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Oral History Interview with Nick Juravich

Voices of Crown Heights oral histories, 2016.027.1.13

Interview conducted by Svetlana Kitto at the interviewer's home on May 18, 2017 in
Crown Heights, Brooklyn

KITTO: Today is Thursday, May 17, 18th, 2017 and I'm Svetlana Kitto from the Brooklyn Historical Society. I'm here with Nick Juravich and we're here at my apartment on Classon Avenue and Sterling Place in Crown Heights. This oral history interview is for Brooklyn Historical Society's Voices of Crown Heights Project. Now if you would please introduce yourself, giving your full name, birth date and where you were born.

JURAVICH: My name is Nicholas Albert Juravich. I go by Nick. I was born on [date redacted for privacy], 1984 in Northampton, Massachusetts.

KITTO: Yeah. Can you tell me a little bit about your early life?

JURAVICH: Yeah. So I was born in Northampton where my parents were living while they were finishing their PhDs at the University of Massachusetts. My dad is a professor of labor studies at UMass currently. His PhD is in sociology. My mother got a PhD in anthropology, currently works in oral history— sorry— local history. This is an oral history. She works in local history.

And we lived in Northampton for about six months, moved down to— first Reading, Pennsylvania and then— Philadelphia, primarily until I was about nine years old. My dad was working at a Penn State affiliate there and I was living in what was then something of a kind of gentrifying neighborhood in Philadelphia, the Mount Airy, Chestnut Hill area. And then when I was nine we moved in 1993 back to Amherst and my dad took up a job at UMass, where he still works and we -- so I kind of grew up in Amherst, Massachusetts.

KITTO: Okay.

JURAVICH: I suppose there's more between then and now.

KITTO: Yeah. So can you tell me a little bit about the neighborhood, for instance, like, that you were living in; your first kind of memories of it?

JURAVICH: Oh, in Philadelphia?

KITTO: Yeah.

JURAVICH: So we actually lived in a big, old, beautiful house in what I technically think is Chestnut Hill— southern end of Chestnut Hill— that was rented at the time by Quakers, as part of a program where they rented these big old houses owned by wealthy old Quakers to do-gooders. And the story my mom tells is that when they handed her the keys— having confirmed they could rent this place for something like, peanuts; it was like \$500 a month for a three-story duplex and it was a giant old mansion, basically— the woman turned to my mother, who's last name is McArthur, and said, "You know, just a few years ago we wouldn't be renting to someone with his last name." This is Juravich, so still, I mean, like there was a -- forget racism; this is the old, you know, sort of chauvinism towards Eastern Europeans still lingering at that moment. But these neighborhoods -- Mount Airy more than Chestnut Hill were changing rapidly. Chestnut Hill had always had a more of an elite kind of nature to it and the southern end is sort of contiguous to Mount Airy in some ways. But I went to a local public elementary school, big school, you know, K-8, hundreds of kids. I don't know what the demographics of it were. I remember my classes being very diverse and I think, probably, majority African American, but that's a really fuzzy memory. All my teachers were Black women; all great. I mean, [laughter] I had a great time. I loved growing up there and I had a sense of myself in a way that— you know, nine or 10 year olds will try to define themselves very strongly— after moving, as a city kid, which I mean, meant nothing at all. Save for the fact that I, you know, had these memories of Philadelphia. But -- and I retained Philadelphia Eagles fandom. But it did— It colored a little bit, my decision— I think, as a teenager— to apply to colleges in cities. So I was very eager to get out of Amherst, go off to a big city, one way or another and so I ended up at the University of Chicago, which was a blast.

And that's, I mean— insofar as I became an urban historian and that's what I do now— I, you know, really dove into all aspects of sort of the history and politics and culture of Chicago while I was there and that was a blast. I really loved my time there. Worked summers in various capacities as a summer camp counselor, as a, you know, part of a program doing kind of, you know, nonprofit and social justice stuff; the kinds of things colleges have.

And then I went off to the U.K. for two years on a scholarship to Oxford and wrote about Britain over there, and then I came back here to New York and that's when I moved to Crown Heights, in July of 2008.

KITTO: Mm-hmm. What is your background; Juravich?

JURAVICH: So the name is, it's interesting; it's Ukr— So the family was Ukrainian, but they made their way to the U.S. through the Balkans and so the spelling, I'm under— I'm given to understand, is sort of Croatian or Serbian; it has a Balkan quality to it. And then when they arrived in New York in the early twentieth century, the ship's manifest listed their point of origin as Austro-Hungary. So you know, somewhere on that Balkan-Austro-Hungarian Empire coast is probably where that ship departed from that brought them to Southampton and then from there, from England over to the U.S. But that's, I mean that's about— I'm a quarter Juravich, in terms of the name; Ukrainian. So the rest, I'm Scottish and German and English and Irish and whatnot; big mix.

KITTO: You mentioned to me when we spoke before the interview that you're a third generation red diaper baby.

JURAVICH: Yeah, in a way. And not quite in the sense that that's usually used, where I think it refers to a very specific subset of folks who grew up and lived in New York and were involved in the CPUSA and others, but in the sense that— So my grandfather was a, you know, a shop steward and union organizer in his copper plant and my father is a labor studies professor and an activist, long-time activist, in the labor movement and my— I should say an organizer and— and my mother, too, is sort

of on the political left and was always active in a number of things. So I, you know, I grew up going to protests.

I have a picture of me when I'm two with a little sign that says "Stop the Bombing;" I believe in this case it would have been of the -- well, what would that have been? Maybe I'm not two. I'd have to triangulate [laughter] to figure out what that was a protest of, but yeah. So I remember— particularly as a kid— going to, you know, picket line strikes, labor movement protests, all through my, you know, elementary and middle school and high school years.

