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Significant African American Public Figures of Texas

POLITICS OF AFRICAN AMERICANS

Interviewee: DIANNE K. JONES, Dallas County Criminal
Court Number 11

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DIANNE K. JONES

Mr. Abebe Honorable judge Diane Jones, on behalf of the African American political science class of university hall basement room fourteen, we would like to thank you for coming and today we will be interviewing you and asking you some questions ranging from your biography, to your political career and your views and opinions. First I would like to start off with a few questions about your biography. First can you tell us who Diane Jones is?

Ms. Jones Well, I am Diane Catherine Jones and I was born in 1963 at Fort Campbell Kentucky, I am an Army brat. My father was in the military so we traveled and lived all over the United States and Europe. I went to high school in Killeen, Texas which in Fort Hood and home of the kangaroos. I graduated from high school and went to the University of Texas at Austin where I attended undergrad and got an undergraduate degree in accounting. Then I went to Southern Methodist University law school where I got my law degree in 1989.

Mr. Abebe What about your family? Can you tell us a little bit about your grand parents both on your father and mothers side?

Ms. Jones My father and mother are both from Pennsylvania. My father's parents are Jackson Jones and Emma Jones. My father's father was a coal miner in Pennsylvania. They grew up in a town that was mostly coal miners, a large German community. My father is six foot six. He has a brother that was six foot seven and one that is six five. My grand father is fairly tall and my grandmother is tall but they were not that tall. My mother's side of the family are David Phillips and my grand mother we called her grandma Phillips. They also grew up in Pennsylvania. My grandfather on the Phillips side of the family and grandmother (her last name was Bruce) they had a farm in Pennsylvania. The history is that my great grandfather

owned a Gris mill. There is no history of slavery on my grandmother's side. There is a large history of free slaves but there is no history what so ever. My great great grandfather owned his own mill and ran a factory. On my father side, my great great grandfather was a seven-foot slave.

Mr. Abebe What about your parents, how did they meet?

Ms. Jones My parents met in high school. My father played basketball; he was a high school hall of fame basketball player. He use to play against Wilt Chamberlain back in high school. Then he went to college where he played basketball for Niagara Falls University. He met my mother in high school and they got married and went away to college. He worked construction, played basketball as well as ROTC. When he got out of college, he went into the military. He was a military officer and retired as a United States colonel after being in the military for twenty-eight years. He was involved in the Special Forces, green brae and fought in Vietnam for two tours. He has a lot of medals. He has a purple heart for being shot over in Vietnam.

Mr. Abebe Do you have any siblings?

Ms. Jones I have two siblings. I have a sister, Darlene Carolyn Jones. She is three years older than me and I have a brother Donald Henry Jones Jr. My brother and sister both live out in Los Angeles. My sister is a flight attendant for Delta Airlines and my brother is a principle at a middle school.

Ms. Williams Judge Jones, Have you been married or are you married?

Ms. Jones Yes, I have been married. I was married. I married right out of college. I am divorced now. I have been divorced for approximately eleven years.

Ms. Williams Can you tell us your husband's name?

Ms. Jones His name was Charleton Hornsby

Ms. Williams Do you have any children?

Ms. Jones No, no children.

Ms. Williams Where were you educated?

Ms. Jones As I said, I went to the University of Texas at Austin and I got an undergraduate degree in accounting and SMU law school.

Ms. Williams What religion are you?

Ms. Jones I am non denominational, Pentecostal.

Ms. Patricia Judge Jones, we would like again to welcome you to our class. What or who influenced you to enter into politics?

Ms. Jones Well when I was in law school, I had a teacher named Linda Edds and she taught professional responsibility and from being exposed to her, it made me want to work in the justice department and be exposed to that area of the law. I have always somewhat wanted to be a judge and in Texas you have to run for office. It is a statewide process. It is a election process, which I think is a good process because it gives people an opportunity to vote for their judges. They get to vote for anyone who is involved in those positions. We do not have a retention process which means that ever four years you are up for reelection. So if you want to be a judge you run for office. Normally, if you do a good job, you get to keep your seat.

However, it is changing now. It is getting to be more and more political as opposed to judicial. And a lot of times the average person is not informed with regard to what their judges are doing, whether they are good judges or bad judges, So it make it somewhat difficult, but it is a good process. It just important that the voting constituent gets to know who they are voting for and they actually take the time to vote.

Ms. Patricia What influenced you? What motivated you to become a judge?

Ms. Jones Well, I took practice of law and I always thought that being a judge would be fun. Getting make rulings. I was a lawyer for approximately ten years before I took the bench which means that I was in front of judges all the time because I was a trial lawyer. I had prosecuted in the District attorney's office for three years under John Vance the D.A. in Dallas County. Then I left there and I was a federal public defender for the northern district of Texas for a year and a half where I did defense work in the federal court system then I was a federal prosecutor for six years. So I have always practiced before judges and thought that I would like to be a judge some day and have had the opportunity and privilege to do so.

