

Interview with **Ann-Marie Adker**

Date: May 15, 1998

Interviewer: Madison Davis Lacy, Jr.

Camera Rolls: 1116-1117

Sound Rolls: 152-153

Team: A

Interview gathered as part of *Eyes on the Prize II: America at the Racial Crossroads, 1965-mid 1980s*. Produced by Blackside, Inc. Housed at the Washington University Film and Media Archive, Henry Hampton Collection.

**Preferred Citation**

Interview with Ann-Marie Adker, conducted by Blackside, Inc. on May 15, 1998 for *Eyes on the Prize II: America at the Racial Crossroads, 1965-mid 1980s*. Washington University Libraries, Film and Media Archive, Henry Hampton Collection.

**Note:** These transcripts contain material that did not appear in the final program. Only text appearing in *bold italics* was used in the final version of *Eyes on the Prize II*.

[camera roll #1116]

[sound roll #152]

00:00:16:00

Camera crew member #1:

Mark it, please.

[slate]

Interviewer:

Hey, Ms. Adker. Take me back in time to when Overtown was really yours and really beautiful. And describe it for me and make me like it—

Camera crew member #1:

Crystal, can you turn on the back light, please?

Interviewer:

Just a second. They just want light. There we go. All right.

Ann-Marie Adker:

Overtown.

00:00:38:00

Interviewer:

Overtown.

00:00:39:00

Ann-Marie Adker:

When I think of Overtown as a community that I knew coming up, [pause] I can see that the predicament that Overtown is in today had to be a planned thing. Overtown, as I knew it, and of course, you can see that I'm no girl. It has been many years ago. [sighs] Overtown was a place that no other, no other place could compare to—

00:01:29:00

Unidentified male:

Hello!

Interviewer:

Stop down.

Camera crew member #1:

OK.

Interviewer:

[laughs]

Camera crew member #2:

[laughs]

Ann-Marie Adker:

[laughs]

Ann-Marie Adker:

She forgot.

Camera crew member #1:

OK.

[cut]

00:01:36:00

Camera crew member #1:

Tilt it down. There's still a glare. Mark it, please.

[slate]

00:01:46:00

Interviewer:

Ms. Adker, tell me about Overtown and how beautiful it was way back then.

00:01:51:00

Ann-Marie Adker:

Hmm. Overtown. Overtown was one of the greatest family-type community that I never been able to compare to any other place I've ever been in. It was clean, people seemed to have pride in themselves and the community.

00:02:34:00

Camera crew member #1:

Cut it.

Camera crew member #3:

I don't know what that sound was, but let's go back over, over that.

Camera crew member #1:

I just stopped.

[cut]

00:02:40:00

Camera crew member #2:

Third's a charm.

Camera crew member #1:

Tilt it down. Mark it, please.

[slate]

00:02:49:00

Interviewer:

Overtown, that wonderful family town.

00:02:52:00

Ann-Marie Adker:

Yes, Overtown was a wonderful family-type community. [laughs] Where you met your mother and father everywhere. It was beautiful. And I feel fortunate to have grown up in Overtown. Overtown has given me a sense of pride that has actually led me right, I believe. And so I've been able to teach my children the same principles that I was taught coming up.

00:03:44:00

Interviewer:

Now, you were telling me earlier that when kids were growing up in Overtown, everybody took care of them. Tell me how that was.

00:03:53:00

Ann-Marie Adker:

If you grew up in Overtown, then everybody knew. They might not have been able to call you by name, but they knew that you were Mrs. Young's child, like I was, or they were able to really associate you with your family. So it was impossible for you to get away with too many things here in Overtown. Everybody knew it, including your mother, you know, or father. We did not have the community centers at that time. We had the schools, and the schools served the community in most capacities like the churches. So it brought on a relationship between the community and the schools. So everybody knew what their children were doing within the schoolroom, and it gave the teachers better control over the children. I wish the same thing was happening today.

00:05:21:00

Interviewer:

Did you—do you remember ever having to take a switch to somebody else's child that you loved?

00:05:26:00

Ann-Marie Adker:

No, but I've threatened. I have actually threatened to do so, and the kid would beg for mercy, Don't tell my mother. You know, one of those things. Overtown. Oh, it's, it does something to you when you think of Overtown, of Overtown [plane flies over] then and now. It makes you think back that something was planned a long time ago to devastate this community.

00:06:12:00

Interviewer:

OK. I want you to do that one more time. We're gonna wait until this plane goes completely over. All right. Start with, It does something to you now, to think about then and now. Do you remember the answer you just gave?

