Oral History Interview:

Anna Holden

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Interviewed by

James Goodman

HIS 7860

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James Goodman (JG): This is an Oral history interview. Anna Holden for the Michigan environmental justice records. Interviewer James Goodman. Wayne State University. December 17, 2014. Good afternoon Ms. Holden.

Anna Holden (AH): Good afternoon.

JG: I just want to start out, could you tell me a little about your upbringing? When you were born and where?

AH: Well, I was born in Ocala, Florida which is dead center in the middle of the state and a small town. My parents were both pioneers. My ancestors were both pioneers in Florida on both sides of the family. So we have a long history in Florida. My father was a citrus grower and truck farmer in the community where he grew up which was near Gainesville and my mother had taught school before she got married. So we grew up in a small community that had a small minority of Catholic and Jews, but mostly a Protestant, Baptist, Methodist population. So I came up in an era when there was still suspicion against Catholics.

JG: When were you born?

AH: I was born in 1928 and my parents, as I say, were born and raised in Florida. Of course, they had experienced much more difficulty. Especially in that era because Catholics were not accepted much. Their generation certainly. And in my generation, I went to Catholic school for eight years and we had no high school. So we transferred into the high school. We were all well educated, you know. We had a mix in the Catholic school. All of the Jewish children attended there and the rich Protestant children and the Catholic. It was the only private school in that area at that time. So, in any event, but things were, as World War II, you know, came along and things would be ended yet with different influences. Anyway, then I went to college at what was Florida State College for Women. It became Florida State University were soon after I enrolled there because at the end of World War II a lot of G.I.s that had been in Florida had training bases. There were a lot of training bases. What came back to Florida would go to school. The University of Florida was overcrowded and they couldn't handle them all, so they sent them to Florida State College for Women…(chuckles)

JG: (chuckles)

AH: …in the Tallahassee branch of the University of Florida. By the next time the legislature meet they made both schools co-ed. They were separate men's and women's schools before that time. So that's where my education got started. I guess, how much more detail you want to go into?

JG: After the College, you left Florida?

AH: I went to graduate school at the University of North Carolina and I did a master's degree there in sociology and anthropology.

JG: And then after graduating from there?

AH: Well, I went to work in Atlanta with the Southern Regional Council. I got interested in race relations when I was at Florida State. I worked in the University of North Carolina for a man named Guy Johnson who was very active in racial/race relations issues with a lot of interest in various aspects of it. Including, he was on the board of directors of the Southern Regional Council which was a bi-racial organization that was active throughout the South on trying to influence people's racial attitudes. Initially, we were not openly against segregation, but that happened as the school desegregation issues went forward. But at that time there was a tremendous amount of active, obvious, acceptable racism in the South. The Klan was very active in Atlanta, for example, burning the cross up on Stone Mountain. There was a Talmadge Governor[1] that was, you know, there was an awful lot of racism in that area. So I worked with him four years and then I went to work with Fisk University in Nashville. It is one of the historic black colleges and I was working there doing race relations and studies and research in race and some teaching. Teaching undergraduate level students how to do social research surveys, community surveys.

JG: So, while you were growing up, you said there was a Guy Johnson?

[1] Herman Eugene Talmadge, Sr. (August 9, 1913 – March 21, 2002)

AH: He was, yeah, it was my main professor while I was at North Carolina.

JG: Were there other people, when you were growing up, that were like a mentor or an inspiration?

AH: Well that was when I was in graduate school. (chuckles)

JG: Right, right. So before that possibly?

AH: Well, my mother was always a great influence in my life. She came out of a family where both of her parents had died before they were fifty. Her mother was a widow, a young widow, with a family to raise. Then, after she was teaching school, she went back to Ocala to take care of her mother. My grandmother died of breast cancer and so my mother left teaching and went home to take care of her. When she died, then she had this younger sister and brother that were still…

JG: To raise?

AH: Yeah, so she postponed, you know.

JG: And that was Ocala?

AH: Ocala. It's a much larger community now. It is an attractive place, that area, for retirees that are not wealthy.

JG: In Florida.

AH: They can relocate in the winter or year-round. The richer people go further down to the Gulf Coast. You know, Palm Beach…(chuckles)

JG: Right.

AH: …and so forth. But Ocala is a community that was an outgrowth of the Seminole Wars. One of the Seminole Wars. There were many. It was established as a community after one of the Seminole Wars concluded. They never settled the Seminole Wars.

JG: No?

AH: They are still at war with the United States. But, they did eventually settle with the state of Florida.(chuckles) So that they would get some social benefits and so forth. But Anyway, we have Seminole history in our background.

JG: Right. Wow!

AH: Well, where were we? We were talking about mentors. My mother. My mother was very strong in terms of her own independence. She was well educated and she had taught. And one of the things she stressed to my sister and I was that we should prepare ourselves to be self sufficient and independent. You know, you may get married, you may not. But, even if you get married, it is no guarantee.(chuckles) You should always suit to best prepare yourselves to take care of yourselves. She was very strong on women having provincial credentials so that you could be self supporting and independent. So, my sister went into nursing and I went into,(chuckles) ended up in, sociology— which is not a good choice except that I had the journalism background, the writing skills. The sociologists and the economists can't write, you know.(chuckles)

JG: (chuckles)

AH: So you can get jobs editing their work.(chuckles) Writing up the data.(chuckles) So there is always a job if you have the writing skills.(chuckles)

JG: That's good. So we last left you off talking about your work in North Carolina?

AH: Well I was in school there.

JG: Ok. School there. And from there you went…?

AH: Atlanta.

JG: Atlanta, ok. And you were helping students?

AH: No, no, no. I was working with the Southern Regional Council, which is a race relations agency that goes back to 1919. Lynching and so forth. We had a constituency. We had member organizations of the different states. It was to educate people about the facts about what the racial situation and racial divide was all about. The economics of it and the lack of opportunity and so forth. It was a bi-racial group and our board of directors included faculty from the Atlanta black historic colleges, Spelman and Morehouse and so forth. They were involved in a lot of other things of course.(chuckles) But, we published a newsletter and we furnished information for the press or people that were doing writing and analysis of racial problems. So, I was a research assistant and worked with having information available, factual information available for reporters and people that were interested in a more factual approach to the situation. I wrote articles for our newsletter and did small little research projects.

JG: What was the newsletter called?

AH: *The New South.*

JG: *The New South?*

AH: I've got some background information you can look at if you want to. So, as I say, I worked for them for four years. About the time, well after, Brown vs. Board of Education, that school desegregation came down, it began to kinda loosen up.(chuckles)

JG: And that year? That was 19…60…?

AH: 1950. Wait a minute. It was just the fifty year celebration recently. I should remember that.

JG: 1964?

AH: No. It was before that. It was before that. I went to work for the council in 1951 and it was in the…it was 1950 I imagine. I'm not sure.

JG: We'll check.[2](chuckles)

AH: Yes, we'll check, yeah.(chuckles) But, as they say that court decision of course launched attempts to desegregate schools in various parts of the South. I worked a lot on school desegregation with various research projects and the Fisk University had a race relations department. I was in the sociology department three years and one year in the race relations. We participated in a lot of studies that were going on and they needed white interviewers, you know,(chuckles) to talk. I would always get out to interview the white people. We published reports and we worked with the Anti-Defamation League and other organizations that were trying to provide people with some guidelines and some understanding and importance of desegregation and how it can be carried out in a non-violent and regional basis. So I worked, as I say, with Fisk University for four years. During the latter part of that time I got involved with the Congress of Racial Equality(CORE), which we were the first chapter in the South. We got involved just before…I got involved just about the time that the desegregation issue was coming to a head and there was a court decision to desegregate the Nashville schools. So I was active with the CORE group there and working with parents and people in the community that wanted to have the integration and want people to participate in it.

JG: And this was in Nashville, Tennessee?

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[2]Brown vs. Board of Education—Argued December 9, 1952
Reargued December 8, 1953
Decided May 17, 1954

AH: Ah, yes. And also, not to be an area where you had a lot of violence and retaliation against the black community that was getting involved in integration. That was a time when you had a lot of unrest. Racial tension in these areas where you were desegregating schools for the first time.

JG: What led you to go to Nashville?

AH: A job.

JG: I mean, on your own. They weren't recommending you go there? You looked and researched and went there.

AH: I was ready for a change in terms of the growth of my own interest and my own ideas about what we should be doing, you know, in terms of racial situations. The Southern Regional Council, I would say, they began to be more forthright, I guess you would say, after the Brown vs. Board decision. But I was interested in getting a little more involved in a more overt way, I guess you would say. So, I got a job with Fisk University and worked there for four years. And Then I was laid off.(chuckles) In a money crunch, you know. So I went to University of Michigan to graduate school as a way of getting out. I couldn't get a job in the South. I went there as a way of getting out of the South. Getting some way of establishing some credentials and some places I could work. Get a job, that was the key issue.

JG: So then you were in Ann Arbor, Michigan?

AH: Yes, I was in Ann Arbor. I was four years in Ann Arbor after I left Fisk and went to graduate school only a year. I did not like the graduate school there. That was a mistake in terms of where I should have gone for graduate school. But, I worked for the Institute for Social Research there. I quit graduate school after a year and I worked three years for the Institute for Social Research there on a juvenile delinquency project.

JG: What did that job entail?

AH: Editing and writing (chuckles) and rewriting.(chuckles) They had a major study that they had done a lot of field work on it and they were writing reports on and doing analysis on the data that had been collected. So, I was not involved in data collection. That data was already collected. It was a large study and, you know, you have to get these reports out.

JG: When you were in Ann Arbor you worked for that group and then after that where did you go?

AH: I went to Washington, D.C. to work on a study of poverty, the so-called "cultural poverty," with some black anthropologist that I had known when I was in Atlanta. He was on the staff at Atlanta University. He had a grant to study the poverty level people in Washington, D.C.

JG: What was his name?

AH: Highland Lewis. So again, they had already a lot of data when I went to work for them. (chuckles) But I was helping edit data and rewrite reports and edit reports and as a research assistant. That study was really a benchmark landmark study because one of the books that came out of that, I don't know if you been in these social studies classics, but, it became almost an instant classic and be used in teaching. *Street Corner Society.*

JG: I haven't heard of that.

AH: Well, it's about guys hanging out on the street.

JG: Oh, ok.

AH: Yeah, the S*treet Corner Society.* There was another book published. One of the staff members lived in a public housing project and she wrote a book called *Living Poor*. That is not as well known as the other one. Dr. Lewis did a tremendous amount. We published a lot of

pamphlets out of that study. At that time the whole idea of the cultural poverty was popular with politicians. How there was such a separate culture, you know, they weren't like really Americans, you know (chuckles), black people that were on welfare were a target of the conservative. This was the period where you had McCarthy hearings and you know the situation was such that liberal people and very progressive people they were at risk. A lot in terms of jobs…

JG: I actually did one of my research papers on that. The "Red Scare" in Michigan.

AH: Oh, yeah. Well, it wasn't just in Michigan.

JG: Correct. Correct.

AH: I'm in the Red file, you know? (chuckles)

JG: Oh yeah? (chuckles)

AH: Oh yeah! (chuckles) I…you couldn't believe how inaccurate it was.

JG: Yeah, I'm sure.

AH: Totally inaccurate. The people that were hanging out and spying on us, we had no clue what was going on. (chuckles) Well, but in any event, I worked with that study and I came back to Michigan after that and worked with the City of Detroit for twenty years in a job training program with the federal job training money.

JG: You've been in this area ever since?

AH: Yes, mmhm, yep. I finally settled down. I realized if I was going to retire someday I have to stop working on these jobs with no future. Just studies that had gone and you would have to get a different job.

JG: A lot of that was with social justice?

AH: Yes.

JG: And then you started getting into environmental justice?

AH: Well, I got involved with Sierra Club. At the time I had several friends, two very good friends, were diagnosed with breast cancer. There were a couple of women that I worked with that I knew professionally in the city that also were diagnosed with breast cancer. I got to thinking, well you know, all this business with working on women's issues, working on poverty issues and all that, it's no good if you're going to die of cancer at a young age. So I did some background checking and I joined Sierra Club because they basically, they have a democratic structure. Many of the environmental groups don't have a democratic structure in terms of people electing local groups—being organized, and electing their own leaders, making their own decisions about what they are going to do and so forth. So I got involved in that because of the health issues. Pollution is in Detroit. Still in Detroit. You know, the industrial heritage of all these plants that pollute and are allowed to pollute. They are not necessarily well regulated. That is still a very controversial issue. When I retired from the city in 1993 I got more actively involved because I had the time.

JG: So, you told me a little bit about the first annual Washington Summit in Washington, D.C. and that issued in different issues nationally, it brought to the forefront, like environmental racism?

AH: Well I'm not sure…The Washington Summit in terms of environmental justice was a landmark, benchmark gathering. I had nothing to do with that. You know that was a black, minority summit.

JG: But you know something about it and what it meant afterwards?

AH: Well, what it meant was that people came back form that conference inspired and realizing that there was a format to work under in terms of promoting issues and giving minority people a stronger voice concerning their rights to have a healthy situation to live in. Also, not to be overburdened within their communities with pollution and decisions made by companies and municipal cities and states that expose them to more hazards than the white communities that were better off and not picked as sites for a lot of the plants and so forth, that were more protected. So they, what happened in Detroit, was that the people that came back from that summit, they learned a lot about what was going on within the environmental movement. Their issues were largely ignored as a community in terms of health protection and protection from the negative impacts of emissions and water and whatever polluting. So, as a result of that, we had the first organization that became active. It was the Detroiters Working at Environmental Justice which Donelle Wilkins headed. She was the one that really pioneered that and got it an active organization that was self supporting that could raise those issues. They weren't interested particularly in whites being involved in it because they were trying to get their own voice and make their own decisions. Sierra Club was one of the major national organizations and, of course, it was on the list of criticism for its policies and its practices that they were accused of ignoring. Not using the influence of the Club in affecting decisions related to protecting people from pollution, especially in these minority areas where you had so many industrial plants located and so many sources of pollution. Since that time we've had a lot of activity in this area around environmental justice. One of the things that Sierra Club did, as a reaction to all the criticism that they got as a national organization, they set up some pilot programs. There were only four cities picked initially for the environmental justice programs. They hired staff and made provisions for Sierra Club staff to work on environmental justice as a program issue. We got one of those grants because New York turned down a grant they were offered. Our executive director at that time had applied for a grant that would be based in Detroit. It was to be Sierra Club, not to be a free standing organization. New York City got a grant and they wanted to give the money to go to an existing organization that had been setup instead of doing it in Sierra Club. But the policy, the national policy, was that it would…that it be Sierra Club's project and it would be part of the Club. They weren't giving money to fund anything outside of the Club. So we got the grant that New York turned down. Then Rhonda Anderson was hired as our director for that project and she's been here fourteen years. Fourteen years ago she was hired. She set up

an office to work just on the environmental justice issue. Now meanwhile, of course, we have, the way that we're structured within the state of Michigan, we have a state chapter, which is based in Lansing. We have within maybe a half dozen communities in the state, we have local groups, and we have a local group in this area called the South East Michigan Group which has four counties. We've been in existence for some time. Our organization in southeast Michigan took a lot of leadership in air pollution that affected everybody. It was not just the black community, but everybody. Our organization, when I began working in it, becoming a member of it in the late Eighties, that was when the Detroit incinerator was under discussion. Sierra Club and Autobahn and a lot of community organizations especially in the Cass Corridor had a lawsuit to try and keep that incinerator from being built. The lawsuit was batted back and forth between the state and the federal courts for a number of years because nobody wanted to be beat…

JG: Go up against…?

AH: Well nobody, neither one of them, the state or the feds, they wanted to dump it on somebody else, you know, very controversial issue. It was intended as a regional incinerator. Of course, everyone wants their own thing you know. So we had an incinerator in Madison Heights that served southeastern area around southeastern Oakland County. Then we had a western Wayne County incinerator over Dearborn Heights and Inkster and Taylor and that area. We had one in the Grosse Pointes. Everybody wanted their own incinerator.(chuckles) So, the Detroit incinerator was never a regional, in terms of being funded and operated by a region. We have a regional authority, but the Highland Park was the only community that joined it and they never really participated. Especially the money. They never paid any money into it. Anyway, that was one of the areas were I became very heavily involved and we're still at it. It's still a polluter that should be removed from the city. On a legal basis, we lost the lawsuit. Part of the lawsuit was to have recycling as an option to incineration. Initially, pollution control was very poor. Very few pollution controls. Or course, it was six or seven years before that case was heard in court. The state regulators, the Department of Environmental Quality as we call it, they moved in during the course of that time, before this suit went to trial. They moved in and required the city of Detroit to add additional pollution controls. They said they had erred on what should be required in terms of pollution control. This was during the Coleman Young administration. So it

was sold to private business, but the city kept all the liabilities. (chuckles) They got some cash to sell the incinerator but they had to put all the pollution controls that were required. That took place over a period of several years. Then the cost of building and operating the incinerator and the pollution controls were all done through bond issues that the city had to pay out. So the city is still very much imbedded in the incinerator although it's been under private ownership since like 1990-1991. There is an adjacent steam plant that Detroit Edison owned, which was later bought by a company called Detroit Thermal. Basically a steam plant that generates steam and doesn't generate electricity until the contract has been filled. So it was tied in with the steam plant and the steam plant services Midtown, the Midtown area, many of the institutions there. Wayne State pulled out of it after, in the 2000s. Wayne State pulled out of it and has their own generators, but Wayne State was a part of that. Many of the facilities in the Midtown area, the city buildings, all those are furnished with the steam from the Detroit Thermal which bought the incinerator steam. The last time the incinerator was sold, the company that bought it, bought both the incinerator and Detroit Thermal so they own both of them. So, this is a facility that the city will not pull away from.

JG: They curb to certain regulations though, correct, to help?

AH: It's regulated by the state, yes. Permits for operating the incinerator that meet the federal requirements. Those, at the present time, are five year. They reexamine these permits, in theory, every five years and you review them and so forth. And they are tested once a year by the state under that five year life of the permit. Throughout the whole history of the incinerator they…the attitude of the state is that these are businesses and that they don't want to close them down, they want to keep them under control. They want them to obey the rules, but they don't want to shut them down. Because the incinerator is so large it was designed as a regional facility. They don't need it as a regional facility, (chuckles) but it was designed as such. Traditionally, they have met the permit requirements. Initially, the mercury was not regulated. The state, at some point along the way, began regulating mercury from these incinerators. There was no federal rule on it. So you have a basic set of criteria that they have to meet and they can allow to release certain amounts of different toxins and, generally speaking, they have met their appropriate requirements. We haven't been able to get much in the way of controls or backing away from

that based on their protocol they meet, basically. And again, you know the permit, the stack test, are scheduled in advance. They know when, they know what, the choice of what to burn.

JG: Right. They can kind of alter or kinda…or that is the idea anyway.

AH: Yeah. It is a situation where…what we found in terms of the medical. I worked for a number of years on medical waste incinerators. With the national Health Care Without Harm initiative at the time, new regulations were being established for medical waste incinerators, which had been very, most of them from hospitals, were very poorly regulated. We had a medical waste incinerator in the Henry Ford Hospital and then we had a medical commercial waste incinerator in Hamtramck that was highly pollutant. The story there was, the hospital themselves, you know, were more subject to pressure than the cities.(chuckles) The national Health Care Without Harm movement to get rid of the medical waste incinerators was very well organized and very well funded. It was a national program. We worked with the Ecology Center. We got involved with the Henry Ford incinerator because of our relationship with the Ecology Center in Ann Arbor.

JG: That is the Sierra Club and the Ecology…

AH: Yeah. We were part of that coalition. I chaired that coalition. We spent three years getting an agreement from the Henry Ford Hospital to close that incinerator and use an alternative method of treating medical waste. They burned everything. Not just the medical waste. That was the easiest incinerator project we had. (chuckles)

JG: Yeah?

AH: But, the Hamtramck was a commercial medical waste incinerator. There was twelve or fourteen years that the community and environmentalists fought that incinerator. The first solid waste incinerator was in Madison Heights, southeast Oakland County. That was a consortium of communities that burned their trash and that was a solid waste incinerator. So anyway, to get back to medical waste incinerators. As a result of all these united campaigns on this by different

environmental groups and many others that were supporting us, all one hundred fifty-nine medical waste incinerators that were operating in Michigan when these new rules were problem gated. They were all closed. The Ecology Center worked very active and with the University of Michigan incinerators and medical incinerator in Ann Arbor. There was…one big commercial incinerator in the western part of the state was closed after it was sold. It is a long story, but anyway, one of our activists in the area from Hamtramck worked actively with one of those western state incinerators. Anyway, that campaign was, as I say, more successful than anything I've ever worked on. There are still some incinerators left, of course, in Michigan. No medical incinerators. I think there's one in Kent County, one in Genesee County, one in Detroit, and I think that is all the solid waste left in the state. The rest have been closed. Anyway, air pollution is an area where in southeast Michigan we were involved in a lot of the leadership to fight these incinerators. People now are very well aware. They are very well aware of the asthma and the impact of these incinerators on health. So it has become much more difficult to try to convince anybody that they're harmless. This has been one of the focuses of the environmental justice movement. We formed the Zero Waste Detroit Coalition at a time when we were approaching the end of the bond payments that the city had to make for the Detroit incinerator. We had, of course, been in court and lost our lawsuit in court. We were still coming up in terms of budget hearings and all that protests and the amount of money going into it. When the city was approaching the end of the bond payments, the cashing out as you would say, Anthony Adams was the Deputy Mayor of Detroit at that time. It was in the Kilpatrick administration. I went to him and I attended these Greater Detroit Resource Recovery Authority which was the name of the agency which was in charge of the incinerator. I said, you know — he had initiated a study to what they would do when their bond payment was up — and I said we would like to work with you and have some input into this and see what we can do in terms of trying to create a different situation, an alternative, and not keep this thing. So we established…we started Zero Waste Detroit Coalition as a way of getting more active involvement in trying to influence the city in terms of backing away from the incinerator and having curbside recycling and using the materials for economic development. That's been our goal since we first started. Our focus, in terms of public hearings, we furnish testimony on that, long term we're trying to educate the community and work with the community and city officials to try to get people more involved in recycling and see the alternative you can get from recycling is far superior to whatever your

going to get from burning the trash. One of the regulatory issues that we haven't made any impact on is that in areas where you have this concentrations of industrial plants and sources of air pollution, the hope is a combination of many sources, and the regulations should not be one by on with each coal plant.

JG: It should be across the board?

AH: You should recognize the fact that it's a cumulative effect.

JG: Mmhm.

AH: You know, it's a killer.

JG: Right.

AH: You know, and our position, in terms of Sierra Club and Zero Waste has been that anything that you can reduce is good. But, you still have a problem that you have a combined source. That you are not solving the problem if you close one incinerator or get better pollution controls on one plant, your not really solving the problem. You need a regulatory system that looks at the combination of the many sources. This is the area, the issue now that comes up over and over again with Detroit. We do have these areas where you combine industrial pollution with mobile sources, highways, freeways. You have the mobile sources on those and so you get these areas that get a tremendous amount of pollution from a number of different sources. Some of them aren't regulated. So, that is a constant struggle and at this point in time it seems to be getting worse, you know, because of some of the recent proposals by the EPA. In terms of national Sierra Club policy, getting rid of the older coal plants that are heavily polluting and turning to renewable energy, are our top priorities. Nationally, we have a lot of activity in that area. So, getting back to environmental justice, the organizations that have become involved with environmental justice issues create a much stronger voice within the grassroots level on these issues. In an are like Detroit, of course, this has been a very important development. Eastern Michigan Environmental Council, for example. When I first started working in this issue, they

did not have any grassroots activity at all. They worked with litigation and policy level with a group that was basically like Sierra Club were we are a white group that's middle-class. We are part of the problem, unless you get involved and realize that we may be getting along ok or better if we are further out from these sources. If we are living out from direct, what we think will protect…

JG: Right. Yeah, like you said. It's getting bigger and spreading out and we need to keep fighting.

AH: Well, in a sense it may not be getting bigger because we are losing our industrial base, you know.

JG: That's true.

AH: We are certainly not adding more major industrial plants. But the automobile and truck traffic is a major source. And again, in the last few years I've been heavily involved with transit issues. Public transit is needed both for economic reasons by people who ride it that don't have access to automobiles, but it's also needed in terms of reducing pollution.

JG: Yes. I see they are constructing downtown on Woodward.

AH: The M-1 rail. Well, we'll see.(chuckles)

JG: Yeah, we'll see. (chuckles) Right now it just causes a lot of traffic back-up. But, I'm sure there is a light at the end of the tunnel.

AH: Well, the M-1 rail is a small part of what needs to be done in terms of regional transit. This is a drop in the bucket in terms of…many years spent on hearings and projected plans and ways of funding the rail on the whole Woodward charter that didn't go forward and then this M-1 rail is a piece of that. That is basically a circulatory system in the new central business district. It is not…it is a small part of…kind of transit that we need. We need a good regional system where

people can get to work. The balance in terms of employment and transit: 70 percent of the employed people in the city of Detroit come to the city of Detroit from the suburbs. 70 percent of the Detroiters who are employed, work in the suburbs.

JG: Hmmm. I did not know that.

AH: So, seventy, seventy-one, basically seventy percent. So, you have an influx of working people coming into Detroit to work and you have the majority of Detroiters who are working going to the suburbs for jobs. The majority of people in Detroit are heavily dependent on transit. We have a lot, long way to with public transit because you have to have, of course, money to run the transit system.

JG: And metro Detroit was kind of build against that. Correct? Because of the automakers.

AH: Yes. Exactly. Yeah. The car culture. So, we have to get people away from the car culture. It's fair to say the transit has economic advantages whether you drive a car or not. The basic thing is that the cars are not the best form of transit in terms of the environment. We need more use of rail and water, water transit and more public transit where you can reduce the amount of emissions. By going in a bus as opposed to drive, everybody driving their own car.

JG: Yeas, definitely a car culture in this area.

AH: Oh yes there is.

JG: Are there other issues besides the air pollution that are important in todays environmental justice movement?

AH: Well certainly in terms of the whole…how should I say this…the basic economic structure here has been relied on manufacturing to the extent that Michigan and Detroit are trying to maintain a manufacturing unit and a presence in the future. You know, using renewables for generating plants and generating electricity and all of our electricity needs are of vital

importance. To the extent that people can participate in this kind of a society, unless we have better education and we have young people that are prepared for it, competing in this kind of climate with the kind of economy we are getting into is really vital. People have to survive, they have to work. There has to be some place to fit into an economy and be self sustaining as a family and as in individuals. The direction we are going in now, the environmental justice community is involved in the pollution controls and involved in beginning to get involved in climate change issue and using more renewables and using more energy efficiency and so forth.

JG: Solar and wind?

AH: Yeah, that would ward off, to the extent you can ward off, the climate change that is taking place. The other part of that is that people have to have an economic stake in whatever is going on. That is the issue where we don't seem to…this is not the issue that the environmental justice movement is involved in and to an extent I don't think. The environmental justice movement has given them a very strong voice. They, in terms of agreements like the Marathon Oil, you know, where they, these companies getting these agreements where they are going to train people and employ them and then they don't, you know, well, these kind of economic benefits agreements. The environmental justice community is supporting those. There is a lot of discussion about that now in Detroit. There is a place for this. The more participation the better.

JG: Right. How would people, especially the youth, if they wanted to get involved, how would they do that?

AH: Well, I'm not sure. One of the issues now, you know I worked twenty years with the city in terms of the federal job training. The issues we always had before us with job training was that the public schools were such when we tested out our clients, a lot of them read at the sixth grade level and did math at the fourth and fifth grade level. They weren't really prepared to enter into any kind of occupational training that would be a good source of income in the future because they din't have the background to participate. The educational system is extremely important. This gets back to terms of politics. You have to be involved in electing people that are going to make good decisions, you know. (chuckles)

JG: It seems like a full circle. That it is all connected together.

AG: This is one of the issues right now before us, especially in the Detroit area. You've got to find some way to get the schools providing young people with a solid education that then can lead them to something in an occupation future. This has been a problem for some time. Auto plants. When they began automating back in the 60's, certainly by the time I was working in this field in the 70s. So, to the extent that you automate the plants you eliminate the jobs that don't require technical skills, computer skills. This is what we call the skills twist. They used to have two-thirds of the plants that would involve people unskilled and a third skilled. So this flipped over now so that two-thirds of the people employed in these plants and manufacturing companies will be skilled and maybe a third unskilled. The whole future of all this global competition where industry has moved to countries where they can pay low wages and make more money off paying low wages…it seems to be going forward.

JG: It seems like a constant struggle and fight to get…

AH: One of the reasons that I like Sierra Club is that we are active politically. We are a 504 company. Company? Pfft, I mean organization where we can work. But, you got to get people in public office that have some understanding of whats needed and then are willing to work for all those things. Do things to regulate industry and to shape opportunities for people through providing them with better education and more opportunities to learn how to perform whats needed to keep the economy going and keep themselves going. So, at this point I don't think the environmental justice groups are targeting themselves in those areas necessarily. There is a lot of concern in Detroit, as you know, for improving the school system. There's no question about that. The way that it's been done so far through these financial managers. People are hoping for the best. We certainly have not solved these problems. I don't even know if we really attacked them. It is very discouraging to see the school system. Until you have a good school system in Detroit your not going to have much in terms of people having a chance. People dependent on the public school system need the chance to get the kind of backgrounds that they need in order to survive.

JG: Well, I wanted to ask you is there anything else you would like to talk about? Because I know that we covered a lot of different things, but is there anything important that you would like to discuss besides what we have discussed?

AH: Well, I think that I would like to see, I guess, more effort on the part of our environmental groups and our environmental justice groups to work more closely together. We have an environmental justice program in Detroit. I'm very happy to have that here. But, in terms of the way that things happen, you know, I think we would benefit from a broader coalition of organizations that are working together, closer together on these issues. What we've tried to do in the Zero Waste group is that we've tried to keep, to get a variety of organizations involved. I don't know if you looked at our list of member groups.

JG: Yes. That's why it's called a coalition.

AH: Yeah. We have twenty-two organizations and we've tried hard to get a broad representation which include not only the environmental groups and community groups. Different kinds of community groups that cover a spectrum of the population and just the environmental groups as such.

JG: Because they are connected.

AH: Mmhm, yeah. That needs to be done on a much larger basis in terms of all these environmental justice issues. And if you don't get into the political aspects of it, the political structure, the government is something that you have to take into account, in terms of getting some of those things accomplished. Within this city of Detroit, for example, our municipal ordinance, which has been put on hold for a couple of years now. The Mayor has ninety-eight, ninety-nine percent of the power. He runs the city. The city council has always been open to the community to come and make their complaints and talk about all their problems. This a full time job, you know. A full time activity. But, the council really has no power except reviewing the budget and interacting with the mayor over the budget. I think we need a different form of

government in this city of Detroit at this point in time. A full time council that is, at its best points, interested in the population and their problems. Yet they have no power. The mayors have had all the power and then taken more.(chuckles) To get some kind of government structure that will give people and to have people voting for people that would give them kind of representation that's going to really solve these problems. That's a tremendous need. We've been basically, the financial manager has been making all the decisions through the tougher years. I think he's going to be with us much longer. Even though the state is taking over to replace him and monitoring the city. People have to understand that they have to participate. They have to educate themselves and they have to vote and vote for people that really have something to offer as opposed to familiar names and this type of thing. I think working together, in terms of politically, political agenda is something that, an area where we certainly need to do much more than what we are doing now. Sierra Club endorses candidates and we meet with candidates. We lobby. A lot of the non-profits are not allowed to endorse candidates and are not as active as we are. They certainly are also interested in lobbying on the environmental issues. But, I think we need to expand on that greatly. I don't see that we are making that much progress in terms of what we're doing with change within the city. There are a tremendous number of people now that are involved in meetings. There are groups that are working on different aspects of recovery in Detroit. How it's all going to work out is yet to be determined. Until you have some kind of governmental structure where you have accountability and you have more focus on what people really need, the environmental aspect of it is just one aspect.

Extension of original interview

JG: We were talking about the "quality of life priority."

AH: Yes. The quality of life issue around the Detroit incinerator, which goes back to inception of the incinerator. Because they are burning garbage and, of course, garbage includes a lot of things that shouldn't be burned, plastics and so forth. They end up emitting emissions that are harmful to people's health. We have these high asthma rates. Three times than the rest of the state. A lot of impact on people's public health that have been documented by the State Department of Environmental Quality and also by some studies by Wayne State University. So

you have those effects which are extremely important in terms of the surrounding community. You also have the smells that come from not processing the garbage immediately when they bring it in and not keeping that garbage burning so that it doesn't accumulate and deteriorate. It can cause smells that are offensive to people. It's become a more pronounced problem in the last three years since the ownership of the incinerator changed. They were bought by a Connecticut holding ventures company. An economic ventures company, Atlas holdings, that has now incorporated and they had bought the incinerator as we discussed earlier and also the power plant that is associated with that. The steam plant. Because the plant basically had a lot of equipment that is not properly working and because they keep the garbage stored too long before they burn it or they make it into pellets. It's an incinerator where they make it into pellets that they are going to burn. So they are stored, ok? So the smells have gotten much worse in the last three years than they were earlier, although they were always a problem. With the outstanding number of violations the company was citied with they eventually…Michigan Department of Environmental Quality recently issued a judgement against them which fined them $350,000. Fines and penalties that had to be paid because of these past violations that were not resolved. They were also ordered to put in a venting system and they gave them two years to do that which would bring them through two summers, you know. So, to redirect the air within the plant so that it doesn't go outside the plant and disturb the community. These are based on…as part of the Department of Environmental Quality regulation, this is based on common Tort law where these plants are not allowed to disturb the quality of life of people and their surroundings. They also, as part of this judgement, in the future if they have these unresolved violations must pay $5,000 a day penalty when it's documented that the odors are coming from the plant. They have a timetable that they have to meet in terms of this new venting system that they install. They have a timetable in terms of paying off these penalties as I understand it. We've gotten a number of people involved through our waste task, through community meetings and door to door activity handing out information to people and talking with them about reporting these smells so that the Department of Environmental Quality can come and verify that. They have to verify where the smells come from. You have to get there before the smells dissipate and go into the air and move away from the immediate vicinity. They are able to document them if staff people can get out there in time to ascertain where they come from. There are other sources in that area that are also creating these violations, but with Zero Waste we're concentrating on the role of the

incinerator and the offensive smells that interfere with people's quality of life. So this is part of regulation that we got involved in in a more active way because they had gotten, the incinerator had gotten a brownfields development grant from the State of Michigan. They were going to get something like 4.1 million dollars. We've protested any hearings. It should not be a brownfields site because it is not, in terms of the way we understand the definition, a brownfields site. But, they did get the award. So, we have been able to block their getting money from this brownfields because of these violations that are unresolved. The state agreed that they would not give them the brownfields credit, tax credits, until they cleaned up the violations. We've been able to block that brownfields money from them for several years. This is an important tool for us to work with. The point where people report the smells we also encourage them that they should be reporting whether they see black smoke coming out of the stacks or if they smell anything that's not garbage because some of the pollutant that are emitted, some of the toxic that are emitted, have an active smell, all kinds of smells that you can identify. Then whoever goes out to identify this will act on the basis of what people report. We are telling people to describe what the smells, what does it smell like. There's a possibility we would find and locate. These violations that the state attorney general has acted on recently were for the smells and he mentioned in his announcement that economic development is important. We all agree with that. But, that it should not be a violation of people's quality of life. That is an important thing we have to keep in mind. This something that we are continuing on. We work with the Wayne State University Environmental Law Center. They've been working with us on these violations because they have some legal, they can give us some legal help with things like this. This has been a pride, we are very pleased with what we've been able to due in recent months on this to finally bring this to a head. Hopefully they'll move ahead with whatever they have to do, but one of the basic problems here is that this is an old plant. It needs, we assume it's needing immediate replacement equipment. As they said when they bought it, they bought it because it would be a basis for making money, you know. But, you can't run a plant like that, garbage incinerator, you can't make money on that. The only way they can keep going is to have heavy public subsidies. This is not a good idea in terms of money making. And the whole issue of trash and what do with what we call trash, which is a lot of discarding things that are useful and could be used and reused, remanufactured. This is again, part of our culture that…we built a throwaway society and many people sanctioned that and they don't see anything wrong with

that. We've got this whole throwaway business enshrined in all of these. The way that we live and it's wasteful, and in the case like Detroit, we can't afford this kind of life, you know. We need to be collecting all these materials and making reuse of what we can of what people discard. So this is one of the primary goals of Zero Waste Detroit. We want get the curbside recycling that the city has now contracted out, we want that to be built up and successful so that the materials that are collected can be used for economic development. At this point, the contracts that the city entered into last September with two private companies to collect the city waste on the east side and west side of Detroit. Two different companies that they get these…part of there contract was to do curbside recycling. So we need to get those contracts under way. They had until December 31 of this year in order to launch the recycling programs to pay the pickups collection. It's been a very slow start and the year is practically over. As far as I know they are still burning ninety-five percent of Detroit's residential waste. It is a figure that we have understood. So it's something. We need a lot of community education and a lot of understanding of the importance of this and what it could contribute to Detroit and, of course, the areas too. This has been a focus of Zero Waste, to get the massive recycling and then the economic development that goes with it and to use alternative methods of disposing of trash that can't be burned and should not be burned.

JG: Yes. It is just causing extra unnecessary pollutants.

AH: Yeah. And as we discussed earlier, it's in an area….back oh maybe eight or ten years ago maybe, one of the staff people with the Sugar Law Center, she said they were in that mile radius around the incinerator, there were a hundred different sources of air pollution.

JG: Yeah, that two and a half times the state average of asthma is just shocking as well.

AH: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Some Wayne State University Staff, well one of their graduate students and staff, did a study that was published before we started Zero Waste in 2007. They compared areas where you had incinerators and where you didn't have incinerators and the health impacts of that. And, of course, the asthma rates, the low birth rates is another effect that they documented. Low birth weights of newborn babies and other respiratory. It triggers other

attacks related to heart disease and so forth. So there is plenty of evidence that it's no good. It's detrimental to people's health. There is no question about that. The question is what do you do about it. To date, we have not solved this problem.

JG: Yes. We were talking in class about one of your colleagues that was interviewed and mentioned people that were incarcerated, they had a testing of their lead a lot of them…

AH: Was that in Jackson?

JG: I believe so, yes.

AH: Yes. The Jackson incinerator recently closed this year. That incinerator goes way, way back. I mentioned to you, you have to have public subsidies to keep these things going. They used the steam from the incinerator to heat the prison. It was the income from what they charged to heat the prison using this steam from the incinerator that kept this incinerator going. Sierra Club was involved in that over a number of years and finally in this past year they did close that incinerator. There is still one in Kent County and there is one in Genesee County and our Detroit incinerator. I don't think there are any others left in this state, municipal solid waste. There is certainly an upsurge now of efforts to redefine the definition of renewables so that we have grandfathered in some incinerators in our old definition which provided for solar and wind. There is a bill in the state legislature at this time to open that, to change that so that you could burn tires…

JG: I just saw that in the newspapers.

AH: Yes. We are hoping that will die in the Senate this week or next week.

JG: That seems ridiculous.

AH: But it did pass the House. It would open up to burning many forms of waste in quotes. Substances that have no business being counted as renewables or have no business being burned

for plant generation. We've got to find a way to run the plants without adding more pollution to what emissions they release.

JG: There will always be issues coming up. It's a fight against the power, you know. It always seems like it.

AH: Oh yeah. Well the thing that's interesting now, the Tea Party types are not wanted to have anything to do with the government, you know. So, in terms of some of these negotiations that are going on in this lame duck legislation, the Republicans need the Democratic votes for some of these bills. This is what one of the things that we're working on the transportation money because traditionally the transportation money has a provision, this state transportation money, that ten percent is available for non-road transportation. Public transit is non-road, bike trails are non-road, hiking trails are non-road. You have have arrangements with crossing safety and with freight, bring freight, by-roads. A lot of transportation that the state is involved in and should be involved in are not roads. So the House bill that would pass this term, did not include this ten percent or any other provision for public transit whereas the Senate bill included that section of the old legislation that had the ten percent set aside. It also included a provision that Detroit could use twenty percent of its allocation for transportation for public transit. Those are two aspects of that bill that we are supporting. That any bills passed in terms of providing money for road repair should also include the public transit and non-road revisions that we've had and then plus adding the possibility for Detroit to use a higher percentage. It's based on the size of the community so it's Detroit for transportation. So that will be decided within the next week whether, what they're going to do in terms of compromise between the House and the Senate bills. The Governor is supporting the Senate bill and our Mayor Duggan is supporting it, so there are people working on it, but it is going to take some participation and so forth to see that we get these kind of things passed.

JG: Well I know you're not going to give up and I know that there are a lot of people that share the same views and want to fight for all those issues. Thank you very much for your time Anna. I appreciate it very much.

AH: Well I appreciate your time.

JG: Thank you.