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Tremont Oral History Project
Interview with Joseph Santiago
Interviewed by David Brock
31 March 2003

David Brock: All right, what is your name sir, and can you please spell it for me?

Joe Santiago: Joseph Santiago. S-a-n-t-i-a-go.

DB: And today is March 31st, a Monday. And, I am interviewing as a part of the Tremont Oral History Project. My name is David Brock. Joe, what are some of your early childhood memories of Tremont?

JS: Having fun, family, the neighborhood connection, poor, welfare. Back in those days it was hard. I remember welfare cheese.

DB: And you grew up a few blocks from here, this is West 14th Street?

JS: Well, I grew up here on W. 14th Street.

DB: And what are some of the good memories of growing up here in Tremont?

JS: Good memories would be walking to school, before busing started. I was a paperboy, so I remember delivering the paper. Everyone knew everybody. You know, my father would know what happened before I even got home.

DB: What aspects of growing up here were important, say socially? Was church ?

JS: Church very important. I'm Catholic. School was important. Graduation was important. Family values were important. Maintaining your yard, all that kind of stuff.

DB: Even without money, you wanted things to look nice?

JS: Yeah, you still cut your grass, yeah. It's changed now, there's a lot of money coming in. Like this house cost \$13,000 in 1971, and now it could sell for \$289,000.

DB: Did your father ever give you any memories of when he came over from Puerto Rico when he was 16?

JS: When they came over it was, well the freeway was getting started and our neighborhood was divided in a lot of different ways. A lot of people were displaced. A lot of Hispanics were here to work in the steel industry. The factories. My father worked in Hostess. When Hostess left here, his job got displaced.

DB: What are some of the places you would go shopping at?

JS: Like grocery shopping?

DB: Sure.

JS: Where Topps is now.

DB: And were there any Latino stores?

JS: The Latino stores we still go to are on (Inaudible).

DB: And you would always drive there, or would you walk to some of these?

JS: Well, back then you only shopped on certain days. Now, you go shopping anytime you want. But back then my mom would go shopping on Fridays.

DB: Oh, is that right? You grew up here, and you said there was only pockets of Latinos. Where did you mostly go to church.

JS: Well St. Michael's is a German church, but it's also a Spanish church. So, we had Spanish Mass and we had English Mass. So, it was a bilingual church.

DB: Is that right? Do they still do that?

JS: Yes.

DB: Now you said your father worked at Hostess, did your mother work?

JS: Well my mom was a teacher.

DB: Where at?

JS: She taught at Scranton school, and other schools. We also had a number of foster kids.

DB: Oh, is that right. Where did you grow up?

JS: Here.

DB: Oh, it was this house right here, okay. Is that why your mom started working?

JS: No, no. My mom, out of high school she went to college. And my father preferred that she stayed at home. So, she stayed at home and raised a bunch of kids while we grew up and went to school. They decided to take in foster kids.

DB: Now, when you and brothers were teenagers where would you go to hang-out?

JS: In the neighborhood. In our yards. (Phone rings).

DB: And when teenagers would go out on dates, not just as far as social functions, where would they usually go?

JS: On dates? We basically hung-out together. Like my group we still hang out together. There's like 10 of us we go over each other's house, we have pot lucks or whatever. But as teenagers I remember we always hung-out together. We did group things. Like we would go skiing with the school, as teenagers. We would go to the zoo, which is right up the street. You know we did group things. We never had boyfriends and girlfriends we all hung-out together. We didn't do separate things. So, if I had a date I wouldn't say, "Ooo I have a date late, let me go out by myself." We just hung-out together.

DB: And at what point, you left to join the Navy after high school, or at what point?

JS: I joined the Navy when I was 22. So, I worked for 3 years before I joined.

DB: Where did you work after high school?

JS: During high school, well I was in this cooperative office education, that you go to school half a day, and you go to work half a day. So, I worked at a library fixing those old movies, those old reels. Those big reels, taping them and all that. Splicing them. And I also worked at Burger King. And then I worked at Burger King and at a nursing home while I was in school. So, when I graduated I quit Burger King and went full-time at the nursing home.