Ms. Patricia What organizations are you a member of?

Ms. Jones I am a member of a lot of organizations. I serve on the Greater Dallas Council of Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission where I am on the board of directors. I am also on the board of directors for the Circle Ten Boy Scouts of America. I am a member of the J.L. Turner Legal Association which is the African American legal association; we are associated with the National Bar Association which is the national organization of African American lawyers association. We have approximately 20,000 members. The local affiliate is called J.L. Turner because it is named after one of the

original founders of the organization. I am also a member of the Dallas Bar Association which is the local bar association in Dallas which has approximately 9,000 members. We have all kinds of different divisions. Criminal section, the family section and various sections like that. I am a member of the State Bar of Texas. With the State Bar of Texas, everyone that is a licensed attorney is automatically a member because you are required to pay dues and participate. I am also involved in several Republican women's associations like the Downtown Republican Women's Club and Dallas County Career Woman Club.

Ms. Patricia What does a judge for Dallas County do on a day-to-day basis?

Ms. Jones On a daily basis, I have what is called first of all a jail chain. A jail chain consists of people coming up on the chain. They are literally in jail in Dallas County and my coordinator will bring them up in the morning and in the jail chain. They come up and they have an appointed attorney that will represent them. They will talk to the prosecutor and find out what kind of recommendations they are making on their case. For instance, in a misdemeanor court, I can have a range of cases of driving while intoxicated, unlawfully carrying a weapons, assault cases, minor possession cases. Things that nature. So the lawyer will take these cases to the prosecutor and they will recommend what they think the person should receive. Sometimes, they will recommend probation and sometimes they will recommend jail time. The reason that the person is in jail is because they did where unable to post bond. In other words that means they did not have enough money to post the bond that had been set for them. And so as a result to that they come on the jail chain. On that particular day some of them will actually plead guilty, they'll say, "I want to plead guilty," and they'll either take the probation or the jail time and, and get out after their sentence or if they get probation or get out that same night and have to come back the next day to go to probation. As well as then or

they can have their cast set for trial, each person has a right to a trial by jury or a trial before the court. So after I do my jail chain I, I take those pleas then there's also a docket, my coordinator has a docket everybody who has cases in my court that is on bond, they show up in court and they'll appear and they will either announce, in other words announcement is I want to accept this for a plea, an announcement means I want to set up a trial before the court or I want to set it for a jury trial. And so they'll do one of those things in court, and if they plea I'll accept the plea, if they set it on the trial docket, then it will be on the trial docket. So after I take all those pleas and listen to the announcements that I need to hear, cause mostly my coordinator handles most of the ones that are just being passed for trial or something. Then I have what is called a trial docket. And on the trial docket, Monday through Wednesday I have a jury trial docket, and we'll have approximately seven to eight cases set on they jury docket and the lawyers will announce whether they are ready for trial or not and then once the lawyers announce whether they're ready the state will announce if they're ready and what happens is in some cases the state's ready and the defense is not ready or the defense is ready and state's not ready those cases will either get reset or some of them will get dismissed because I only give the state like a certain number of passes, especially on cases that are domestic violence, assault cases, because its been established that if the victim doesn't show up the first time and they've filed an affidavit now the prosecution is saying they're not going to trial, there's a good chance they're not going to show up the next time and if the state can't prove it without them, after two passes I require them to dismiss it, because what is does is back up my docket and they never are able to obtain the witness. And then the ones that are ready will actually go to trial. We'll have a trial, a jury trial, where the lawyers will pick, select jury, we'll have a panel of about twenty people who'll come up on a panel and they'll ask them questions regarding the type of cases they're listening to today. And six people will serve on the jury, and after that

they'll have an opportunity to put on testimony regarding the case and at the conclusion of the case they'll do closing arguments and the court will read to them the charge and they will reach a verdict, one of, you know, guilty or not guilty. A jury trial usually lasts on average one to two days, some cases last longer in misdemeanor courts but for the most part we're done within two, one to two days at most.

Ms. Patricia Ok, and my last question is what is your salary?

Ms. Jones As a judge for Dallas County salary is one hundred and nine thousand dollars were are, it's written by statute we have to make one we, we make exactly one thousand less than district judge. So the district judge salary is a hundred and ten then we make a hundred and nine. Now keep in mind though, right out of law school law firms are paying about a hundred and fifty thousand dollars for a first year associates. So a lot of judges are complaining that a lot of times the judges are the lowest paid court person in the court room, now that's not across the board of course the prosecutors make less money and some private practices attorneys make less money but when you hear that salary I want you to hear that its relative to other things that are going in, in Dallas County.

Mr. Abebe Back to the courts, do you only, uh only reside over misdemeanor or also felonies?

