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## Joe Santiago interview, 28 October 2003

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Santiago 28102003  
Tremont Oral History Project

Interview with Joe Santiago  
Interviewed by Michelle Burk  
28 October 2003  
5:00 PM  
Tremont, Ohio

Joe Santiago:  
My name is Joe Santiago, J-O-E S-A-N-T-I-A-G-O.

Michelle Burk:  
And today is Tuesday, the 28<sup>th</sup> of October, 2003. When did your family come to Tremont?

JS:  
My, my grandparents first moved here in the 50s, um, my—and they lived in the area called Clark Field. My grandparents moved here because they were looking for work from Puerto Rico. Back then you could say they immigrated here but today we don't say we immigrated because we're part of the American—part of the colonies. So what, so they moved here and then my parents stayed here. My grandparents when they retired, moved back to Puerto Rico.

MB:  
Did they make any stops along the way? Or did they just come straight to Tremont?

JS:  
They made—well, it's funny you ask that. My grandfather came up first. And the main reason why people came up from Puerto Rico was to find jobs, and the first place they went to was Lorain, Ohio. Back, back in those days Lorain, Ohio had a lot of factory working, steel workers, automakers, all those types of jobs. So first he went to Lorain, Ohio. Then from Lorain, Ohio, they moved to Cleveland. Cleveland wasn't as big as Lorain, Ohio was, as far as factory work back in those days.

MB:  
Did he come to Tremont because there wasn't enough work in Lorain?

JS:  
There was plenty of work in Lorain. He came to Cleveland because they had built the new Chevrolet plant, and he was working for Chevrolet, and, he bought a farm. Back then, where I live now, this all used to be farmland. And his farm currently, where it used to be, is currently 490. The 490 highway.

MB:  
Ok. When your family moved here, to the Tremont area, were there other families from Puerto Rico?

JS:

They were slowly trickling from Puerto Rico. A majority of the Hispanics or Puerto Ricans were from, were living in, in Lorain, Ohio. And what was happening is, you know as companies were hiring them for labor, they were finding that the labor was cheaper, so more of them were coming into Cleveland, and that's why this area has so many Puerto Rican families living in it to this day.

MB:

How was your family received by the community?

JS:

Back then?

MB:

Yes.

JS:

Ooh. Um—pretty good, I guess, I'm not sure. That would be a good question to ask my mom. She was, one of, I think, three families at Lincoln High School—you just visited Lincoln West—the old Lincoln High was torn down, and in its spot is the, is the middle school now, and then they rebuilt the new Lincoln West in 1974 or '76 or somewhere around there. And, she, they had a good, you know, a good education. She's a schoolteacher too.

MB:

Really?

JS:

M-hm.

MB:

Do you know what other ethnic groups were here in Tremont when they arrived?

JS:

There were many Polish. This was a Polish neighborhood, it was a very German neighborhood, um, Italian neighborhood, it was—you have to remember that back then there was no freeway. So all of these streets that are dead-ends now off of Fourteenth used to go straight through. But there were sections. So like, the Polish people lived in a section, the Italian people lived in another section, the Germans lived in another section. So it was a big mixture of different ethnicities living here, back then.

MB:

Ok.

JS:

And factory workers, a lot of just blue-collar, blue-collar workers were here. Farmers, blue-collar workers.

MB:

Was there a loyalty among these groups? For example, were the Italians loyal to the Italians, or did they make friends with Polish people—

JS:

Well I think that, back, back then, I'll just say in my, in my opinion, back then, there—they were loyal to their own people, but they were also very loyal to their jobs. Because that was the main purpose of many people immigrating to the United States, was to get work, to find a job, to support their family, to, you know, have food, and what, the necessities of life. So as far as getting along, yes. I think everyone got along. It was, it was a pretty, it wasn't like today you hear racial, black and white slurs. It, you know, people, their main thing was to work. So that was their focus. To work, to have a house, to buy a house, to be able to afford a piece of land. So that was their main goal, back in, you know, the 1950s, early 1900s.

