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**Laveau Saxe, Lynette, oral history interview conducted by Lina Raciukaitis, July 22, 2018;
Caribbean Heritage in Cambridge Oral History Project; Cambridge Historical Society**



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Oral History Interview with Lynette Laveau Saxe

Caribbean Heritage in Cambridge Oral History Project

Interview conducted by Lina Raciukaitis on July 22, 2018

at CCTV, Cambridge, MA

Lina Raciukaitis: My name is Lina Raciukaitis and this is an oral history recorded as part of the Cambridge Historical Society Caribbean Oral History Project. Today is Sunday, July 22nd, 2018, it is 4 PM and I am at CCTV in Cambridge, Massachusetts with Lynette Laveau Saxe. Lynette, do you consent to being recorded for this interview?

Lynette Laveau Saxe: I do.

LR: Alright, I'm going to start with some questions about your early life history. First, what is your full name?

LLS: My full name is Lynette Laveau Saxe.

LR: And when and where were you born?

LLS: I was born in the year 1942 in the month of December on the fifth day. And this took place on the island of Trinidad, which is part of two – a twin island government, Trinidad and Tobago, and I was there for my elementary education, my secondary education, and right up until I got married and left. But I'm going ahead of myself, am I not?

LR: And where did you grow up?

LLS: So, I grew up in a cosmopolitan country. It has the distinction of being the largest diverse group of people living in one place, the country of Trinidad and Tobago. And so even in my neighborhood – the neighborhood

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where I was raised reflected that. There were people of African descent, East Indian descent, Chinese descent, Dutch descent, Caucasian, I hope I said Indians, Spanish, and so there was a rich flavor of ethnicity in the

neighborhood that I grew from, let's see, from age – well, when I came to know myself, you know, age of reason and awareness, until age fourteen. And then I moved to another location where – which is really the homestead where I grew up. I had been moved there because I lost my mother at a very early age. Or at least my mother was ill at a very early age. And so, we lived with my aunt in that diverse community that I told you about. And then we moved back, when I became a teenager, I moved back to the homestead where my father had been continuously living after the death of my mom.

LR: Yeah. And how did that diversity affect your childhood and your upbringing?

LLS: Oh my goodness. During those years I wasn't aware of it, I just took that for granted that this is the world everywhere, people live among groups, multiple ethnicities and groups of people, but after I left and came out of Trinidad and started living here in the U.S. I realized how fortunate I was, and how it had enriched my early childhood education. Because I learned the customs and cultures of the different groups that of course – in a school setting, you're exposed to many different people and you will form friendships. And some of those, I was able to visit those homes, the homes of the different children who were of different ethnicities to my family, which by the way, is African descent, some Indian, some Native, and French. So right there in my family there was already a mix of cultures and cultural heritage, and cuisine and all of those things. But I remember going to the home of a Chinese friend and I was able to see how they lived differently, and things that centered around food, the different ways that they handled information that flowed in the family. They are very very very private. And I learned that. Later on, I discovered that my father had some of those traits, that everything is not taught to a child but you catch some things. So, I caught a lot of those things.

LR: Yeah, and it sounds like you were able to notice similarities and differences among your friends and your own family.

LLS: Yes, yes. Now, on my father's side, which – I know more about my father's family than I do my mother's family because once she passed, of course the two families sort of drifted apart. Not that there was a schism or anything, just drifted apart, so – and I was growing with my father's family. The ethnicity, the culture, the socioeconomic culture of Trinidad depicts, or dictates, how certain groups of people live and how they see themselves. And in my family, we had some of those restrictions, I'll call it, that prevented the children from

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associating with children from other classes or whatever. It just piqued my interest more. And you know, that's the natural thing for most children. You tell them don't, they want to know why. So, I set about trying to find out why – they look like me, children, and of course growing as a child you don't see differences in culture or

anything, you just see another child your age and you gravitate. And so, a lot of what I gathered and picked up and caught was, during those years, being able to co-mingle with people from other cultures and other ethnicities.

LR: Did your education allow for that? Did it facilitate that?

LLS: Yes, because I learned – well of course reading, writing, and arithmetic, and all the other things, but we were taught, in that school system we were taught the culture of some of the dominant groups that – well, let's put it this way, we were colonized. We were a colony of Britain. Britain, the UK, United Kingdom, is all over the world. And so, the schools that I attended were run by nuns and a lot of them came from Ireland. Now they being Irish, or English, or British, or whatever, some of them were Welsh, some of them were Scottish, but they were nuns. They would teach us the culture from where they originated. So, we would learn the dances, some of the craft, sewing and so on and so forth, and the way it would be done in their culture, they passed it on to us, because that's where they were stationed as teachers in the colonial island of, British colonial island – was during those years that I was being raised. That was part of the parochial school system, being dominantly Catholic at the time. My family was Catholic so of course naturally they would not send me to a government run school, they would send us to one that was run by the church. And then that had an influence also.

LR: And going back to your parents and your family, what were the names of your mother and father?

LLS: My mother's name was Miriam, and her maiden name was Jaque [sic]. And my father's name was Harold Eugene Laveau. He had in his family, he's descendant of people who are of French origin, French African origin. And my mother was just African, yes.

LR: And what did they both do for a living?

LLS: So, what did – let me see. My mother was a homemaker. Because there were – I came from a large family. She had ten children before she passed so as you can see her main occupation was to make the home, raise the children, educate the children in whatever way that was possible during those years. And my father worked in

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the oil fields for Texaco in the machine shop, and he was the foreman for the machine shop, and he worked many hours. But my mother, along with being a homemaker, I was told that she also was very skilled in dressmaking. So, she did dressmaking for the people around in the community.

LR: And were they both from Trinidad originally?

LLS: Yes, I would say born in Trinidad but my mother's family were from the smaller island of Tobago. My dad's family came by Martinique, the French island of Martinique.

LR: And as you continued your education in school, what did you find yourself being drawn to, in terms of interests?

LLS: Strangely enough, that impetus came in the home. We went to school and we came back home. We weren't allowed to intermingle with a lot of people outside of the home. Very different now, I mean children spend more time out of the home than they do, than they did, than we did. So, my aunt would arrange for activities in the home so it would be storytelling, a sing-along night, learning a craft like something knitting or crocheting, of course sewing, but we were taught sewing in school as well, which I thought was quite responsible on the part of the government, to make sure that – I think the boys learned to sew as well, but definitely the girls at every level, from kindergarten all the way up, they learned some stage of needlework and later on to interact with a sewing machine. So, skills were passed on as we were coming up, and the sewing, I was intrigued with that. So, we had a sewing machine in my home, and as soon as the adults left, we would be on that sewing machine (laughs)! Of course, sometimes you would run into trouble and I don't know I think it's by the grace of God we would be able to make everything go back to the way it was before my aunt would return home. But it was exciting, just knowing that we could actually, without guidance from an adult, we could go on that sewing machine and make it work (laughs). Not that we made anything, but just to learn how to operate it. So, I loved story night, storytelling night, and recently I was in the square and I saw this woman with, in her shopping cart, this ornate sculpted brass planter, and I said to her, "That reminds me of my childhood," and she said, "Really?" I said, "Yes, that became the stage for us!" Because we were so small, they would take a planter, the plant out of the planter, turn the decorative holder upside down, it became a stage. So, you had to go up on top there to do your performance, because we were so tiny they would put us up on this little, like a little pedestal. So, whenever I see a brass planter, I remember those times of my childhood of – and you would sing, then we knew French songs which if we went to school and sang those songs, it would be kind of foreign to the kids around us because they didn't have the opportunity then, because every family out there was not French based, we were