DB: What made you decide to join the Navy?

JS: I just did it. Well, I knew my parents didn't have money for me to go to college, and I did not want to be stuck doing minimal jobs. So, I went and I took the test, because back then 20 dollars was hard to come by. So, it was 20 dollars to take the ACT test or whatever. So, I said I'll go take the military test, and if I pass that I'll go take the ACT test. I knew the military test was free. So, I took the military test. I passed it. And two weeks later I was in the Navy.

DB: If your parents would have had a lot of money would you still have joined the Navy.

JS: Yeah, well I don't know because we weren't a military family. And in high school, we didn't have the benefits that I think kids have today. Where their career counselors really show them the avenues they should take with their future. I see today that schools are more involved as far as education, or what your goals should be in life. For us, our goal was to graduate. And when you graduated the goal was for the girls to get married and have kids, and for the guys to work. So, it was never, there was never that, "Oh did you think about joining the military?" Or, "Did you think about going to college?" For me, that's how I felt. There wasn't that push for what you should do. It was, when you graduate you're going to work. That was it. I just fell upon. Like I said I just said I'll go take the test and see if I pass it. I didn't stick my foot in my mouth, but you could say I stuck my foot in my mouth. I joined for three years, and then I ended up staying for ten.

DB: What year was it that you joined?

JS: '88

DB: You don't think that if your parents would have had more money you just would have went to a four year college and that would have been it? Or you would have worked or what?

JS: Yeah, I don't think, I don't know. Because money would have probably changed a whole lot. I never thought I would go to college. Here I am now, I'm 36, and I'm going to college. I don't know, because we were never. It was never a part of our family talk. Graduate. Graduate was the biggest deal. So, once we graduated that was up to us. There was never any, "Do you think you want to go to college, or what do you want to be when you grow up?" It was get a job, and go to work, and live on your own.

DB: Along with those, what other values would you say your parents instilled in you here in Tremont?

JS: Family values, work values, ethics, work ethics. Being proud of who you are. Being proud of where you live. All that stuff.

DB: Is that pride in who you are, and where you live why you returned here to Tremont after 10 years in the Navy?

JS: Good question. Well, let me think about that. I did have a choice of going anywhere in the United States when I left the Navy. And, I came back home because my experiences of living in all different cities around the world, wasn't the same as being home. Even after being in the military for 10 years, I always talked about Cleveland. I think if you're born and raised in Cleveland it never leaves your heart. And, I think that you always long to come back home. I always wanted to come back home. And, when I did come back home, since this house is so big, my father said, "Well why don't you just take over the house?" Then, I got involved in the community in so many things. My block club. Then I became block club chairman, and there was a lot of issues in our neighborhood. Our neighborhood was going downhill. So, I became a real big activist which I never thought I'd be. It just kind of rolled. Join one thing, and then before you know it you're on all these committees. That's how I am. I'm involved in so much. Through the block club, and the block club is associated with Tremont West. And, then we had, like three cars were sideswiped in front of my house. My mom said, "Oh, for 20 years we've tried to get a light there." I said, "Well I'm going to get a light there." So, I got the block club together and we picketed and picketed and finally we got a light there.

DB: And how long did that take?

JS: Two weeks.

DB: Two weeks?

JS: Well, we got the press involved. We got cameras, and the TV stations involved. So, then everyone's like, "You should run for the board of trustees of Tremont." So, then I ran and now I'm the Vice-President. That rolled into running for councilman. I'm on the Puerto Rican festival committee to do the first parade downtown. I'm on the Long Range Planning Committee. I'm on the Safety Committee. I went to a class here, with the 2nd district police here to see how the police, because people had a fear of policeman. So, I went and took a class to be a citizen police officer to see how they worked. And then, from that we started curfew sweeps and cleaning up the neighborhood, and getting it back to the way it was before.

