

2017 Oral History Project

Detroit, Michigan

**Sandra Denise Turner-Handy**

Interviewed by

Leon E. Bates

December 7, 2017

Detroit, Michigan (Hannan House)

As part of the Oral History Class in the School of Library and Information Science

Kim Schroder, Instructor

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Biography Interviewee

Sandra Denise Turner-Handy (1957- ) is an environmental activist in Detroit, Michigan. She was born and raised in Detroit and is a graduate of Case Technical High School; Wayne County Community College (WCCC); Wayne State University, and Grand Canyon University. Ms. Turner-Handy is an Ed.D. candidate with an emphasis on Leadership Development at Grand Canyon University.

Ms. Turner-Handy is a widowed mother of six children. She lives on Detroit's eastside in the Dabney Neighborhood. She is the Outreach Director for the Michigan Environmental Council (2008 – to present). She became involved in environmental issues through her previous work in the office of a Michigan State Representative when their office was asked to look into environmental pollution issues in a neighboring district. Since then she has championed environmental justice, social justice, community development, education, and family issues all of which she sees as interrelated.

Interviewer

Leon Bates is a Ph.D. student in the Department of History at Wayne State University. He is a native of Indianapolis, Indiana. He is a graduate of Indiana University – Purdue University Indianapolis, B.A. Africana Studies, and History; and the University of Louisville, M.A. Pan African Studies.

Abstract

Ms. Turner-Handy relates some of her experiences growing up and living in Detroit, and how she came to be involved in the environmental movement. She has watched the city of Detroit's decline over the years and now positioning itself for a rebirth in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Restrictions – None

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Leon – We are here at the Hanan House with Sandra Turner-Handy, and she is going to discuss her life, her oral history, here in Detroit, and for the record, I am Leon Bates. It is December 7, 2017, here in the city of Detroit. (checking the audio recorder).

Leon – Tell me about you, tell me about ah about yourself. We were talking earlier, and you said that you were born in Detroit.

Sandra – Born and raised in the city of Detroit, have never lived anywhere else, been here I am 60-years-old now. So 60-years of my life has been spent right here.

Leon – What part of Detroit? Detroit is pretty spread-out-city.

Sandra – It varies. I was born and raised, well I was born on the Westside, at Herman Kiefer Hospital. We lived on the east side right across from Belle Isle. Belle Isle was my playground. We moved west, moving west in the city of Detroit was like a move up, to move west. Because those were areas that we were not allowed in, you know.

Leon – The move west.

Sandra – The west side of Detroit basically, you know we had our Black Bottom area, we had our area where the Fisher Freeway came through and destroyed the Black Community, that was a thriving community. We moved to 12<sup>th</sup> Street, 12<sup>th</sup> Street was the new Black economic district.

Leon – OK

Sandra – OK, we were over in what is now New Center area.

Leon – New Center, OK

Sandra – OK, so I stayed on 12<sup>th</sup> and Pingree, 12<sup>th</sup> Street and Collingwood, and 12<sup>th</sup> Street and Calvert. I saw the riots. I lived through the riots in Detroit; in fact, I was four blocks from where the riots started.

Leon – How old?

Sandra – 10-years-old. Amazing to see places that I had the freedom, as a 10-year-old to go to alone—with no fear. Such as the restaurant up on 12<sup>th</sup> Street, the candy store, the ice cream shop, you know, ah and as back in the 60s we could travel like that, and we didn't have to have a group of people. We didn't have to have somebody older because everybody knew everybody, you know, so everybody has looked-after. And so it was amazing for me to see how quickly all of that could be destroyed, you know, and the fact that here we are 50-years later, and none of it has been rebuilt.

And so I, I always think of it as the...we call it the rebellion, and yeah we were rebelling, but I always think of it as a designed process to end the economic aspect of the Black community.

Because that was our...we had everything. We did have to go out of the community. We had all our needs were within a walk, just a walking distance. A lot of us didn't have cars, you know. We would go downtown, but that was an adventure because if we really needed something, we got it right in our own community.

Leon – OK. Were your parents from Detroit, or did they come from the outside to Detroit?