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one of the few that had the French background. Recently I went home and I visited my aging kindergarten school teacher. And so, I said, “Do you know who I am?” She said, “Of course I know who you are!” She said, “You used to sing a song whenever we would ask you to sing to, you know, just sing, you had a French song you would sing!” And in that moment,

first of all, I was so stunned that she could go that far back, being so advanced in age, and remember. So, I went back home to my brother’s house where I was staying, I said, “You know Ms. Curry says that I used to sing a song,” and he just broke out in song and started singing it (laughs)! And I said, “Oh! Yes, I do remember!” So, it’s again, you just take those things for granted, you’re growing up and it’s – you sing a song, you learn a song you sing it. But it has, it grows to have significance – strong significance later on. It tells you about your journey, why this song, why not that song, and so on. The other thing about the first location where I grew up – that would be from age five to fourteen – the neighbors, well of course we had children, but we did not go to their homes. Which, now again I look at the difference – we were forbidden to go into – even though these were solid people, well respected, we were allowed to play with the children their children were allowed to play with us – going into other people’s homes was forbidden. I don’t know if it is out of respect for that family or discipline for us that certain things you don’t do just because it’s there, you temper, you discipline yourself, and I can see how that affects me today. I’m not inclined to do a lot of visiting.

LR: To homes, to people’s homes?

LLS: To homes, yes, yes. And I’m very respectful about, if I’m not invited I don’t just show up (laughs). So, you see how some things stay with you and they inform how you think things through or how you – your behavior.

LR: Did you know those families despite not being able to easily visit their homes?

LLS: Did we know them?

LR: Yeah.

LLS: Well they would come, their parents would allow them to visit, but we were not allowed to visit their homes. And you know, of course we had a curfew, you could only be out for a certain length of time so we interacted with them outdoors, we didn’t even have to go into their homes. But when I think back, those were wonderful times. And one family, I don’t think any of them are on the island, so when I go back I wouldn’t see

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them, they moved on, married or whatever it is. And some are married and are there so my family would say, “Oh, Lynette is coming!” And we would connect or talk on the phone or something like that.

LR: And did your interest in storytelling and music or singing, did that stay with you as you grew older into adolescence and young adulthood?

LLS: I think that the brood, myself and my siblings, we inherited some sort of a creative streak. Every one of my siblings are creative in some way. At least of two of us, if not three, ended up in theater. So, I have a brother who is now the artistic director of one of the oldest theater companies in Trinidad. I was a member of that theater company. But before being invited to participate with that company I had interacted with other smaller companies, less prestigious, but this one was formed by a playwright poet who eventually was awarded the Nobel Prize. And that’s Derek Walcott. And he even came to Boston and he started a playwright’s theater here, but I had the good fortune, and privilege, and opportunity to study theater under him and act in some of his plays, plays that he directed, and traveled with the company. That’s how I can see where the early beginnings of drama in the home led to my keen interest in doing legitimate theater.

LR: Yeah, how did you get involved in that? What was the first opportunity or your entry into that?

LLS: I had taken a summer class at the university. By then I had become – I was teaching because, I think I briefly explained before, that I got streamed into career rather than academics due to that government scholarship that I had qualified for, I earned it. And the conditions of that scholarship was that I would complete my high school education and then sign on to be trained as a teacher, elementary school teacher. So, part of my track in being trained as a teacher was to outsource myself to as much training that I can access to be able to pass on to these children. Reading, I ended up teaching choral reading, drama, dance, folk dance, all of those things, because I learned them in the theater – I was able to be a better teacher because of that. So, I found that in signing onto this summer course at the university to learn all the different disciplines, folk singing, folk dance, technical theater, acting technique, stuff like that, that the director was teaching one of those classes, the Nobel playwright director. So, he saw my potential, but my brother was already a member of that theater company so he said, “Well, let her come and do an audition.” So, it was like that and I got it. Yeah, you couldn’t just go and be part of the thing, you had to be invited.

LR: And go through a process, audition.

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LLS: Yes, yes, and I performed with them until I left, got married and my husband was at Brandeis here in Boston. So that's how I ended up here, in Boston. He was matriculating in anthropology.

LR: In Trinidad?

LLS: Here. But I met him there because he had come to do one of his studies and research there in Trinidad. And yeah, as a matter of fact I didn't, I was kind of reluctant to interrupt my unfolding theater career there, and I was traveling with the company too, so I thought, okay, alright, marriage is a change of life, things have to change. And so, I ended up here and within one year I was performing here with the Harvard Summer Players, and was able to meet with and work with some luminaries in the film and theater industry. Then they were students here, like Tommy Lee Jones and John Landis who is a director, and Tom Milner, all these people are now very successful but I had the opportunity to work with them when they were at Harvard and they were part of the Summer Players.

LR: And when you were in the company back in Trinidad where were they traveling?

LLS: We traveled just to the Caribbean and then we were invited to participate in – Canada was celebrating...something. Sorry, no they had an expo, an arts expo. And I think it was their first anniversary as a country and so they had this big expo and they invited people like Derek to bring his play and so on and we performed. Fifty years later was last year. And that event was called Caribana because they had so many people, immigrants, from the Caribbean and the culture was so rich so they said let's have an expo to celebrate all of this, and that's how our group was invited. So, last year was fifty years for Canada celebrating fifty years of its formation or I'm not quite, forgive me I'm not giving you full information.

LR: Oh, that's okay!

LLS: But it was fifty years last year. And I couldn't believe that I had been there the first year, fifty years later.

LR: What was that experience like, being part of the expo?

LLS: Wow, well we were there for a week. And we performed on the center island. There's a theater there and we were able to do that play, *Dream on Monkey Mountain*, which had won quite a lot of awards. And so, every evening we would have to get on the ferry to come back to the mainland because we were staying at one of the

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universities, the dorms. It was in the summer so the students weren't there, we were staying in the dorms. But everyone wanted to get on the trip with us, on the ferry, because they knew it was like a party (laughs). We would be singing all the songs from the show and just having a wonderful time, and of course people do know the difference, they do know the difference. The persona of Caribbean people is outstanding, and then especially when you're around artists, we're cracking jokes, we're telling stories, we're doing skits, we're doing mime, everything! And people loved that, it was like a free performance on the ferry back at the end of the day to get home.

LR: Like an after show, to the show.