DB: When did it start, talking about cleaning up the neighborhood and getting it back to what it was before, when do you think that decline began, or did your parents mention when you were gone?

JS: It was while I was gone. And, what happened was that during that time when people were getting deals out in the suburbs, like Parma. The goal of many people in the city is to leave the city, but they leave and they always come back. But, their goal is to, I don't know if it's the dream of a lot of people to live in the suburbs. So, a lot of people met their goal, and they moved out to the suburbs. So, their housing here became rental property, or Section 8 property. And then, in that same ball of fire, many of the ghettos were getting torn down. Reform happened in the city where City Council and the Mayor were saying they no longer wanted people to live in the ghetto and that way. So, different types of people were moving into the neighborhoods, Section 8 housing. People that never lived in neighborhoods. People that have lived in, what would you call it, not institutions, people that lived in, well the ghetto. That's what we'll call it, 'cause that's what it is. And, they've never experienced that you have to cut your grass every other day. You have to take out your trash on Friday. They're used to throwing their trash in the dumpster whenever they felt like it. So, a lot of training through social services, through the welfare department, people were lost, basically. So, when you've lived in generations and generations the same way, and in maybe very bad positions and you come into a neighborhood, we need to be taught.

DB: Right, do you, talking about being involved, were your parents involved civically within the community?

JS: My mom was involved, in the block club. Back then they only had block clubs.

DB: Roughly when was that, "back then?"

JS: 70's, 80s. My dad was the worker, he don't do that stuff. He would come home and do what he had to do in the house. Ethnic men really don't get involved in that kind of stuff, I don't think, as much as white men do.

DB: Was there, did you when you were growing up did you speak English? Did your parents both speak English? Or did you speak Spanish and English?

JS: We spoke both. With my father we spoke Spanish.

DB: Exclusively?

JS: Exclusively.

DB: To this day?

JS: To this day. Well, he speaks English, but it's broken, so it's a lot easier to speak Spanish.

DB: And your mother she spoke?

JS: Both.

DB: Both. And did she come over here with your father or did they meet here.

JS: They met here. My mom came here when she was six or seven years old. Her family came.

DB: Did she grow up in Tremont?

JS: By Lincoln West. Actually my mom grew up by Clark Field. And, when the freeway came through they purchased, back then this was all farmland too. There was a lot more farmland. And, they had a little farm down by Clark Field. And, the freeway, 490 came through, and they bought their farm. And, then they didn't build the freeway until maybe 15, 20 years ago. So, that land stayed vacant for a long time.

DB: How many people were forced out because of 490?

JS: Thousands. I'd have to look that up for you. Tremont West would be able to help you out with that. They have the whole history of that. You know, where the freeway is now that used to all be neighborhoods.

DB: As far as festivals, were there a lot when you were a kid?
Do you remember any? Did you go to any?

JS: The only one, well there's three that I remember. St. Rocco's, which still has their festival every year around August. That's on Fulton up the road. And that's an Italian. Then the Puerto Rican festival which has been moved a hundred times. The city keeps displacing us, but hopefully we're at a permanent place now.

DB: Where's it at now?

JS: We're going to be moving to the downtown muni lot, so we're excited about that. It was held at a lot of places. It was held by the West Side Market. It was held downtown by Mall C. Until recently, it was held right here at Clark Field.

DB: And what was the third festival?

JS: The 3rd festival was the Irish, St. Patrick's Day.

DB: Yeah, of course. When you were growing up, can you describe what would be your typical weekday like? As far as going to school. Your parents workdays. Things like that.

JS: Describe it?

DB: Yeah.

JS: Well, when I was a kid I was a paperboy. So, I'd have to walk through miles and miles of snow. I remember that story. We were always taught work values. So, all the boys worked.

DB: How many boys? How many siblings do you actually have?