KITTO: Mm-hmm. Do you have any, like, specific memories that stand out?

JURAVICH: Yeah well, so, a few. In Philly I remember we had a lot of fun. Every year we'd go to the big Labor Day rallies, which were down in front of Independence Hall. You know, they'd have a big march of sorts and in addition to being a professor, my dad plays guitar and sings labor songs, so he would perform at those. When I was old enough I got to perform with him sometimes, play guitar along with him. By that time we were in Amherst and the venues were smaller, but they were fun nonetheless.

So those were, I mean, those loomed large in my memory as these big events where my dad was up onstage. But I also, you know, when I was a little older, went along to various smaller kinds of things at Amherst. You know, more academic, but where you met really interesting people who were talking about, you know, all kinds of issues of the day. And you know, I had it in my head— even after high school, which once I got to college— this was the kind of thing I'd get involved in. And in my case it was, you know, it was the lead up to the Iraq War that I was really involved in my first year; in terms of anti-war activism on campus and in Chicago— all through '02 and '03— and of course, it didn't stop anything. But it was a sort of, you know, a catalyzing force for a lot of us to get involved with protest and politics in Chicago.

KITTO: Can you tell me a little bit about some of the protests in Chicago during that time; in more detail?

JURAVICH: Yeah well, they were— sure. So I mean— on campus, you know, we did— we had walkouts, we did big teach-ins at the Rockefeller Chapel; which is the big kind of

campus chapel building that's actually the size of a massive cathedral on Chicago's campus in Hyde Park, there. Lots of fliering and leafleting and things, and then we were involved with some of the big citywide marches. So, the one we went to down in December of '02 is the one where Obama famously said— then still a state senator, you know— "I'm not opposed to all wars, I'm opposed to a dumb war," which of course, he reiterated a million times on the campaign trail in '08. And then the big action— which made a lot of national news was, you know— a protest in response to the start of the bombing. I think in March it would have been then, of 2003; where you know, basically the protest is flooded, what was then Grant Park— not yet Millennium Park— and then we poured over onto Lake Shore Drive and took Lake Shore Drive over and that was, you know, it was unplanned. It was a big protest march. The CPD ended up not being particularly brutal that day, though there was some fighting and tussling on the edges of it and we were out there for hours. And that sticks in my memory— in part because a photo of me with my roommate on my shoulders holding a sign was in the *Chicago Tribune*, but also— because later that year when John Nichols of *The Nation* came to campus he was talking about, sort of, the problem with the way the mainstream press covers protest and one of the things he said was that introducing footage or live coverage of that protest on CNN— I can't remember which anchor— but it sort of said, "This may disturb some of our viewers." You know, "We're going to show this now, but prepare yourselves," and it was, you know, literally after showing hours of endless bombing, which there's no, you know, no caveat, yeah, no disclaimer for; there had to be a disclaimer to show a peaceful protest in Chicago. That this might really upset their viewers. So Nichols used that to highlight this kind of -- this disparity and that, so you know, the fact that I was a part of that and involved and that stuck with me then.

KITTO: Mm-hmm. But you said that before college was when you sort of knew that you were going to, kind of, make this your life; like, activism.

JURAVICH: Well, actually I have not been an activist my whole life and I have friends who are full time, you know, activists and organizers and I, I'm amazed by them.

KITTO: I just mean your interests.

JURAVICH: Yeah, no, I mean, you know, I was, because I was— I went to these things, my parents went, and you know— It was, you know, the way that I think people who have been longtime, you know, lefties are involved with various movements do; it's sort of like, is there a picket line? We will be there. Is there a protest? We will turn out. It wasn't, sort of, a question. It's just, you show up. You, you bring yourself and your body and your sign and you chant along, you make noise. You know, the various networks get activated; whether by phone in the old days, now by, you know, email and social media and you show up.

So that; I mean I always, I had that sense and then, you know, I was involved I think in high school; with, you know, mostly just kind of stuff around the high school. But I wrote a long article for my high school paper about the killing of Amadou Diallo, actually, [laughter] here in Brooklyn [actually took place in the Bronx] and how, sort of, horrific it was and how there should have been more outcry about it and stuff like that. And we were active in protests; even of the bombing of Afghanistan in '02, which of course, was far more popular and less controversial. But we wrote editorials and had little student protests and things as high school students, so I was involved in that. I remember my mother actually insisting that she should have ceremonially put a copy of the editorial me and a couple of friends wrote against the sort of rush to bomb Afghanistan in a little manila envelope and said, "You're going to need this if you ever have to be a conscientious objector." And she had Vietnam in her head and sort of wanted to, to have a paper trail that would demonstrate that I was conscientiously objecting to war, in case they wanted me to go over to Iraq. Of course, that's not how they do it anymore. Now we just pay the poor to do it. The old models, back to the Civil War model, which was ugly, but --

KITTO: How were politics talked about in your house? Speaking of your mom.

JURAVICH: Oh, all the time. All the time at all volumes, constantly. And, and yeah, we listened, you know. When I was a kid, we all would, you know, we'd sort of sit around in the kitchen— which was sort of our hanging out space— as people made dinner.

And we all kind of helped and cooked and NPR would be on and then my parents would yell at and about NPR, you know, "All Things Considered." So yeah, it was the news of the day, whatever was happening locally, yeah. It was, it was regular dinner conversation. And we were expected to have opinions— so for instance, I, you know— Not expected to, but encouraged to. I -- In 2000, I was a very big Ralph Nader advocate at age 16 and my dad thought it was the stupidest thing in the world. It was a cult of personality; Nader was useless. Like, get behind Gore. Don't let Bush win. He was right. But I don't think it was stupid to be pro-Nader. He actually carried my high school [laughter] in the student election, which is not surprising in a kind of, a liberal college town, but --

KITTO: Mm-hmm. What about your mom? Like, for instance, in that scenario.