LLS: Yes, yes, yes. So, this is making me go back to a time when I – it's not that I don't think about it, but I don't have any reason to recall and recapture it in detail as I'm doing now. So, let's see. So once I got here and I missed, I really missed, doing theater, being around my friends, being around that warm accommodating comradery that is Caribbean, having to adjust to the climate, the changes, the seasonal changes, one of the things I noticed was that people weren't as outgoing and friendly, and in the beginning I didn't – because I didn't, I wasn't familiar with what it is like to live in a student town. There are people from all over the world. Some of them don't even speak English. So, you would go up to someone and ask for directions, they can't give you directions because they are not from here! I would think, I don't understand this, why people wouldn't just – well one of the things I also didn't pay attention to is that there's something called racism in North America and that many people I may have approached never even thought that they would talk to, or have the desire to speak to, someone who looked like I did because it's like they were indoctrinated, you know, people who look like that and sound like that don't have anything to do with them. Not their fault but unfortunately there are – these things happen. So, I just decided, well you have a lot of things going for you, because I was in theater, I know how to speak to people who are total strangers, and I just put those things to work for me. I said, "Okay you have to start somewhere." I was taught how to be civil, how to be cordial, how to even be outgoing, which, I also never realized that I am not as outgoing as I thought I was. But you know I think it's my skill, the skills that theater gave me. I would overcome the shyness, overcome the reticence to reach out, because I would think of it this way: everybody doesn't know what you know about breaking the barrier of unfamiliar to familiar. You know it. So, demonstrate it and people will learn from you. And I found once I did that people would just begin to just have conversations with me. Like I'm with someone who knows me and I come in contact with someone and we just start talking. When we part from the person they say, "Do you know them?" I said, "No, that's the first time I met them!" They said, "You spoke with them like they were long lost friends." I said, "Well maybe we are, I don't know!" (Laughs) And this happens continuously because I got to a point where I thought, everybody

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has not been as fortunate as you to learn the things you have learned, being in the theater, of how to start a conversation, how to pay a compliment, how to – even when people are rough and gruff to you just, okay, that’s alright it’s no big deal, because of what I said before – maybe you don’t have a lot of experience talking to someone who looks like me. I’m in a college town. It could be a parent from somewhere else visiting their child and first time to be face to face with a brown person, and they don’t know what to do (laughs). I thought, okay, I’ve been given the, I think the gift, now that I am a life success coach I share with people that the gifts that we have that have been given to us is not for us. You have to give it away for it to be a gift. So, when you gift someone that quality or skill of just being open and accommodating, even when they’re not accommodating – but it could be that they’re having a bad day and they just need someone just like you to say, “It’s okay, no problem.” So, I talk about that on my show which, I do a show now, twelve years, this is my twelfth year, and it’s the *Callaloo Express Relationship Show*, and it’s on Wednesdays, and we talk about all of these things.

[We briefly paused the recording to turn off another recording device in the room]

LR: In your interactions with people around Cambridge, did they happen just as you were going about your daily life and learning the city and getting used to the new environment?

LLS: My reference to encounters relates to over a period of time. We’re talking about, let’s see so I came here in the sixties and it took me some time before I was as outgoing as I appear to be now, or sound in my narrative, to have had that confidence. Because I became a woman here. I came as a young bride let’s put it this way. My only skills that I had was as a teacher, elementary school teacher, and an actress, stage. I didn’t do radio then, I didn’t do television, I had not done film. So, it was, I would say it was still a little bit limited but nevertheless my skills with people, young people, was from having been an elementary school teacher. And I was in my twenties so I didn’t have – I am sure I didn’t have the confidence of a mature woman, I didn’t even know what I looked like. It’s many years later on when I was shown pictures of myself and I said, that’s what I looked like? I had no clue. I just, because the way I was raised, it was to always downplay yourself, you live for other people, you don’t matter, your wants your needs don’t matter. So, I had been living like that – I had no clue as to what I looked like to people. And so those are some things that I, in later years I learned how to correct and be more cognizant of what place I hold in the world. And 2010 was when I first decided that I wanted to become a life success coach. Because I had been mentoring people for all of that time, from the sixties until 2010, I had been mentoring people. Either friends, or people would ask me to come work with some kids, or I taught theater, adult theater, juvenile theater, I was a mime, I was part of a mime company – all of that, it was always me giving people, helping them on their journey. Now it could’ve been that because that career had not yet emerged, that I didn’t

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know that it was something that could be monetized as a career, but I also was changing too and so I had arrived at that point where I was now cognizant enough to be able to see, to do an evaluation on myself and know that you can do this, you are a coach, you can be a coach. You have all that you need to start a new journey into this profession and so I went and I got certified. And I continue, even to this day, to continue training in different modalities, neuro-linguistic programming, law of attraction, tapping – all the meridians, it's a form of acupuncture – but helping people with personal development or achieving a goal or getting unstuck. And little by little I'm making strides in my new field.

LR: It sounds like it was part of your other fields but sort of something that came along with it, not the main focus – like mentoring students like you said or people coming to you asking questions.

LLS: And I always had this passion to help people become the best version of themselves, not realizing that that's what a coach does. So, you're right, you hit it, yes. And I'm enjoying that, I enjoy it so much because Cambridge, my new home for the last what, fifty years, and the artist community here, me having been an artist as well, I have that sensitivity to help those people. I say that that's my tribe, those are the people I want to see progress, prosper, make their name in the world however they're meant to do it. If I can be of service and helping that gives me joy. And so, I worked, I've been a booking agent, and I think that being the booking agent helped me realize artists are the people you need to be working with. Because whenever an artist would come and say, "I want to work, I need to get some jobs." So, I would take them through, "Ok, do you have a bio? Do you have a resume?" "What is that?" I thought, oh my God (laughs). You're so far out in left field you don't even know it! Or a musician, let's say musician, I said, "Where is your work, how is your work stored? Do you have a recording, do you have a demo tape?" In those days, demo tape. Don't even know what it is, how to go about it, and I thought, oh my goodness these are my people this is my tribe but they don't know how to get out there and sell themselves. Of course, they don't know enough to be picked up by an agent or a manager, they're not yet ready. So, I said, "Okay, I will take you from where you are to where you can be picked up by an agent. There's a preparation that has to take place and so let's go from there." And little by little what was unfolding for me was my new designation, coach. And I got it, I got my spiritual download I heard it when it came and I said, "Okay, I understand, this is what I'm supposed to do."

LR: Yeah, and you could relate to that being an artist yourself and an actress.

LLS: Yes. And fortunately, over the years I had had an agent from whom I learned. Again, everything is not taught, some things are caught. I caught from her what an artist needed to be sellable, bookable. And when she

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started working with me I had all those things because I'm a – what am I – I'm a scribe. I write everything down. So, over the years my bio was just ballooning because I did a lot of work in theater and I would just, every time I did something I would go write it down, the date, where I did it, what role I played. And I had it in scrap form but I had the information. So, when she was ready to market me I could give her all the salient things about my career, she didn't have to do a lot of that work for me. And I learned from her that's what you do with an agent. You have to be prepared, you have to give them something. And it was wonderful. Now, did I learn that in Trinidad? No. Because when I was in Trinidad I wasn't an independent artist, I was part of a company. But as I came here I was forced to adapt to my station, where I was then at that point in time in life. Okay, number one, I am not American, I don't speak with an American accent (laughs). My experience is outside of the country, so I had to find a way to say how am I going to market this. I am unique, but does my market know that? And so, I did stories, telling stories, at WGBH. I read Indian stories, African stories, because I had the accent, the right accent, for something like that. And I also taught theater at the Elma Lewis School of Fine Arts. And they needed – well, because it was the first of its kind so they were looking for staff who were either Black American, Caribbean, African, I don't know, somebody knew I was here and said call these people. And they were glad because I was trained, I wasn't just trying to find my way, I was trained in theater. I knew what those students needed. I was already a teacher, I knew how to teach, you could give me anything today, I know how to teach because I know the format of teaching something. So, it was like they had found a treasure. I didn't know that then I just was happy to be in an environment of theater. I directed my first musical at that location, at that facility. It was a Caribbean style thing. So, it was like an aligning of the planets, for me. I was at the right place, at the right time, they needed someone who knew Caribbean theater, I had been in it at a respectable level. So, I came with my credentials but I didn't know I had credentials. All I knew is they were looking for a theater arts teacher. And then when I got there and they saw who – my work and my skills – they wanted to do this musical and the rest was, yeah, it was really nice. And it was there that I later on became a member of a mime company. I don't think since then Boston has had a mime company. A Black mime company.