MB:

Did you make friends with people of different nationalities here?

JS:

Of course. Definitely, yeah. Um, even till today, you know, there's such a mixture of culture and ethnicity, it's—this area's just a melting pot of all different cultures. You know, even today you see it, Tremont, Tremont is very culturally diverse and, we're—every culture is represented here in Tremont. And I think that's the good thing about it, is there's—it's just not one group of people, it's not one ethnicity, it's, it's different. Everything's different. So you have, you have such a different—you go to one restaurant, you have Polish foods, like Sokolowski's, you go to another one, like La Tortilla Feliz, which is Mexican, there's just a big blend of all different types of people here.

MB:

How has the community changed over time?

JS:

The community has changed drastically, one of the big changes was because of the freeway being built. Right now we're working with ensuring that ODOT—the Ohio Department of Transportation—we're working with them. Where back in the early days, in the early, in the 1950s and the '60s when they were designing the, the freeway, and the Interbelt in front of Jacobs Field, people's consideration and their lives weren't taken into effect. Where now they kind of, you know—we're demanding that they listen to us. You know, they destroyed many neighborhoods, they destroyed many homes, many, you know, our churches suffered because of that, our schools suffered, our neighborhood suffered. So it divided the community. With the freeway, the way it was constructed and the way it is now, it just—one whole community was divided into several communities. So now we have like, Tremont West, we have Ohio City, we have Clark Metro Development Corporation, we have, we have the, the Broadview area over there. So now we're like, divided into different sections. So—but with today the way things are going, with the mayor's office and the CDC's being formed, it's, those are an avenue to ensure that the neighborhoods are still connecting and still working for the city. Did I answer the question?

MB:

Yes, yes you did, thank you. Was there a number of new residents to the community over time?

JS:

Our community here in Tremont fluctuates. It goes up, it goes down. If you go by the Census, the Census says—says we're lower. The Census that just happened, so I, I think that's an important reason why we have to advocate for people to fill out the Census. Because, without the Census being filled out, then we lose dollars, and we lose people, but we're losing dollars. One of the biggest, um, one of the biggest goals for people that lived here in, in the earlier years, I'll say, those are '50s, '60s, '70s, their goal was to always do better for themselves. So their goal was urban sprawl. That's why that's happening now. Everybody had the goal to make their life better, and to move out to the suburbs. Now, in Tremont we're seeing, it's flipping. 'Cause a lot of the suburb people are coming back into the Tremont, they're putting money into it, big money into it. We have houses that are ranging in three hundred thousand dollars range down at, down here, by, by Lincoln Park. We have—the economy is l—is down, but we have a lot of people investing in the old homes. We have a lot of people renovating. We have a lot of programs that are offered through the city now, we, you know, like low-interest loans. We have Cleveland Fix A House Fund. We have a—there's just so many opportunities for people now. So, I would say that back in the earlier days, there were many people here—we have LTV that has closed down, so a lot of those workers have left because there's no work. A lot of our factories are closing; we're losing a lot of small businesses in the city of Cleveland. So the big issue is, is we're going up a little bit, but we're still losing those businesses, those small businesses. So people are going where there's work. And if there's no work, people of course are going to leave the inner city. So the goal should be to, to continue to support small businesses and businesses alike, to attract people to move back into the area. So right now I would say that it's, it's staying level, but we're still starting to see people coming in and, families, or, or individuals that left to move into the suburbs, and now they're coming back because their children are grown up, they're in college, or they're married or whatever. So they're, you know, just father and mother, and, they feel that they don—for whatever reason, they can't afford the big house, or, it's, too much yard work, whatever it is. So they're moving back into the city to, to reinvest, which is a good thing. And the city is offering them opportunities like tax abatement for fifteen years, first-time home buyer loans, so it's, it's, it's kind of in a weird situation because of the economy, but I think it's a little bit of both.

MB:

Do the block clubs have anything to do with bringing people back into the city?