JURAVICH: She was more amenable to it [voting for Nader]. But she, it's funny, she didn't, it wasn't a case where my dad was the sort of personality and she played the peacemaker. They both were equally, you know, sort of vocal and aggressive about things they cared about. That's just one particular example. I'm trying to think of a good one. So, for instance, my mom was— was and continues to be sort of— horrified by the state of American [laughter] higher education and public education and would yell about that. And then sort of, you know, if she felt that anything in our educations evinced any sort of hint of the kind of dumbing down of the curriculum or the failure of, you know sort of, political education, we'd be grilled or asked to, you know, stand for why we were taking one class instead of another and such.

KITTO: So they're very involved.

JURAVICH: Yeah. I mean not— it's funny— by the standards of Amherst, not [laughter] actually. By the standards of, you know, a town where people, you know, professors are really eager to get their kids into good colleges and all that. But they were, yeah, I mean you know. They were sort of involved in most parts of the college application process and the, you know, yeah.

KITTO: Yeah. So -- back to, or forward to college. When did you kind of decide what you were going to study?

JURAVICH: So in my— actually this is, given that we're doing an oral history, this is fun— in my second year at Chicago I took a class with George Chauncey, who's a historian of, a historian of sexuality; of gay and lesbian experience in America and he, yeah right, he's amazing. And the class, which actually was titled Social History of American Sexual Subcultures; so that it would list as "Soc Hist Am Subcult" on a transcript and therefore not out a student to their parents— different era. Now he calls it "Gay History" or I think he calls it "Queer History;" at Yale, where he is now. But, so that class, which I was recomm— basically I, you know, I had a good advisor at Chicago, I was lucky— and this person said, "Oh, all these things you're into, all the stuff you talk about; like, you should take one of George's classes and he'll get you interested in all kinds of things," and I think I had it in my head that I was going to be like a sociologist or a political scientist or something or major in those things. But the class just hooked me. It was amazing. We read amazing texts. He was an amazing teacher and part of the class was actually an oral history project; so we were interviewing gay and lesbian, queer, trans alums of Chicago who George had contacted through, sort of, an ongoing project. They've actually just finished in the last couple of years, so this ended up being kind of a 10-year thing on and off. But we all did interviews. It was the first -- you know, we got a little bit of training. We had gear loaned to us. I did over-the-phone in this case. I had this wonderful two-hour conversation with this brilliant, you know, '60s guy who had been involved in everything on campus and then gone off and joined a, kind of like, commune/collective on the North Side in the early days of Boys Town. And was, you know, running around, you know, doing all kinds of awesome stuff. I mean, right, like challenging, you know, these racist construction workers in the neighborhood and fighting for every bit of equity they could get out of this, you know, slowly-gentrifying place. And then just, yeah, he ended up I think getting a, like a PhD or an MD in psychology or psychiatry years later and, sort of, fighting all the kinds of hideous things that those disciplines had done to gay and queer people. So he was fascinating. We had this like great two-hour conversation and I wrote a paper about

it and I was hooked. I was like, “This, yes, this is what I want to do.” And I took the next, the next semester took a class with George that was— or in the case of Chicago, I was on the quarter system, but— it was Post-War American History and Culture and this, we read books about Chicago. We read Arnold Hirsch’s *Making the Second Ghetto*. We read, you know, bits of urban history that really like, you know, explained and opened up the history of the built environment around me and all this and it was sort of like, yeah, this is, this is what I want. This is, this is, this is how I think about the world and it’s helping me think about the world more, in a more illuminating fashion.

KITTO: Mm-hmm. And what about people on campus? Like other students that had an influence on you?

JURAVICH: Yeah, so I, my— I was lucky. I showed up at Chicago and you know, college is a difficult transition for a lot of folks. But I had kind of a ready-made community in the track and cross-country teams, which, you know, those aren’t particularly— I don’t know— they’re not characteristically jock sports. But even then, at a place like Chicago, you know how the sports are, because it’s Division 3; it’s not a big sports school. So, I had great teammates, you know, who were all as passionate about whatever they were studying as I was and some of them became my roommates then. By my second year we all lived together in this apartment that we stayed in for three years and we just had a blast and one of them is now a, she’s a full-time organizer with the Green Corps. Another’s become a doctor. Another went up to Vermont and founded this awesome kind of naturalist education center. Another, she was a teacher here in New York— actually in Newark— and then worked for a nonprofit, a nonprofit here and now is a, just finishing at the New School; a master’s in organizational change management. So like yeah, awesome, awesome people. Not that many who were like historians, necessarily, but who were interested in thinking about the same things. So that roommate who’s an activist for Green Corps now, she and I were the two; she was on my shoulders with the sign when we were at the protest, for instance,

in '03. So I had really great people around me, and, who shared interests and passions.

Two of my roommates were part of the Summer Links program that I did as a rising senior, where they placed you at a— you know, it's a kind of classic model for a, from the Public Allies model, but they'll place, you know, students, 30 students— with social justice and/or nonprofit orgs all around the city, you know; places that often are too small to, sort of, afford an intern of their own. UChicago pays the internship and then on Wednesday nights and Friday afternoons we all got together as a 30-person group and had a training; which meant, like, an introduction of some large set of issues in Chicago from, you know, one or more practitioners or specialists in the field and then there can be discussion and it was awesome. It was a great summer. So, two of my roommates were part of that. Lots of friends came out of that program; stuff like that.

KITTO: Cool. So, what happened after Chicago? Where did you go?