LR: Yeah, how did you get involved in that?

LLS: Because I was – that came out of the drama department of that school, the Elma Lewis School of Fine Arts. This was a woman who was from Barbados, she had been a ballet dancer or something like that, and she wanted to educate the Black children of Boston in the fine arts, so there was drama, art, dance, music, costuming. And at that time, I was, nothing, not doing any costuming, I wasn't doing anything sewing-wise, just for myself. But I had I think the first year I came here I was so bored sitting at home and I'm walking into the square and I walk past this little boutique says "Help Wanted" and I walked in and I said, "What kind of help are you talking

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about?" (laughs) And they said, "Well, what do you do?" And I said, "Well, I know dressmaking." They said, "Really?" So, she said, "Ok, come" – we set a date and I go. She gives me a pattern and she gives me cloth and she said, "Turn that into – " I guess she wasn't expecting me - the level of work that I had done, but that was very helpful too, it was great feedback because I didn't know the level at which I was doing work. I could do work, I had customers I was getting customers but I didn't know the skill level. And she was so impressed. There I met a Chinese dressmaker, an Irish dressmaker, a Brazilian dressmaker, and then me (laughs) so we were turning out stuff from that boutique like, people just started coming. And I stayed I think a year? And then – yeah, it was early, shortly after I had been here – I wanted to go back home, my husband said, "Well let's – let me finish up and we'll go back." And I think he just said that to kind of appease. I was so excited I told them, "No I can't stay for another year I have to go!" (Laughs) So they were sad, and I was sad too because I liked the people that I was working with but you know, things happen in life and if you don't make too much of a – have it too much angst ridden, it levels itself out. Because what happens is that you're open, you say, "I'm going to adapt to this, whatever comes, I will work with it." And I think that when I look back that's how I – what happened. I wanted to desperately to be back in my country. I didn't, America didn't have an allure to me at all. I wanted to go back and do my theater and do whatever other stuff I was emerging into. But at that time, it was not the right time for foreigners to be there, so my husband couldn't get a job. See, I would've been fine but I mean, a career in theater couldn't sustain us for but so long. And I mean he is now fresh out of school, he's ready to work, he's looking for – and so we ended up back here.

LR: Yeah, staying in Cambridge, yeah.

LLS: Yes, and by then my daughter was born and well, unfortunately the marriage didn't last that long but we're still connected and friends and all of that. But when I look back, everything that happened I see was for a reason. I had to be in a certain place, space, time – because I didn't try to make too much of a ruckus about why and how, I just moved with it.

LR: And when you were sort of starting to realize that you would be in Cambridge for a longer period of time, were there places that made you feel more comfortable and made – reminded you of home maybe, or just made you feel at home, yeah feel comfortable?

LLS: Places in Cambridge, let's see. You know I am not a city person, although I love the city. I wasn't raised in a city per se. I was raised in a town, but not a city. So, I can take it, or I can leave it. I'm very much at ease just being alone because I have a lot of skills that I could always default to. Either reading, sewing, craft making,

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consulting somebody on the phone, is always using some part of my faculty to either amuse myself or to help someone else. And then I can be just quiet too, I can just meditate, I can just not, I don't have to be doing something all the time, but I do like to be active and productively active. But when I'm outside, I love nature, so when I discovered that there was a river that wrapped around the entire city of Cambridge, I was so amazed and I thought oh my goodness, water! Because where I was raised, even though it's an island, not everybody lives close to the ocean where you can see the ocean all the time. But I like – I don't swim, that's another thing, I don't swim – but I like seeing the ocean, being able to go put my feet in or any running water. So, the river here, this Cambridge river, even to this day, it gives me solace just to go and be close to it and – there was another thing that I found. The other thing is I'm not a mall person either. Some people say, "Let's go in the mall and look at things." Yeah, I can do that, but I could – the joy that it brings, it doesn't last long because I'm not a big consumer person even though I have run a business and relied on customers, and knowing that without customers your business doesn't thrive. I like that part of it, I like serving people, I like the service part. I like having a business and doing something that I know that there are people out there who know that I can solve that problem, whatever problem my product solves I'm the one, come to me! I like that. And of course, with the coaching, same thing with my service. So it was either product when I had the boutique, I created custom design clothing, and I even had good fortune to have my shop at Copley at one point and there was never a problem, people came, they made the order, they got it on time, and they left with their bag very happy, and loved what I would design because I'm not – the other skill that I didn't know that I had until I came here – when I was trained, and this was at a high school level, when I was trained in sewing and designing I didn't know that in the industry here, sewing, that's seamstressing, is one part of the career, and then designing is another part, and pattern making is another part. However, the way that I was trained you do everything. You make the pattern, if you wish to have a pattern, you take scissors, tape measure, mark, and you design and then you get on the sewing machine and you make it. Here those are three professions in the industry. So, I would get here and people would see something that I would be wearing and I'd say, "Yes, this is one of my designs." They said, "Oh! So, who sewed it?" I said, "This is one of my designs." They said, "Yeah, I know, but who sewed it?" I said, "Well, I don't know how else to explain it to you." They said, "No, no no, here in America the designer doesn't sew!" (laughs) That's a revelation for me. I said, "Really?" "Yeah, no, the seamstress sews, the designer designs everything, and the pattern that you use there's somebody else who makes that, creates that." Mhm, okay, I didn't know that I was that blessed (laughter). So I never really pursued it that much, I still like one of a kind, make one of a kind so therefore I have to create the pattern, I have to cut it and make it. Because during the time that I had a boutique I interviewed something like twenty-five people whom I thought were going to be my protégé that I would turn them into me, that I would teach them. But I think it's because of all those divisions that you could never get just one person who knows all those things.

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LR: People specialized and...

LLS: They specialized, yeah. Because of course that's how the industry works, you don't have to know everything, you just say well you want to be a pattern maker, specialize in pattern making. You want to be a designer, just design. You want to be a seamstress, you work alongside a designer, they bring you the work. Somewhere along the way I knew that while it was a profession for me I was making money from, it wasn't something that I was going to be staying in. I didn't know what the next step was but I knew that that was not going to be the, my last. What I do now is my last, the coaching. I can see back now what all those things cumulatively contributed to. I was gathering information for this job, for this one. So now anybody from pretty much any career can come to me needing help and I am knowledgeable about what they do, and what they need, where they need to be and at what level. So, let's say someone who has a boutique and can't understand why the boutique is not – I understand that. Or artists, which is my, really my tribe, I understand what they need in order to be successful. So, I see now, when I look back I saw why God had me come through all of these because those are the people I'm supposed to help.

LR: It all sort of led you to this final profession and career.

