

Interview with **Nancy Jefferson**

Date: April 13, 1989

Interviewer: Madison Davis Lacy, Jr.

Camera Rolls: 1082-1085

Sound Rolls: 137-138

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.

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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 #1082]

[sound roll #137]

00:00:12:00

Camera Crew Member #1:

Marker.

Camera Crew Member #2:

Mark one.

[slate]

00:00:14:00

Interviewer:

Let's start with the, the story of four AM in the morning. Ed Daley has died, and all of you are gathered down at city hall. Tell me what that was about and what happened.

00:00:25:00

Nancy Jefferson:

Well, we understood that the mayor had died and that Frost, Wilson Frost, was the president pro, pro tem of the city council. And, and to us that meant that he was the next man in line to take the seat until there was another election. And we were just all down there to make sure that happened and to give him the encouragement. 'Cause that, that that should happen. And I remember some of us, you know, like quote leaders met with him the night before to assure him that's your seat, and you take it, you know. Which he, you know, had every confidence that he would do that. And that, that morning, I'll never forget that we all decided we'd better be there at four o'clock 'cause we knew the other side, quote Richard J. Daley's people, were going to fill up city council, and we couldn't get in. So, everybody was there at four o'clock in the morning. But we lost. Wilson Frost just did not—whatever, whatever considerations they put upon him, he could not take that seat. And it was a great disappointment with us is that all he had to do was sit down in the seat we said and let the courts prove that you shouldn't sit in the seat. And he could not do that that day. And I'll never forget it.

00:01:55:00

Interviewer:

Tell me now a little bit further in time about the snow of '78 and the story you told me about peoples' disappointment with Bilandic.

00:02:07:00

Nancy Jefferson:

Well, I think, see, I think really Frost, as little as we know, Frost not taking the seat, you know, just led to what we saw that, that the machine politics were. And then Bilandic come on as, as the, as the polit—as the person that that group selected to put in there. And, and he, he could not relate to, they had already won but not taken, by Frost not taking the seat, Bilandic came in. And then the great snow came, and it was just like God had ordained it, you know. So that we could prove his, that he was not the person that respected the, the population. The big snow came, and Bilandic was still disrespecting because that was the trend that was going. That we don't have to, you know, deal with the, with the general population of Chicago, which is primarily a Black population. He, what he did was when the snow came, and then transportation paralyzed the city, you know, everything was paralyzed in the city. He began to do snow removals were not done in the Black community and to pass up which was an insult, the greatest insult that, of all time was that ***people were standing on L platforms. And I'll never forget that evening at four o'clock in the evening, he ordered those L's not to stop in Black communities***, to go right through Black communities, taking those riders that passed through the Black community to Oak Park, to the first stop would be Oak Park. And then farther west. ***It was the same on the South side that every side of town was to pass up the Black community. And the Black community people became irate 'cause it was a personal affront, a personal insult. And they went to war.*** That's, that's how Bilandic was removed. Then Jane Byrne came. At, well after the snow, after the, that, that episode of paralyzing the city and how he paralyzed the people with any kind of snow removal, then when the snow began to settle down and was melted, you know, the snow left

such debris, such chaos in the community. Again, he decided to clean up other communities and not clean up the Black community. Jane Byrne took the opportunity, and that was of, of, when she began to run is to stand at L stops and remind people of what he did, why he should not be there, and that—what she would do if we, if people would elect her. And we did. We went to war. We said, She's got the answers. She's the person to move Bilandic out of office. So, we always say he got removed with the great snow.

00:05:21:00

Interviewer:

Let's stop now.

[cut]

00:05:23:00

Camera Crew Member #2:

Mark two.

[slate]

00:05:26:00

Interviewer:

You said that Jane Byrne's school board appointments were a flash point that sent the Black community a signal. Tell me that story.