JS:

The block clubs are the foundation of each neighborhood. Who—you make speak to different people, different council people, different mayors, you know, we have mayor Jane Campbell now, but we may get another mayor that may not be as supportive of block clubs. We may not have—our next councilperson may not be as supportive of block clubs. Right now with the council people and the support we have from the mayor's office, the block

clubs are the foundation of each neighborhood. The block clubs encourage home ownership, the block clubs encourage low-income families to apply for programs, it's an avenue, I'm not sure if I can say that they go out there and say "Come on into our neighborhood," but through the block club, through a clean neighborhood, we work to, you know, ensure that our neighborhoods are clean, our neighborhoods are safe, so it's inviting to people when they come in and see that we have an active block club that is working towards safety, children, um, is there a place for children to play, how are the schools around the block clubs—so yeah, I think block clubs encourage it, but I think the city overall is who sells Cleveland. But the block clubs have a big part of it.

MB:

Ok. You belong to a block club?

JS:

Um, yes. I've, I've been in a block club for ten years. I was the chairman for three years, and from chairman, now I'm on the Board of Trustees at Tremont West, and I'm the first Vice President of Tremont West.

MB:

Is Tremont West a block club?

JS:

No. Tremont West is a CDC, is a community development corporation. In this area here, we have three CDC's, we have Tremont West which is called "twidic" or TWDC, we have Ohio City, and we have Clark Metro Development Corporation. What the CDC's do is, they don't run the block clubs, but they are the support of the block clubs. And what the goal of the CDC is, is for housing development, business development, safe neighborhoods, so the block club works through the CDC, but the block clubs aren't an initial, like, part of the CDC. So although the CDC's, what they do is they, they send, like Colleen (Moynihan), they send her to the meetings and they take the minutes and the notes and they have flyers. They're the support of the block clubs. But they don't run the block club meetings. Do you understand what I'm saying?

MB:

Yes.

JS:

They don't come in and have an agenda and say, "Well this is what Tremont West wants, this is what we're gonna do." Excuse me. The block club is the, is who runs the meetings. And CDC is just there as a support to, to help get the block club to where they need to go. S—and every block club there is different. So, my block club, Holmden-Buhrer-Rowley block club, is one of the oldest block clubs in this neighborhood. We set goals and then, but it's up to the block club to make sure those goals are met. It's not up to Tremont West. There's ten block clubs in this area, here alone. So it's broken up, like three blocks make a block club, or something like that.

MB:

Are people asked to join the block club?

JS:

We do have, what do you call it, hm, when you go door to door and you ask people—

MB:

Recruiters?

JS:

Re—um, well we don't have recruiters, but we have like a, like a month in the summer where we go out and let people know that we're here. Every block club has a specific day that they meet, like the Holmden-Buhrer-Rowley, we meet the second Tuesday of every month at 6:30 in the same location. So what we do every month, we flyer all the houses, and we encourage people to come, we don't force people to come. Most of the time people come if there's only a problem. So you have the same group of ten or fifteen people that come to the meeting month after month. And then if there's a big problem in the neighborhood, we may have fifty people that come to the, to the block club. So that all depends. As far as recruiting, like if I see a new neighbor come, we'll send him a "welcome to the neighborhood" letter, let him know there's a block club meeting, we encourage you to attend, if you have any issues, this is where we discuss it and try to take care of it, like theft, whatever the issue in the neighborhood may be. You know, we have speeding cars coming up and down the street, so we'll invite the police officers to the block club meeting. Or if we have questions about taxes, we'll call the IRS office and invite them to come to the meeting. So it's a, it's a tool that will help benefit—or elderly. The elderly, you know, do we ha—you know, like I have two elderly neighbors. So we keep an eye out for the elderly. Do they, are they ok during the winter months? Do they have heat? Do they have water? Do they have food? What can we do to help them? So it's—we try to invite everybody. So we flyer the whole neighborhood. That's how we do it at this block club.

[Phone rings]

MB:

Are there membership dues?

JS:

No. In some block clubs there are, in the—I believe in the ten block clubs here in Tremont West there's no membership dues. And even to be a member of Tremont West, there are no dues. But if, Clark-Metro I think has dues, I don't think Ohio City does either.