LLS: Yes, yes, and I don't have any desire to re-track and go back. Those were steps to bringing me to where I am now. And I'm so happy to have done it here in Cambridge, I don't know that I would have done it – Cambridge is the type of environment and landscape for helping a person to find themselves. Because it's not as intense as it is with some other large cities like New York, I've never been to Chicago, I've heard about Chicago (laughs), I performed in Baltimore I know a little bit about Baltimore, I visited Washington. But here, this city, the make-up, the mood, the vibration is closest to Port of Spain where I came from. The pace is a little slower so you can navigate easier, you don't run into a whole lot of stress from trying to figure out and – yeah we know about the racism but that you sort of like, you kind of learn how to factor that into – recognize what the behavior depicts, decide how you're going to navigate around it, don't let it put you out too much because it's there, it's bigger than all of us and it's for each one of us to learn more as we go about, why, and it's all about history, historical, you learn about the history, that's why I'm involved with the Cambridge African American Heritage Alliance because I love learning about – and then of course I learned a lot from my former husband too as an anthropologist, why people behave the way they behave, why it takes them so long for certain things to work its way out of the clan or the tribe or the whatever. And I'm fortunate to know that so sometimes I say okay well that's a process going on there, we just have to wait, and in the meantime just show love, love them. Everybody

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responds to love. The most vitriolic person can be attended to, I think, with love. At the moment, sometimes when you dispense the love and they retaliate so violently, it's not at the person who's loving them or showing love, it's the fact that all of that stuff is between them and you that they cannot navigate to fully appreciate the love that you're extending. And they're angry not at you, I've come to learn that, that it's so much damage sometimes has been done to that person, they cannot allow themselves to just access, someone saying, "Okay, I see it, I hear it, I feel it, but you're still worthy."

LR: I'm wondering how you express your and engage with your Caribbean heritage while living in Cambridge.

LLS: That's a good one because it makes me think deeply. Because on a day to day basis I don't interact with Caribbean people, I may not even speak to a Caribbean person in weeks, and while having been born in the Caribbean, nurtured in the Caribbean, from my family to my community to my, to the church that participated in raising me, the government that gave me the confidence to, as a Black person, a person of color, I think that's how I interact. When I am – not the people around me immediately because many people I interact with I don't even know that they're from the Caribbean, it's much later on I discover that they are. They ask me, "Where are you from?" I, "Oh Trinidad" "Oh yeah my grandfather is so and so and so." You know?

LR: Yeah, and like sharing connections.

LLS: Yeah, but on a day to day I just interact with people as they are. Whether you are Black, Brown, Latino, Asian, it doesn't matter, as long as we find a connection it works for me. Because I say, this is my home, Cambridge, this is where I make my home now, and everybody else around me is my neighbor so I have this philosophy that my neighbor – I have to be my neighbor's keeper because if some catastrophe, some disaster takes place, we all have to help each other. So, the last thing I want to do is forge any kind of – well, not forge – establish any enmity between people I hardly know but yet they live next door to me or they live in the same building or whatever it is. So, my thing is – and I live in an apartment building now. I didn't always live in an apartment building but I live in an apartment building now, and I am glad that I have that philosophy because you know, you have mail, in the winter you have snow to be cleared, well year round there's garbage that has to be moved or managed or whatever, and if each one of us didn't do what we were supposed to do, the other person's stuff is in jeopardy. If I come in and I see a package that is there vulnerable, let's say it didn't even make it into the building, it's right on the step and I just go by and oh it's not mine and then later on the person comes looking for the package and it's gone – I could have saved the package by bringing it in so, which I do that. If I see a package that didn't make it into the building I look, I see it's someone in the building, I bring it in, I buzz the

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bell, I say, “You have a package down here.” And they are grateful that somebody – because they talk about experiences where they lost that and I said I would love somebody to do that for me, and just so that little gesture opens an opportunity for creating a symbiotic relationship with someone. You don’t have to be talking always, and texting, and going in and out of homes, nope. It’s just little things that matter to people that start a relationship. With the mailman, at Christmas time I make sure I give him a card or leave something for him because I appreciate him delivering that service on time every day every week. And so now when I am, I have a package, he knocks on my door and he tells me, “You have a package out here.” So see, I started the little connection, the little relationship, and I think just us being aware of those things can start a thread, a nice thread of connecting to people around us, and in Cambridge I know it is so easy to do, I see it all the time. Sometimes a package would come to my building that is not even my building. It’s like doors up, and I would walk and go put it, or I would call and say, “Do you live at – there’s a package here. I’m going to walk up and –” “Oh no no no you don’t have to.” I say, “No but I’m coming that way anyway.” And they’re so grateful because a neighbor, that they never even knew! But I think Cambridge is unique about that. City Hall, I like going to City Hall to be able to just talk to the mayor. How many places in America can you just walk up to City Hall and say, “Can I talk to the mayor?” I don’t think (laughs) not in cities this size. They’re so busy, and they have this protocol. I think I could – not just this mayor, all the mayors that have gone before. And so, whenever someone just comes to, you know they’re just coming in and, I say, “Well what do you do?” They say, “Oh I – and I’m trying to get a job, and you know I do this,” I say, “You do what? Oh! You need to go up to City Hall and present your papers. Say I am new in this city, this is some of the things I do that would benefit people in the community, and see what they say! Challenge them, without challenging them, just, let them know you are here.” And they say, “I can do that?” I say, “Yes you can, they are our, they are there for us!”

LR: It’s like an open door.

LLS: Well not open door but I mean, if you really take it on a very basic level, they are public servants. We are the public. So even before I became a citizen, I worked on campaigns.

LR: In Cambridge?

LLS: Yes. And when I tell other people that, I said, “You don’t have to know how to vote – no, you don’t have to have a vote to help with a campaign,” They said, “But – ah – “ I said, “It’s not about that, this person is running for office and they are going to represent you when they get in office. So, until you get your vote you can still help, still help them with whatever they need in a campaign. And then you learn the process as you’re going

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along, now you're immersed, you can learn what it takes to run for office, what this particular office does and so on and so forth." And again, the person said, "I never thought about that." I said, "Well neither did I until somebody invited me once and said come, you can come – and my response was the same, I don't have a vote! But every day you are benefiting from that person in office because they're advocating for you, you're a resident of the city." So wrapping up to say, that living in Cambridge has given me some insights and to appreciate certain – the value of public officials, private business people, business owners who, same. Just recently when I did the event for the, to celebrate the –

LR: Caribbean heritage month?

LLS: Caribbean heritage month, I got assisted by a private owner of a restaurant whom again I just have forged a relationship with him and his family just by going there, referring people, stopping in to say hi. So when I told him what my predicament was he said, "Well, if you're not lucky, you're not fortunate to get –" you know, I was trying to get the Y, trying to get City Hall, but they had been filled up, plus I was coming at them too late – he said, "You can come, I'll help you." And that's how it worked out. Forging relationships, even before I knew that I could benefit from that. I believe in it and I know it works because I saw recently how it worked for me. This gentleman is – the Andala café, this guy is Palestinian, I am from the Caribbean (laughs). But um,

LR: But we're all in Cambridge.

LLS: We're all in Cambridge, it's a big family, big family in Cambridge.

LR: And that event was for CAAHA?

LLS: It was sponsored by CAAHA, because I am the executive chairperson of a dwindling organization. I mean, it's just hanging by a string now because again it's hard to get people to support, be excited, about history, African American history, and I'm glad that the historical society is carrying this along, not just for general but like the immigrant population, they would be delighted to know that they could go on the website and be able to find out things about immigrants who are here. I hope that more of these will be done for other segments of the immigrant population so that that way little by little we can learn about the people who have contributed in ways that, in my case I didn't even know that I was contributing I just, I am who I am and I just do things that make sense to me and in the moment if I feel that it's going to help, I do but, I'm glad that I was raised the way I was raised, to have this mindset that everything is not about money, and people, helping people, has enormous

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gains. It may not come immediately in the next twelve months or so on but if you just keep on doing and keep on believing that what you're doing is for the benefit and greater good of a segment, it does not have to be for the entire world. You know, I talk about tribe, maybe the people you're doing it for belong to your tribe but you don't know it because the gift that you have inside of you is specifically for those types of people, that group of people. We should not discriminate and I'm not talking about racism now, just talking about being selective about who, when the moment for helping comes, you're going to help. Just go ahead and trust that it's going to fall at the feet of the right person. So, I have a – I am very spiritual, maybe not religious although I am part of a church, the Aletheia Church at meets at the Y, but I do interact with the word of God every day. And I recently saw this and I said, this resonates with me: "The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places. Surely I have a delightful inheritance." That's Psalm sixteen verse six. And then my favorite that I always live by, Proverbs three five six: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, the Lord, and he will make your path straight."