JURAVICH: So I went over to Oxford. I was really lucky. I got a Rhodes scholarship; [laughter] just you know, a total, one in a million thing. That was great. And so, I was over in the U.K. for two years doing a master's in economic and social history and I'm something of a— You could call me a lazy historian or a local historian; I'm interested in the places I'm in. So, having studied Chicago for my BA thesis and written about a protest there to desegregate the beaches of Chicago, I went over to Britain and wrote about transnational activism and the making of Black British protest in the '50s and '60s. And that was a blast.

KITTO: Yeah. So -- how long were you at Oxford?

JURAVICH: This was a two-year master's.

KITTO: It was a two-year master's.

JURAVICH: And the year— actually the summer between I came here to New York. I had a terrible— sort of, well, not terrible— let's say a boring paralegal job, but I worked it to pay the rent so I could do research at the Schomburg. Which was great; so, getting the American side of that transnational story. How U.S. papers covered, U.S.—

particularly the Black press— covered Black British protests and how it fit into a larger kind of transnational world of, of anti-colonial activism and Black protest and all that.

KITTO: How was it to go from Chicago to England?

JURAVICH: Oh, it's a big, big difference in a lot of ways. But it's, it was fun. I mean, the British university system's just much less student-oriented. You really have to find your way, especially for master's students. I mean, another thing that's kind of funny is, you know, you become a Rhodes scholar and there's just all of this laudatory language and, sort of, this blowing of smoke; you're going to be the next senator, president, this, that and the other thing. You go over to Oxford, and to the Brits, you're just, you know, another silly American.

They couldn't care less what scholarship you're on or how impressive you are and as a master's student— which most of, most Rhodes scholars are, which I was— you're not important at all to the professors. They care about their doctoral students and their undergrads. Master's students are seen as cash cows, you know sort of; sources of income for the university, and unserious. So I really— you have to fight; you even have to fight to get access to the library sometimes, you had to fight to get access to professors and get them to take you seriously.

They would if you did, but if you just showed up and said, "I'm a Rhodes scholar." "Yeah, I don't care. Enjoy backpacking in Thailand or whatever it is you're going to do instead of reading my books." Like, they were not— So that was kind of jarring. And then Britain's dark and it's cold. Right? It is actually those things in the winter. It's beautiful in the spring and summer. But— so yeah, it's always a challenging transition to, you know, go from an environment where you're really comfortable to a new one. But in my case I was lucky. I found good people there, too, to hang with and work with.

KITTO: Did you? Yeah.

JURAVICH: Yeah, no, I mean, people in my program, and then the second year I was there, I had a nice core of folks in that, kind of, Rhodes/Oxford community, which is,

you know, very international. It's not just Americans who go over there on that. So, it was good. You know.

KITTO: Mm-hmm. So, what was the next step?

JURAVICH: So I, my now spouse, Jean, came over the second year I was in Oxford. She graduated college— she was at the School of the Art Institute in Chicago— one year after I did, in '07. So, she'd moved over. And the deal we, sort of, made was, "Oh, if you're going to come to Oxford for a year," which sounds like kind of fun, live abroad but also, you know, not anywhere near her career or her world; she's an artist. She said, "I want to go to New York next," and I said, "That sounds great." So, we had a plan to get to New York, and so we actually moved back to Chicago first, because we were moving back at different times of year and we had some friends there who we could, sort of, stay with cheaply and then July, late July '08 we moved here to New York. We stayed with Jean's sister, who lived in Chinatown in Manhattan. But then we scored our place— where we still are, actually— on Franklin and Dean here in Crown Heights, in late July of '08 and we've been there ever since. And so, Jean was then applying for jobs in galleries and things. She got a gallery job in August, and I had applied for and got this gig as a, a Regional Coordinator— as we were then called, but— essentially an after-school program coordinator for the New York Road Runners, in what is now called Youth and Community Services Division. It was then called the Foundation, but; their arm that does nonprofit work with schools in the city. So, I was an after-school coordinator. My role was to, sort of, to visit 42 different schools here in Brooklyn once a month each and meet with the people who ran the programs every day or every couple of days on the ground; bring materials. Often when I came, too, sort of, do an event as well. And in some cases, some schools you visited more often because they needed more help. In the case of others, you didn't come as often. So that was the job I was dropped into; having never lived in Brooklyn, knowing nothing of the geography, I was a brand new --

KITTO: What, what made you apply for that kind of job? Like were you thinking that you were going to be doing education or—?

JURAVICH: Well, so, yeah I had, I had been a student teacher in Chicago in a student teaching program there. I'd worked -- Summers; I've always worked with students and kids, you know, one way or another. I'd worked as a camp counselor. My job with the Summer Links program was as the community garden director for an art center, focused mostly on youth, way down on what's called South Chicago, which is a neighborhood on the South Side, way down by the Calumet River. And -- so I knew -- I'd missed, I'd missed the summer before. Because I'd been a paralegal, I'd missed at Oxford. I did a little volunteering there, but I hadn't had a chance to, sort of-- I'd wanted always to, sort of, do some of the fulltime, you know, on-the-ground work and I'd thought about applying to teaching gigs fulltime. But I also had a sense that I might want to go back for grad school and so, knowing that it takes years to get up to speed as a teacher, I wasn't ready to make that commitment and this job, kind of, uniquely suited my abilities.

It was running, which; I was, you know, a full time distance runner in college and was still training a lot in the UK. So, I sort of, you know-- I could do it but I also had experience kind of coaching and working with kids in that, you know, in different contexts there. It was school-based. It was direct service. It sounded like a lot of fun. Yeah and when they-- So they hired me and I was, I was-- also I needed a job quick and this was '08, so like-- already it was like, oh, this is going to be tight and they said, "Yeah, we want you." I said, "I'm onboard."

KITTO: Yeah. Had you been applying for jobs and having a hard time?