MB:

Ok. Membership is determined only by neighborhood, right?

JS:

Membership to the block club?

MB:  
Yes.

JS:  
Eh—yes. It's determined by the neighborhood. And it's determined by if you attend the meetings. Because you could be, you could come to one meeting, and you're a member of the block club. You know, that's all you really have to do.

MB:  
What are some of the main issues that have been addressed at the meetings that you can think of?

JS:  
Several, several, several main issues ever since I could remember. One of the biggest issues was, here in front of my house here, on the corner, we have a, a elementary school across the bridge here, we have Lincoln West High School, we have St. Michael's School. So we have a lot of children traveling through this area during school hours, and we had a incident where we just had cross walks, but no lights. And cars would come speeding off the freeway, and we had three guards sideswiped from cars and trucks. Because they, there was, there was no respect for the law. So what we did as a block club, we rallied, we stood out there picketing at 6:00 in the morning, you know, begging the mayor, "We need a light," this was when Mayor White was here, in office. And you know, nobody wanted to listen to our, to our problems. We've had three guards hit, and we were saying, "What will it take for one of our children to get killed on the street?" 'Cause it's a busy street here. And finally the mayor came out, parked his car right there, and he realized that what we were asking and demanding the city to do was correct. So we had a light the next week. The repaving of our street, we have a lot of truck traffic, eighteen-wheeler trucks that come through here, so right now I'm on the, on the board of the Scoping Committee through ODOT, which is the Ohio Department of Transportation. And we were very influential in ensuring that ODOT included the residents in the process of what was gonna happen to the Interbelt structure. They're planning to e—um, they were planning to expand it, which would have affected our neighborhoods by taking a whole row of houses on Fourteenth Street. So through working with them, letting them know that we're here, that they're not gonna take our houses by imminent domain, they, there's about, I would say seventy-five people that work on the Scoping Committee throughout the—from through, you know, from within the city. And we're working to make plans, to make the freeway system better than what it is now. So in doing that, they're working on making a new ramp that goes behind us down through Quigley, instead of having all these eighteen-wheelers come in front of our houses now, and in our neighborhood, they'll be routed through the back, down through the Flats and everything, so they'll have their own road. So working with, working with different departments of the city as a block club has helped us. We have the Paint Program, which allows people to renovate their homes, we have the Insulation Program that many of these houses, they're so old that they're not insulated, so there's a program that will insulate your house for free if you're within a certain amount of income. There's—we just, about two years ago, we did a campaign through the block club for everyone to get the city yard lights. I don't know if you noticed, but most of our houses on Fourteenth have a, a yard light that



comes on automatically, dawn to dusk. And the city gave us a grant that we applied for that allowed a, everyone to purchase those lights at fifty percent off. So anyone who wanted to, so, we had a grant for three thousand (dollars) and then we got, like twenty lights in the neighborhood, which is great. Another program that we did was—we had our, this year we had our second annual block club party, which was through the city as well. We applied for a grant, and the city gave us a grant for a thousand dollars, [phone rings] and we were able to have a block club party with the police, and the firefighters, and invite all the kids of the neighborhoods to come in and, and participate. So there's a lot of different things.

MB:

Have the block clubs always been in Tremont, as far as you remember?

JS:

As far as I can remember, my mom was a block club chairman, back when I was a kid. And I was a paperboy, so, [laughs] so I was always involved in the neighborhood and stuff. I left and went to the navy and when I came home, I bought the family house. So yeah, I would say that block clubs have been very active for sure, in the last ten years. I would say over twenty, thirty years, yes.

MB:

Do you remember some of the issues that they dealt with in the past? When you're mother belonged—

JS:

Um, well, one of the issues was that the taking of homes, by imminent domains when they were building—the highway's the biggest thing. Because it went right through the neighborhood. Today it's not that big of a issue because it's already there, and it's right in front, here. The biggest things, I, I don't know, that's a question I would have to ask my mother. Because back then, they didn't really want for much, you know? Today we're spoiled. You know, we, our kids don't walk to school anymore, where they used to walk two miles in knee-deep, knee-high snow, like they used to tell us. Today we're a little bit spoiled. Back then I think their needs were like, a shopping market, 'cause they had the West Side Market, the East Side Market, so I would suppose those were probably some of their issues.