Ms. Jones I

Mr. Abebe Murders, rape.

Ms. Jones I'm misdemeanor court, in Dallas County you have jurisdictional courts, in other words we have courts that are like county criminal court, which I am a county criminal court number eleven. They also have county

criminal court at law, which is a civil court in Dallas County. Then you have county district courts, criminal district courts which are felony courts that have robbery, rapes, things of that nature and then you have criminal district courts which have higher dollar amounts of civil actions, like car accident cases, breach of contracts, and things of that nature. We also have juvenile courts and family courts and now you went to a smaller town such as Kaufman County you could have a county criminal at law and they would actually handle the misdemeanor courts, criminal cases as well as civil cases, as well as family cases, as well as juvenile cases. So fortunately in Dallas County because we're such a large county we are able to specialize in the areas, which are, we have experience and training. And when you run into smaller counties, literally you have to become familiar with every topic that comes before you in the courtroom.

Mr. Abebe And, could you tell us on like an average day about how many cases you or consider (inaudible)?

Ms. Jones The hard part is when you say that the average case. I would, I could not tell you specifically what I would say, there is at least a hundred cases that come in my court every day. Now me actually seeing them, I probably plead about twenty cases, that I handle my jail chain, my coordinator will probably see another fifty, sixty people that you know, announce, or set their cases for trial, or things of that nature, that I don't actually see but she works for me so those cases are being processed. As well as, then there's probably eight to ten cases on the jury docket that I'll actually have contact with the lawyers on. But on average each court has about nine hundred to twelve hundred active pending cases in their court. In other words we have that many cases where someone is actively pend, when I say active pending that means these cases are pending, the person has been arrested, they've showed up and appeared in court. Cause then you could have inactive cases where the person was arrested, or we don't know

where they are, so they are sitting on a bond forfeiture section and then if they ever get arrested then their cases will become active again.

Mr. Abebe Has there any, has there been any particular trial that stuck out you mind, especially?

Ms. Jones Well, my court, part of it is domestic violence court, so fifty percent of my docket, when I say domestic violence or usually assault cases, stalking cases, some telephone harassment cases, things of that nature. And what makes it family violence is that, if it is an incident that occurs within the household setting, it could be people that live together that are not married, it could just be a roommate situation, it could be a husband and wife situation, it could be a brother, sister, cousin, nieces, nephews, aunts, uncles. It could also be people who have kids together that aren't married or have never lived together but they do have children together. So I do see some cases that are sometimes very emotionally charged cases. We have a lot of emotions involved on each side. I've had at least one case where a woman, I found the husband guilty for stalking her and she literally read her obituary to me in the punishment stage of the trial, talking about how she just knew he was going to kill her and kill her kids and that she wanted some, the court to do something and the most I could do was, what I did was I put him on jail and put him on electronic monitoring system, where he had a monitor and what happens when you put them electronic monitor, that means they have a monitor on them and the person, the victim also has a box in there house so if that person ever comes within two hundred feet of their home the monitor will go off and the monitoring agency will know that this person is near the house. They only problem with that is if they cut off the monitor nobody knows it. But in that case I put them on electronic monitoring, but because domestic violence is an issue of control, he kept coming back to court and he did want the monitor him and I kept telling him that, you know, I'll keep you

on probation for a year, as long as you keep the monitor on, you don't want the monitor, it's up to you, I can send you to jail for a year and he eventually wanted to go to jail for a year and that's where he ended up. And my understanding is during that time frame she relocated to another city, cause she really did think he was gonna kill her.

Ms. Williams You said earlier your party affiliation is Republican and what influenced you to be a Republican and why?

Ms. Jones First of all in Dallas County everybody, every sitting judge in Dallas County is a Republican. What I have found over the years as I've done research and investigated my own values, views and opinions. I do think, I embrace a large part of what the Republican Party represents. I have, I do ask people what is my religious affiliation, I do have strong views and opinions about different issues, regarding my religious values and views. Additionally, if you look at the history of the Republican Party in Texas it was formed African American, one hundred and fifty African Americans where from, formed the Republican Party and two, twenty white people helped form the Republican Party back in the eighteen hundreds. It was after slavery, and if you look at the history of the party in general, I know things have changed but the Democratic Party passed the black codes, that was the codes so that African Americans could not vote. They voted against, they created the Jim Crow laws. Prior to that African Americans were in the legislature, they were very involved in politics and then they passed the, the poll tax, where it went from a hundred African, hundred thousand African Americans voting, down to five thousand because they didn't have the money to vote. So historically, African, the Republican Party has been, it was founded by African Americans. I think things have, things have changed however I do, I think that it's important that people are involved in those parts. I think historically African Americans at some point shifted to become part of the Democratic Party and they have been