Sandra – My parents are second generation Detroiters, their grandparents came from down south

Leon – OK, so your parents were born and raised in Detroit.

Sandra – My parents were born and raised in Detroit.

Leon - Wow, OK, alright ah when you were growing up, you said that you were born on the east side and moved to the west side, did you go to the Detroit Public Schools?

Sandra – Yes, all the way through school, I went to the Detroit Public Schools. Excellent, Excellent, academic setting and education, but then I was a child who loved school.

Leon – I understand. Thinking back on the schools, was there anyone that made a difference—a school teacher, or maybe someone in the neighborhood, that you think had a positive effect or a change on you, your outlook on school? Maybe a teacher or a principal?

Sandra – It was so much an individual, it was school itself. School was exciting, I was learning something new every day. We were engaged, school was just such a positive experience for me. I can remember in the second grade, I had Ms. Dailyon, she was my second-grade teacher. I can remember having a blizzard, we had a blizzard, and they shut down the schools. I cried to my mother because there was no way Ms. Dailyon was not going to be at that school to teach me. I knew that she was going to be there. My mom bundled me up, I lived two blocks from the school, two little shot blocks. My mom bundled me up and said go, go on to school, that door was locked. I cried all the way home because I just knew that the teacher had to be there because she was teaching me, she could not, not be there. But the schools were closed. My first lesson learned.

Leon – Oh wow that fascinating...as you are going through school and get to high school, you have gotten past the 67-riots outburst. Um, and you start towards your future as now you are going to be out of school, and moving into the adult world, and into Detroit, what ah, what are some of your recollections about how that part of your life was coming together?

Sandra – I wasn't, ah, my teenage years were really turbulent years, due to different family situations going on. However, it what it shaped was what my career, or what I thought what I wanted my career to be.

Leon – OK

I wanted to be a psychologist because I felt like that would be the area where I could help people that were going through traumatic situations.

Leon – OK

Sandra – So that shaped my career field.

Leon – OK, so that wanting to be a psychologist is what eventually brought you to Wayne State to psychology there.

Sandra – Yes, after starting a family I went to Wayne Community College for a number of years, didn't go into psychology to start with because it was about getting a job. Making some money, and computers were coming of age. So, I actually went into computers, and, um the old punch, IBM punch cards. Learning all of the different languages of the computer, Fortran, Basic, and RPG 1 and 2; and completely out of my area. I mean, I was just completely in the wrong field, after having always been an honor student all the way through school. To get into college and get

“E.” was devastating to me. I said, OK, this is not for me. Let me go, I know that I Like people, let me go into the field I always wanted to go into. And after graduating from WC3, I went over to Wayne State, for ah, I only had a year and a half to go, and so I majored in psychology and finished there.

Leon – WC3 would be?

Sandra – OH, Wayne County Community College, which is now Wayne County Community College District.

Leon – OK, alright, and then you went on to Wayne State and got your there degree there, did you ever start working in psychology?

Sandra – No, (laughs heartily). Nope, I have always worked, I have always, I have held a job since I was 14-years-old. Um, I went into corporate America. The thing about psychology is that it teaches you how to interact with people.

Leon – OK

Sandra – So, it didn’t matter what field, or where I worked it. I could always use my knowledge, around psychology in my work. First, I went into banking, and I worked for some of the major banks in the city. Then, I went into insurance and worked in home and auto insurance, for over 10-years. Then I started getting back to, get into working around people in the city of Detroit. You know in the non-profit sectors.

Leon – OK, so you worked in several office environments, you studied, and at some point, you transferred into, ah, the public sector, and started work with politicians, and that led you into environmental activism.