MB:

Is the West Side Market a far walk from here?

JS:

Oh, yeah, it's about a mile and a half, from here.

MB:

Ok.

JS:

So, it's a, yeah, it's a far walk.

MB:

I also wanted to ask about the Valley View homes.

JS:

M-hm?

MB:

Is that, is that public housing?

JS:

The Valley View homes are public housing. They are owned by CMHA, which is (Cuyahoga) Metro(politan) Housing Authority, and it is an estate, and right now, through Tremont West, and through CMHA we are working on applying for a grant to renovate that area. Those were built way back in the early '50s I believe, or '60s. And they're to the point where they're not livable anymore. So we're working with the city, with CMHA, with Tremont West, to redevelop that area. To—and it will still stay low-income to, to high-income housing. There's—I don't want—there's a program out there that's like three hundred million dollars, or thirty million dollars, that we're applying for this grant, and then if we get it, the state will fund us as well. And then we will redevelop that area with new housing, like two, three, four, five bedroom homes, for—

MB:

Ok.

JS:

—lower income families. And then there's gonna be different programs available for lease purchase, and rent-to-own, and, you know. But it's not all clear right now.

MB:

What do they have in mind for the people who currently live there?

JS:

Um, what the plan is, for the people that live there now, is that they will be relocated, if, if we were to get the grants and everything for the project. The, all the families that are there will be relocated into, into different government housing programs, for example, HUD Housing, or they would be relocated into other housing that's similar, like there's some housing in Hough, in the Hough area. They will be relocated, and then when the houses—they have a choice of whether they want to return to that area, or if they want to be relocated and stay in their relocated area. A lot of the, I say about forty to fifty percent of the people want to go back to the East Side because a lot of those families were relocated into that property from the East Side. So a lot of 'em want to go back to the East Side because they have family there, they have jobs there, and they feel more comfortable going back, let's say, home. But, so they will be relocated, and then they will have first, the people that live there currently, will have the first choice when the houses are built, or whatever is built in that—they're gonna be houses—to come back into the area. So they'll be like, on a list, and then the list—up to a hundred forty-five families will be relocated back.

MB:

(Ok).

JS:

So they'll have a brand new house, a yard, you know, it'll be like, totally new living. And they'll be sent to classes, to learn how to live in a neighborhood, because you have to remember, many generations have lived there, and that's all they know. So they don't know what it is to live in a neighborhood. They don't know what it is to take care of a house. So they'll be offered classes on how to fix things, how to maintain a home, how to clean your yard, you know, all of those programs.

MB:

So a number of those people were relocated in the '50s and '60s when it was built?

JS:

I'm not sure about when it was built. I'm pretty sure that those houses were built because that was all factory workers, so it was like the lower-end of the factory workers and they lived there. And then it became housing, when, when that, I think in the '60s when, you know, homelessness became a big problem, then it became a property of CMHA. But I'm not sure about that.

MB:

How did the community react to that?

JS:

To what?

MB:

To when the homeless people moved in?

JS:

Well, [laughs] there's a big issue going on right now, because Ward Thirteen encompasses so much of the downtown area. It—Ward Thir—this is Ward Thirteen, so Ward Thirteen is part of downtown, and then it surrounds the downtown area, including Tremont, including St. Clair, Superior area. And I don't know if you saw the news last night about the homeless women's shelter that got closed down, and then they were put into a temporary shelter. Right here in this ward, there are over fifty community programs for, for all kinds of things. The people, a lot of the people here feel that we have too much already. We are, we have so much on our back, we have so many homeless, we, we have food shelters, we have, you know, so much of that, that a lot of the people feel that we can't take no more. But our doors are always open to welcome whoever's in the neighborhoods. So we are looking to helping anyone in need, currently the councilman is looking to find a place for, for a homeless shelter. And granted, a lot of people have the mindset that, "Why put a hundred homeless people together in one place?" Why not take some of these abandoned houses, abandoned buildings, and clutter them, three here, four there, five here, and have like, group homes