JS: There's four of us, plus the four cousins, plus the foster kids. There were five boys and three girls. And, then the boys all worked. So, from a young age we all had paper routes. If we weren't delivering the paper, we were out shoveling snow or cutting grass to earn our dollar. So, we would go door-to-door and say, "Do you need your snow shoveled?" So, that's what we did as young kids. Even as teenagers we still had those responsibilities.

DB: What would your parents, they would wake-up at what time? What would their routine be like? And when would they get home? And, what would their nightly routine be like? And, would you say that would be common or normal?

JS: My dad's routine was we very strictly had dinner every night at 5 o'clock. Between 5 and 5:30. He would normally be in bed by 9, because he had to go to work at 2 in the morning. 3 in the morning. At the bakery. And, then my mom, in the winter months we would play family games. Like we played bingo, or spelling. I remember the big thing on the TV back then was *Make Me Laugh*. The TV show *Make Me Laugh*. So, as a family we would have *Make Me Laugh*. Back then there was no dryer, so we had you had your schedule. Friday you did groceries. Saturday my mom did laundry. And, we would either in the summer hang it outside, or hang it in the basement in the winter. So, that meant Sunday we would all, we had ironing and picking up the clothes and folding it. Go to church. Every Sunday we went go to church. So that was kind of our weekend deal. During the week, you know, our parents worked and we went to school. Then we came home, we did homework, we had dinner.

DB: Now was that common for this section of Tremont over on West 14th Street and was that common for all of Tremont, that sort of routine?

JS: I think it was common in this entire area. Even my friends that grew up behind me, they kind of had the same routine. In the summer, we were never allowed over people's houses to spend the night. We didn't do that sort of stuff.

DB: Did you, do you remember there being a poorer or less affluent, if you want to use that term, section of Tremont? Did you stay mostly in this area here.

JS: I remember the very poor area was, still is, well it's growing now. We were all equal. We were all equal. Middle class. Moderate to middle class families.

DB: Right, right. So, you're saying that your upbringing would have been somewhat normal for Tremont.

JS: Yes.

DB: Getting back, as you've alluded to, you've become pretty active here in the community. Explain, if you can, more about that, and what was it your experience, was it your upbringing that kind of led you to realize you needed to be more active in the community. Was it the time you spent in the Navy that instilled in you this desire to do things or what was it?

JS: I think it was a little bit of everything. The way I look at it is when you live somewhere, that's a representation of who you are. So, if you have a house, or if you rent. Anywhere I have ever lived I have always made sure my grass was manicured, my yard was nice looking. That's just a part of me. And, I think that has to do with your upbringing. Being involved in the community I think it has to do a little bit with your upbringing. My military career, just my social activities with the people around me. You can only bitch so much. And, bitch and moan so much about things not happening in your neighborhood when you have to put your foot in there and say, "I'm gonna bitch, but I'm gonna try and find a way to do something about the situation." So, I'm a doer. I guess I'm a doer, and that's how I got involved.

DB: And you see yourself staying involved in the community for the remainder of your time? Do you see yourself staying here in Tremont for the remainder?

JS: Never know. My goal right now is to finish school. Run for council in 2005. And I know I'll probably end up making it. And then we'll see what happens from there. This house right now is a hundred and six, seven years old. I think it's in better shape than the houses they're building right now.

DB: I do too.

JS: Right now for my future I see myself staying here. But, you never know what opportunities may arise. I don't see myself leaving the area.

DB: Yeah, so getting back to, let's get back maybe if we can toward the 1970s. Your parents married in Tremont?

JS: My parents eloped. They were married in court, because, I think because my mom's parents didn't want my mom to marry my dad. I think that happens in a lot of families.

DB: I think so. What was the reason do you remember?

JS: I don't remember. I think they thought he was too old. I think he's older than my mom. He's about 12 years older.

DB: Oh, is that right? Let's talk about the politics here. Have your parents ever, you grew up in the seventies, is that safe to say you can remember the seventies. And do you remember things like the city of Cleveland defaulting?

JS: No

DB: Did your parents ever talk to you about politics? Organized politics or unorganized politics?