exclusively part of the Democratic Party. And if they're not a part of the process you can't have any say in what takes place. I think that if this current administration, with President Bush in office it's been indicative of that. I mean there's people, he's put some key people in position like Condoleezza Rice and Colin Powell and people of that nature. But if your not involved in the process to begin with and so it makes it difficult and if, I know you've heard this saying, "He who screams the loudest gets the most." And so I think it's wisdom, as African Americans in general that we should be involved in both parties, we should be involved in both systems and so when you're involved in both parties and you have people on both sides, you have somebody watching the gate. Somebody communicating, no this is not right or no this is wrong and that things should be done differently and then to give you an example of this. I have a friend who's running for a judge in Kaufman County right now and she's an African American female and she's running against a predominately, a white male who's sitting on the bench and it's a very difficult process to educate people, I mean she's having a very difficult time convincing people if they should vote for her, she's have a difficult time convincing African Americans people that she should vote for her. Because their position is I'm a Democrat, I'm voting Democrat. But when you ask a person what makes you a Democrat most of them don't even know. Their momma voted Democrat, their grandpa voted Democrat, so they're Democrat. But they never really sat down and counted the costs of why am I a Democrat. You know there's some extreme white people that you don't want to be associated with but you're not getting involved with a party because there's people one person out there who's extreme, who come across as racist and you know, mean spirited, well of course not because there's also a lot of good people, who have good hearts that are trying to do the right thing. So for me, I feel very comfortable being a Republican, I feel comfortable with the party I'm involved in and I feel comfortable in participating in the process. In communicating with people

that are in high positions and its allowed me to actually have access to a lot of different people and exposure.

Mr. Caudle What is leadership?

Ms. Jones Being able to direct people and get them in a direction behind your vision of where you're headed and what you're trying to accomplish, but leadership is also training of people to replace you. If you do not train someone to replace you, you have accomplished nothing; cause we have had a lot of great leaders, but when they died, the whole activity just fell apart, and if you're training people to replace you that they can step in and take over and continue the dream and continue the vision then you've really accomplished your goal in life.

Mr. Caudle In your opinion who do you think is the most effective African-American?

Ms. Jones When you say effective, I think that's a difficult word in terms of visually, I mean I can say, I admire Colin Powell, I admire what he's doing, I mean he was on the Joint Chief of Staff when he was in the military, now he's in the position he's on with the President, he has access to him, but I think effective is something that you have to measure after the fact, because just because you're in a position and you have access to people and you can share you views and opinions, you really don't know until after you look back on life and say O.K. I got this done right, got that done right, really accomplished this. And so I would say at this point Colin Powell, based on what he's done as Joint Chief of Staff and what he's done in the past.

Mr. Caudle And locally do you see anybody that would be respectable or most respected African-American politician to rephrase the effective work, I suppose?

Ms. Jones Well, we... that is a hard question, I personally know Michael Williams, he works on the railroad commission, he's running for reelection, as well as, Wallace Jefferson, he went to the University of Texas and I've talked to him on numerous questions. He went to the UT Law School. He's currently sitting on the Supreme Court of the State of Texas and twelve of these are republican people that are running statewide in the elections. IN fact, I think we have about four or five African-Americans running statewide as Republicans in this upcoming election.

Mr. Caudle What do you think is the most pressing issue today facing African-Americans?

Ms. Jones I think the most pressing issue for African-Americans is the youth that are coming up behind the generation, I work a lot with young adults and youth in my ministry and things that I'm involved in and I work with a college and career ministry and one of the things we're finding just at that level is you know when a person goes to college, they get credit cards in the mail and they've got all this debt out there, because literally we did a seminar and people asking how could they file for bankruptcy at age 21 and it's kind of scary to know that and with the student loans and with all the things that are going on. I mean it's like we have missed in educating our youth the value system. I think that what's facing us is we become very materialistic, and I don't think it's just African-Americans, I think it's an Anglo issue, it's an American society issue, that we spend now and we pay later, and we're no educating our youth and our young people to value hard work and time and the costs that it takes. For me I'm, you know, 39 years old and I'm already a judge. I even see it at my level, you know now everybody wants everything now and you know of courts in our system you almost have to be young, because you have to run for politics and you have to get out there and do all those things, but what I see in the younger generation is we are a microwave society. Everybody wants