Sandra – Yes, yes I worked at the health department for a while, under a grant helping uninsured and under-insured residents in the city of Detroit get health care. Which is what kind of led me to really working with people. After coming off of that job, I was offered a position to work with a state legislator. And of course, my fields in working with him was around seniors, education, and healthcare because those were the areas that I had some knowledge in. That legislator went from the House of Representatives over to State Senate, I became the chief of staff. And as I stated before we got a call one day, from a friend of theirs, who worked for the fire department [Detroit Fire Department], that stated that something was going on in a community, and they really needed a state legislator to come and see what was going on. It wasn’t part of our district, but because a friend had asked, we did it. We let the state Rep for the district know that we were coming into their district. I went to the district, got out of my car, and literally was hit by this wall of odor, it was 90-degrees outside, and it was like all of a sudden, I was just consumed by this smell. My head started hurting immediately, I got nauseated, it was like I just got sick, I was just sick, and it was just hanging in the air.

Leon – What part of town was this?

Sandra – I was over on John-R and Nevada, right where Eastside becomes the Westside, right going North by Eight Mile.

Leon – OK, so North of Downtown.

Sandra – Yes, a low-income community of color, they had a wastewater treatment plant at the end of a block, dead-end street, and this private company was designed to take wastewater from different factories, and their job was to clean-up the heavy toxins and metals out of the water and dispose of it. Well, they were just dumping it down into the sewer system in the community, meaning that it was coming up the basements of peoples homes. So, the smell was coming in their house, it was coming up in the streets. We had children 1 and 2-years-old in that area on breathing machines, because this had been going on for a long time, this just the first time that someone actually said, we are going to do something about this, we going to bring some attention to it. So, we worked with that community for a year and a half, we were able to shut

down the facility. MDEQ, Michigan Department of Environment Quality, finally shut them down, and this a plant that had been fined repeatedly, they paid the fine and kept on doing what they were doing.

Leon – So they had a history of this?

Sandra – They had a history because MDEQ is not enforcement, part of their job is enforcement, but it is not part of their job that they have ever really done. They will fine-you, but the enforcement part they weren't doing. So this place had a wall of fines, they would pay the fine and continue to operate as usual. So we were able to bring a lot of media attention in the community. We were able to actually get monetary compensation for the community. Not scientifically tested, that community had a lot of birth abnormalities in that area. As I said, I wasn't scientifically proven but were able to get monetary compensation for the residents. Get the facility shut down, and eventually torn down.

Leon – OK

Sandra – So that was my entry into the environmental field. It was intriguing and found out, this happening all over the city. Not just here. There is other areas of the city that are experiencing this same environmental injustice, and I never knew it. I never knew that when I grew-up across from Belle Isle, that the Uniroyal plant set there, and that all these toxins were going into the soil, the same soil that I was playing in, and that it was an environmental hazard. I didn't know this, of course, now I know the Uniroyal site where I used to play as a kid, is one the most heavily polluted brownfields in the city. You know, it's a Superfund site, that's how bad it is.

So, but I didn't know it, but now I know. I know where a lot of these environmentally hazardous industries are located, and they are located in low-income communities of color.

Leon – So as you got into this, you stayed with environmental issues. What kept you interested, or pulled you in and kept you involved in the environment issues opposed to moving on to something else, or even going back to psychology and dealing with people?

Sandra – My grandson, no granddaughter and my son attended “Go Lightly Educational Center” [part of the Detroit Public School System], a school where they had a lottery to get in, or you had to know someone. Well, of course, I knew a state senator, so I was able to get my son and granddaughter into the school.

Leon – Where is the school located?

Sandra – Its located on Ferry, right at I-75 (Interstate-75) and Ferry Street, which is at the I-75 and I-94 intersection.

Leon – Just east of here?

Sandra – Just east of here, and right across the freeway from the solid waste incinerator, and they were able to attend that school. My granddaughter, both of them were healthy kids. My granddaughter was a, ah, the school was K through 8 at the time. My granddaughter was in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade developed asthma, never been sick in her life. Developed asthma to the point that she had to go on an inhaler. Many trips to the emergency room, never knew what was causing it. My granddaughter graduated and went to school further away in the city, and now she is 25 and has not used an inhaler since then.

Leon – So the problem went away?

Sandra - The problem went away, which led me to believe that the problem was the area which she was in.

Leon – It was environmental?