LR: What about those two phrases resonate with you?

LLS: Because, okay, one is that you just, you have to have faith. That you will succeed, so trust in the Lord, he is the creator of the entire universe. And so if he created the universe and keeps everything night and day and seasons and all of that, you're not that insignificant because you're part of His creation as well, so you have to trust that if He looks out – or, there's the scripture about the sparrow, every sparrow, He knows about every little sparrow and we know how many sparrows there are, so you have to take heart and trust that the creator of the universe has you also in mind. And the thing about the boundary lines, I also have a prayer that I pray, "Expand my boundaries," it's a prayer of Jabez and he prayed to God, "Expand my boundaries." And God listened and did it, so when I was reading the Psalms recently and I saw, I said oh that resonates with me. "The boundary lines have fallen," meaning, there's no boundaries anymore, I can be – I can just give myself freedom to go, to help, to explore, "They have fallen for me in pleasant places." That means I don't have to be nervous, everywhere I go it will be pleasant places for me. And so then, "surely I have a delightful inheritance." Makes sense?

LR: Yeah, I like that, it just flows really nicely and the talk about boundaries too, falling, it makes me think of how boundaries are set in ways that are out of your control sometimes, most times.

LLS: And sometimes we put boundaries up, we put boundaries up. So, we have to one, recognize that boundaries are good, they're good, they control who has free reign back and forth into your space, but

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sometimes we have to bring those boundaries down, and explore, and not be so nervous that oh if I go, this that that, you know, get rid of the negative, just think positively. If I throw the boundaries down and go out maybe I'll be out there helping people who need my help, or I may encounter people who can help me, so it works both ways.

LR: Yeah that's a good –

LLS: And if you don't go out, you wouldn't know that the help is out there. If you keep still trying to be so safe, and staying behind these walls and boundaries, and we know the narrative these days that we've been listening to about walls and boundaries and you know boundaries keep people out, but they can also keep you in from your greater good.

LR: That true, another thing that I thought of was just the political situation now obviously and boundaries causing so much separation and violence and, you know.

LLS: And to think had there been boundaries, right, when the first, when the pilgrims came, we would not have the country that we are today.

LR: It would be a different story.

LLS: It would be a different story, so again back to learning about the history, we need to read and re-read the history of this country. Some of it we really don't want to be reading about it, but it's good to know all the trials and tribulations that this country – Cambridge has a wonderful history as well – that what we've gone through, and to have come where we are now, what would be really, really a travesty is if we have come through all of this and then to watch the country just fall into a situation of devastation because we're making the wrong choices based on ignorance. So, we just have to keep, we have to pray, I pray over this every day, I pray for the president and I pray for the people around him that they would speak wisdom into him. Everyone can be rescued from themselves if they're open to and we're in critical times but we just have to see it positively. As they say, everything that exists began with a thought. So, think the best that you can, because it starts with a thought. So, if you are optimistic and you say, no matter what I see no matter what is in front of my eyes, I know this can be better, that's a great start.

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LR: Yeah, and I'm wondering, going back, just about your involvement in Cambridge and some of the things you've been involved in, specifically about Cambridge Carnival and your role in Cambridge Carnival.

LLS: So, the Cambridge Carnival – and this may also feed into that question that you asked about my engagement with Caribbean people – prior to 1993, which is when the Cambridge Carnival was established, conceptualized, given birth, 1993, I was involved with Carnival in Boston and they started in 1973. And so, from time to time I would go over, I would go to their meetings, I even brought a group, a costume group and everything. But there was so much chaos and so much dissention, and then I went to an alternative meeting instead of the main group. Another group was meeting and trying to see if they could come up with new solutions and all of that, and I said, “Right across the river is another city that would love to have a Carnival. Would you guys be willing to come and bring the Carnival over?” Because I was the only one who lived in Cambridge. Everybody lived over on the Boston side. It took three years. So that was 1989 when I stood up and – 1990, 1991, '92 was when we had the first meeting to start talking about it, and so November '92 we started talking, go up to City Hall, present the proposal and so on and so forth, and '93 August was the first one. And we got the assistance of the Boston groups who had costumes and so on and so forth. And by five years later I was gone. I didn't hang around because as we expanded the group – this was only three people that came together to co-found it, myself and two other people – and less than five years later the other people whom we had invited to come and expand the group had a whole skewed vision of what they thought it was and I didn't have the interest, it was an uphill climb. So, I thought listen, the gift is already there, Cambridge knows, they have a lovely gift of Cambridge Carnival, cultural, it aligns with history, Black history, it's good, educational, it's an outlet for the artists, Caribbean and otherwise, musicians, I felt it'll survive. So right now, it's just surviving, I wouldn't say it's in its thriving stage yet, this is twenty-five years, but I think if they, whoever is running it now, keeps with it, it will eventually, it'll get on its growth legs. So maybe some things like these have to – take a longer time.

LR: Did you participate in the Boston one actively?

LLS: I participated in the Boston one, after that? No.

LR: Oh no, just like when you were starting the Cambridge Carnival and before then when you were engaged with the Boston Carnival, were you sort of –

LLS: Before then, before the Cambridge Carnival I participated in the Boston one, I brought a group, I think more than, maybe twice I think I did, and I even won a prize there. And only because I was well, one, I mean as a

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Caribbean person it's your culture and you come out and you help those who are doing – but again it wasn't something that I saw myself doing year after year. Then again on a whim I said let's try Cambridge, if you're having so much struggles over there, try Cambridge. And that took three years to get off the ground but it did, and again so now it will take twenty-five years for it to get to the next level. The thing is that I don't see it only as a Caribbean event, nevertheless it's using a Caribbean mode of expression, which is pageantry, costumes, music, you know, that kind of thing. And right now, it is what it is, I mean it suffices, it represents something Caribbean of sorts, it doesn't depict anywhere near the vision that we had but I knew that also that it would take some time, step by step to add all the different components that would make it.

LR: And I'm also wondering if you could talk a bit about how you got involved in CCTV and your shows.

LLS: Ok, how I got involved in CCTV, that was 2005. Ok, so leaving the Cambridge Carnival wasn't planned, and it wasn't, it didn't, it's not like I was "Ha ha ha!" It really, because that was like a baby that I had birthed and then to have to leave it in the hands of other people, you know I was kind of like, for a bit, a little bit disoriented. Should I, are you doing the right thing? So, what I did was I just immersed myself in other things that bring me joy. And by then I had done theater, film, worked with kids on an Emmy award winning show, *Zoom*.

LR: I loved that show.