JS: We never really talked about politics. The only voter in my family, in my immediate family was my mother. You have to remember my dad didn't have a real education, and he didn't speak English very well. So, they were, so my mom was the person who did that. And the biggest thing I remember is Kennedy. And, I think every single house had that stupid, and I still have it in the attic, that stupid cloth with Kennedy's, with the two brother's face on it. Like a towel. Like a terrycloth towel thing. They hung it up, always. So, I remember that, but I don't remember anything about Cleveland.

DB: And a lot of people in Tremont like Kennedy, because a lot of people here in Tremont were either immigrants, or second generation immigrants. Would you say that had a lot to do with it?

JS: Yeah, yeah. And, I think because he won people over. He was a very popular politician, and people felt that he was there for them. He was there for their needs.

DB: And did it ever occur to people that first of all he was Irish, and second that he was extraordinarily wealthy? Or that just didn't matter?

JS: I don't think so. I don't, I don't know. I don't think it did. 'Cause even today everyone's, "the Kennedys, the Kennedys." Even with the son, before he got killed, everyone followed him. To see what he was doing. Maybe they thought he was the prince of the United States, I don't know.

DB: Right, right. Now talking about your dad's education. He came here when he was 16, but did he have much of an education before he left Puerto Rico?

JS: No, he quit school in the 3rd grade, because education wasn't. Work was farming they come from farms. Farming was the big thing, and school wasn't important back in those days.

DB: And what brought your father to the United States? To Cleveland? To Tremont? When he first left Cleveland did he come to Tremont first?

JS: Yeah, well what happened was my father came to Lorain, Ohio. That's where the work was. Lorain, Ohio and Cleveland. But, the main manufacturing, factory work was in Lorain, Ohio. So, you have a big pocket of Puerto Ricans in Lorain, Ohio. And, then from Lorain, Ohio jobs started coming to Cleveland like LTV Steel, Hostess, the bakeries. This was a big industry area. So as jobs became available, what happened was one person would come from Puerto Rico and then when they would get settled another person would come. And, then they would get a bigger house and then they would send for the whole family to come over.

DB: Yeah, did something like that happen with your dad?

JS: Yeah, that's exactly what happened.

DB: And, that was common for all immigrant groups here in Tremont?

JS: Most, one would come check it, and they would get a one-room place. And, then they would save their money and get something bigger. And, then send for the next person, and before you know it the whole family's here.

DB: And that's also the immigrant story of the United States as a whole?

JS: Yeah, yeah. Now we don't immigrate, so if you write something, be careful. Back then they...

DB: Now getting back to your father. When your father was working at Hostess and he lost his job, how old were you when that happened.

JS: Oh, jeez. It must have been when I was in high school. In the 80s. I think early 80s. Hostess closed down, but he was in the union. So, the union found him a job at another bakery.

DB: Which union do you know?

JS: I don't know what union. It's the Teamster's Baker's Union.

DB: Yeah, right, right. And, what did he do after, I mean what was his next job?

JS: Through the union he went to work and New York Frozen Foods.

DB: And, is he still there did he retire?

JS: He retired last year.

DB: And getting back to your interest in politics. When you were say, sixteen years old would you have known who the mayor of Cleveland was?

JS: Hell, no. (Laughs). No. I didn't, we were all into our own stuff. School. I didn't learn how to, I didn't know nothing about politics until I joined the military. Although in school I was the president of my office class. I was most eager person to succeed in life, or whatever. Very popular in high school, but we didn't care about that stuff.

DB: Did you play sports at all when you were in school, or high school?

JS: No, no.

DB: What other activities were you, and were sports a big part of St. Michaels?

JS: Sports was a big part of elementary school. High school I wasn't interested. My brothers were.

DB: What high school?

JS: Lincoln West.

DB: Right. And what other activities were popular, and were you involved in?

JS: I was involved in the Spanish Club, the Drama Club, theater, the Pep Club, the Booster Club. I was the sports announcer for the football team. Where I sat in the box and said, "And number 20 is da da da." And I was the PA announcer for the school.

DB: What type of national things occurred when you were living in Tremont as a kid, or even up to date, that you can remember the type of thing, maybe not where you were, but that had an impact?

JS: National impact.

DB: Do you remember, well you probably don't remember Watergate right?

JS: No.

DB: Do you remember the hostage takeover in Iran.

JS: No.

DB: No.

JS: I remember when the quarters came out. The bicentennial in '76.

DB: Yeah the bicentennial.

JS: That's all I remember. How old was I. I was 12, 13 years old.

DB: And are any of your siblings, two brothers and a sister? Are any of them married.

JS: All three are married. My sister lives behind me. She has five kids. My brother, and they all still live in the neighborhood. One of my brothers, John he has two daughters, and my brother, Jim he has two boys and a girl.

DB: And what church were they married in, or churches?

JS: Two of them were at our parish, St. Michael's. And then my brother Jim got married at St. Gwendolyn's where we were all baptized at.

DB: And where were the receptions held?

JS: The cheapest hall. No. My sister at St. Michael's. And my brother Jim on Denison at (inaudible) hall.

DB: And on Sundays when you were a kid would the whole family pack up and go over to St. Michael's?

JS: Pack up? We would walk. Yeah, we would all just walk to church?

DB: The whole family? Every one of you?

JS: Everyone except my dad.

DB: Oh, he didn't go?

JS: No. My dad still doesn't go. He only goes for special occasions like Christmas and Easter.

DB: And your mom, it was a big part of your mom's life?

JS: Oh yeah, it still is.

DB: And is it still for you.

JS: Yeah, sometimes.

DB: Now, if there are any other memories, I asked you earlier would you stay here, do you think if you would have grown up in say a Westlake or a different suburb, do you still think you could be living in Tremont and be as happy as you are now in Tremont?

JS: I don't see why not. I see a lot of my grown-up friends now are from Rocky River, Westlake, Middleburg Heights. And they're just itching to come into Tremont. And, a lot of my friends that I graduated with still live here. So, yeah I think I would be very comfortable here.

DB: Do you, is there any one, or any policy you blame for the decline of just the loss of these mill jobs didn't help Tremont.

JS: The decline of what?

DB: The decline of Tremont before the resurgence, the current resurgence of Tremont.

JS: Like I said, I think it was, that was the goal of many people. To make money and move to the suburbs. To get out. I don't think it was a real decline. I just think that was the family goal. To do better. To get money, to save enough to buy a house in the suburbs. Today, I don't think, I don't know. I think a lot of people see that investing in the neighborhood is good. Now that we pay so many taxes, like in Lakewood and Rocky River, and Parma. Now maybe people are coming back

because they pay too many taxes. There's a lot of programs available now. First-time Homebuyer programs. There's low income rate, loan rates available. There's those renovation loans available. So there's so much stuff, the city is offering so much to ask people, to tell people to come back. So we're trying to get people to come back. And people are realizing that investing in the city is a good thing.

DB: Right, and that do you think would help, with a renaissance of the, the so-called renaissance of the whole city of Cleveland? Or are you focused only on Tremont?

JS: No, I focus on the entire city. I think the city, like the mayor's office, the council people, their goal is to make it easy to live in the city. We have to, and I'm saying we because I'm so involved in so many community things. We have to be able to sell Cleveland, to keep the money in Cleveland. You know, we don't want people to flee to the suburbs. We want people to come to Cleveland. We want them to feel comfortable. We want the safety issues to be addressed. We want the housing issues to be addressed. We want the school issues to be addressed. A lot of people live the city also because of the school system. You know busing was a big factor for many people to leave the city. My family, we were lucky enough, well actually we got bused. We were in Catholic school, and then busing started. The girls, my father couldn't afford to send us all to private school, so the boys went to public school, and the girls stayed in Catholic school. I was lucky because I went to the school of arts, down by University Circle, and then I went to my local, neighborhood high school. But busing was, I think busing was what really (Inaudible). And you asked me a couple times, "What do you remember?" And you know, you don't think about that, but I think busing and the inner belt that ruined, or made people leave Tremont, Ohio City, Clark Metro. The city of Cleveland in general. Those were the two biggest reasons people left the city.