Sandra – It was environmental. I began to realize that a lot of the children in that area were suffering from respiratory problems. A lot of the seniors were suffering from respiratory

problems. But, it seemed that if they moved out of that area, they disappeared. So, it was something environmentally wrong going on in that area, and of course, we connected it to the incinerator, but not only the incinerator. We also connected it to the fact that we are at the most traveled freeway intersection in the whole state of Michigan. The I-94 & I-75 intersection is the most widely traveled intersection. So we not only have the emissions from the cars, we have the emissions from garbage being burned. From the incineration of solid waste materials, and with no sorting, so if your burning plastic bags and all of that, and they have oil on them, you have all of this pollution coming out. So, didn't know it at the time, but I kind of started figuring it out, and then wind up working in the environmental field, around environmental justice issues, and the incinerator was the very first issue that I worked on.

And knowing the history that I had with my granddaughter, you know, it was really something that I could really dig into and wanted dig into. Because I wanted to find out how can we help this community, and help these kids? Because when I was working for the state senator, I actually was able to help raise funds for a playscape for that school. Because my kids went there, and we built the playscape. The playscape was actually built on the side of the school where the freeway and the incinerator sit.

So we were putting the kids in[to] direct harm, and so I really began to look at different things surrounding the school, and the fact that the incinerator was there, and the freeway was there. So, I began to work with a group called "A New Business Model for Detroit," which later became "Zero Waste Detroit." And what we did was design a recycling program or a recycling pilot for the city of Detroit. Of course, we had to advocate for the program because the city, a major city, didn't have recycling. We didn't have curbside recycling in the city. So from 2008 until 2011, we advocated for curbside recycling.

Leon – Curbside recycling, that's where the homeowner is actually separating recycling materials from garbage.

Sandra – Yes, it is collected separately, but the city decided to do a pilot program. So they did one community on the Eastside, and one community on the Westside and they were using different storage containers. One side had the big corvill's [recycling container] that looks like a trash can, and one had the small bins. So they piloted the recycling program for about three years (laughing). Long pilot (hearty laughing), before they moved into full implementation throughout the city of curbside recycling.

Leon – So they did implement it?

Sandra – They did implement curbside recycling and during that time, the incinerator itself, went through three (3) different ownerships.

Leon – So the incinerator is not owned by the city?

Sandra – No, the city sold the incinerator in about 1990, because the city could not afford to do the upkeep, to install the scrubbers [air pollution controls] that were required by the EPA (Environmental Protection Agency). So the city sold it, but at the time, the city still owed the bond debt on it, because it [the city] had sold bonds in order to build the incinerator. So, the bond debt was not over until 2009, when we paid it off. But, during that time, residents in Detroit were paying \$171 per ton of solid waste that was being incinerated, and the incinerator operators and company were receiving solid waste from suburban communities \$25.00 a ton, so, Detroit residents were actually supplementing the suburbans incineration of their trash.

Leon – So the trash was being processed, being collected and incinerated, by, from the Detroit resident in the city of Detroit proper, and its also being collected and processed from those surrounding communities which are not a part of Detroit?

Sandra – Correct, at a much lower cost.

Leon – That's interesting.

Sandra – Very interesting—and that’s a part of the whole environmental justice landscape. We’re actually paying to supplement the environmental aspects of burning trash and polluting the air, and were paying for it. We are supplementing other peoples garbage, so that was a big thing, and we wind up getting the city to really move toward city-wide curbside recycling with a stipulation—that you had to purchase your cart [residential recycling bin], you had to \$25 for a recycling cart. Well, that’s a problem in a predominantly city of color that has been through bankruptcy, that has no jobs, that has a high unemployment rate, that has a low educational skill level. Many families living below the poverty line so \$25 can go on your heating bill, or your food bill—definitely was not going toward a recycling cart, which is way down the list when trying to take care of a family. So, Zero Waste Detroit, we were able to secure a grant working with the city in order to get free carts, if residents really wanted to recycle, and were willing to do an educational sitting around recycling, the does and don’ts of recycling. They would receive a free cart. So we have been doing that for about 3-years now, and we now have 45,000 residences in Detroit recycling, which is an enormous increase in the last 2-years. We went from maybe 5,000 residences starting, to now 45,000, and that’s with education. We have made it easier for residents to able to receive carts. We now have an online system, they can go online take a quiz, and get a free cart. A quiz that does the education.