everything now. We want the big car now, we want the nice house now, we want all these different things and I think it's going to hurt long time African-American communities, as well as, this nation in general. If we don't begin to change our values, because if you look at other countries, most countries like Asian people and different cultures they come into these countries, they save their money. They save 30 and 40% of their income. American Anglo-Saxons as well as, African-Americans, we spend everything that we have. We may have 10% saved maybe. But we are creating a situation that if we don't deal with this quickly we're going to have a whole economic issue in these country. And when we don't train our kids with money and value money then that's when crime comes in. I mean I'm getting so many kids in my courts that are stealing. And my first question to them is write an essay to me and tell me why you would hire a thief, because once you got that theft conviction, who should hire you? Why should I hire you? Why would I trust you to work in my store? And they're in there stealing CD's, or stealing you know tennis shoes. One guy came in and stole a \$150 sweat suit and I asked him what makes you think you have the right to wear a \$150 sweat suit? And you're 18 years old. And so I'm saying if our values are getting so out of wack that we watch TV, we see these athletes playing basketball and we decide that we should be able to dress like them, look like them, and spend money like them. When we haven't even, began to financially dig ourselves out of the debt that we're in just trying to get to college and save enough money to buy books and pay for those different things. As well as, I think our other issue is with this Hopwood case and I'm not sure if you all know what Hopwood is, but Hopwood is basically got rid of affirmative action and you were looking at the University of Texas School. We're loosing a generation mostly of African-American men to education. And if we don't get African-American males educated, I mean the population is disproportionate in our prison's incarceration rat and I see them everyday; young people going to jail. We are incarcerating too

many people and we have to do something different. We're spending more money incarcerating people than we are educating and sending the to college. And so I see that as a major problem in the African-American community, because we're losing a large percentage of our African-American men not just the prison system, but they're not making it into college. And when they do get into college they're dealing with so many issues with regard to racism, and economics that once they get there they don't necessarily graduate. And that's the other thing that I've seen, the retention rate is not very good just because the Universities are admitting people doesn't mean their graduating.

Ms. Williams What do you feel like we could do as African-Americans to the community to change some of these problems starting with the youth, what do you feel we could do?

Ms. Jones I think part of it is we have to get back to the basics, what we're missing now in 1990 and 2000 is what we didn't have in the 60's. In the 60's everybody went to church, grandma took you if you didn't have parents grandma took you, grandpa took you, but there was some basic foundational values that were there that no longer exists, I think that's part of it that people are just totally unchurched. I think also you have to give back. Everybody has to give back if it's just going back and going to a school talking to kids, doing different things to reach your community, it's important, but I think the critical thing is the family structure. We look at ourselves as a community and as a culture, but the mistake we're making is you know if you're trying to save the world and your own house is not together then there's a problem. So if we each could just individually effectively reach our own homes, in other words, in terms of helping our brothers and sisters getting to college, or you know, cause one of us makes it then we don't have any money to help them get an education, well, no, I got mine, you get yours and if we can just reach back and help one person

within our own household, if we know that we have that brother that's in trouble spending time with him and trying to get him from out of that environment, and hanging out the wrong people, then that's a start, as opposed to trying to do this global community thing we'd be more effective in just reaching our own home, I assure you an African-American community mostly everybody knows one person who's incarcerated and somebody who's dying from AIDS just within your own household or within your own small community. So if we just reach the people within our little scope then we've accomplished something.

Mr. Caudle In your opinion, what African-American political organization is the best or most effective or most respected, however you want to word that?

Ms. Jones I would think it would be between either the Urban League or the NAACP and when I say respectively I would say more so, most known, recognized, people when they hear the name they identify with them and in terms of actually of what they are accomplishing, it's very difficult when you're in a national organization, I've been involved in various organizations and I personally have concluded that they're very important, because you collectively bring people together with different ideas and views and their presence and numbers always represents, but at the same time I've individually have found for myself that I can more effectively. If I can reach 5 kids and get the into college and help see them graduate and get degrees and then turn around and help their brothers and sisters. I personally feel like I'm accomplishing more that way, than I am sitting because I've been on a lot of committees and a lot of boards and you spend a lot of time meeting, but I'm one of these hands on people who wants to actually want to see the results, the tangible results. But we need both, and so I think both of those organizations are very important and their very effective in the African-American community.

Mr. Caudle What do you think are the underpinnings of tensions between African-Americans and Hispanics today?

Ms. Jones Well, I think the main part about that is there's always some underpinning tensions when you think there's only one piece of bread, and it's kind of the crab and crab shack theory, well if the Hispanics get, you know, the get too large in Texas, we're not going to have, the African-Americans aren't going to say if the Hispanics got too large then the blacks get too popular, the Hispanics aren't going to have a say, but I'm not necessarily sure that's true, because as we work together collectively and the roots come together and accomplish what they're trying to accomplish. I come from a philosophy that whatever God has for me no one else has, in other words no one else can steal it from me, so I don't have to be threatened by my brother whether their brown, black or white, because that's what God has for me and that sometimes we look at, we look at things wrong because we think, we're trying to split one piece of the pie when maybe there's, maybe there's ten pies out there and we can all share in them equally and that everything that we each have for us, we're going to receive and we can work this thing together.

Mr. Caudle Wouldn't you think that's hard to do when there's strength in numbers?