instead of having a hundred people like cattle, shoved into one place and, and, it's just not healthy anymore. So I think that a lot of, a lot of things are happening with the homeless situation now. Back then I think that this area was a, such a transient area, that people were always coming in and coming out. So, it was just the norm, I would say. But today we're just working with the city, working with the councilman, working with the block clubs to ensure that there's no one sleeping out, especially now, that the weather's getting cold. That everyone has a safe and warm place, and some food to eat.

MB:

Have there been any lasting effects on Tremont because of the Valley View homes?

JS:

No, the, it's a, it's a neighborhood just like any other neighborhood. They have a block club as well, Valley View block club, they're very active. It's people, it's just like Holmden-Buhrer-Rowley block club, the Castle block club. We're all block clubs, we're all represented, so their problems are everyone else's problems in Tremont. I think we have to look at it as a, Tremont as a whole picture, because we're not divided, like the Valley View people, or the West Fourteenth Street people, we're one community. So whatever affects them affects us all. So we kinda work together to, if they have a problem, we help them, you know, it's not just Valley View, or Tremont, or Holmden-Buhrer-Rowley block club, or Clark block club. It's, we're all here for the same purpose, to live, to raise our families, to have our kids go to the schools. We're neighbors, so whatever affects them affects us as well. It's not that, you know, it, that might be the most blighted area of the neighborhood, but it's coming around. It's changing little by little. And through education and programs being offered, I think that's what really helps them.

MB:

Are they enthusiastic about the plans to rebuild that area?

JS:

At first they probably weren't, because they felt like, here we go again. We're getting moved, we're getting shut out of the neighborhood, they don't want us here. But after we educated them, we had seminars, which a majority of the residents from Valley View attended, we had speakers come in, we had to sell, we had to sell it to them, that, you know, this is gonna be good for you. You're gonna, you're gonna have the opportunity of a lifetime. You're gonna have the opportunity that many people don't get. You know, like you or I, we have to work for what we have, we have to work for our home, we have to work to pay our bills. This is a, this is a program that's gonna give you a brand-new house, with a garage, with heating, with, you know, all of that. Now you have to put your foot forward, and continue to find a job, and educate yourself, make sure your kids are educated, and stuff like that. So I think it's a positive, because it's kind of forcing them. You know, we don't have (welfare) anymore, we don't have those, those programs that people are just living on for free. So it, it's giving them the opportunity to, to move forward and to get out of generations and generations and generations of living like this. So, I think it's great. You know, I think it's a great opportunity, not only for them, but for the whole neighborhood. Yeah.

MB:

Will they have any additional expenses when that area—

JS:

Uh-uh.

MB:

—is redeveloped?

JS:

The same thing. I don't know all the specifics, but you know, like if you have HUD housing, they pay eighty percent of your, eighty percent of whatever your rent is, and then, you're, you're, gas bill and water bill's included in the rent. So there's so many programs that are available. I—it's gonna go by income, I believe. But it depends on the individual.

MB:

Do you know some people who live over in that neighborhood?

JS:

Oh yeah. I, yeah, actually, I go there, there's a coffee shop over in that neighborhood that I go to, Lucky's. Yeah, I feel very safe, I've, you know, it's just like over here, it's, no problem to me. And you know, but I'm a guy, so, for women it might be a little bit different, because it's a little bit rough. But like I said, they're active in their block clubs, they, most of the children over there attend Tremont Elementary School. And Tremont is one of the oldest schools in the city of Cleveland. And Tremont, the, the school principal is very active in the community as well. So involving the school and the children and all of that, it's, you know, it's part of the community, yeah.

MB:

What is your new—er, I'm sorry. What is your opinion of the new businesses in Tremont?