Leon – So this system is still ongoing, you are still passing out carts to folks who want to participate.

Sandra – Yes, we paid off the debt. So now, the city, whereas one time was beholding to sending all of our solid waste to the incinerator. Now we don’t have required tonnage, we can send as little as possible. And my thought is always get everybody to recycle, and we are going to do this so well, that we have very little to send to the incinerator, and that will help the environment. That will help us better our air quality in the city. Well, that’s not true, and the reason why that’s not true is because, however, less we send, they pick-up more from surrounding communities. They make it up from surrounding communities solid waste. So if we send 20 percent, they are going to get 80 percent from elsewhere.

Leon – So the amount that is being incinerated has stayed fairly constant, it just now they are getting more of it from outside the city.

Sandra – They are getting more of it from outside of the city, correct, correct.

Leon – Interesting.

Sandra – So when I tell residents about the great thing about recycling, and it is great, we are doing our part. But the fact that it's really not decreasing the toxicity of our air in the city because they are making up for it somewhere else. The incinerator itself, which is deemed a renewable energy, because it generates steam. As you know, there is a three-mile radius that is on the steam loop, what we call the steam loop. If you drive through the city of Detroit and you see steam coming up out of the streets, that’s the steam-loop. And its only in this area, the three-mile area around downtown Detroit, that’s en-efficiency of the steam loop, because it's leaking because we got steam coming out.

Well, what it does, it generates steam, which helps to generate electricity for DTE [the local gas and electric utility], and it heats 141 buildings in the surrounding area. A lot of the buildings are looking at sustainability now, and their beginning to come off the system, the steam loop. Wayne State itself is down to just one building on the steam loop, and it was a major, major, and I found that out today, so it’s a yeah. So, um, so the fact that it heats these surrounding areas, how will provide this energy needed. Well, at one point the incinerator was going through some contractual issues, and they had to use natural gas, which is not the greatest thing either, but they used natural gas, and they were able to provide the steam without burning solid waste—and it worked—so we know it can be done.

But one of the biggest issues around the incinerator is that it has always been a nuisance for residents in the area because it’s always been an odor problem. And the odor problem and the odor problem has arisen not from the burning of the solid waste, but from allowing the garbage

sit on the floor for an absorbent amount of time. And in the summer, you get these odors that hang in the air. So the incinerator probably since its inception has continuously, received fines from MDEQ, again not an enforcer, but they will fine them. The city, when the new owners came onboard about 3 or 4 years ago, Detroit Renewable Power, they actually applied for a "Brownfield Tax Credit" of \$4.1 million. The city council awarded it to them, they had to go to Lansing [the state capital] for final approval. Several of us went up, and we gave testimony, and I told them the story about my granddaughter and the other kids that I knew that went to that school with the same problems, and they granted them the \$4.1 million, but they put it in escrow. They could only get it once they cleaned up their violations. Well, they never cleaned up their violations, and that was 2011.

Leon – So the money is still sitting there.

Sandra – No. I just found out a couple of months ago, that money has been released, a couple of months ago I found out. I have always bragged that they have this money sitting in escrow. Well, they got the money (hearty laughter). But it was supposed to sit there until they cleaned up the violations. But, all in all, we're able, we have had some great victories around the incinerator. *One*, we got curbside recycling throughout the city. *Two*, we have gotten MDEQ through an engagement process that was designed with residents around the incinerator, we have them to call MDEQ 24-7, whenever the smell anything, they make a call to the hotline. MDEQ will send out an investigator, and they will fine them immediately. Well, after so many fines, and there wasn't anything being done, and were constantly meet with MDEQ. We were able to get the Attorney General, the states Attorney General, to file a consent judgment against them. So now, anytime they get a violation, they have to pay \$4,500 per day, of the violation. Now you are hitting people in the economic area, and you are going to get some results. Well, part of that result is they just sold the facility to a company out of London.

Leon – London?

