got his degree in business administration and entered the law school and did graduate and practice in Arkansas. You might remember. He was the attorney who handled the Little Rock school case. But at any rate, I can skip to make a statement about my joy and my feeling of accomplishment. I opened that school, even though I didn't go, in 1948. But in 2017, they looked me up. in Texas and awarded me an honorary law degree at the graduation exercise in 2017. But there had been a lax on the faculty and in 2022 the board of trustees at the University of Arkansas elected a black person as Chancellor of the University of Arkansas, and I had a chance to go up at the time when he was officially had an embark, they had a banquet on a public banquet for him, his installation, and I personally saw the experience at a time when they would not admit. A black to the school at all to the time when a black is chancellor of that school. It was a great joy. Now, they opened up college training in many of the other schools, states, colleges, and universities of Arkansas, and it's moved along well.

JENAY WILLIS:
And you talk a lot about like how you were inspiring in terms of, you didn't go into the playing field, but you did a lot of work around integration and being an inspiration for others in terms of the University of Arkansas. I want you to think about now Texas. What do you think about your influence with other attorneys has been here in Texas and in Fort Worth?

L. CLIFFORD DAVIS:

Well, I came to Texas in 52. But I had to set up residence and take the Texas Bar, I couldn't just transfer in. So, I taught at Paul Quinn College for two years. Paul Quinn College was located at Waco in those days, and I taught there. I passed the bar in 53, but I continued for one additional year, so that I taught the school year 52-53, and school year 53-54. In the meantime, in the spring of 54, some lawyers, two lawyers from Dallas who had solo practice had opened an office in Fort Worth. Well, there had been no big practitioner in Arkansas. There was one elderly man, who was 75, 80 years old, who had studied law at a time when you could study. by correspondence of him in law school in a law office and take the blind. If you pass, you can pass the bar. So, he got passed in that way. He was not, he did not finish in law school, but he was practicing out of his house. But these two lawyers in Dallas, tried to go into a partnership and open an office in Fort Worth. So, in June of 1954, I was invited to join their office and be a resident counsel, Bockley Bedford and Davis, C. B. Bockley, Lewis Bedford and Davis. So, I came in on the second day of June, and I got a draft notice. May of the ninth day of June. So, I had to go to the army. I went to the army. It took me six months and three days to get released, but I finally got released. When I got back, there were two local lawyers, local residents who had passed the bar. One had finished through the University of Texas, I believe, and the other, Texas. And the other had finished somewhere else, Lincoln and Missouri, I believe.
But at any rate, they had opened an office together. So, they were here. And this elderly gentleman that I mentioned was here and I was to occupy the office for Buckley and Bedford. So, I did. I came back in '55 and started practice. I joined other organizations that were promoting equal opportunities. I worked with the local real estate brokers and helped move into a broader section of the town where we had not been permitted to live. We worked in employment to open up employment and expand employment. We worked with the city to get more blacks employed on the police force. We worked with the city and the fire department. The political action committee was made up of one black and the blacks who were chairs.
The precinct chairs, and we were there. So, I worked with them. I worked with the real estate brokers, I worked with the precinct workers' council, the urban league had an office here, I was active with that. Everything that was working for equal opportunity, or open opportunity, or broadened opportunity, I worked with. I do not claim that I did all this. We did this. But, of course, there were instances where they needed the work of a lawyer, and I did that area of the effort and mentioned it. But I still say I was working with the group. Rather than "I did this," we did this.

JENAY WILLIS:
And who was the we?