Ms. Jones There's always strength in numbers, but there's also called coalition building and basically, you know, does it really make a difference if a Hispanic person gets in versus a black person, versus a white person, if the person who gets in has the same values that you have? That's my point, you know, in other words if that same person is concerned about, you know, may head start a program, and that's important to me, what difference does it make if there's an Hispanic person that's gonna vote for that head start program? Or black person that's gonna vote for that head start program? Or with person that's gonna vote for that head start

program, now where in comes the issue is the distribution of wealth once they vote for it and they say OK we're going to start the head start program, how is it going to be distributed? And that's where it's key where everybody's at the table, representation so that there is an equal representation and equal distribution of the pie.

Mr. Abebe Judge Jones, What is your view on reparations?

Ms. Jones What do you mean about reparations? Oh, you're talking about, OK. Reparations, well my view is, you know and I know, there has been many views, I know recently if I'm correct they paid the Japanese who were placed in the facilities during WWII, they actually paid them for reparation. Of course, they weren't paid for slavery, and I know that it's very difficult. I don't see that happening. I don't see that it would be worth my time or energy to get involved in that. I think that, you know, that people have a right to pursue it if that's what they want to do but from what I've seen, you know, slavery was not a good thing. We built this nation on our backs, a lot of slaves died. A lot of slaves died in slave ships, but I have talked to numerous people most of the people in the world want to be in America. So even though there's been some bad, there's been some actual good from slavery. I think as culture, we have been able to, we are like, we spend billions of dollars, we are a nation in ourselves in terms of African-American people and our spending power and our ability to spend money and to reach other continents of the world. So I just personally don't think that reparation is important. I think that I, personally, am happy to be American, glad that I'm born in this country. Unfortunately my grandfather was a slave for me to be here, but I'm very happy I'm here.

Mr. Abebe Why do you feel reparations won't happen here? Are they asking for too much money? Or is it Feasible?

Ms. Jones I just personally don't think it's realistic. I don't think that you're ever gonna get enough people in Congress to vote for that, and to give reparations and say OK, your great grandfather was a slave and because he was a slave, I'm going to pay him money for what he, you know of what he went through, as regards to slavery.

Mr. Abebe Earlier, I heard you say that President Bush had placed, as a Republican, he's placed African-Americans in key positions, but how do you feel about the pressuring of J. C. Watts?

Ms. Jones Well, I personally don't know that J. C. Watts was pressured to leave Congress. I've read some articles. I've met J. C. Watts on several occasions. I mean, I don't know, I mean, my position is I really can't answer the question because I don't know that your premise is true. My understanding that he's leaving because he has five kids that he needs to make some money to educate them. Now I don't know if that's true or not, but keep in mind if you're a Congressman you probably make \$125,000 a year. You live in Oklahoma and you live in Washington D.C., which is one of the most expensive places in the U.S. to live and maintain two households and educate your kids on that salary and fly back and forth every weekend of the month is demanding and I see that is a political decision. It's a service position and so, I mean he maybe leaving because he's tired of or he maybe leaving because he's frustrated with what he feels lie he's being accomplished within the republican party, but his position is what I understand, is why he's leaving actually makes sense. I've actually seen in Florida where there was an African-American Federal Judge who was the bench and people were very upset with him when he left. He was appointed for lifetime but when you're making \$135,000 and cost of tuition is now, what \$20,000 a year, I mean it's very difficult when

law firms are paying \$300,000 to \$400,000 a year, just to stay in these positions sometimes.

Mr. Abebe In regards to the educational disparities, how do you feel about the Robin Hood resolutions?

Ms. Jones Well, in regard to Robin Hood, I think it's a good concept, but from what I can see it's not working. I'm of the position that I personally believe that without your system, I personally believe in if the system doesn't work it needs to shutdown. I mean to take money out of Highland Park to pay for schools in South Dallas; you take money out of South Dallas to pay for it. There's never enough money to spread the wealth. Jessie Jackson Jr. right now, has this constitutional amendment where he want to make education the constitutional amendment where everybody will be required to get equal education, because education in Mississippi is not equal to education in Texas. It's a wonderful concept, but the money's not there. I would rather see the money stay in Highland Park and the school in South Dallas is not good to be shut down, either get it up to the level that it's qualified or allow these kids to go to better schools and give the money to take their money wherever they want to go and get the education they want to get. A lot of people don't agree with that concept cause they say that these kids aren't gonna make it to another neighborhood and maybe that's the case but at the same time what we're giving them. How is it that we're teaching our kids cost, we're not teaching our kids school, we're just teaching how to take a test and when you finish. I had one guy who's a lawyer. Literally, he has a client who can't pass the test. She has a wonderful education but she can't even pass the test, she doesn't even have a GED. You'd think she'd at least get a GED out of going to high school for 12 years even if she can't graduate, some kind of certificate, something that says something that she's accomplished, so my position is

that these schools if they're not operating and they're not functioning, they need to be shut down or the need to get up to speed. And that's why.