JURAVICH: Yeah. I applied for a bunch of stuff and didn't get any of it. I mean-- Partially because, you know, I had a lot of, like, skills, but no real experience and I think at that moment-- you know, especially in New York-- nonprofits were, sort of, saying, "Okay, you've never lived here. You don't know anybody here. You don't have any particular experience here. Like, why would we hire you? Yes, you have an impressive resume in some abstract sense, but like, you know, we need someone who knows what they're doing on the ground and we can pick from a wide range of those people in New York City, so why would we grab you?" I think, at Road Runners I stood out is because I

had been an avid distance runner and because I had, I did have the experience working with kids on my résumé, so it made more sense there. Even though they very much— you know, like all these jobs— threw me in the deep end. And I was able to swim, which was good.

KITTO: So you, you guys decided you were going to come back to New York. Why did you look for places in this neighborhood, in Crown Heights?

JURAVICH: So, budget, and we had a friend who was living at that point on Washington and St. Marks, here; which I guess the border's always a source of debate. But I suppose that's Prospect Heights -- ish. Maybe if it's on this side of Washington, it's Crown Heights.

KITTO: I think Washington and east is technically Crown Heights. I'm not talking in realtor language --

JURAVICH: That's how your drawing the boundaries? Yeah, yeah, no, no, no, I mean, that's -- I --

KITTO: Yeah. I think that's the official demarcation. I don't know. Or at least like, I don't know what the-- Yeah, yeah.

JURAVICH: Right, right, but there is no official demarcation; which is part of the, part of the issue. But yes, so he, he at the time called that Prospect Heights and, it's funny, he— I remember when we first walked around the neighborhood with me, sort of— said, "Yeah, east of here it gets, you know, a little less safe, probably. But you might want to look over there and—" Franklin to him felt like the edge of the world, I think, at that moment. He didn't know anybody who lived that far east and— I actually remember when I— So, we got the place, and again we got, we got so lucky. It's beautiful, one and a half— place, room— bedroom place on the top floor of a brownstone on Dean Street and it's— lovely landlords, great people; we know everybody in the building. It's really easy, and they could have, you know— We're not rent controlled or anything, because it's under six units, so not rent-stabilized— so they could have, I mean, the rent could have doubled by now and it hasn't, because they're just lovely people. And, I mean, because I think also, you know, they were—

when they lived there— were too busy raising their kids to raise the rent, kind of. They wanted stability, not, you know, constant churn. Anyway, so but yeah, we moved there. I mean, we also looked in what's, sort of, you know, Bushwick, right. Now, I mean it was, sort of, the edges of Bushwick. We looked at places around here. We looked at a couple of places, just on Atlantic and just north. We had one place on Atlantic that would have been just miserable; like, right where the LIRR emerges [laughter] from its tunnel. I mean, not miserable because it's a bad location. I mean, it is, I mean, miserable because of the sound, not because of anything about the neighborhood; just would have been roaring trains day and night. Yeah, and then we, we also were, kind of, in a hurry to find a place. You know, we were living on the floor of an apartment in Chinatown and so, I think, you know, when we found a place we liked— and it was nearby and it was in our price range— we, sort of, snapped it up. I don't know that— you know, we had, we knew people moved around in New York all the time. We didn't know how long we'd be here. You know, I don't think we ever had any sense we'd be here nine years; having a baby here. But, yeah, we were lucky. We were very lucky. And when I started at Road Runners I had a, a colleague; an old African American guy who grew up actually around the corner on -- it was what? President and -- not Kingston, because that's right in the middle of those big mansions, but I mean, maybe Albany. Yeah. Anyway, he worked over on that, kind of, right on that block and when I told him I was living on Franklin, he just said, "Oh, shit!" [laughter] -

[Interview interrupted.]

KITTO: Okay. We're back

JURAVICH: We're back.

KITTO: Okay, so yeah, you were explaining how -- [laughter] you decided to come to this neighborhood in particular.

JURAVICH: Yeah.

KITTO: Yeah.

JURAVICH: Well, our sort of origin story in part— origin story is the wrong way to say that— but one of the reasons we gravitated immediately over to, I think, to this area, rather than to Bushwick, where we started looking initially, because Jean had heard that artists were moving there. You know, we went to look at an apartment in Bushwick and it was— it's funny, we looked at two places that somehow or another was right where elevated tracks were outside the window. And the first place in Bushwick was over an auto body shop, right there kind of at the Central Ave stop on the M and it was just roaring loud, totally chaotic; the place was not clean when we showed up and it was not occupied. It was just sort of like trash in it and the guy who was showing it, it was pretty expensive and he was sort of like, "I've got people here every day; I don't really care if you're interested." And we, sort of like, "Oh my God, what have we gotten ourselves into here?" You know, we had nice places for not much money in Chicago and we had looked at a couple of places around there and then we took the train out here and before we even walked around here we met our friend down at Prospect Park. We actually took the shuttle from the C down to the, the Prospect Park stop and so we went walking through Prospect Park and it was like, oh, this is awesome. We're both runners. You know, this is really lovely, this is close, this is nice. And then you know, we came out in Grand Army Plaza and we came down Eastern Parkway and we went over to his place and it was sort of like, oh, this would be a really nice place to live. Just purely on the landscape and then, yeah, so when we found a place we liked nearby, we jumped on it.

KITTO: Mm-hmm. So can you just tell me a little bit about like your impression of your building, your block, when you first came in?

JURAVICH: So we're in, you know, we're in a brownstone and we're on a block that's mostly brownstones. And it was interesting. At the time, right away we noticed that it was--

KITTO: And so we're talking about Dean Street?

JURAVICH: Dean Street, between Franklin and Bedford.

KITTO: Between Franklin and Bedford.