Ann-Marie Adker:

Mm-hmm.

Interviewer:

Go ahead, start.

00:06:26:00

Ann-Marie Adker:

It actually does something to you when you think about an Overtown then and now. You can see there was a, an intentional plan to devastate this community. This was once a thriving, viable, stable community. Just think. There were—this was a community of about 45,000 people. Today, we have little better than 12,000. So with all the bonds for progress. I-95, 836, urban renewal, redevelopment, all these were roads of progress that displaced a lot of people out of this community.

00:07:50:00

Interviewer:

Do you remember when people moved and how—you know, what was that like? How did that happen?

00:07:59:00

Ann-Marie Adker:

There were a lot of heartbreak in this community when neighborhoods were broken up. It was like members of the family leaving, and some going to Brownsville, places that they actually didn't know too many people, though most of the people in Brownsville and Liberty City came from Overtown. But it was like breaking up huge families.

00:08:46:00

Interviewer:

Do you remember any particular instance when a friend of yours moved away and how you felt?

00:08:51:00

Ann-Marie Adker:

Oh, yes. Many of them. Well, we all had to leave. Only several of us decided we were going to remain, come hell or high water. We were going to remain and do something about what was happening. I'm still here.

00:09:19:00

Interviewer:

Why'd you stay?

00:09:22:00

Ann-Marie Adker:

I felt that I owed something back to this community. This community has done a lot for me and my family. And I just owe something back, so I had to make that commitment.

00:09:44:00

Interviewer:

OK, let's stop down there.

Camera crew member #2:

OK.

[cut]

00:09:49:00

Camera crew member #1:

Mark it, please.

[slate]

00:09:51:00

Interviewer:

Give me a story of when someone left.

Camera crew member #2:

Just a second.

00:09:55:00

Ann-Marie Adker:

I had a very close friend of mine. We didn't go anywhere without each other, especially if it was nightclubbing. And when they moved, they moved ahead of me. And she was taking down all the chandeliers, because the places were going to be demolished anyway. She was taking down the chandeliers, and they had removed—they had a bathtub that must have been the first bathtub made, because it had foots on it. [laughs] And they thought they'd take that along with them, too, and I mean, that was the funniest thing that I'd ever seen, to take a bathtub along to a house that already had a tub. But they were gonna save it and use it for different parties to put ice in and whatnot. While this dragged on, they had moved and everything, about four or five years after that, they had had a party and someone saw the four-footed bathtub, and wanted to purchase it for a home they were building as an antique. And guess how much they made out of it? Seventeen hundred and fifty dollars.

[rollout on camera roll]

[wild sound]

Ann-Marie Adker:

[laughs] My, my four-foot bathtub went with demolition because I didn't think it was worth anything. [laughs]

00:11:37:00

Interviewer:

[laughs] We've got rollout.

Camera crew member #1:

OK.

Interviewer:

OK.

Camera crew member #3:

Well, let me slate—

[beep]

[cut]

[camera roll #1117]

[sound roll #153]

00:11:48:00

Camera Crew 1:

Mark it.

[slate]

00:11:50:00

Interviewer:

You told me a story about how prostitutes used to gather at one intersection right after I-95 was built and you guys, you and your—

Ann-Marie Adker:

Mm-hmm.

Interviewer:

—friends stopped it.

Ann-Marie Adker:

Mm-hmm.

Interviewer:

Tell me that story.

00:11:59:00

Ann-Marie Adker:

Mm-hmm. You know, we—the perception as done by the media is, does not bear very much truth. We realize here in Overtown that the police can't do it all. That we have to be the right arm of the police. At the finish of I-95, where the exit and entrance located right on 8th Street here in Overtown, we began to get a rash of complaints about people opening the doors of, of people's cars and snatching their pocketbooks. And then the prostitutes, they were hanging on the corner waving cars down. I had my crime prevention subcouncil, and we—different committees are located in all the areas of Overtown. And I decided I'd bring out the older ones that I call my hymn-singing, ham—hand-clapping crew, and we took over the block at the exit and entrance of I-95. And we were able to not only quell, we were able to stop the car intrusions and the prostitutes. Because we would just stand on the corner. You know?

00:13:55:00

Interviewer:

Well, you—that figures into another question I have about the perception of residents in Overtown. You said that once there was a, it's a ridiculous lie then and now that, that's perpetrated by the media about our pathology. Tell me about that. [plane flies over] OK, let's let the plane—

Male camera crew:

You want to cut or—

Interviewer:

Yeah, let's cut.

[cut]

[wild sound]

Camera crew member #2:

One more time.