LLS: Yeah! So, you know, I had all of that and I thought, well, look at all of the things that you've done, see what you can, see how you can use that information toward something else. I was growing a business and I went to the Business Development Center to be trained, because that's how I'm oriented, you know? If I don't have all the information I go find it, I get someone to set me straight. We got enrolled as members at the CCTV because they had the computer lab where we as members would go to be trained on computers, just to learn the computers. So, for a good couple years I was just a member as a business member going, and then maybe I went to an orientation or something and they said, "You do know that you can do a show, as a member, you can do a show." And I thought, well I've done some radio before, I've been on TV as a talent and so on, I should be able to do this. And so, I signed up and after a while it evolved into TV. At one point I had a TV and a radio show side by side. One on one day, one on another day. The radio show was longer, as a matter of fact I said, "What am I going to say on a radio show? I don't talk that much!" (laughs) But again, my creative mind, I put it to work and I came up with the theme of the relationships because the TV show was for artists, to help artists, the radio would be for people who want to just explore different topics, ideas, with me and sometimes I would have guests, sometimes I would just – and then in 2010, when I decided to build my coaching practice, I said, "Wow, this is

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my platform, so I'm just going to use this to demonstrate to people how I work on any given topic that involves personal development, and relationships," and no sooner I was able to lock that in, I was able to do my elevator speech with people. "So, what is your show about?" And I'm just like that, rattle it off, "What!?! That's a great idea!" And because I had the by-line, "forging and sustaining dynamic relationships" and in order to have a dynamic relationship you have to bring a dynamic person to the relationship well then that leaves the question, how do I become a dynamic person? So that's what the show focuses on. All about examining the self and honing those weak areas and empowering the other ones where you were already doing well. And then in January I added financial literacy to it. So now it's filled out where I move back and forth, about personal, becoming a dynamic person, don't lose the money, that's the other thing. So, I weave them back and forth. Don't lose the money, whatever you do, don't lose the money. And people love it, they love it, they're intrigued at how many things I can fit under relationships and I said, "We're always in a relationship, so why not address it if we are always – we cannot get away from relationships." We're either with parents, with students, with your boss, if you're part of a choir or a team, many other people, and those many other people ones are more difficult than the one on one because it's many people coming at you with many different personalities, and you have to know how to juggle and make everything work in order to do something that you all are coming together to do. Remember that's the whole purpose of why a team gets together, you have a common goal. A choir, same thing. Volunteering, same thing. You're working together towards a common goal but you have to have that skill of ambiance and comradery with people that you work with so there's no constantly conflict, conflict, conflict. Or that it minimizes conflict. I even studied something called Ho'oponopono with a Hawaiian psychiatrist. It's an ancient form of conflict resolution practiced in Hawaii. So, I'm always on the lookout for things that will expand my skills and consciousness. Ho'oponopono so that's – and I do conversational hypnosis, I'm studying that as well, how to skillfully get people to be in agreement with you as opposed to be in conflict. See the whole thing is agreement, so this gives you the skill as to how to listen, how to use words, how to use the tone and of course in personal contact reading the body language, reading the facial musculature and so on. It's very interesting.

LR: So, what will your next show be about?

LLS: My next show coming up is, well I already wrote it, what is it... It's a great day to be alive, and that that should be our daily mantra. If you decide, and it's all from living with intention. So, my last show talked about how to eliminate those things that keep you reaping negative, no success and so on, and it's because your thoughts don't match your language and don't match your intention, and don't match your beliefs. So, we talked about how you have to be intentional about what you think about, how you express it verbally, because then it

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imprints on your subconscious the wrong belief, and those three inform your actions. I gave affirmations, I gave exercises, I gave examples of the outcomes. Of course, the whole idea is to have people recognize the value of coaching, and that I emphasize coaching is not like psychiatry where you're with them for a year, two years. In three months, you should be able to transcend or overcome the obstacle. And by a coach working with you and opening up your awareness – which is really why people get stuck, because they're not aware of what they're doing incorrectly, how they're speaking incorrectly – so, I show them all the phrases they have to eliminate from their vocabulary, and show them what you replace it with. And it has – just from living with intention so you have to begin to listen to how you speak, the words you choose to express something (laughs).

LR: No, it's really interesting.

LLS: Yes, yes, so I have fun with it because I'm learning too, I have to do the work, I have to do the research. So, growth. It's what, how, to affect growth. And one is what we say and then what you replace it with. So, I have a list ready for them of how – an example would be, "I don't know how to do this." But instead of saying that you say, "I can learn." So, when you recognize "I don't know how to do this," instead of saying, "I don't know how to do this," "I can learn this." So, what happens is when you make that intention to express something in that manner, your neuropathways hear what you're saying. They hear, it feels the energy with which you say it and it informs your subconscious that not the old stuff, bring in the new stuff, bring new stuff in. So, in the last few weeks I've been talking about that, how your subconscious is listening always to the thoughts that you're entertaining in your head, or that you're saying. It's not from the conscious mind that you do things, it's what the subconscious hears from what you're thinking, what you're saying, and then you find yourself doing things in agreement with those negative things.

LR: Like you're always listening to yourself.

LLS: That's right, and they say it's awake twenty-four seven. So, I gave the example – was it last week or the week before? – I gave the example of why it's always the neural pathways, right, listens to the subconscious. And it protects you, so if during the night you're asleep and there's a fire, the minute that your neural pathways detect fire, it'll wake you up and tell you, flee. So, it's never asleep, even while you are resting your subconscious is awake, looking at the things you need to keep you safe. And we even keep ourselves safe by not doing the things that we should be doing, because we get so accustomed to doing certain things that when you try to change the subconscious says, "This is different! Let's not go there, let's not do that, because this is – you've never done this before." Now, if you consistently decide I am going to do this, the subconscious gets the

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message, we're about to change, all that stuff is old, let's eschew the old stuff because here now we're taking a new path. I love learning all about the subconscious and I weave it in with prayer and beliefs because your belief is strong, it's part of your subconscious.

LR: Well I have one more question to ask you. How have you seen Cambridge change?

LLS: I've seen Cambridge change in – ok, being a business owner, so I am very sensitive about that. I've seen that these things that we took for granted that would be essential in the thoroughfare, let's say from MIT to Harvard, have just arbitrarily just disappeared. Like we had a supermarket, a Star Market, that's gone, that's moved. We have a small supermarket, the Harvest, and then now we have H-Mart. Ok, some people like H-Mart, some people don't like H-Mart. I like H-Mart because I like trying new stuff (laughs). So, I go to H-Mart and I buy things I've never bought before, go home and experiment with it, and then love it. Ok, in the nineteen – I made a list – in the 1980s, we saw an influx of Haitian immigrants who came not directly here, they came from Miami, so that would be the port of entry and then they would migrate up north. How I was aware of that: I was working at a daycare center and we suddenly began to see this increase of Haitians into Cambridge. Right about that time we also saw Ethiopians but not as many. However, by the 1990s, there was a significant amount of Ethiopians that we had an Ethiopian restaurant right in Central Square. Not the other, Asmara, right there where the buses are there was an Ethiopian restaurant. And all the guys you know, you can see culturally they come and they hang out, just like in the Middle East how they sit out and they talk and so on, and I liked that, you know, they had some place to go and to interact with each other. The Brazilians didn't really take to living in Cambridge as much as they did in Somerville but they would circulate here, they would come, they had music and so on. And by the 2000s we saw more Asians, Koreans, Chinese you know, from that part of the world. Now how did this change? Well, we had shops. The Indians have always come and gone, I threw out all of these – I've seen Indians come, have businesses, go. It's kind of like, it comes in waves. But then those again, these groups made Cambridge to be such an interesting, culturally rich place, food-wise, you walk down the street you see this blaze of saris flying in the wind, colors, and it just felt like such a nice place to be. People would come to visit me from other parts of Boston and they say, "I love coming here, this is so beautiful!" And then in the summer all of that comes out. And then we just noticed that shops started closing, and even banks were changing, you know, banks. And where – then the rent control also had something to do with that, when rent control came to an end in the, when was that? In the end of the nineties. So, we have a – it's good and it's bad. It's good because we know that nothing lasts forever. The economy affects these things too. People can't afford rents, or it costs more to maintain a building or to make changes on a building. Landlords have to protect their property so they want to go with the people who can afford the rents that they – so I don't know the full answer, of course you're not