L. CLIFFORD DAVIS:
The organizations, the Precinct Workers Council, the real estate brokers, the other organizations, the Urban League, all of those organizations were doing that area of pushing, and I would work with all of them. Now, in Dallas County, there were about 8 or 9 black lawyers practicing in

Dallas County. So, I had affiliated with the Dallas County Bar Association. And I would go over there on a regular basis and meet with them. In the mid-sixties, some other lawyers began to come into town. What happened in 1958, in the district attorney's race, we, in a political group, pushed for adding blacks to the district attorney's staff. And when the Republican candidate talked in the black neighborhood, he was put with that question: Would you consider hiring some black lawyers in there? And he said no. But when the candidate for the Democratic Party spoke out in our neighborhood, he was presented with that same question. He said yes. Well, I was doing civil rights work at that time. So, when the election was held, the Democrat won, and the day he was sworn in as district attorney, he appointed one of those other lawyers that I had mentioned to his staff. That was the first black assistant district attorney in the state of Texas, and we are told the first one south of St. Louis. We don't know that, but we were told that. But at any rate, we had worked, and finally in the mid-60s, after Kennedy was elected president, there was great advocacy and movement toward adding blacks in government positions. So, some lawyers came through. But in '61, '60, a lawyer named Will Griggs passed the bar, and I brought him in with me. The next year another fellow named Pearson passed the bar, and he started practice here. My lawyer was in the D.A.'s office. When my lawyer went into the D.A.'s office, Harold B. Jones, who had been associated with him in practice, moved and went somewhere, I don't know whether it was St. Louis or Chicago, but he left the state. But I was the only one left here with Griggs and these other boys. That's all. We tried to join the Tarrant County Bar Association, and they would not admit me because I was black at that time. At that time, the Young Lawyers Association did not have a racial clause, and I tried to join them because I was still a young lawyer. But I was rejected by them. The explanation was that they met in the cafes downtown for their meetings, and the cafes would not admit blacks; therefore, they couldn't admit me because I couldn't even attend meetings. So, at that time, a lawyer called. When that hit the paper and all, a lawyer called and said it wasn't fair and it wasn't right and he was going to work to change it. He and several other white lawyers started activity to try to get that changed. They got it changed in '60, '61, and they offered me membership. A lawyer called, came to me, and I said to Griggs, I'm not going to let them pick us. They have to admit all three of us. So, you and I will join and call Pearson and see if he will join. He was just getting started, and if he's not in a position to pay his dues, we'll pay his dues for him. So, Griggs got in touch with Pearson, and Pearson said he wouldn't want to join. So, the two of us refused to join in the early '60s. Okay. In the mid-'60s, as a result of the effort for the employment of blacks in government more, as advocated by the Kennedy administration, some blacks began to come through that were lawyers in government agencies. Some came with housing, some came with labor, other areas, some came with other officers. But, Griggs got appointed, and he was assigned to a project in New Mexico for the government. So, that took him away and left me here by myself. So, I got tired of being the only one walking through the courthouse from time to time with a briefcase, except every once in a while one of the lawyers from Dallas would have a matter over here. So, in '70 or '71, somewhere in that time frame, I invited a lawyer from Houston who I'd met. We were schoolmates at Howard part-time, and I asked him to send me somebody, and he

recommended John Height. John White came up for an interview. He had taken the bar but hadn't got notice about passing. But I hired him to assist me. And in that late August, he got notice that he had passed. So, he became a lawyer. And that put me with one other lawyer active here in the town. We're called Pearson, one with the government, and the others were with the government. John White and I were here, and then one or two others came in. So, by the mid-'70s, there were several of us here, and some of us were going over every once in a while to the society in Dallas, G. L. Turner Society. And we decided to try to organize an organization in Fort Worth. With the low number of lawyers that had come in and the numbers that were in private practice, twelve or fourteen of us formed the Tarrant County Black Bar Association. They met in my office, and we talked about it. And they elected John White, who was in my office, as the first president. So, you ask about my influence. I was the oldest one practicing in terms of membership in the bar. I practiced with and cooperated with the Dallas Bar Association, J. L. Turner. And so, we led those in. But in the meantime, I had some other lawyers, a total of eight lawyers who practiced in this town at some time or another, starting out with me. I assisted them. Gregg was the first one, John White was the second one, then we had Hatcher who went with the City Attorney's Office. Stearns came through for a period, and he had to go to the military, but until he got his military orders, he was with me. There was a lady whose husband was in the military out at Carswell Air Force Base from Mississippi, so I hired her to work with me, even though she was not a member of the Texas Bar. And, Leon Haley, and there was a lady that worked with him, and they were there. And, Les Johns, and Louis Stearns when he got out of the military and came back. So, about eight lawyers that have practiced in this town have been at some point associated with me through my office, and I'm very, very proud of the company. Hatcher went to the city attorney's office, from there to the D.A.'s office and was the chief prosecutor in one of the courtrooms. Louis Stearns, who's been with me, later went on his own with Les Johns. But he has been a judge of four different courts of record in this state, three in this county, and one was the first black to serve on the Court of Criminal Appeals in this state. John White is serving in one of these municipalities now in a judicial position. So, I have been an inspiration for helping some other lawyers get started. In appreciation for that, they have renamed the Black Bar Association. Instead of Tarrant County Black Bar Association, they named it the L. Clifford Davis Legal Association. In '83, I was appointed to Tarrant County. The District Court bench, and I served in the Judiciary that year. In '84, I had to get elected, and I was the first black to be elected in a contested race for a judicial position in '84. But, in '88, I got defeated because this county turned Republican and all of the judges who were up for re-election who were Democrats got defeated that year, and I was defeated. But I was eligible to serve as a visiting judge, and I served as a visiting judge working in a total of 12 other different counties at different assignments during my term until I retired in 2004. But that's my contribution to the lawyers, and I mention those that have been directly connected with me in my office, together with being of assistance to others who practice here.

JENAY WILLIS:
I appreciate how you talked a lot about your own influence with integration, your own influence with being role models for people who came after you, especially Black lawyers who came after you. And then the work of integration that you did at the University of Arkansas, but also in Texas as well as Fort Worth and in your own practice. But I want to ask you specifically about in Fort Worth, you integrated the independent school district through one of the most notable cases of your career. So how did this shape your career in law? And further, how did this work shape who you would become in having a school built in your honor?

L. CLIFFORD DAVIS
Well, let me say this to you. I got great appreciation for the value of education from my parents, who thought so much of it that they rented a home in Little Rock for the kids to go up there and get a good high school education. That was the inspiration initiative for me. I developed an appreciation for the value of education and that you need to work to get it. You need to do your best to be, you're not just getting passed, you want to be one of the better students. And I did that as a part of my skills. My work in education, I wanted to have equal opportunity. I wanted integration because it was difficult to say, this person can't do this job because he's colored if he finished the same school that the white boy finished. If they both finished the same school, they both ought to have similar talent in that field. So that was one of the motivating factors that caused me to want to get it open. If we go to the same place and have the same schooling and training that they have, we could look for and be expected to do the same efficient job position that they were doing. Now, we brought that. You see, there was a time when I. M. Terrell was the only high school in Tarrant County for black people. So the kids from Mansfield, Grapevine, Arlington, and the west part of this county, if they got to high school, had to go to Terrell. This included all the students from various sections of Fort Worth. We lived in sections of the town at that time. But everybody who went to high school had to go to Terrell. We wanted to open that up, and we did so. Let me explain what we did. We filed the Mansfield case in '55 and had that episode. We got an order for an anti-segregation measure there, ultimately by appeal. But in '56, when it was time for them to go under that order, a mob gathered on the school day, and it was physically unsafe for us to go, so we did not go. The kids did not enroll in Mansfield, but it set in motion a movement toward integration. What Fort Worth did was have the one high school at I. M. Terrell and up to eighth grade in three other sections: North Side and Riverside. Then those students from those schools would go to Terrell. So, when the Brown decision came by, because originally we were saying we should be able to go to a school nearest to us, they decided that they were going to upgrade the schools a grade a year. They started trying to upgrade them to make four high schools, and we ultimately developed four high schools: Como, Riverside, North Side, and Terrell. When we brought our lawsuit, we wanted integration. We filed a lawsuit in '59 here in Fort Worth to integrate students. One of the plans in our case was the kids that lived down there, what's now where the downtown junior college is located, that was a housing project. And there was an elementary school right up the hill, a couple blocks, three blocks away.