Sandra – Out of London. Someone said Germany today, but the final sale has not gone through, but, I think its London. So, they sold the facility in July, paperwork is still going on. Ah, this new entity will have to adhere to the consent judgment. But, the one thing I have to say, is that the odor problem is a problem. Because it hampers repository [inaudible], it triggers respiratory illnesses in a lot of people. But the thing is, it's the toxins that you can't see or smell that are that are more detrimental [inaudible]. February 2017 [ or 20]16, they were out of compliance for 60-days, for Sulfur Dioxide, Carbon Monoxide, and particulate matter (2.0). And, if anybody knows anything about particulate-matter, it is fine and minute, that of course, you cannot see it. But, it attaches, you breathe it, and it attaches to your lungs and clogs up your whole lung. And, so it is really deadly, so right now fighting to get MDEQ and the Attorney General to file suit against them around the noncompliance for that period of time, they want to fine them as one incident because it was continuous, we want them to be fined per day. So that's we are trying to get done at this point. So, the incinerator has always been a part of work that I have done for the last 10-years. The incinerator sits again in a low to moderate income community, you have housing projects over there, and housing projects are normally subsidized for low-income families. And the idea that facility would never be in Bloomfield Hills, [Michigan] it would never be in Grosse Pointe [Michigan] and mind you that we get Groose Pointe's garbage it comes to the facility. But, you would never have this in your community. We are down to paying \$25 a ton now, but Grosse Pointe pays \$14, so we are still supplementing.

Leon – Grosse Pointe pays \$14

Sandra – Yes.

Leon – And Detroit pays how much?

Sandra – \$25

Leon – \$25

Sandra – So we are still supplementing. For the fact that we allow other people to pollute our



Sandra – So we are still supplementing. For the fact that we allow other people to pollute our area, we are helping to pay for it. And, I always say (laughs), so it's a challenge, it's a challenge, but its one that I am willing to keep on fighting. And, the fact, the one thing that amazes me with our city government as we continue to repopulate this city, the influx of capital in the city has been in the downtown and midtown area where Wayne State sits. The influx of a whole new population is now settled in this area, and the incinerator is right-up the street, and many of those residents did not know that in the summer, you cannot raise your windows. OK, they did not know you may not want to walk outside on those nice days, those hot days, because you may get something that you don't want to smell. And now they're beginning to realize, so we really got a new groundswell of support, because these people are coming from the suburbs, moving back into the city. They're not going to stand for it. You got a whole population paying taxes in the city, and they're going to stand for it. So we have a whole new group of supporters that we can now lean on, as we continue this fight.

Leon – How have the elected officials, and I am thinking of more of the federal and state officials, congressmen, and senators, state senators over the long-haul how much of an asset have they been? In the effort to try to change and improve the environment issue in Detroit, in inner-city Detroit?

Sandra – Not very helpful. We had one state rep that represented Southwest Detroit, which is the third most heavily polluted zip code, 48217, in the whole country, the whole country, not just Detroit, not just the state of Michigan, but the whole county. It is a community surrounded by at minimum 13 polluting facilities including Marathon Oil U.S. Steel; Zug Island; Detroit Water and Sewer Department, which has incinerators. So, the representative for that community, which at one time was our area, I cant think of her name right off the bat. But the representative fo the area fought long and hard for the six years that she was in the state legislature, around environment issue in the city of Detroit. State level, that was our, the biggest support was from whoever was representing that particular zip code. But with no concentrated effort to clean up the city environmentally. It was never there. We have a city council now that is somewhat, well actually our city council prior, our old city council where we had the Joan Watson's, Kwame Kenyatta's. The activist, the great activist of old on the council, where they were establishing some policies and process by creating the green task force and creating the environmental task force to look at these issues for the residents of Detroit. Well, they're gone, and we don't have a lot of those activist anymore that's really standing up.

We have the councilwoman out of southwest Detroit, [Raquel] Castañeda-López. She really stands up around environmental issues. But, Rashida Tlaib, that is the representative that was a state representative around 48217, in Southwest Detroit, is really an active voice. She is no longer in office, but she is still an active voice around environmental injustice. So, but state government has been more of a grassroots effort to influence decision-makers and influence policy.