00:05:33:00

Nancy Jefferson:

Yes, you know, after Jane Byrne was elected and all that and she, you know, quickly said that she was gonna get rid of the evil cabal, and that's what she called that group inside of city council. And she, and she did very well in, in the beginning 'cause she did have, you know, she got in right after the snow and all that stuff. And she, and she did a massive cleanup in all communities. You know, everybody gain-gained really respect and confidence in her. But I guess the evil as we determined, the evil cabal got to Jane Byrne and said, you know, You better stop your action. And so her first signal that we got was that we had put in a lot of effort, people had in Chicago, both Black and White, in, in, in quite—in a reform of the school. And that was tra—permissive transfers, and, and opening up classrooms in, in, in White communities so that Blacks could go in. And, and that was done through the school board. She quickly changed that board, and it, and put, and appointed to the schoolboard some groups, women, that had been in objection to transfer, permissive transfers. And that

sent a signal to us that what Jane Byrne was doing. That was our first signal. Then it was other kinds of things that, that the evil cabal as she called it began to put the muscle on her and that she changed. She absolutely changed a whole 180 degree.

00:07:24:00

Interviewer:

Now, you told me a story about how you went to the state legislature around public assistance cutbacks. And there's a story associated with that.

00:07:30:00

Nancy Jefferson:

Yes. You know, the public, the public aid department of course is run by the state, you know, mostly. And the public—all, all things began to move together, you know, with the, with the evil cabal, with Jane Byrne, with the Jane—the public aid, the public aid people got a severe cutback in public assistance. ***We took a group to public aid to Springfield to the legislators about the public aid cutback. And so we were told by the legislator, Your people don't vote. You know? And which was the truth. They, these public aid people were not voting. And we just came back and took that as, as a lead to organization public aid recipients to vote.*** And we went to the board of election to set up, put a voter's registration in public aid offices. And that's where we got the balance of power, of, of people. 'Cause they were the voters. And that changed things with us. It changed things a lot.

00:08:39:00

Interviewer:

Was that the formation of POWER that...?

00:08:41:00

Nancy Jefferson:

That was the formation of POWER 'cause we wanted to empower the public aid people to do exactly what the legislatures said: vote.

00:08:50:00

Interviewer:

Tell me a story about how people become, became aware of the power within them.

Nancy Jefferson:

They, they became aware because they, they saw—

00:09:00:00

Interviewer:

Oh, oh, just a sec. We're, we're gonna have to stop here.

[cut]

[camera roll #1082]

Camera Crew Member #1:

And we're marking.

00:09:04:00

Camera Crew Member #2:

Mark three.

[slate]

00:09:06:00

Interviewer:

Describe to me how POWER got formed.

00:09:07:00

Nancy Jefferson:

Power really got formed by empowering welfare recipients on their, the cutbacks. And it, it was really personal to them. You know, and I always say that, that personal agendas become collective agendas. OK? And that's how POWER was formed. Because it was a collection of welfare recipients that had gotten cutback, and they were told, and we were told that when we went to the legislators about that cutback, they say you don't vote. So, POWER said, We will vote. And we will vote that legislation out that does not respect us and, and vote ourselves in as to what's happening to our welfare check. So, POWER was formed on those basis, on those premises.

00:09:55:00

Interviewer:

So, now you've been a community organizer for a long time. What was unique about the formation of POWER?

00:09:58:00

Nancy Jefferson:

What was very unique about it was that it was a, again, it was a, a personal, peoples' personal agenda, enough of it becomes a collective thought. And, and that's what we got to do. You got to, you must answer to person, person. And it's if enough people are violated by whatever there is, it becomes a collective thought. And that's your organizing tool.

00:10:30:00

Interviewer:

Stop down. Very good.

[cut]

Camera Crew Member #1:

Again, there's a marker.

00:10:35:00

Camera Crew Member #2:

Mark four.

[slate]

00:10:37:00

Interviewer:

[coughs] At what point did you feel—how did you turn against Jane Byrne?

00:10:43:00

Nancy Jefferson:

Yeah, I, I, really believe it was the school issue that, that, and it was a very difficult time for me as a person because I was one of the person that worked very hard to make sure she got

that seat. And it was a very difficult time because she began to move in so many directions at such a rapid speed. Now, the school issue was, was the most devastating and the most I guess penetrating because the school, we all know education, you know, as we do now was the base of our community. And, and, and as, and as you may know that it became a national piece that I took over the schoolboard. I absolutely sat in the chair one day and be...and, when they began to take a vote on this permissive transfer. And we was trying to get them to base what they were basing their vote, vote on. They did not have the paperwork. And, and now I had—was a, I was one of her appointees to the Chicago, to the Chicago police department. And that day, I had three hundred people in the board of education that we were championing our cause. And I moved that they, around—I had given a signal to my group if they take the vote, and they have not based their vote on, on the, on what we know was right they could not justify that vote they were taking that day. And there's a big picture on my wall where I and Francis Davis from Operation PUSH, we, I sat down in Kay Rhoda's [sic] seat. Kay Rhoda was president at that time, who was also the racist that Jane Byrne had appointed. That began the turning point with, with Jane Byrne. And then as she began to rapidly, and of course she called me in after that as to say to me did I realize that I was her, in her cabinet. 'Cause I was appointed to the police board and that I was in her cabinet, did I realize what I had done. 'Cause she, what she did when she called me in, she called in Jesse Jackson and me. And she, you know, was just very irate that I could not do that as an appointee to the city administration. She had all of her Black members of the city administration. And I'll never forget how she sat me in a circle as to, you know, whip me in line. And I knew right then that I—we, we had to move and move as rapid as she was doing. Then after that became the ChicagoFest. You know, that was one of the other real portions...though before that, it was the CHA.

00:13:39:00

Interviewer:

Well, let me start right there. Tell me about the CHA.

00:13:43:00

Nancy Jefferson:

It was the CHA business, Jane Byrne, people began to really get upheaval about what was going on at CHA, what was going on with the gangs at CHA, and how the CHA and, and HUD was, was handling the folks, the folks in CHA, all the CHA problems. She moved in CHA with a battery of, of policemen. You know, with, it was some kind of a fluff, nonsubstance that was her answer to CHA problems, yeah. And, and, and the whole community went wild over how she approached the CHA problems, and there were many. And that was the gangs in CHA, and what you, what was she doing about that. The rental structure in CHA, what that was, began to look like. And especially the Cabrini-Green area because everybody began to see that they were, that it, everybody felt that that property was, was being handled that way because as we said the Gold Coast got tired of looking at the Soul Coast. [laughs] And so the Soul Coast began to rise up, and the Gold Coast was right

next to them. And Jane Byrne began to talk about taking over Cabrini-Green. And with developers and all of that. And people began to move, to see that this woman was, was out of sync with that.

00:15:26:00

Interviewer:

Now, she actually pulled a stunt once where she moved into Cabrini.

Nancy Jefferson:

She moved into Cabrini-Green.

Interviewer:

OK, tell me that story.

00:15:32:00

Nancy Jefferson:

She, when she moved into Cabrini-Green, as, as she began to see that people were uprising, and then she said that, you know, to get the safety in Cabrini Green she was gonna move in there. And she moved in with a, in, in one of the apartments, it was beautifully done, you know, just before she moved in. And, but it was, she never stayed there one night though. Everybody knew that, you know. It was, it was a stunt. It was well protected. She was well protected going and coming, you know. So, she was proving, trying to prove that she had a handle on Cabrini-Green, but the people knew different. It was just a stunt.

00:16:10:00

Interviewer:

Let's stop down.

[cut]

Camera Crew Member #1:

And marking.

00:16:13:00

Camera Crew Member #2:

Mark five.

[slate]

00:16:15:00

Interviewer:

How do you change the mindset, how did you change the mindset of people here who believed that folks could make a difference in, in the, in the youth?

00:16:22:00

Nancy Jefferson:

Well, I think POWER. When we organized the group called POWER, the, the POWER group, that welfare group, which was nonvoting population. I think they never realized. They, I think the people thought that they had to accept whatever legislation that came to them, whatever, when it said cut, cut your welfare, they had to accept that. There wasn't nothing they could do about it. And when that legislator said, They don't vote. And then we started to organize the collective mind of individuals. And, and say that your one vote can make a difference. You know, if everybody takes the position that my vote count, and collectively they do, even one vote can make a difference. And people got it. They got it because it was personal. And they, and they, they decided to try it. And it worked. And that's what, I think that gave a base of, of, of understanding the voting power in the city that has never been before because it, we were used to the old machine. We were used to they're gonna do what they wanna do anyways, so what, why should I go vote. And it, and it worked for, for several years because the old machine always had say out of eighty thousand folks, they controlled three thousand votes. That, that was all that ever elected an alderman or anything. Three thousand people came out, and that's what they got. Three thousand two-hundred, all that. So, seventy, eighty thousand votes never bothered to even go vote. And that was exactly what the machine wanted because they were elected by the three thousand people. They didn't want these uncontrolled people out here to ever think that their vote counted. And we made that happen through POWER.

00:18:24:00

Interviewer:

ChicagoFest. Big thing. Tell me the story of ChicagoFest. How did that go?

00:18:29:00

Nancy Jefferson:

Well, as you know, the ChicagoFest was about contracts, and, and, and, and who got the contracts, and, and where it was, and money. It was a big money deal. A very big money deal. Outside, Jane Byrne brought in some, some person from outside, you know, who got millions of dollars for the ChicagoFest. And people were going, and one day just, just an ordinary man—and we were not satisfied ‘cause nobody, no, no, no person that we knew: Black, or Hispanic, or White, the poor communities ever got a, a popcorn concession in there or contracts. And we began to understand what they were, we were all belly hooing and giving it, its credence plus its, its money. And yet we were not there. And so, and we were disturbed about that. We couldn’t get into Jane Byrne, and, and, you know, everybody was cut out with everything. And some guy just called up one day and said, You know, just, just some person called Jesse Jackson one day on the radio and says, Why don’t we boycott the, he was a nameless, faceless person that said, Why don’t we boycott the, the ChicagoFest? Let’s just boycott it. So, Jesse took it up. He really took it up and said, You know, well, let’s, I’ll meet with somebody. He met with Dorothy Tillman, me, and some other folks. And, and said, This guy called up and said let’s boycott. Let’s try it. And we tried it, and it was, it worked. And it sent Jane Byrne out of her seat.

00:20:08:00

Interviewer:

At what point thereafter did you realize that it was a possibly to elect a Black mayor? Tell me the story.

00:20:14:00

Nancy Jefferson:

After that and when we got that level of understanding that, that, that what we could do, we began to say, What about a Black mayor? You know, let’s get a mayor in this town, a progressive mayor. And we talked for days and days in basements of Lu Palmer and other kinds of folks, and, and, and looking at who, and what, and all that. ***And I think we were dealing with not so much as who as to what we wanted. What kind of person we wanted. We was first ironing all of that. And, and then I, I, I think it was Lu or somebody that, that talked about, Let’s, let’s look at Harold Washington.*** You know, let’s look at Harold Washington. And then folks began to say, Yeah, let’s look at Harold Washington. You know? ‘Cause he had run, you know, he had attempted to run before. You know, like in '77 or something like that, and it was a very little, lowkey thing. And he lost and all that as mayor. He put out that sign. And so that brought to peoples’ mind, Let’s look at Harold Washington. We began to look at Harold Washington do what we wanted to—

[rollout on camera roll]

[wild sound]

Nancy Jefferson:

—do. It was first what the people wanted. And then they—

00:21:32:00

Camera Crew Member #1:

Rollout.

Interviewer:

We got rollout.

Nancy Jefferson:

OK.

Interviewer:

We can go back and get, pick up from there...

[beep]

[cut]

[camera roll #1084]

[sound roll #138]

Camera Crew Member #1:

Mark.

00:21:39:00

Camera Crew Member #2:

Mark six.

[slate]

00:21:42:00

Interviewer:

OK. Tell me what you were telling us before about the difficulties and how you go about changing peoples' heads.

00:21:53:00

Nancy Jefferson:

Well, you know, it was very difficult, as I say, that, you know, especially with the welfare people that, that we finally organized the POWER group with is the, was the obstacles that, that was before them. They had to make some hard decisions based on how they had lived. They have lived with a precinct captain intimidating them, watching their every move. And they, that was, that was deep consideration. It was also who was placed in the welfare offices. See, the welfare offices were manned by all those politicians that placed those folks there. You know, the case worker, all of those people were politically appointed. Those people had to make a hard decision based on can I live even though with this cut check, I know my check is cut, you know, but also I may be cut off period if I follow this group that's telling me about voters will change what's happening to me. Those was hard decisions based on their former intimidation, had lived like this for years with, with control. And now these people are saying to me, We can change this by me voting. That was hard to do. It was hard to convince these people that, that it could be done and that we would stand with them. Now, there were some people who were—they, they, you know, we, I remember at least six or seven cases right at 2417 Rockwell, the Rockwell Gardens where people, and this was Quigley's regime here. Big Ed Quigley ruled the West side. And where the, those people were absolutely, we put them back in. They were put out, and we, we formed a, a group to put them back in. And we set them right back in and stood guard with them that nothing would happen to them. Because, see, what happened to them that we had to prove to them that the larger community now was a part of, of their personal problem. And that's, that's how it, how it worked out.

00:24:19:00

Interviewer:

Let's talk about Harold—

Camera Crew Member #1:

[coughs]

Interviewer:

—a bit more. You were at the point where you were telling me about Harold and your consideration of him as a potential candidate. Condense for me that, that, that moment at which you realized that it was possible to elect a Black mayor and that Harold was the man.

00:24:40:00

Nancy Jefferson:

Well, what we did was we were considering what we needed. You know, after all the furor with Jane Byrne and the disappointment with her, and, and her leadership, and, and the, the ChicagoFest, the CHA business, the school business that she had done, and we saw it was just back exactly where it was or even worse, and we, we began to, to analyze what is it that this city needs. You know, not only for Black people but for good government. What are we talking about? What, who do we need? You know, what do we need? And then we would decide who. So, we, we began to look at Harold Washington because he had, you know, someone had raised the issue that Harold tried it in '77, and he might be a good candidate. And we began to say, Let's form a committee that go talk to him. And we did that right out of Lu Palmer's house, basement. And we formed this committee that, to go talk to Harold. Harold laid down some tough assignments to us. You know, he said, Well, you know, I, first of all, y'all gotta give me 50,000 votes to tell me that you're serious about, you know, me. I'm, I'm, I'm in congress. I'm doing fine. I don't need to do this. So, he, he laid down some, some, some, you know, rules. And we called them I guess plumb lines. And he said, Get me 50,000 votes and a hundred, and, and we said, OK. We'll go, go out and do that. So, we went out and did that. You know, this POWER group was already formed. You know, we calculated how many votes that is, you know, with other folks. So, we went out, and, and got the 50,000. Came back to Harold, Harold said, Now, I need, you know, you gotta get 100,000 dollars, you know, to show me you're serious. And he laid out, then we, we were doing that. And then he said, We, we gotta have 100,000 votes. You know? He really gave us a lot of challenge that we met. We absolutely met them all because we thought, Well, this is the guy. You know, this is the guy. And, and, and that's how he captured the spirit of the people. Because we had to work with the CHA. The ordinary people that were the nonvoters, and get them registered, and get them, you know, registered to vote, and, and all of that. And we were working with such a broad spectrum of people based on what was laid down that would answer to their personal interests, see. It wasn't the man first. It was the, the condition first. And that's how people got on. And this man was to carry out the condition of the people.

00:27:37:00

Interviewer:

How do you remember Harold fondly?

Camera Crew Member #1:

Can we cut? My battery is going [inaudible].

Interviewer:

Yes.

Camera Crew Member #2:

[coughs]

Interviewer:

Good. Yeah.

[beep]

[cut]

Camera Crew Member #2:

Speed.

00:27:47:00

Camera Crew Member #1:

Hit it.

[slate]

00:27:49:00

Interviewer:

OK, give me something of a story about Harold that you'll always carry with you as a memory of him, the individual, the man, the intellect. Tell me something.

00:28:01:00

Nancy Jefferson:

Harold was, it was just so many things that, that, that you carry with you with, with Harold. He had, and, and I think I heard somebody say this. Harold had, Harold and, and this is, Harold had the ability to make common people like me feel very royal and, and he had the ability to, to make the royal come down to talk with the common people. I, I'll never forget that, you know, about three summers ago, we were involved with this West side stadium building stuff, and Harold appointed me to help get that together, to get the felt needs of the people and see if there should be such a, a animal out here. Now, for thirty years, I had been trying to talk to William Wirtz who owns that stadium. You know, big multi-millionaire that owns all of this stuff out here. And we could never get to him. I never would. And I remember one day that I got a phone call from Wirtz who was on his yacht in Florida that—with the brigadier general of the air force. And he called me and said, I wanna come, I wanna get an appointment with you. And, you know, I was flabbergasted, and I said, you know,

Why? He said, Harold Washington. I tried to meet with Harold Washington about the West side problem out there. Harold Washington told me I had to meet with you. And that was the greatest day of my life because I—we own, the problem is he owns all this land out here. We have been trying to do something with him, with the land. And Harold Washington ran him into us, and that's what I mean, he made that man common. He says, I, you know, I'm the chief executive officer, but that's their side of town. You have to meet with them. And we had been trying for years. So, we all, you know, relished that. And he was that kind of a man. Just many incidents like that that Harold Washington put people together, linked them together and made them understand what they had to do and made us understand who we were.

00:30:39:00

Interviewer:

It's election night of the primary, the primary election night, and the results have come in. And you realize that, that Harold has won. How did you feel?

00:30:48:00

Nancy Jefferson:

Oh, it was the greatest moment of our life because I know that...I know that, how hard we had worked to sit down, the conditions by who we, of who we wanted, you know, what we wanted. And then decided on who we wanted to carry out our conditions. And, and, and, and we, and he understood it. He only, he understood so thoroughly that he was an instrument to carry out what the people had set forth. And everybody got it. Everybody got it. The, the welfare people, because the POWER group, and their vote counted, you know. And, and, and they understood that when he won that primary, my vote really did count. You know? And we, and it was just like *we danced in the street. We danced in the street. We absolutely, it was the greatest feeling we ever had in life. It just, everybody felt empowered.* You know, whatever it was. Whether it was the welfare, or whether it was me, with the, as the leadership of the West side. It was everybody was empowered at last to do what [laughs] we wanted to do. Personally and, and our personal agendas came together as a collective force.

00:32:00:00

Interviewer:

You must have felt a little bit different. But it's another night now. Jesse Jackson is at, is at the '84 convention. He speaks. Tell me how you felt then.

00:32:11:00

Nancy Jefferson:

Great. Yeah, that, that finally that same transcending of, of that vote, my personal vote counted, and here we got this man up here now speaking as, as being in the presidency where we got him to and that we did this. You know, I think it was, it was equally a, a jubilative affair 'cause I was a delegate then. It was, it was great. He was great.

00:32:38:00

Interviewer:

OK, stop down.

[cut]

[wild sound]

Interviewer:

—eventually [laughs]

Nancy Jefferson:

[laughs] You got it, you got it right? That's great.

Camera Crew Member #2:

Yeah.

Camera Crew Member #1:

OK, any time.

Nancy Jefferson:

The little guy that they didn't want to answer.

Interviewer:

Right. Right. [laughs]

Nancy Jefferson:

Didn't want to in-introduce.

Camera Crew Member #1:

[laughs]

Camera Crew Member #2:

[laughs] I know.

Nancy Jefferson:

You know how to do it. I love it. I love it.

Interviewer:

[laughs]

Nancy Jefferson:

[laughs]

[cut]

[camera roll #1085]

Camera Crew Member #1:

Mark.

00:32:57:00

Camera Crew Member #2:

Mark eight.

[slate]

00:33:00:00

Interviewer:

Since this series transcends so much of the movement, and you've been a captain, a soldier, and a stalwart of the movement, what's it all meant? What's it been about? Why do you keep on keeping on?

00:33:12:00

Nancy Jefferson:

Well, I think it, that you must 'cause you do see some, some signs. You see a lot. You know, that there's been a lot from the King days until now. Had there not been a King, there would not have been a, a Jesse. There would not have been a, a Harold. There just wouldn't have been. You know, that was, it started with that. And, and you can change if, if you stay in and hang in there long enough as, as the POWER group. You know, that meant a lot to me is so that I've seen those people go from, from the welfare rolls to understanding what their voting power was all about and what their life was all about. And you must continue to do that. It's sorta like, you know, I, I came from, from the country, from backwoods country, and we used to...I always think about this. We used to have a big bell in the yard in Ms., Ms. Burden's yard. You know, where I had to wash the dishes. And whenever anything happened, and you had to pull that bell with the rope to get it to ting, especially on cold days. You, you'd, to get that bell to ring for dinner time at, at 12 o'clock, you, my job was to, as a little girl is to pull the, the bell. You know, it was a rope on the big bell. And so you, and sometime your hands would get raw from trying to get a ting out of that bell. 'Cause if you get the ting, the bell would ring. And so I used to, you know, be pullin' the bell, pullin' the bell. And my hand sometime would be raw inside from trying' to get the ting on a cold day. But finally I kept pullin'. I'd say, you know, look, listening for the ting. And once I got the ting, I had it made. You know? I knew even though my hands was raw. And I, and I look at life like that. You keep pullin' the bell. And you'll get a ting, you know, here and there. But you must keep pullin' it. And, and, and things happen. Things happen. Because as I said before, had there not been a King, had not been Rosa Parks sit down, had not King took on the mantle, King took—they, you know, they had a platform first just like we did with Harold, and then suggested King, you know. He didn't come first. They suggested him. And that's exactly what this is all about is that we must continue to do that because there will be others that will take up the mantle. And people understand platform. One thing that we do know since Harold Washington, that he moved this city to an enlightenment that you'll never, you'll never, I don't care who comes, they will not turn the people back to where they were. They can't do it. It's impossible 'cause too many people caught on.

00:36:28:00

Interviewer:

Stop down. Excellent. Fantastic. I think—

[beep]

[cut]

Camera Crew Member #1:

Mark.

00:36:36:00

Camera Crew Member #2:

Track nine.

[slate]

00:36:38:00

Interviewer:

So, what did you, what did people want in a mayor?

00:36:40:00

Nancy Jefferson:

We, our platform said, you know, we just had a plumb line that we drove. And that platform said that we wanted a, a, a mayor that would look at the city, that would say it could not be bought and sold to the highest bidder, that it had, that it must be fair government. Fairness in government. Because when we looked at what had happened that made us protest, the way the, the people were intimidated in CHA by the politicians, that wasn't right. And we wanted a, a, a mayor that, that would under—that knew that that wasn't right. And that he would carry out the kind of policies that destroyed that. We talked about how do you really reform a government that is corrupt, that, that didn't open its books, that we didn't, had no contracts with, for Blacks, that people were not cut in fairly. And, and it wasn't only Blacks. It was people in the city. Poor Whites, Blacks, all. There was a, a group that, that, that was, got all the contracts in the city, and, and, and kept it where they wanted to keep it. There was the school issue that decided on no permissive transfers and all of that. And we wanted a, a, a mayor that was fair for good government. And that included everything that was good government. And it was a lot of those kinds of things that was laid down that we had been protesting against. And then when we took that platform to, to Harold Washington, and we said, This is what we want, and we have decided on you, to look at you as being the person to carry it out. He knew very well what he was getting into.

00:38:41:00

Interviewer:

That's it.

Camera Crew Member #1:

Cut.

Interviewer:

OK, very good.

Camera Crew Member #2:

Cut.

[beep]

Interviewer:

[unintelligible]

[cut]

[end of interview]

00:38:49:00

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