Ann-Marie Adker:

Yeah, that's right. I forgot your job. I mustn't forget you, Crystal.

[picture resumes]

Interviewer:

[laughs]

Camera crew member #2:

Thank you.

Camera crew member #1:

Mark it, please.

[slate]

00:14:24:00

Interviewer:

You were gonna tell me about how the image of Overtown and its people are a lie.

00:14:29:00

Ann-Marie Adker:

There is a terrible perception or image brought on by the media about Overtown. That concept is ridiculous. And I don't know why the, the media did this, and it could come out of the different incidents that has happened in Overtown that they call riots, but I don't see any need to carry that perception on. The people in Overtown, and we have some that are new arrivals that still picked up from the habits of the older residents, that we look out for each other. And we do. We still do that. We still look out for each other. A lot of these people

that look out for you are called nosy. [laughs] But I like them. I like them. [car passes] They are a great asset to Overtown. It, like I said before, we don't have the break-ins. We don't have the muggings of the little old ladies. We, we don't have that. The greatest thing that has happened to us, and, and I mean the greatest terrible thing, is the narcotics.

00:16:11:00

Interviewer:

Now tell me, you said that the process of convincing people to move, creating this Overtown as a hole in the donut, that a lot of people gave up. Tell me about that a little bit.

00:16:24:00

Ann-Marie Adker:

You know, if you look at Overtown and the devastation that local government did to Overtown, then you could see that Overtown as—is needed to expand the City of Miami. When I actually look at Overtown and the perimeters of it, you would see the downtown that sits to the south, and all the government buildings that also sits to the south of Overtown. Then you have the Port of Miami, the Omni Center that sits to the east. On the west, you have the Civic Center that includes every hospital, just about, in Miami, and we have Jackson Memorial, which is the greatest hospital in the southeastern region. And to the north, you have the garment and the Miami Design Center. And where is Overtown? The hole in the donut. Everything is going on around, and nothing seems to be moving in. And that's why I'm determined. I'm, I'm gonna stay here until I see something move within.

00:18:12:00

Interviewer:

Let's cut right here.

[cut]

00:18:18:00

Camera crew member #1:

OK.

[slate]

00:18:19:00

Interviewer:

What's, what's this woman's story? Tell me.

Camera crew member #1:

[inaudible]

Camera crew member #2:

[inaudible] OK.

Interviewer:

OK. I'm sorry, Crystal.

00:18:25:00

Ann-Marie Adker:

Mm-hmm. This incident happened in 1964. This friend of mine, very close, and she had been working on, in this hotel on Collins Avenue for about eight, nine years. She was a card-carrying maid. Union, OK? And after the influx of the Cubans, of course, a lot of them were hired in hotel work. They [train passes] were not people that believed in unions; however, they got just about the same treatment in the hotels. And I can recall my friend telling me that she had a checkout which she expected. These people came into the hotel on a yearly base. Every year they came in, and they always [dog barks] took her suite because they liked her attitude, personality, and things like that. And they would always leave her tip not at the desk, but in the room, in an envelope. This morning, as she had bid them bye the day before, and she knew that they would be gone when she got there the next morning, the next morning she went up to her floor. And she said that just as she got to the end of the hall, she saw a shadow of a person come out of her suite. The, the rooms are mad—the rooms are divided up between two maids on a floor. I believe it's fourteen, it was fourteen rooms and two suites each. And so she saw this shadow go to the other side of the hall. She went and looked in her suite and she found the envelope with her name on the front of it in the trash can but no money. She confronted the maid across the hall, which was a Cuban that had come in, and she denied it, and of course, it was a friction. But she was the one who got fired.

00:21:30:00

Interviewer:

Stop here.

[cut]

00:21:33:00

Camera crew member #2:

That was a false slate.

Camera crew member #1:

Mark it, please.

[slate]

00:21:39:00

Interviewer:

Talk to me about integration and...

00:21:43:00

Ann-Marie Adker:

You know, it's a funny thing that during the civil rights movement and all the economic stability that we were putting together, the jobs seemed easier to get. Some people were holding on to two jobs to further them up the ladder and everything. And all of a sudden, the United States opened the floodgates, and those floodgates opened right here in Miami. And I'm talking about the Cuban influx. The people who came here supposedly and had to leave everything, came with nothing.

[rollout on camera roll]

[wild sound]

Ann-Marie Adker:

And were given everything. Now this was—

00:22:56:00

Interviewer:

We've got rollout. I'm sorry—

Camera crew member #1:

OK.

Interviewer:

—we've got rollout.

[dog bark]

[cut]

[end of interview]

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