Leon – What about representatives of color? Black politicians, have they been active in the struggle, or--?

Sandra – No.

Leon – OK.

Sandra – And I say that because a black, we have black, we have a, our Detroit delegation was 95 percent of color, always have been.

Leon – Why do you think they are not as involved, or aware, as they should be?

Sandra – Mostly because a, for some of them it's not an issue in their community, and for those that have communities where the incinerator sits or have Southwest Detroit where you have all these polluting facilities, or have Jefferson where have the factories of old, well, you got the contamination they left. But, if it's not in their communities their working for whatever their constituency advocates for, that what they are working for. So they are no concerned about Marathon Oil sitting down in Southwest Detroit because it has no impact on their area. And I

incineration or siting down in southwest Detroit because it has no impact on their area. And I think that why I, I don't think a loud enough voice is being raised that environmental injustices affect this vulnerable community, and if it can happen in this community, it can happen in your community. And I don't think that is raised enough.

Leon – That's fair. What do you think should be done, what type... (interview interrupted by none participants, then recommences).

Leon – So what kind of voice do you think there should be, to try to change or improve this situation?

Sandra – I think that our, as we elect officials to local, state, and federal government that they must be fully educated around the issues that are truly impacting the health and safety of resident, they have to be educated. We have to not continue to elect people that are making decisions for us that are not looking out for our welfare. If you have a representative, representing the area where the incinerator sets, they should have the biggest voice. If they are in the federal government with the EPA saying look, we've got to look at this term renewable energy, this is not renewable energy. State level, this is not renewable energy. We cannot grandfather these facilities in that are polluting our communities. Or they have the biggest voice saying, look, we need renewable energy. We need to shutdown DTE coal plants. We need move toward solar energy or wind energy. We need to start having a vision of beyond where we are now because we know it's not healthy. So, as voters, we have to start grooming candidates to carry that message. That we have to have a healthy, safe, and clean city. Especially if we want to repopulate it. People are going to move into a city where they have high rates of asthma, high rates of lead. Who wants to raise their kids in that environment? You have young people moving in, but you don't have a whole lot folks with families moving in. And the families that are here are families that's been here there whole life. Either, they have a love for this city, or they cant afford to move; those are the two scenarios. I love the city, I can afford to move, but I love the city. I am not going anywhere, I would rather try to change where I am—than move. And that's what it is, we have to start grooming people to carry the message that we want a city that is clean, safe and healthy to raise families in.

Leon – You raised lead a few minutes ago, which made me think about Flint Michigan, which most everyone in the country has been talking about Flint, and their lead pipes and water crisis. That is an issue many older cities face or may face. Does that issue become a problem in Detroit, the lead pipes or has Detroit dealt with that.

Sandra – The issue of lead in Detroit, always has been an issue. Detroit is the number one city in the state that has the most elevated lead blood levels of children, than any other city in the state of Michigan. And you are going to find most of these elevated lead levels in our urban cities because the housing stock is older. Detroit does not have a lead problem when it comes to water. We have the best water system in the world in the city of Detroit. We go to out taps, and we drink straight out of the tap. We're good on the water. But it is our housing stock and the fact that we are a post-industrial city and a city that continues to have a lot of industry, that we have lead in our soil. And we have an older housing stock that's never been abated for lead after 1978 when they got rid of those lead-based paints. And we are finding that we have a lot of generational homes. Where it was the grandparent's house, now it's the grandchild's house, and she is raising kids in it, and we're finding that for each generation we had a lead affected child in that household, because the house has never been abated for lead. And we finding through a lot of the zip codes in the city if it's not new housing they have never been abated. So we still have a concentration level of children that are being affected by lead in these homes, and it's an issue that we work on continuously. Because before Flint, everybody thought lead is no is longer happening. While they were thinking this, we were saying to the state of Michigan, look, lead is an issue. We need for funding to continue around abatement, and lead risk assessment, and this and that. And we had to keep fighting for it because people didn't think lead was an issue. Flint happened, now everybody sees lead as an issue, but they only see it in water. Well no. In Detroit, in Flint, in Saginaw, in Grand Rapids, our urban cities with older housing stock, this is an issue, and it continues to be an issue. And a lot of people don't understand how much we as residents pay for these lead cases. A study was done many years ago about prisoners in our states