JS:

Well, we are working very hard to bring new businesses into the Tremont area. We just got a, a—something, you know, what the block clubs work for, is for things to help make our lives easier. Through the block clubs, there was a big issue that we didn't have a laundrymat. So, last year a laundrymat opened in our neighborhood. Because we had to travel either to the suburbs, or to another area, part of town to get our laundry, you know, our dry-cleaning done. So welcoming business with open arms is our motto, [laughs] I think. We have a, we have a master plan through Tremont West Development Corporation. The mayor has a master plan to have, I believe it's a thousand homes, or two-thousand homes built by such-and-such a time. So through the city, the CDC's also have a master plan. And our plan is to, we have, a renovation program for businesses, for small businesses, that a store renovation, that does a renovation on the front of the store. We, the city has offered low-income loans for small businesses, so there's a lot of, a lot going on. Tremont just so happens to be on the site of a lot of different restaurants right now. So we're really excited. We have a, we have

barber shops, we have flower shops, many, many artists that are beginning to sell their art, we have a art-walk pro—um, once a month, where we—the artists hang their artwork at different restaurants to show what their art is, and people from the suburbs that come to our restaurants buy that art, so it's, you know, like a rolling ball a, in the economy. So it's, we, we're encouraging small businesses in our neighborhood.

MB:

When did these new businesses start to appear?

JS:

Ooh. Um, there were businesses here, small businesses, it's just, in the last six to eight years, with the Main Street program, and the city grants, and the programs that are available, more businesses like restaurants have been able to open. It's very tough for the small businessman to make it with the economy today. So there has to be a plan, and the plan has to be followed, you know, in order for them to make money. So, and if the economy's low, they don't make money, they shut down. So with that plan, we're hoping to improve on it. So the small businesses have always been here. The corner stores, the factories that we have, we have several small factories in the area. And we're, you have to remember that we're right on top of the ridge from the Flats. So where you have LTV is right behind us, then you have the freeway right in front of us. So it's a, it's like a main area, where businesses are attracted to. We just have to make ourselves attractive to the business now.

MB:

[Laughs]

JS:

And keep them in the United States, period.

MB:

Do you know anyone from the neighborhood who works in these new businesses in Tremont?

JS:

M-hm. I know several people that work in the neighborhood. We have Metro Hospital, which is a big business, we have Grace Hospital, which is smaller, I know a few nurses there. My mom's a schoolteacher, and she works at one of the public schools. She used to work right here at Scranton School, but now she works closer to her home. She moved out of the neighborhood. And, yeah, I know quite a few people, quite a few. I even know the, you know, the business owners, because I'm on the Board of Trustees, so I have the opportune to meet them, and get to know them, and stuff.

MB:

I'm going to flip this tape.

END OF SIDE A

START SIDE B

MB:

Ok. As for the new restaurants, in Tremont, like for example, Lola, and um, Theory, I think they're called—

JS:

M-hm.

MB:

Restaurants like that, and bars—

JS:

M-hm.

MB:

Do people from the community work in those places?

JS:

It's encouraged. We can't, we can't—a lot of 'em do, I know that a lot of 'em have a lot of employees that live in the neighborhood. Because the rent, you know, they rent above a storefront or whatever. We encourage that from business owners, but we don't force it. But I think many of the business owners like it here so much that they do hire from within the community. So that's, that's a, that's a positive, that's a good thing. Not only them, but you know, the stores, the, like our Tops has, I would say fifty percent of their staff is from the neighborhood. So that's a good thing.

MB:

Ok.

JS:

When we had Hostess Bakery in the neighborhood, they had a good majority of their staff was from the neighborhood. But they since closed down. So it's, you know, we encourage it, yeah.

MB:

Did your parents always work in the neighborhood?

JS:

M-hm. My father always worked for Hostess. And then when Hostess closed down, through the union, he got a job at another bakery. My mom is a Cleveland public schoolteacher, so she always worked in the neighborhood. Family and friends that work at Metro Hospital, a lot of 'em worked in the neighborhood, yeah. Still do, still do. Factories, small factories and stuff like that.