Mr. Abebe A lot of the proposals for the voucher system are offering about \$2,000 a year for each student, you know of any private school that a person can go and pay \$2,000 a year?

Ms. Jones No, I don't, but the problem is, OK, so you're saying that your thing is you've got \$2,000 and you can't get an education.

Mr. Abebe Well, there's no private school. I don't think that...

Ms. Jones The point is maybe, I'm not saying they need to privatize, also you can take a voucher and go to private school. I'm saying either, they're going to get the schools up to the level that they need to or these kids should be able to go to another regular county school, state school.

Ms. Williams What do the children do in the mean time until the system is fixed adequately? So who suffers, the kids that are in South Dallas that are still trying to make it right?

Ms. Jones OK, but the question is now do you think they're not suffering?

Ms. Williams They are, I mean, I...

Ms. Jones OK. Now they've taken the money from Highland Park and put it into South Dallas and you're still saying they are suffering?

Ms. Williams So take a school like Colleyville, I mean I went to that campus, I mean to me, what do you feel is a way to spread all that money, you're saying they should just close down the schools in South Dallas and have away for the

kids to get to the schools in Highland Park or Colleyville? I'm just trying to figure out, what?

Ms. Jones What I'm saying is that the school system is gonna have to come up to the level, but if you don't require them to come up to level, why would you keep pouring into something and it stays at mediocre level. That's where it's gonna stay. But as soon as you're gonna be shutdown next month, all of a sudden they got teachers who can teach, all of a sudden they come up with resources. It's to me almost like the welfare system, if you keep paying into something, and say OK, you can have another baby next week and then you can have another baby next week, they gonna keep having babies. The day you say, no more money after 2 years, all of a sudden everybody got a job. I mean that's true, and that's just the reality of lie, and the more you work in the criminal justice system as a judge, and as a prosecutor and you deal with society, you become less idealistic and you begin to realize this is not working, and we need to do something different, because it's not working, and all I'm saying is all of a sudden, I really believe, if you told them they're gonna shut this school down, you got six months to get up to speed, I betcha they'd hire the best people to get in there even if they have to privatize and get it up to speed.

Mr. Abebe Now Judge Jones, we'd like to open it up for questions from the rest of the class.

Student 1 I have two questions. Since we're on the topic of education you are aware that Texas has stated that if a school is low performing that you can take you child out of that school and move your child into another district correct?

Ms. Jones Right.

- Student 1 So the question that he posed, as far as this amount of money that they're gonna give you which is \$2,000 which is not enough for us to put our kids in a public school, my opinion is that these private schools are gonna increase their tuition. We're not gonna even be able to get in there anyway. So how are we gonna do that? So how is that gonna solve the problem when it comes to vouchers, cause I think that's what you're saying or leaning towards?
- Ms. Jones OK. I didn't say I was leaning towards.
- Student 1 No, you didn't, but...
- Ms. Jones She said Robin Hood, that taking the money form Highland Park and putting it into South Dallas or wherever and I'm saying it's not worth it, and I'm saying we need to come up with another system, but even in your statement, my kids are not gonna get in the school anyway. There's a whole mindset already set there. Why not believe my kids gonna get in, and I'm gonna get a scholarship and I'm gonna approach this totally different? I mean half of the approach; I mean you get what you say almost.
- Student 1 And that is true, but when it comes to probably would get in, but I'm not just standing for myself, I'm looking for the 20 other people that's behind me, in that same system that you said, if we just reach out and help 1 person in our community, I'm also looking at the 20 that's behind me that is not gonna make it. I mean I may make it, but the 20 behind me is not gonna make it.
- Ms. Jones Right, and I hear what you're saying, but the problem is I mean, I'm literally on the boy Scout Board and we're in a system where we have to take the uniforms out to the meetings and take them back and we're in a

system where we sign up Boy Scouts and we decided they need to pay to be a Boy Scout, because if you doesn't pay you don't have any vested interest in what's going on, and, I mean I'm just shifting so we're dealing the whole problem and I understand you're talking about educations, but we're dealing with a deepened issue of disfunctionalism in the family structure, because we got to get to a point where people are responsible for their kids, for their households, for getting their kids to school, you're saying that if we keep doing Robin Hood, all I'm saying, I'm not sure Robin Hood's working, I'm not saying that maybe we're doing a quick fix and your kid can get into a private school, and this other kid, I'm not saying they should go to a private school, they can go to another public school, but if you're not willing to drive your kid, or get him on city busing and get them to where they need to get now, I mean statistics are showing that the dropout rate is ridiculous, so maybe we temporarily stopped it for the first 2 years but, I'm telling you, you're saying that these kids want to get into anything. I'm telling there's good chances those kids aren't gonna make it anyhow, it's just a little further down the road.