JURAVICH: Which is interesting, right, because of course, yeah, Dean going the other way is industrial. There's that little old industrial zone that kind of ran, at some point sort of from St. Mark's down to Atlantic and from Dean to Washing-- or from Franklin to Washington. Now it's really clustered, kind of between Dean and Atlantic there, those two blocks of Dean and Pacific but, yeah. So we were, you know, walking to our place actually from the west, people often, if they were coming, say, from Vanderbilt, we would say, oh, it's not really, you know, desolate. Because it did, there was just, I mean not, it's funny -- I think scary in people's minds, but never actually scary; there's just nobody who was there because it was, you know, auto body shops that were closed at night and, and school bus lots and things. But our block is quite nice. Our block is where it transitions to being residential and -- yeah, the difference we noticed right away was that, you know, the street trees weren't as old and mature, right? This is actually -- I've always noticed this, right. You go to a sort of, a very well established New York neighborhood; the street trees are very grand. Right? They're big. They've been cared for. They've been tended, by the city and sometimes by residents, too. And then it was one thing we noticed, that there had been street trees planted but they were small on our block. And actually now they're much bigger and Dean today, along those brownstones, looks a lot more, sort of, Prospect Heights or Park Slope than it did in 2008 and just, almost by virtue of those trees, in some the only reason. But that was one thing we noticed right away.

So it felt more sort of open and kind of bright in the summer sun than maybe, you know, a block of -- say like Park between Underhill and Vanderbilt would, or something like that. But -- it was nice, it was really nice and it felt much nicer, for instance, than living either on the avenues, which were loud, or then living like [laughter] on Atlantic, with this train coming out of it. So I think we were drawn to the block, absolutely. And our neighbors were great. So downstairs-- it's just a three-unit building-- so downstairs from us is a woman who's been there longer than we have; a White woman, a little older than us, works in bridal for Bloomingdale's or Macy's or something like that, great down-to-earth person. And then the people who

owned the brownstone and bought it for a pittance in 2000, it's now worth 10 times what they bought it for, quite literally. They bought it for like \$27-- \$272,000 and you could probably sell it now for \$2.7 million, easily. That's what other brownstones on the block go for. Local African American family; dad works in finance, mom works in real estate, three kids, dog, just the nicest, most lovely people in the world and they were, they were great landlords and they were friends and we kind of, you know, we all got to know each other and talk, you know. Easy to keep our bikes in the building. Easy to leave stuff in the hall and -- and yeah, it's interesting. One thing that affected my perception of the neighborhood early on-- which was interesting-- with the, you know, in a way, I was far more emblematic with gentrification than they were walking down the street. Right? As a, as a newly arrived young White person, very visibly not from around the neighborhood, on Franklin in 2008 and yet, you know, I, you know, being the sort of, you know, awkward, nonprofit, you know, leftie I was, was sort of ambivalent about gentrification, even at that moment, because you can see it's starting to gear up in a big way and -- you know, my neighbors were pretty unsentimental about it. You know, they were, you know, in finance and real estate and they were happy to see the neighborhood change, happy to see their property values go up, for all kinds of very reasonable reasons.

And so that, you know, colored my impression and it shows up in the blog, which I wrote, you know, that there was a, you know, a long running and established sort of property-owning class in Crown Heights. Sort of African American and West Indian folks who had worked very, very hard to improve the neighborhood in the years when the city didn't care at all about it, but also who were-- you know, at least in those early years that I was here-- unsentimental and even enthusiastic about the change coming to the Avenue. That changed for a number of reasons, I think, not least of which was policing. But see, I'm -- the block was great. You know, we got to know our guys at our little corner deli, you know, bodega; the many guys who run it and, quickly, they were lovely. You know, if Jean felt uncomfortable late at night, if she was followed home by somebody from the train, which would happen, she would just duck in there

and stand and they'd ask questions until the, you know, whoever was bugging her went away and then she'd come home. And yeah -- and pretty quickly along Franklin, in part because I starting writing this blog within like a couple of months of living here, we got to know business owners; folks who had opened up places or were opening up places and where we felt comfortable sitting and talking and chatting and that was great. So we were, we were enthusiastic about the neighborhood, very quickly, and I think felt really good about -- you know, our choice of place, having sort of done it completely, you know, without really a ton of information. We were happy with where we landed, yeah.

KITTO: Hmm. So how did the blog kind of emerge?

JURAVICH: So, what, what's interesting about my experience, coming to Brooklyn, in particular I think, was that whereas a lot of folks in my demographic-- I was 24, you know, young White college grad from, you know, middle class background, you know-- would land in Brooklyn and their whole world would be sort of oriented back towards Manhattan, right. Like you know, if they lived far out into Brooklyn that was sort of like the furthest out they went. But I happened to have this job where I worked with a ton of schools, you know, not just in Crown Heights and Bed-Stuy, but in East New York and Brownsville; those were my big four neighborhoods. I also had schools out as far as Canarsie, down to Coney Island. So I actually -- the borough kind of extended for me, whereas I don't think it did for a lot of people. And initially the blog was, I was just, you know-- the best days of my job were the ones where I didn't have to go into the office in Manhattan and I would have five or six visits with schools and I would leave my house running at 6:00 a.m. I'd run to a school, I'd run with the kids, I'd run to the next school, I'd run with the kids. You know, literally sort of hopping around Bed-Stuy and Crown Heights or maybe out to East New York. East New York I usually took the bike because it was like four miles out. But you know, so I just had great days out in the borough and in between, if I had an hour to kill I wasn't going to, you know, take the train in and come back. So I'd, you know, I'd find a place to sit and eat and work. I'd meet interesting, you know, business owners who couldn't, who

were, "Why is this 24-year-old White kid in a bright orange New York Road Runners Marathon blaz-- you know, windbreaker coming into our, you know, our little Dominican steam table place in East New York to sit and have a meal? And let's talk to him and see what on earth he's all about. So I got to have these great conversations early on with people all over the borough that were just, you know, interesting. And then I was seeing the landscape. And so I started taking photos and a friend sort of suggested, yeah, start a blog and I sort of thought, well, this would be fun. I also, you know, having been a history undergrad and then a master's student, you know, I had this sense of, like measuring my days in words produced and was eager to start; write and think about what I was seeing.

And it's funny. The first year of the blog is less Crown Heights and more me taking pictures of things all over Brooklyn. You know, so there's pictures of banks in East New York that were converted to churches. There's pictures of, you know, funny street names in Brownsville or old houses I found in Bushwick or in, you know, wherever and so it's -- and I enjoyed that, too, because there was a whole world of people doing that. And of course, this itself was part of the engine of gentrification. Right? The rediscovery of the old -- but you know, so I would get re-linked on Brownstoner[.com] or if I found a particularly funny or interesting thing, I would get re-linked by "Gowanus Lounge" in the big Brooklyn blogs and "Gothamist;" that was exciting. So you know, I, I jest a little. It's silly in hindsight. But it was fun and then the blog came to center on Crown Heights, in part because I was here more than I was anywhere else. So even on the weekends I was up and down Franklin Avenue. And then also because very quickly I realized that I was having, you know, extended-- not just one-off-- but extended conversations with neighbors and business owners and people involved in the Crow Hill Community Association. And that in writing about that, I wasn't so much generating, like a kind of, mixed, silly chronicle of Brooklyn blog, but actually something where I had lots of people commenting, some regularly where I got calls from, you know, reputable news sources who wanted to know what on earth was going on in Crown Heights. Reporters from the *Times* would

call, even as early as '09, sort of to say, "What's, what's your take on X, Y or Z?" And so it made me feel like there was something, you know; a project worth pursuing, in terms of this continuing to write and think about the neighborhood. It's funny, for this oral history I went back and looked through a lot of that and especially the early stuff, because a lot of it's unreadable. I mean, it's hopelessly naïve, it's ridiculous, it's -

KITTO: What are you thinking of right now?

JURAVICH: Oh, just you know, posts about -- hooray for this new business or, I just -- nothing particular -- you know. I mean, there were times when I was wrong or said stupid things on the blog, many times. But I'm thinking more just in general, the tone of it is so, sort of like -- naïve and hopeful and, and earnest. And I am a very earnest person. I don't have an ironic bone in my body. But --

KITTO: So, yeah. Like speaking to that, what were you documenting, exactly? Or what were you trying to document? And what was the, sort of, affect? What was the, sort of like, approach or attitude that you had towards what you were documenting?

JURAVICH: Yeah. So -- I think, I think pretty early on I realized, as the blog shifted from being a kind of chronicle of things I saw as a Road Runners employee to a story or a -- a sort of -- a blog about Crown Heights, specifically Franklin Avenue, I, you know, I realized I was documenting change. And I wanted to comment on that. And actually looking back at it I was thinking, you know, I documented a lot of stuff in great detail. Like it, that is actually kind of useful. You know, as a historian now-- someone who goes through archives-- if I found something like this, you know; somebody's long journal documenting in real detail a, you know, a period of change in the city, you know, neighborhood, I would be really thrilled about that. That's a good resource. My editorial comments are, you know, my sort of, my angle at the time I meant to be, you know, I wanted to be thoughtful about the process. I wanted to be thoughtful about -- the neighbors I was talking to. I might -- I am an earnest goober but I think that I affected even more of [laughter] that in the writing, sort of -- which is meant to both convey a certain honesty about being a newcomer; a young, a sort of

enthusiastic, White, you know, nonprofit kid. And yet I think there's, you know, there's a little bit of reading that, back through it. There's a little bit of like almost a -- I know there's a saccharine quality to it now, it's sort of like, oh yeah, there's so much enthusiasm for everything. Everything's great all of the time. Like, there's not -- it lacks a critical lens that you might expect or want someone who is writing something more substantive about a neighborhood and neighborhood change to have. I developed that later on. And part of that was because I also went back to grad school in 2010 to get a PhD in U.S. history and study New York in the twentieth century and so one of the ways the blog changed is I started referring to, you know, histories and things I was reading and sort of contextualizing Crown Heights in a much longer trajectory of, of urban disinvestment and then investment, selective investment and change and real estate and employment and all of that. So the blog gets better. But it also gets more boring and, sort of, [laughter] academic, which is not a great way for a blog to be. I mean, writing 2000-word posts wherever you're citing Neil Smith and David Harvey, they're not the kind of things [laughter] people want to read.

KITTO: But you did have a lot of readers at one point. Right?

JURAVICH: I did, I did. No, so the readership -- and then I eagerly followed my Google Analytics at first and then later just, kind of, to see what people were reading. But yeah, I mean, '11, '12, '13, the blog would get-- you know, when I was writing 20 posts a month-- it would get, you know, 15,000 page views, 10,000 hits, 5,000 unique views a month. I mean, that's, that's a lot. It's not, I mean, not by the standards of some journalism, but it, it meant that I had an audience, and more interesting to me was that I got to live in this very interesting space between the blog and real life, which I'm not sure-- I mean, the other people did, too, actually, in some of these neighborhood blogs, where I knew a lot of people who commented. Some of them would identify themselves on the blog. Some are people I had long-running debates with on my blog and on their blog or their message board. Others were people I knew in the neighborhood and then many people I knew who didn't post on the blog, would still read it and then, you know, I'd see it and they'd ask -- they'd sometimes call,

actually, and say, "I didn't like what you wrote about my business," right. "Can you change this one thing?" And so I had a sense of trying to be responsible to people as I had conversations with them and also having kind of an ongoing conversation that, to move between, you know, sitting at Lily & Fig and talking to the owner, Lily Johnson-Dibia, and then going home and writing and then she'd tell me what she thought of what I'd written the next day or something like that. Same with Kevin Phillip and Garnet Alcindor who, you know, are long, long-time sort of business owners and community organizers of a sort on Franklin.