MB:

Why did your mother move out of Tremont?

JS:

Um, my mom moved out of Tremont after my parents got a divorce, and she found a house, and that's why she moved, I guess. [Laughs]

MB:

[Laughs]

JS:

Just to move. I don't know.

MB:

[Laughs]

JS:

But actually, she's looking for a place to move back into Tremont.

MB:

Ok.

JS:

So, this is home.

MB:

Did your father move out of Tremont?

JS:

Nope, he still lives here, he lives a few blocks down in that area called Buckeye (Woodland), by the market.

MB:

Ok. Was West Fourteenth always this busy?

JS:

West Fourteenth has always been this busy. It's busier now, because a lot of people use it as a shortcut when the freeway is tied up. They come through West Fourteenth. I think it was estimated that during rush hour, morning rush hour, there's over seventeen hundred extra cars on West Fourteenth Street. So with working through, through ODOT, we're hoping to eliminate that after the highway's renovated, and the Interbelt is fixed. So hopefully, we'll see what happens. But it's a busy street. [Laughs] It's like a main street. It's a county street, actually. So.

MB:

I just have one question for clarification. When you mentioned the CMHA—?



JS:  
Uh-huh? CMHA.

MB:  
What does that stand for?

JS:  
Cuyahoga County, Housing, Metro Housing Authority.

MB:  
Ok.

JS:  
I'm not sure I got that in the right order. Um, C-H, Cuy—it's Cuyahoga Housing Metro Authority or something like that.

MB:  
Ok.

JS:  
Like you'll see CMHA policemen, too, because they have their own police. But it's, it's a county housing authority, it's for low-income housing. Like they, here in, in this area, we have those housings you talked about, what are they called ( )?

MB:  
Valley View?

JS:  
Valley View. I'm sorry, I couldn't think. Valley View housing, we have Scranton Castle, we have another building here on West Fourteenth. Most of them are elderly, low-income housing, or like the Valley View estates that are mixed, you know, from young to old. And different generations. But that's what they do, they have housing. We have a real big one, which is on West Twenty-fifth over by the market there, um, Riverview Apartments? It faces downtown, it's a long building.

MB:  
I'm not familiar with it.

JS:  
It's senior housing, it's senior housing, and mentally ill housing. So it's through the county, it's a county program.

MB:  
Ok. And they maintain the property?

JS:

They maintain the property, they have their own safety forces, their own police officers, they work together with the, with the Cleveland police. But they have like, you know, like their own security. Yeah, they maintain the buildings, they maintain the properties, it, it's, it's a benefit for the elderly and the poor in the neighborhood. They have a list. Like, you apply for them and, and then you go through the interview, and the process, and then as soon as a house opens up, you move into, or an apartment you move into it. But a, it's a nice program.

MB:  
Ok.

JS:  
A lot of people use it. I think their occupancy is at ninety-five percent, probably.

MB:  
Ok.

JS:  
So they're pretty full.

MB:  
Does the CMHA work with the block clubs?

JS:  
Oh, yeah. CMHA is—the people there work with the block clubs, I, I don't want to say CMHA works with the block clubs, but the people that reside in those buildings work with the, within their block club. They, they even have like a tenants' association, and stuff like that. CMHA is a, I think it's a federal, or maybe state, they're sometimes hard to work with. But, we get along.

MB:  
Ok, hm. Do you happen to know some of the issues [Phone rings] that people might bring up at the block club meetings—

JS:  
From CMHA housing?

MB:  
Right.

JS:  
Some of the issues are, they have bugs. They're properties aren't maintained, although it's changing now, it's, it's getting a lot better. Their leadership at CMHA wasn't that good for many years. So, that's all I know about it.

MB:  
Is there anything else you would like to add?

JS:

Um, no. If you have any more questions, you can call me and I can answer them, but, or, you know, I'll give you my mom's phone number, she'll be good to poke her mind a little bit.

MB:

Ok. Well, thank you for your time.

JS:

Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW