Marie Wilson: Food Service Worker

“Housing Our Story” interview with Joseph Ian O’Connor-Giles

October 30, 2018

Joseph Ian O’Connor-Giles: It’s recording? Okay. I’m Joseph Ian O’Connor-Giles, I’m here with Marie Wilson on October 30, 2018. To start, can you tell me about your neighborhood growing up?

Marie Wilson: My neighborhood growing up was actually fun. It was better than some of my friends’. It wasn’t a violent neighborhood at all.

Joseph Ian O’Connor-Giles: You grew up here in Baltimore?

Marie Wilson: In Baltimore.

Joseph Ian O’Connor-Giles: How did you identify your neighborhood? What were its boundaries?

Marie Wilson: I want to say my neighborhood was ... you mean class-wise?

Joseph Ian O’Connor-Giles: I mean geographically or however you would describe your neighborhood.

Marie Wilson: I grew up in a neighborhood with trees, nice homes, clean neighborhood, no trash, all of that.

Joseph Ian O’Connor-Giles: Can you tell me about the schools you attended?

Marie Wilson: The elementary school I attended was not so great. It didn’t have a whole lot to offer but I took advantage of what they had.

Joseph Ian O’Connor-Giles: What was the name of that school?

Marie Wilson: Lindhurst Elementary. That was the elementary school.

Joseph Ian O’Connor-Giles: And then, for middle and high school.

Marie Wilson: My middle school was Calverton Middle School. Was Calverton High, that’s was it was called then. And then, I went to Northwestern.

Joseph Ian O’Connor-Giles: What were racial or economic mixes of your schools?

Marie Wilson: At that time, that was back in the ’70s, it was half and half.

Joseph Ian O’Connor-Giles: Where were you living in the late ’70s and the ’80s?
Marie Wilson: I was in Edmonson Village.

Joseph Ian O’Connor-Giles: Can you tell me about that?

Marie Wilson: I can tell you about how it is now as opposed to what it used to be like.

Joseph Ian O’Connor-Giles: Yeah, that would be good.

Marie Wilson: Now, it’s a distorted neighborhood, a lot of crime and violence. When I was coming up in that area, our parents had boundaries, they put restrictions on you, what you could and could not do and where you could go and could not go. Basically, we followed those rules. When it came down to socializing, they were particular of who we socialized with and who we didn’t socialize with. Basically, I mean, that was the way it was. I was from a family of nine.

Joseph Ian O’Connor-Giles: What did your parents do?

Marie Wilson: My father actually was a delivery man. My mother, she did housework.

Joseph Ian O’Connor-Giles: Can you talk to me more about those kind of rules about who you were allowed to socialize with and what your social life was like for you and your siblings?

Marie Wilson: Well, back then, when I came up it was a whole different program to what it is today. When I came up, people weren't as violent as they are now. The people I socialize with was anybody that lived in a neighborhood whose parents had restrictions on them as mine had on me. We had a rec center. We could go to the rec center and play or socialize at the rec center. You had people in the neighborhood looking out for each other. Basically, that's it. We also had curfew, we couldn't stay out all night.

Joseph Ian O’Connor-Giles: Where did you attend church?

Marie Wilson: Attend church, when I was living up there? I attend Friendship Baptist Church. When I moved from up there, it was probably 40 years later, I went to New Shiloh.

Joseph Ian O’Connor-Giles: Was your church when you were growing up an important influence on the neighborhood?

Marie Wilson: No.

Joseph Ian O’Connor-Giles: No? Was it not in the neighborhood [inaudible 00:04:15]?

Marie Wilson: It was in the neighborhood but not in the exact neighborhood. It's across the other side. It was in walking distance, you could walk there.
Joseph Ian O’Connor-Giles: Were you involved in any church activities?

Marie Wilson: Yes. Actually, I used to do dance, sing on the choir, that kind of stuff.

Joseph Ian O’Connor-Giles: Where would you go to see a movie, a play, a concert?

Marie Wilson: We had a movie right up there in Edmonson Village. Edmonson Village had a movie, they had a bowling alley, they had all of that up there. It was walking distance also.

Joseph Ian O’Connor-Giles: How long were in that neighborhood? Did you move out right away or did you stay?

Marie Wilson: I actually lived with my parents and I stayed there for ... we went there in the '60s, late '60s. Actually, I stayed there until, basically, 1999. When I moved I bought my own house.

Joseph Ian O’Connor-Giles: Why did you decide to move?

Marie Wilson: I had a daughter, I didn't have any children. Yes I did. I had a daughter at that time, I did. I wanted to go out on my own, that's what I did. Through all of that I did, I went to college. It's a lot in between that. I went to Coppin State College, I went to BCCC College. I was on the verge of actually getting my CPA in accounting but my daughter got sick. She had a blood disease called ITP. You ever heard of that?

Joseph Ian O’Connor-Giles: No, can you just--

Marie Wilson: Well, it was a blood disease where your blood would never clot and she used to have really, really bad nose bleeds. I had to stop to attend to that with her and I just never went back.

Joseph Ian O’Connor-Giles: How old was she at that time?

Marie Wilson: At the time, she was about seven.

Joseph Ian O’Connor-Giles: You were studying accounting in school?

Marie Wilson: Yes.

Joseph Ian O’Connor-Giles: Can you tell me about your book ... I guess, can you talk more about your family, about your children?

Marie Wilson: I have 39-year-old, which is a schoolteacher. She teaches in PG County. I have a 25-year-old, she's in the school system in Baltimore County. My oldest daughter has four kids. The youngest one has a set of twins. The one with the twins, she's home with me. She's trying to get herself together, get on her own so she's
home. I don't ask her for anything, I just let her try to get herself together and move on. I help them as much as I possibly can.

Joseph Ian O'Connor-Giles: All right. I guess we'll start talking about your work experiences and your work here at Hopkins. Could you tell me about your first job?

Marie Wilson: My first job was I used to work at a venetian blinds place in East Baltimore. No, that wasn't my first job. My first job was at a place called Gino's on Patapsco Avenue. That's the first place I worked. I worked there for, I want to say about three years. They got robbed so my father told me I couldn't work there no more. I left there, I went the venetian blinds place in East Baltimore. I worked there for about, I think it was about three years, somewhere along that line. After that, I came here to Hopkins.

Joseph Ian O'Connor-Giles: How old were you then?

Marie Wilson: When I came to Hopkins?

Joseph Ian O'Connor-Giles: Yeah.

Marie Wilson: I was 19. All the other jobs I was still in school but I was 19 when I came here. I worked here, I had a great experience even up until today working here.

Joseph Ian O'Connor-Giles: You worked here all through-

Marie Wilson: Forty four years.

Joseph Ian O'Connor-Giles: ... college while you were at Coppin State?

Marie Wilson: Yes, I did. Yes, I did.

Joseph Ian O'Connor-Giles: How did you come to work here at Hopkins? How did you-

Marie Wilson: My father was one of the delivery guys here and he knew the lady that worked down Levering Hall, Miss Mamie. She's passed away now. She got me the job here. When she got me the job here I started working here, I only was working six hours a day. When I started working we had a real bad snow storm. I waited on a bus stop to catch the bus and this man got out of the car to try to chase me. Okay, I let my father know what happened with that and he says, "You're either going to get a full-time there or you have to leave." I went back and told my boss I had to have full-time or I had to leave and they gave me full-time. I've been full-time ever since.

Joseph Ian O'Connor-Giles: What was your job at the beginning?

Marie Wilson: At the beginning I was a, back then they called them a checker. It's like a cashier were you punch the meal tickets for the students coming in. I did that and after
that I did a little bit of cooking. Not a lot, just a little bit of cooking. And then, I worked at a dish room. They offered me a job as a manager, I didn't want that though. I did various things, cleaned the dining room, different things.

Joseph Ian O’Connor-Giles: Can you tell me about not wanting the job as manager?

Marie Wilson: I didn't want the job as a management because I'm a union-type person. When it comes down to what companies try to do to people or try to hog all the money and give you as less as possible, I wasn't for that. I wasn't for that at all. My thing was I need to take a stand and be in this union. I become a shop steward after, I think I had only worked there for three and I took a stand as being a shop steward. The reason I took a stand because my father was a shop steward on his job. He showed me some of the things to do as far as shop steward, your rights and all. My brother became a shop steward on his job. He worked at Towson and he was shop steward there. Between the two of us, we would go to my father if we didn't know certain situations that arise what to do and he would actually tell us. I'm still shop steward today.

Joseph Ian O’Connor-Giles: Can you tell us more about what that's involved?

Marie Wilson: Shop steward is basically making sure people are treated properly. It's also making sure people are paid a decent pay. It also involves a pay where a person can branch out on their own if they so choose to try to make a decent living. When I first started working here, I made $7.00 an hour. Today, although I don't think it's enough, but today I'm at $19.00. I don't think that's enough for 44 years. That's the downfall that I see in being here for this long. But it helped me to raise my children, feed my family. Of course, sometimes we had to do without but we made it.

Joseph Ian O’Connor-Giles: Are there particular moments in union work that you remember as meaningful to you?

Marie Wilson: There's a building downtown called ... I forget what it's called, it's on Redwood Street, I still have the news article at home ... where we went to a setting where they had attorneys for the company and attorneys for the union and different union people to have contracted this particular hotel. They wanted to get a certain amount of union employees into that hotel for jobs. They wanted them to have positions open and available for these people so they would be able to work. We won the case. We won the case on that. It's a lot more to it. It could be a very long conversation but that's the basis.

Joseph Ian O’Connor-Giles: We'd love to hear more.

Marie Wilson: Like I said, we won the case. We went to court, we won the case. I was one of the speakers and actually ... I'm trying to remember the rest. Actually, we won the case. I can't remember if the union became contract there or not. I can't remember that. I think the hotel is still there. We went around to different
places trying to get positions open, decent jobs for people. Today we still do the same thing.

Joseph Ian O’Connor-Giles: What are your current activities in that? What are your current projects?

Marie Wilson: Presently, right now, I just maintain as being a shop steward because I just had a stroke in January. I basically maintain being a shop steward, helping the people out that I work around. Occasionally, I go in with the union and go to different places and help them be involved in some of the activity there.

Joseph Ian O’Connor-Giles: Can you talk to me about how you felt about Hopkins before you started working here?

Marie Wilson: Before I started working here, I never gave this college a thought until my father got me the job here. Other than that, I never gave it thought. But when I came here, the people were nice. I didn't feel no racial tension or anything when I came. But now, somewhat, it is.

Joseph Ian O’Connor-Giles: Can you talk to us about that?

Marie Wilson: Well, you have some students come in from different places and you can tell. They don't care to be around black people or they don't prefer to even touch them. I'm a cashier right now and sometimes when you hand them their stuff it's like if they take it, they'll take it with a draw back where just give me the food and that's it. Not all of them but it's some that's like that. Also, they ... it's a lot of friendly ones, a whole lot of friendly ones. I say the friendly ones outweigh the bad ones. They're not really bad people, that's their choice to be that way.

Joseph Ian O’Connor-Giles: Do you see that coming ... that's mostly from the students?

Marie Wilson: Basically from the students. The staff, they're wonderful. I don't see none of that from that staff. When I say the students, it's not a lot of students. It's not a lot. I've had great rapport with quite a few students. I've even had students to leave, graduate, come back just to visit and say hi. Some of them come back and they've made families and they bring their children back, little kids, so you can see them. I don't have anything bad to say about Hopkins at all.

Joseph Ian O’Connor-Giles: How would you compare Hopkins to other places you've worked? I guess, I mean you-

Marie Wilson: Work-wise, well, they were all the same. They were all the same. It's like any company that you work for, they want the most of the money. That's the way it is. They're going to give you as less as possible. If you don't fight to get more, you're not going to get it. That's it.
Joseph Ian O’Connor-Giles: Can you tell us about some of the fighting you’ve had to do at Hopkins for better pay?

Marie Wilson: Oh, yeah. We’ve had quite a few marches as far as decent housing, decent pay, treating people with respect. We’ve had all of that. In a lot of them we’d have ... it’s gotten better. It’s gotten better but sometimes I just feel like you shouldn’t have to go fight these battles in order to get it, bring out large numbers of people to see exactly what’s going on. Some stuff should be naturally given. I’m not saying you hand everybody something on a silver platter. I’m not saying that but what I’m saying is when you go into a job and say the job pays you $10.00 an hour, you should not be on that job at $10.00 an hour for 20 and 30 years. That’s how it is at the Hopkins Club. Those people weren’t making ... they were making next to no money. For years, it went on like that because they were actually afraid to step out, get a union or get people together to organize and let them know that it’s a better way.

Joseph Ian O’Connor-Giles: Have they organized now?

Marie Wilson: They're not union still. As far as I know, they're not.

Joseph Ian O’Connor-Giles: Have you participated in trying to get them to unionize?

Marie Wilson: We have but the employees are scared. They're scared. I know when the company that's here now, which is Bon Appetit, when they came a lot of people who were with them for years they didn't get their jobs because some of them had criminal background records. They were good employees but they had background records so they wouldn't hire them. My opinion is there’s people out here at young age, they do bad things. But as they get older, they change. They don't stay the same all the time. I feel like everybody deserves a second chance.

Joseph Ian O’Connor-Giles: When was that that Bon Appetit came?

Marie Wilson: Bon Appetit came here in ... okay, this is their second time around. They came here in I want to say, say this is '18, they came here five years ago. That was probably '13, 2013 because before then it was Aramark. See, we deal with different companies. That's one of the downfalls that I do find with Hopkins is that when you have a person that has worked here for as many years as I have that they don't recognize them on their pension plans or anything like that. They don't. They recognize housekeepers but they don't recognize the people who work for the contractors like we do. That, to me, I feel like they should recognize that.

Joseph Ian O’Connor-Giles: I guess going off of that, what changes would you like to see the university make? What are changes you think personally you can try work for?
Marie Wilson: I personally think that the university, from where I work at, I think that they should, basically, pick up the food service themselves. That's what I feel. That way, okay, students go here, they can hold Hopkins fully responsible because some of what goes on the inside, they don't even know. I don't care to speak about that because I don't want to incriminate myself, but I think it's better thing when Hopkins ... if Hopkins was to run this, which they did years ago, if they ran it, food-wise and everything they would be held fully responsible. The way it is right now is you have a food service and this food service is only held to certain standards if they come in to check and see what's going on. Otherwise, they don't know.

Joseph Ian O'Connor-Giles: Were you here when Hopkins was running the food service?

Marie Wilson: I had just come. I had just come.

Joseph Ian O'Connor-Giles: What work do you do that no one notices you do?

Marie Wilson: I think they notice what I do because, okay, I ... originally I was doing stock in the market. Like I said, I had a stroke in January. I came back and I was still doing stock but for me it was a little too much so I went to cashiering because you go by seniority and the person with the most seniority gets to say which job they want. I came out of that. But when I came out of it and I look back and see some of the stuff that's happening now, it's not like up to par the way I feel like it should be. It may be the standards for somebody else but for me I just feel like the standards could have been better.

Joseph Ian O'Connor-Giles: Can you tell me about the stroke and how that ... how you're able to take time off?

Marie Wilson: I can tell you about that because I was actually here when I had the stroke. I was at a big meeting, we've been coming back off the Christmas break. I was sitting here just like I'm sitting here talking to you and all of a sudden I just went into having a stroke. Didn't know what it was at the time but I was able to tell one of the managers that was sitting next to me that I needed medical help. He didn't know what it was at the time but I was able to tell one of the managers that was sitting next to me that I needed medical help. He thought I was joking because just before that we were joking. I said, "I need to get out of here, I need medical help." He said, "Yeah, I need to get out of here too." I said, "No, I'm serious. I really need medical help." But mine's was all at a twisted voice because I was already into the stroke. They finally got me help. They came, the ambulance came, they stayed with me. The manager, the general manager, he went to the hospital with me to make sure I was okay, notify my family and all. They did pretty good with that.

Joseph Ian O'Connor-Giles: You had medical leave for-

Marie Wilson: No, that's the problem. Okay, what happened is we did have medical leave through the union but it was next to nothing. When I got that medical leave, I was already back to work. That's how long it took and they give like 100 and
probably 10 dollars a week, that's all you got and you only got it for ... okay, when I started the medical insurance I had to get all that information from the hospital, and which I went to Hopkins Hospital. I had to get all the information to get it back to them. I would get it back the insurance company, the insurance company would say they don't have this amount, they don't have this information or don't they don't have that information. Basically, with me trying to recover, I still had to stay on the phone and try to get everything in order the way they want it in order for you to get the money. All in all, I was out six weeks, I think it was a month to six weeks and I had gotten no pay.

Joseph Ian O'Connor-Giles: How were able to manage?

Marie Wilson: I had somebody to help me out.

Joseph Ian O'Connor-Giles: Was it a family member?

Marie Wilson: A friend. I had friends, family members, they all pitched in.

Joseph Ian O'Connor-Giles: You talked about it some with some of the students, relationships with the students, but how have race and gender affected your experience here at Hopkins?

Marie Wilson: It hadn't affected mine's at all because I'm the type of person I take things for what they really are. I treat a person how I want to be treated. If a person come to me and if they show the racial tension or something, I still try to make them comfortable. I'll still try to do whatever it is I need to do to make it a satisfied experience for them when they come in and buy whatever they find. I can't lash out because they lash out. I can't do that so I just keep my composure and do what I need to do and that's it.

Joseph Ian O'Connor-Giles: Would you want your children to work here at Hopkins?

Marie Wilson: My daughter actually studied here for some of her programs, the one who is a school teacher, she studied here. As far as working, as far as what I do, I wouldn't want them to do that, I want them to do better. My youngest daughter would not come here. I tried to get her to come here until she could really get up on her feet and she didn't want to do what I do. She actually is in the process of taking more classes for nursing but she's in the school system right now helping kids with disabilities.

Joseph Ian O'Connor-Giles: I guess I would like to go back to kind of what we had started with, just kind of get more fleshed-out answers about your neighborhood and your childhood growing up in Baltimore.

Marie Wilson: My childhood, I would say I had a pretty good childhood. We didn't have everything that we wanted but we had everything that we needed. My parents were like ... okay, to school. You go to school, they buy you some new clothes,
you may have enough for three days. Three days worth of clothes, you're going to wear them for the whole week but when you come home you got to change them and put on play clothes. The same thing with your shoes. You had to change your shoes and put on your old shoes to go out and play with, play in. Basically, as far as going out to play but when we came home from school we had to make sure we did our homework before we went out or else you couldn't go out.

Marie Wilson: We also responsibilities in the house where you had to clean, you had to make sure your room was clean. Of course, we shared rooms. There was nine of us so we shared rooms. We lived in a three-bedroom house but there was nine of us and we still had to share rooms. Everybody had responsibility of cleaning certain parts of the house, certain parts of the room. You had to wash dishes. The boys and the girls had to wash dishes. When my mother would go out to do her daily, they called it day's work back then. She would go out and clean people's houses and she would come home and she expected her house to be clean. It was cleaned. If it wasn't cleaned, we couldn't go outside, we'd get punished. Basically, that's what we do.

Joseph Ian O'Connor-Giles: Where were you in the order?

Marie Wilson: I was the middle child.

Joseph Ian O'Connor-Giles: Can you tell me about your memories of the civil rights movement era in Baltimore?

Marie Wilson: Well, actually ... you talking about for Martin Luther King?

Joseph Ian O'Connor-Giles: I mean more broader.

Marie Wilson: When it comes down to all of that, I really don't really like to discuss it. I don't even really like watching the films that they ... because some of the stuff is really, really horrible. I say, I could not live in that day. Those people really took a lot and that's something I couldn't do. I don't really ... I watched it when my kids was coming up so they could know what we actually struggled for. Other than that, I don't get into that too much. I mean, it is history. I do know about it but you can't change time. Once time's past, you can't change it. You can just remember what the struggles is to work harder to do better yourself.

Joseph Ian O'Connor-Giles: Can you tell me about your neighborhood now and how different-

Marie Wilson: My neighborhood now is basically just like the one I used to live in. But the one I used to live in is not like where I'm at now. Basically, my neighborhood is a quiet neighborhood. People mind their business. You have violence sometimes but it's not that often. I think you have violence wherever you go, wherever you live, it doesn't matter. Basically, I help my neighbors, my neighbors will help me. Sometimes helping the seniors are bringing the trash cans after the trash man
Joseph Ian O'Connor-Giles: That's where you raised your kids in, where you're living now?

Marie Wilson: Yes.

Joseph Ian O'Connor-Giles: What were their schools like?

Marie Wilson: One of them went to Cross Country Elementary and then she left and went to Dunbar. The other one went to Cross Country, she left and she went to Pimlico Middle School. She left Pimlico Middle School and went to Westin. Basically, their middle school and high school was good, elementary too. And then, I had a friend of mine's mother was a school teacher and she would bring all the kids, she had a little room called a den upstairs and she would bring the kids in her neighborhood and bring them into this room, sit down, read to them, teach them different stuff. She did took both of my daughters in it and did the same thing.

Joseph Ian O'Connor-Giles: What was the racial and economic mix of your children's schools?

Marie Wilson: All the schools they went to were all black schools. All of them. You may have maybe one or two white kids in there but now it's a little different. It's a little different now, you have mixes of all kinds in the schools. But I don't like the way the schools are run now, I really don't.

Joseph Ian O'Connor-Giles: Can you talk about that?

Marie Wilson: Okay, one of the things I found out is about ... I talk to my daughter a lot, the one who teaches school and you know how in school they teach you handwriting? Now, what they're doing in the schools, how you cursive write, they want to take it out. In my own opinion, that's to keep a person from not knowing a lot. That's how I feel. Some people say it's because of computers and all of that, I disagree with that. I really personally think they should do away with computers because computers are destructing people's minds a whole lot.

Marie Wilson: My grandkids, I let them do the computer once in a while then restrict it. If they come to my house, they can only do it for a certain amount of time. Because I look at them, I have a set of twins, my grandbaby twins, two boys, and I'll give them my cell phone and they'll go on there on YouTube and play the little cartoons and stuff. They get so drawn to that, nothing else around them matters. That, to me, is total distraction. I think it's a destructive thing to the mind of kids. It's just something I totally disagree with.

Joseph Ian O'Connor-Giles: Going back to working here at Hopkins, how have your friends or family felt about you working here?
Marie Wilson: Well, basically when my mother was living, she wanted me to continue on with the accounting but at that time I didn't see fit to do that. I had to take care of my daughter so I didn't see fit to do that. As time went by, my mother got sick, she had cancer, I had to wind up taking care of her. My father got sick before her, me and mother and my other siblings, we had to take care of him. I had a lot of deaths in my family back-to-back. My father died, my mother died, my baby sister died, she had the same cancer my mother had. And then, my next to the oldest brother, he passed. He just went home, went to sleep, and just died. They couldn't find nothing for cause of death for him. I mean, basically, I dealt with a lot but it's life. It's life. I mean, a lot people I think stress about, let every little thing get to you, I cannot do that.

Joseph Ian O'Connor-Giles: Can you tell me about how working here has changed how you think about Hopkins in relation to the city?

Marie Wilson: It's a different world. It's a different world. When I come here to work and deal with some of the customers coming in, you can already see that it's different. Opposed to, I leave here and go home in my neighborhood, it's just totally different. Different to, I don't know, here, sometimes it makes feel like you're on a different level. Really, a lower level. Sometimes it make you feel that way. Other than that, I just come to work, get my paycheck, do what I have to do. I don't put a whole lot into it.

Joseph Ian O'Connor-Giles: Can you tell us about that? About feeling like, being made to feel like you're on a lower level?

Marie Wilson: I mean, I'm not going to say I'm made to feel like that. What I'm going to say is the people around you, you get the vibe and you see how, you get the vibe with people. You can talk to some people and you know that they really don't care. It doesn't matter what race you is, what color you is, who you are, you're a person. But there is others that like, "Oh, no. That's a step down." You get the vibes from people.

Joseph Ian O'Connor-Giles: How do you think Hopkins could change that or improve it?

Marie Wilson: I don't think Hopkins can change it because Hopkins is built around students coming from everywhere. You can change some of the people but you can't change all of the people.

Joseph Ian O'Connor-Giles: Can Hopkins improve its relationship with the city in general?

Marie Wilson: They can. One of the things, too, I'm going to go back to this. One of the things, I've talked to a student, two students, about how racially it is around here. You can have a bunch of white kids on the corner, loud, drinking, police drive by, don't say nothing. These two black guys, they just walking, it's late at night, they're walking, the police will stop and stop them, want to know where they're going. They actually Hopkins students but they're going to take them through
the whole, unnecessary riff-raff to make sure that they Hopkins students. “Put your hands in your pocket, put your hands behind your back, let me see your ID.” And this crowd right here, you already see they’re rowdy and you don’t do anything. It’s the respect.

Joseph Ian O’Connor-Giles: What do you think the proposed private police force that Hopkins is thinking about?

Marie Wilson: I don’t believe that. You mean the city police or like-

Joseph Ian O’Connor-Giles: I think a Hopkins police.

Marie Wilson: They had them before and it was no difference. They had Hopkins security, that’s what they call them. They were actually polices who were ex-police officers and they were retired but they came on as the Hopkins security. I don’t know, I mean basically they have Hopkins security now but they don’t call it Hopkins security. They have the, I forget the name of them, the people standing on the corners and all of that. To me that’s bad because those people are there all night long. One day I got off the bus, I was coming down Charles Street, University and Charles, the person had been out there for so long they had leaned up on the pole and went to sleep. I tapped them to wake them up. I’ve seen some of them out there standing in the rain, they’re drenching wet. They got raincoats on but they still soaking wet.

Marie Wilson: I think that not just Hopkins, I think all places need to treat each person as an individual human being. I don’t think that things would be as bad as they are if they did that. But everybody’s not treated the same way. I’m not going to say whites treat blacks different or blacks treat whites different, it’s the whole, all the nationalities. It’s all of them. People just need to get together more and be more, what’s the word? Be more sensitive to another person’s feelings.

Joseph Ian O’Connor-Giles: Do you think with the organizing work you’ve done here that you’ve made that kind of community in your workplace?

Marie Wilson: I do. I do because I look at some of the new employees that came in since I’ve been here, a lot of them came in with no self-worth. They just didn’t care. Then, they get in and they see how there are people who care. There are people who will jump in and help you if you don’t know something. You don’t have to shout off and don’t do it because you don’t know it, people will pitch in and help you out. Basically, right now in the food service, there’s more different races coming in to get jobs because we have Filipinos, we have white people, we have black people, we Spanish people, we have all of them in the food service.

Marie Wilson: I look at, too, I don’t have to have the best job out there because somebody got to do some job. All the jobs got to hold somebody. The only thing I ask for them to do, for the companies to do, is give the people a decent pay. The cost of living go up, people get food stamps, they raise it where if you work you can’t get no
food stamps because you make too much money when actually the money is not too much money because you can be able to pay your rent. You got to get gas, electric. Money don't add up to what you're making to pay the bills that you have. They are basic bills, they are not ... yeah, some people go out and buy name brand, nickname brand, that, but there are also people, such as myself, do not go out and buy name brand nothing. I go out and buy stuff that's going to get me from point A to point B for me to survive and there's a lot of people out there like that.

Joseph Ian O'Connor-Giles: Do you have any questions? Is there anything that you want to return to that we've talked about or anything that I haven't asked you that you would have liked me to have asked.

Marie Wilson: Not really. Actually, not really. If you have other questions you can ask me but I don't have ... I'm actually 62 years old, I'll be 63 in December. I feel like for me, I had a great life. That's how I feel. I never did drugs. I used to smoke cigarettes, I smoked cigarettes for 36 years. I went cold turkey just like that. I prayed and prayed and prayed and said, "God, this is your battle." And he stopped me. I never thought I would stop. But I feel like I had a great life. I didn't have everything I wanted. Who does? I feel like I had a basically clean, decent atmosphere wherever I was. I'm grateful for those things, I don't have to have everything.

Marie Wilson: I do want to ask you a question. Now, when it comes down to the race issue, why do people have such a problem with black people, mainly? One of the things that I don't understand with that is how can color make such a big difference? I just don't get that.

Joseph Ian O'Connor-Giles: I mean-

Marie Wilson: You don't have an answer?

Joseph Ian O'Connor-Giles: No. That's-

Marie Wilson: It's puzzling because in all and all in what I see one is no better than the other. What really does happen is ... it's not just whites, it's blacks too, it depends on your income to your education. It shouldn't be that way but it is. If you come from a family that makes $200,000.00 a year, naturally they're going to put their kids in a better school, a better college. If you come from a family whose only making $40,000.00 a year, they're going to be put in that category of the worst schools. You got to make the best of it when you go in there, you have to do whatever you can grasp and get while you're in there. That's what you're going to have to get in order to climb the ladder. Those are the kind of things to me that need to be changed. I think it should be a fair education for everybody. Just because I make $200,000.00 a year my child can go to Hopkins but yours can't.
Marie Wilson: It doesn't start from Hopkins, it starts from kindergarten. When the kids start school, once you start school, teach all of them on the same level. All of them on the same level. They'll still, as they go along in school they'll still grasp different things. They'll still have new ideas, maybe better ideas because they've gotten a better education.

Marie Wilson: Some people act the way they act because they really don't know no better. They haven't been taught or ever been in an embodiment where they know there is a better way. That's how it is in here, in Baltimore, in the ghettos. If you get out into some of the neighborhoods and you see even the little kids, they hanging on the corners late at night, they feel like nobody cares. Nobody cares. They were speaking on TV about the kids with the squeegees, they out there trying to make a dollar. You never know what they dealing with inside their homes. That's the way it is. Nobody's looking for a pity party, they just looking for a better education for their kids. A fair one, like everybody else gets. That's it.

Joseph Ian O’Connor-Giles: All right, I think we've covered all the topics we wanted to. Thank you for your time.

Marie Wilson: You're quite welcome.