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asking me that, but just thinking out loud – of how does one prevent these things from coming to an end? Because the main thing is the people who bring the essence and the vibrance to a place need to live somewhere. They need to live somewhere. So, it says that developers and landlords need to come together, think about these things, whether that is important because in the long run it is important, it does impact the quality of life in a city. When you have too many of one kind of resident the place is boring (laughs), it doesn't encourage a lot of visitors because the place is boring it's like okay it's like another one we left home (laughs). So, they need to factor that element in. The vibrancy, the diversity, the cultural richness, which attracts people to a place. Even what we're dealing with now is the opioid epidemic. Are we going to think about helping those people who get addicted so that their lives have meaning and dignity and respect and so on, so that they're not laying outside out and just wasting away and not knowing how to overcome that predicament that they find themselves in? We don't know all of the stories of how they got there, so we can't pre-judge anybody and say all addicts are the same. We don't know that, we don't know how people become addicted. I saw recently somebody did an online show and had two people who – three people as guests who were addicted, and one of the people who had formerly been addicted says it is so easy because a lot of the opioids are dispensed by medical people, so that needs to be looked at.

LR: Right, if it starts at a prescription and then...

LLS: Yes, that needs to be looked at, they need to crack down on medical professionals on not just readily dispensing a pain – or whatever it is, I don't know. Everybody's system is not the same so that one you may readily prescribe it for, and they're fine, and then another one has low threshold for pain so they take – they want the pain to go away, not realizing that they are on a slippery slope to becoming addicted. So, more monitoring, more whatever, I know it's going to take money but we're just discussing it. So, people with businesses could be approached to assist with that too. Create jobs for some of them and it all comes under the label of the love, showing love to people when they're down. And that could be anybody. It's not, no one group has a monopoly on, in need of love and caring. Or losing your job, I mean, losing your job, anybody that could happen to – and that was one of the reasons why I got involved with the financial literacy, because it's coming to the attention that a good portion of previous generations never received any knowledge of how to handle money. And so, when the credit card thing came in everybody thought this is free money. They don't realize that the minute you use a credit card, that's a loan. But it was presented so nicely, that if you didn't have the knowledge of how to manage money, you got caught up – students got caught up in huge credit card debt. So, I thought, well if I could use my platform to help get that knowledge out and show people that once you have the knowledge and you apply it, you can get out of debt, and you can – I say, "Don't lose the money."

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LR: So, I think we're slowly wrapping up, but if there's anything else you'd like to add that we haven't addressed about your experience in Cambridge –

LLS: My experience in Cambridge, well I do want to. We hit on it yes, to thank CCTV for all that it has done to help the community become much more productive I would say, because I hear from people who look and they say, "Oh, CCTV has so many very interesting shows and I like what you are doing." They tell me they like what I'm doing and I say well, this is a great service that a community television station can provide information from *Democracy Now!* to cooking, and pets and food, and it's a lot. I myself have not seen that many of them. And in the beginning, like I've said I've been here twelve years, I've been at CCTV twelve years, but in the early stages it was like trial and error, you had some shows that were like, why is that on (laugh)? But you grow, and I've seen the growth, and now we have the youth component that helps youth learn about digital technology and maybe it's a precursor to some job options, career options. You know I mean we still have a ways to go but I mean I would say that in the twelve years that I've been – well, twelve years I've been doing a show but I've been a member before that, so who knows maybe I'm about to hit my twenty year mark, as I remember. I think I got here in '93 or '94 so that's quite, quite some time. And then I, in 2005– 2006 I did my show, so that's twelve years, started my show, twelve years. I gave up two, three years ago I gave up the evening show, the half hour TV show, because they wanted slots to market to new producers, and I thought that was about ten years so I said, "That's good, ten years it good" (laughs).

LR: Yeah, it's a good run.

LLS: A good run, so I said okay I'll just do one, and I do the radio show in the afternoon, that's one hour. And I enjoy it. It's something I look forward to and I feel like I'm giving back to the community because of the feedback that I get. People say that they learn things, and – it's kind of like an odd time to really engage as many people but I'll figure that one out too, when is, what is a better option, to get it at drive time, or in the evening when people sit down to look. Let me see, anything else? I feel I have grown, not just at CCTV, but overall, from being in Cambridge. I think if I had been somewhere else, I probably would have been, I feel much less – would've been much less accomplished in what I like to do. How I know that? I just had my annual health checkup. Everything is fine. My blood work, my pressure, blood pressure, everything, like a well-tuned engine (laughs) and to me it says that I am at a level of contentment.

LR: Yeah, you're not stressed, like no huge pressures or, yeah.

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LLS: No, no, and that test was done the day after I did the event at Andala Café. And I was so sure that everything would be like – no it was fine. My blood pressure was unusually low, and I thought how did that happen? Because I'm doing what I love to do. Great medicine, right?

LR: Yeah, absolutely!

LLS: And I'm doing it in a place where I feel content, I feel accepted. I have a friend who visits me from time to time, she lives in Boston, so sometimes we go to, we test, check out the new restaurants along the strip here, so of course it always, "Hi!" "Hi!" "Hi!" "Hi!" "Oh hi it's good to see you!" She said, "You need to run for mayor." (Laughter) I said, "Oh no, I wouldn't enjoy that." So yeah, so if I have to leave my home to come here I have to come take the back route because it's going to slow me down, if always somebody wants to say hi and talk to me. And it's a good feeling, that people appreciate. The feedback, they have connection, they have ready access. Sometimes I forget that I do the show because I say, "Who are these people, I don't know them," but it's because they look at the shows and they feel so connected to me that when they see me in person they must say hi or hello or whatever, and most times I'm not thinking along that line, I'm saying, "Who are these people? I don't know them." (Laughs) But if you're listening, if anybody's listening to this it's not that I disdain them, it's just sometimes I am off on my own train of thought and I forget that I am a face that they see occasionally on TV.

LR: Well Lynette, thank you so much for participating in this project and doing this interview.

LLS: Thank you. It was great to do that reverie back in time and appreciate what I've lived. Most of the time I'm not thinking that this has any significance to anybody. My daughter would be especially privileged, and pleased, to know that I had the opportunity to do this. She has two sons, eleven and eight, Mika and Ezra, my daughter is Kafia and her husband is Lloyd and they are very supportive of me, and what I do. And they came recently, they paid me a surprise visit, my daughter and her two sons, and I had them on my show. And it was wonderful, we talked about genealogy, and the value of genealogy, and they were very engaging. It was on the show that I discovered that one does journalism as well, he helps with a school newsletter. And the other one, whom I was referring to as the journalist, the younger one, had interviewed me via FaceTime for a project he had in school, about me being Trinidadian and some of the questions you asked me reminded me of some of the, you know – yes, what it was like growing up in Trinidad, and favorite dishes –

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LR: Yeah.

LLS: Yeah.

LR: Alrighty! I'm going to stop the recording.

END OF INTERVIEW

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