DB: And how, that's a good point, how bad, or how big of an issue has crime been in Tremont over the course of the last three decades?

JS: Crime goes up, crime goes down. Crime, there's a lot of petty crime. You know, they steal a lawn mower, they steal a bike. It really all depends. We have an excellent block watch program. In this whole area, the 2nd district area. So, now instead of talking about Tremont, we're the 2nd district police department. We have an excellent rapport with Commander Cuevas of the 2nd district. Officers are excellent. Crime, you have crime, but I think it's petty crime. The last big thing I remember that was in the news was when somebody threw a rock through the Tree House window or something like that. I can't even remember the details right now. But it's pretty much safe, very comfortable right now. Drug issues, if you want to bring that up. Drugs are everywhere. They're here. They're in the suburbs. They're everywhere. So, we do have drug issues. We do have some crime, but I think it's the community being aware that here is crime out there and we're sticking together and we are trying to stop it before it happens.

DB: Do you think there's more of that communal effort to try and prevent crime and drugs here in Tremont than there would be in a suburb.

JS: Yeah, because in the suburbs it's hidden. People, "Oh, my kids don't do that." And a lot of parents, I don't know, but from what I've seen you go to the suburbs and, if your kids are doing

drugs or whatever. A lot of suburban parents don't want to admit it. That's my opinion. But it's probably out there more that it's over here. A lot of the suburb kids people say come to the city to buy their drugs, but a lot of the suburb kids come to sell their drugs in the city. Drug education, drug, sex, AIDS, whatever. The education in the inner-city it's very strong. You know, if anything else, you know my mom's a teacher now and she stresses to her students the importance of not doing drugs. The importance of self-esteem. The importance of graduating from high school. Because there's still a lot of ethnic people coming in, whether we realize it or not. Our public schools are filled with a lot of ethnic, ethnic groups.

DB: So you're saying, say at midnight tonight if you wanted to walk over to the store would you be nervous?

JS: Hell no.

DB: Would you have been 25 years ago?

JS: No.

DB: Are there sections?

JS: In the city there's a lot of areas. In Tremont, I'll talk about the 2nd district which includes Tremont, Clark Metro, and Ohio City. There's pockets in each of our areas where I would walk through and I would be nervous, but I would still walk through it. Not because I'm looking for trouble, but because I would want to prove that there's no crime in our areas. But, you know, over here on the south side, by St. Theodosius Church, the ghetto area.

DB: Has it always been like that?

JS: It's always been like that, but we're working very hard on changing the atmosphere. Helping, we're building new homes over there. \$300,000 homes, that's not cheap. So, that neighborhood is really changing. We're working on the Hope 6 Project to rebuild the area so that it's not that bad.

DB: Are any of your siblings involved in the community?

JS: Yeah, my, all of us are in different ways though. Because I don't have kids. They have kids. Through the church, they're all involved through the church. My nephew is in the choir. They're all in sports. So they're active in other ways. Because they have families.

DB: Right, as we're about to wrap it up, where do you think Tremont can be in 10 years from now?

JS: Tremont can be on the top of the list. Tremont's its own little... Tremont is Tremont, you know. Tremont is going to be what it is no matter what. I don't think that no matter what Tremont is always going to be here. Along with Duck Island. Along with Ohio City. Along with Clark Metro. We're unique, and no matter what no one can tear us down. You know the freeway

came through. I'm working on the inner belt project now. Which they wanted to expand the highway and take out more houses or whatever. We put a stop to that. No matter who you are I think Tremont is going to be Tremont no matter who you are.

DB: Well, good. I appreciate your time Mr. Santiago. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

JS: No.