Student 2 With regards to possession of crack cocaine and cocaine, the penalties are different, yet they're almost the same substance, do you have any issues about this?

Ms. Jones Well, in the federal system they're different. I was a federal prosecutor for 6 years and there has been major challenges on that, because there's definitely challenges on that they're race disparities, because the white people use cocaine, black people use crack. Their sentencing guidelines have been that way. My understanding is they're going back to a justice, the rational behind it though is crack cocaine is more potent, the crime that comes with the use of crack cocaine is more violent and it comes with more theft crimes. How things of that nature, that was the argument, now whether that's a true argument or not I don't know, but they're definitely

disproportionate, and you're seeing people who are, like you said it's the same cocaine, but it's in a whole different state and what happens with crack cocaine it's like when you take crack and you get that high the person is chasing that high for the rest of their lives. Now I think it's very similar though, because they have the same exact effect, but you're right, they are disproportionate and I know they're working on that.

Student 1 Can you speak on the Voting Right Act, Section 207, since it is coming up in 2007?

Ms. Jones No, I can't.

Dr. Gutierrez Judge, the first question about language reform, cause other people of the black minorities and the 2007, that she's asking you is the sunset that's gonna expire.

Ms. Jones OK. And I don't know enough about it to be able to discuss it.

Dr. Gutierrez Any other Questions? I want to know who Lou Sterritt was and who Charles Allen was?

Ms. Jones And I don't know who either one of the are.

Dr. Gutierrez You don't know who Lou Sterritt was?

Ms. Jones I mean, Lou Sterritt, I know they name the jail after him. And I know Charles Allen, but I couldn't tell you the historical position on him.

Dr. Gutierrez Where does Judge Jones see herself when she's 49 and 59?

Ms. Jones When Judge Jones is 49 or 59?

Dr. Gutierrez This Judge Jones.

Ms. Jones I have no idea where I'm gonna be. I have no idea. I'd be surprised if I'm in politics or a judge though.

Dr. Gutierrez How long does it take to vest in the County of Dallas as a County Criminal Court # 11?

Ms. Jones It takes 10 years.

Dr. Gutierrez Is that so?

Ms. Jones It takes 10 year and that's the same for a DA. You have to work for the county exactly 10 years to vest.

Dr. Gutierrez So 2 ½ terms?

Ms. Jones Well, actually yes.

Dr. Gutierrez Interesting

Ms. Jones But, see my bench was created in 1999, so when I took the bench I was appointed by the county commissioners, so I had to run again within 2 years, so I know I've been on the bench for 3 years and then I'm running again for this next term will be 4 years. So that will be 7 years, so I have to run one more time. It's kinda hard some times.

Student 3 You said you were appointed so, someone retire, die, or what happened?

Ms. Jones Actually, my bench is a brand new bench. It was newly created by the legislature in Texas. They created a lot of new courts and the county commissioner, since I'm a County Criminal Court appointed me, and then I immediately had to run for reelection.

Student 4 So, to get appointed, how did you get appointed?

Ms. Jones To be appointed I applied for the position.

Student 4 OK. How did you find out about the position?

Ms. Jones Do you really want to know? It was from my friend across the hall.

Student 4 Was he a judge?

Ms. Jones And he had a docket that had 3,000 cases on the docket and at the time the docket was created, he had 3,000 pending cases over loaded, he needed to get some more cases and he could not get any. He wanted a new court created. They could not create a new court because unfortunately there was a congress woman down in Houston who was holding the benches hostage because she was tired of them creating new benches and no one of color was getting on them, so George Bush couldn't get any benches for 4 years. So my friend came and asked me could he use my name to start getting them to try to create a system that was fair and which to appoint judges. And I said I didn't care, so he went to various people and asked Senator West and some other people to convince them to open these benches and to create some benches and they did, and then there was a whole interview process in which they decided who they were going to appoint, which is the first time they've done that. Normally people just happen to be judge, and no one know how it works and I actually the job.

Ms. Patricia Do you feel like there's too much politics in the education system?

Ms. Jones I think that there's probably too much politics in everything because of what happens is everyone has an interest in the agenda, sometimes we loose sight of the purpose of what we're doing. If whether it's a criminal system, or whether it's the children and we loose sight sometimes of who we're trying to help.

Student 1 OK. 1 quick question, you said you worked with kids in a ministry, what was the name of that ministry?

Ms. Jones I attend the Potter's House, and we have a college and career ministry call Next Level.

Student 5 Are you going to the Billy Graham Crusade this weekend?

Ms. Jones No, unfortunately I have to go out of town for something else.

Dr. Gutierrez Anything else?

Mr. Abebe On behalf of the African-American Politics class, I would like to once again thank you for coming and we wish you good luck on the bench and we hope that you run again.

Ms. Jones Well, thank you.