But those kids had to get on to the school near I.M. Terrell Elementary School. And the other party was a kid that lived out here, in the military base. But the bus would pick him up and bring him to Como, but drop the white kids off at a school out there. That was factual. So, we filed a lawsuit to integrate the students, but we ultimately improved it to include integrating faculty. Then we started talking about integrating administration staff. And then we ultimately filed for single-member districts. And let me tell you the results. We got integration of students, ultimately integration of faculty. We got some black principals. We got a graded Terrell. I mean, no, I'm talking about Dunbar. We got a new Dunbar High School because the location over on Willis Street was overcrowded. I can tell you that I persuaded the judge to join me out there for dinner one day at school so he could see how crowded it was at that school, and at that time the street was unpaved from the other school. So, we got a new school. A high school for top six and improvements across the board. Ultimately, we got a black principal at the Polytechnic School. We got not just one black in a school, but we got increased numbers of blacks in a school, in white schools, and whites in black schools.

DR. JENAY WILLIS:
Were all the roads not paved?

L. CLIFFORD DAVIS:
Huh?

DR. JENAY WILLIS:
Were all the roads not paved? I know you said for one of them it wasn't paved. Was it like that for all the black schools?

L. CLIFFORD DAVIS:
The one that's gone by Dunbar, which was over on Willis Street, it was all paved. It was later surfaced. But at any rate, the result has been we got blacks in administration. Ultimately, we had a black superintendent of schools. I mean a black superintendent of the Fort Worth Independent School District. And we've got the same number of districts. And we've had two members on the school board, two black members on the school board for 40, 50 years. And I'm asking on that, so that we got the thing, and I can tell you, we had an association going on with the NAACP. We got to where we would have a luncheon meeting, a breakfast meeting rather, once a month with the superintendent, and we could bring to his attention certain things, improvements that we needed in our schools, in our neighborhood. And we would meet with him, and he would call an investigation and make certain adjustments. And what happened, we didn't have to make public that fact, because if we made public that request, there'd be resistance by the segregationist attitude of people. But if they didn't know that we had called attention to this discrepancy, that the superintendent was initiating an improvement, it got accepted, and we made a lot of adjustments. We created the School of Technology at Poly, and we created the School of Science

and Medical, that group, that area of medical stuff, at Dunbar. So, there are a lot of improvements out there. If we improve those schools, the white students would want to go there to get that kind of specialized training. So, we worked, and we worked in groups. That wasn't Clifford Davis; that was a group. We worked in employment, we sued General Dynamics, and ultimately, it took us a long time, but we ultimately got a large financial judgment for money for the people that had been discriminated against in jobs. And promotions out there, we intervened at General Motors here in Arlington and got employment there. We had a problem with Daley Helicopter. We had problems with agencies. We sued for housing. As a matter of fact, we sued to open up that area. On South Freeway between Alta Mesa and Sycamore School Road, that was a new addition that was developed there. And they were developing it, and when they got some houses developed, they were going to have a sale of the housing after they got a number of houses built. The broker put his salesman out there one Sunday to sell. He sold four houses, one of which was to a Black person. That Monday, when that salesman went in to report the success he'd had, it was brought out to the broker that one of them was to a Black person. "Oh no, call him, give him his money back, we can't sell it." And they called him and told him that. He came to me, and I filed a lawsuit. We got that settled, and that opened up that area. We ultimately got Blacks moving all the way into Hewland Mall area and beyond. And the real estate brokers. We worked from Maddox Street on south to Berry Street, then went across Berry Street. We delayed pursuing until Carver Heights and Rosedale Park was sold out, and pretty much sold out, and then we went into Rolling Hills, and ultimately into Highland Hills. We got expansion in the Riverside area for the real estate brokers. So, we were working with groups for employment, we were working with groups for housing, we were working with groups for jobs, and areas for police, additional police work, firemen, and all that, and added. We had several people who worked in the federal government, and every time some positions would open up there, there was a group of us. They would call and say there's so and so opening up. A group of us would meet and find out who in the community had that skill. We'd get in touch with them and got people to go and apply for them so that we expanded the number of people in federal government offices locally. There were a great variety of things that we did. And let me say this, we had a few marches, but we didn't have the disruption and violence that many other areas of this nation had in making progress. There was a cooperative element of the community. We got the same member district for city council and the same member district for the school board. We got Blacks on the railroad, on various agencies and things, Blacks on the Junior College District Board, and they've been on there ever since. It's the only agency, as far as I know, that's had a Black on there ever since its creation. So, we've made a lot of progress. But it's been group progress, group progress. And let me say this to you. I developed my own notion about community responsibility. I call it civil responsibility. We hear a lot of talk about civil rights, but I want to talk about what I call civil responsibility. Let me give you the root of that notion. When you look at the Constitution, it says, "We the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union." That was a permanent mission, to form a more perfect union. And we do it all the time. Each generation is trying to make it better. But they also mention in that for freedom,

justice, liberty, and the general welfare. So I have my own definition. We, the people of the United States, have a civil responsibility to treat all inhabitants with dignity, courtesy, respect, and integrity, without regard to their race, culture, age, sexual orientation, religious or non-religious affiliation, political affiliation, or any other socioeconomic factor, and to advocate and practice individually and collectively for freedom, justice, equal opportunity, diversity, health, welfare, and safety of the total community. Each individual has that responsibility. I have tried to live that lifestyle, to work for the general welfare and open opportunities for all people. At this school, I've tried to generate a theme that I want to plant in the mind of every student from all levels of education: that education is the pathway to a world of opportunities. Another thing I often say when speaking to students at career conferences is, ' You prepare yourself to live the lifestyle you prepare yourself for.' I discuss factors to make it clear: you have to dream about it, get the education and experience for it, and motivate yourself to work hard to achieve it. I've drawn inspiration from educators at schools I attended or was close to. Dr. Mays, president of Morehouse College during my time at Atlanta University, he used to tell the boys at Morehouse, 'It's not enough to be good. The woods are full of good people. You have to be excellent and superior. Start out with the notion that you're going to excel and run faster than the crowd. If you're going to win you've gotta run faster than the crowd". Also, at Howard University, our president, Dr. Mordecai Johnson, always emphasized in his addresses to graduates that 'there's good you can do wherever you are, no matter your career or location. Get yourself involved'. Those ideas I've tried to live, practice, and pass on. I wish we could adopt in the education community the notion that education is the pathway to a world of opportunity and you will live the lifestyle you prepare yourself to live.
Absolutely. That's perfect for the last question too. You've talked a lot about your influence, your work with integration through various organizations, and your time at Texas University and the University of Arkansas. And now approaching your 100th blessed birthday.

DR. JENAY WILLIS:
What does celebrating a legacy life have in all these values as we sit here in the school named after you, Clifford Davis Elementary School? So, in celebrating the life of a 100th birthday, what does that look like in terms of really being driven by community and the work that you've contributed?

L. CLIFFORD DAVIS:
I feel good that I tried to practice what I preached. I have worked for the general welfare. Even when I was in school, I aimed for excellence in my studies and excellence in my work as well as in play. Another idea that has stayed with me is that as long as you are in the world, you're going to want to be with people. That one I learned that when I was at Philander. That was one of the big statements of the president, Dr. Harris, of Philander Smith College. He required every student at Philander to belong to a club. That was a requirement. You had to belong to some kind of club on the campus. The thing that he tried to drive was 'as long as you're alive, you're going

to want to be with other human beings, and you need to learn how to work with and for the general welfare of all human beings'.

DR. JENAY WILLIS:
Thank you. Thank you so much, Judge Davis. Again, today is Tuesday, May 14th. It was an honor and a privilege to be in community with you and to be here at the school named after you. So, Thank you and happy 100th birthday. Thank you.

L. CLIFFORD DAVIS:
It was a delight to have visited with you.

DR. JENAY WILLIS:
Yes, thank you.