pay for these lead cases. A study was done many years ago about prisoners in our state's correctional system, come to find out a lot of them tested positive for lead. Because lead it harms a child developmentally. If you are a child and you are going to school, and you are not keeping up, you become a behavior problem, they're kicking you out, they're putting you in "Special Ed." They're doing this, they're doing that, well when you get to a certain age you just stop. You just stop going. OK, if you stop going to school and never go to college: how are you going to take care of yourself? What do you resort to in order to survive? You resort to crime. You wind up in our prison system, so now we're paying ten, or 15 thousand dollars a year to take care of you as a prisoner. And the fact that our prison system is overcrowded, we're paying for a whole lot of folks. And for the fact, so many of them tested positive for lead, just showed a correlation lead and our justice system, and those that are incarcerated in our state. So, people don't understand the lasting effects of lead, and how much it truly impacts a child. It never leaves you, once you have lead in your system it's there for the rest of your life. So you see I get excited when you talk about lead. Because people, to me it's like the hidden, the hidden environmental hazard, and people don't think it happens. And in Flint, all of a sudden open up all these eyes, but they only see water. They only see water. The number of kids, of children that were impacted in Flint, by the Flint water crisis, is nothing compared to the number of kids that tested positive in the city of Detroit for lead. And people don't understand that because they think, we got rid of lead-based paint, that's over with. Well No. The housing stock has never been abated. It is still lead in these houses.

Leon – Let me ask you a closing thought or question? As we have talked air pollution, water pollution, and now lead pollution, if, looking back on it, what would say is probably, I know that you said some, some positive impact on the incinerator and how that was being done, and the private sewage plant that finally closed and demolished. What would say is probably one of the biggest challenges that remain that you haven't gotten over, or that you are still fighting. Or seems like, this is one, that just, this is the problem that won't go away? This is the problem from Hell that you just cannot seem to bring under control.

Sandra – That would have to be incineration.

Leon – Even with the progress on incineration, that would be the one?

Sandra – Because it is still going on, and as I said; yeah, we made progress, we're changing the way people think about solid waste, but anytime we are not reducing the amount of waste going to the incinerator. If we reducing it in Detroit, they're picking it up elsewhere, and the victory comes in the mindset of everyone around the fact that we cannot incinerate solid waste, and not pay a health price for it. And the fact that price is being paid by residents who have no choice. That is the biggest thing for me, and if I could place like Grosse Pointe, and Oakland County where we get most of our solid waste from. If I can go to places like that and convince them, can you please stop sending you garbage—to my city. You're affecting my kids. You're impacting their health. If I can go somewhere, and convince these people, that they are part of the problem and not the solution, it would be great. Ok, but that's not happening, that's not happening. So we will continually fight, to hit them as hard as we can economically. In the hopes that somebody, soon or later will say that this is not a profitable business, and walk away from it.

Leon – I think that is probably what I need to complete this part of the interview, we can probably go on forever.

Sandra – You see my passion.

Leon – The questions keep rising in my head, and you are very passionate about what we are talking about. Is there anything that you think that we didn't talk about, that you want to mention before we wrap this up.

Sandra – The one thing I want to say, is that living in the city of Detroit, and we have been through a lot of struggles economically, environmentally, socially we are struggling. But we now have this great opportunity to begin from the bottom—up. We are at ground zero, this is the time to get it right. Environmentally, economically we need to start putting into practice things that are going to make this a clean, healthy, and safe city. Businesses moving in, need to move in with

are going to make this a clean, neat, and safe city. Businesses moving in, need to move in with an idea that we are a clean business. This is not the place to come to dump. So that's my parting thought, as we begin to transform, recreate, redevelop this city, let's do it in a way sustainable for everybody. OK. ALL RIGHT [with excitement]

Leon – Thank you, I will get this typed up, and get it turned in, and thank you for doing it.

Sandra – You're welcome [recording ends]