KITTO: Which -- what businesses?

JURAVICH: So Kevin started out in '97 in the space that's now the annex of Chavella's, with a place called "The Spot;" that was a boutique called "About Time" when I got here. He also owns the building where Domo Taco is now. And where they operated, for a bit, a candy shop, called "The Candy Rush," and then it was "Cool Pony," which was not their project; somebody else's, they were just renting it. And they've done well. But they -- yeah, and they were the organizers of the Kids Day; poured a lot of their own money into that, too, for Crow Hill, for years, for the five or six years it ran, which was a great project. Yeah.

KITTO: Yeah, so who— what, how— who was your audience at that time?

JURAVICH: So that was, yeah, so reflecting on this, you know, I aimed to be honest about where I was coming from and who I was and I aimed to speak in part, I think, to people like me, who were perhaps new to the neighborhood and thinking through the place they'd arrived in. And partly because I felt like I had something to say to that audience, which at the time I sort of thought of it as, you know, "go into the establishments you find 'sketchy' and actually talk to the people there." Like I did want to challenge people of my demographic who I saw moving in, being, you know, dismissive or afraid of long-time establishments in the neighborhood and residents. So I encouraged people to go to community meetings, encouraged people to patronize local businesses, encouraged people to, right, to think and speak and, and interact with the neighborhood in ways that were more open and humanizing,

perhaps, than a lot of the discourse of "sketchiness" allowed for. But I also think I was trying to have conversations with, you know, what I thought of as the whole neighborhood. Upon reflection I think -- so who read the blog? In addition to sort of other young White new arrivals, and not just White arrivals, but other young arrivals - - business owners and property owners; 'cause that's a particular class of people. Right? The folks who go to Crow Hill meetings, who ran that organization, definitely read it and had often nice things to say about it, but had things to say about it and told me where and when I was wrong.

KITTO: Like what kind of things would those be?

JURAVICH: So like I wrote a post about a new business, you know, it was sort of more just like thank you, or that was nice. One example-- so this is from 2011 or '12, was it? I don't write these things down. Yeah, so in 2012 the *Times* came out and did a big piece that was sort of like, uneasy renaissance on-- Liz Robbins wrote it-- on Franklin Avenue. And it did the classic thing where it was like, it juxtaposed a picture of something new on Franklin Avenue, with a photo from the riots. It was like, those were two and a half miles apart. [laughter] You know, those are not the same place; that's not the same space. And of course, it was, you know, riots as, you know, as Zaheer [Ali]-- [who] runs this Oral History Project-- says, you know, "riots" is this kind of, you know, nadir. And then this triumph [emerges from that] origin moment. But what I thought Liz Robbins got it exactly wrong and what some other people I thought got wrong in talking about Crown Heights was this idea that the riot meant that the place was sort of scarred and wounded and sort of uneasy about everything, including gentrification.

And I actually think the legacy of the riots in Crown Heights-- insofar as there was one with respect to this early wave of gentrification-- is that there were a lot of people who were very savvy, cross-class, interracial organizers; long-time residents. And that included people in Crow Hill and in the Mediation Center and all kinds of other contexts; religious leaders-- both rabbis and pastors-- and these folks were eager to be vocal as intermediaries and brokers and also leaders in what they saw as, you

know, a positive set of, you know, developments in terms of, you know, economic growth, which at that time wasn't yet rapidly displacing businesses every minute. But also when they were worried, already, I think about displacement, surely, of residents, who wanted to sort of effect, you know, the building of a new community among these folks. Precisely 'cause that's just what they tried to do and had to do after the riots between Hassid, between the Lubavitcher community and the West Indian community. So, I thought there was something to that, and what was nice is that I wrote up a kind of reply to this, at the same time that Kevin Phillip— who had a, you know, a screen printer over at The Candy Rush— printed up all these shirts that said, "It's not what happened here, it's more what's happening here." And what's funny is I think different— so he ended up— he handed out and then sold zillions of these shirts. They were all over for about a summer, which was kind of fun. And it was interesting, because I think for some people that was meant as a kind of, a thoughtful comment and for others it was sort of a statement of boosterism. I think Kevin meant it in a thoughtful way, like, "Come out and write the story of what's going on here. You don't have to use the riots to talk about gentrification. In fact, it would be better if you didn't because that contrast obscures as much as it reveals." I think a lot of people were like, "Yeah, forget the riots; everything's great." Well, that's not -- I don't -- Kevin certainly didn't think that because, this is getting a little off topic. But one thing I started seeing early on, as someone who was just trying to pay attention to the neighborhood and talk to people, was the degree to which policing— particularly once they brought the Impact Zone to Franklin Avenue; so that was in 2009— became not just, you know, deeply unequal and discriminatory, but violent, right.

So Kevin, business owner, long-time resident, and also someone who knows everybody at the 77th Precinct -- because that's what you do as a local business owner, you know, when this Impact Zone arrived and these hordes of young officers and recruits were poured out onto the street from 6:00 a.m. to 2:00 a.m. People who know nothing about the neighborhood, none of the people are given no mandate to— Are told they're basically going into a war zone and their job is to clear the streets of

anybody who looks threatening. You know, twice they arrested Kevin, both times because they thought he was breaking into his own businesses. The second time, for good measure, they smashed his head on the hood of the cruiser, bloodied him up. Every time they got him to the precinct, everyone there knew who he was, and told them to release him. But he was rightly incensed and at the Crow Hill meetings he raised these questions to, how— we [the Crow Hill Community Association] fought for this policing; we actually put out a petition because we wanted to make the streets safer. It's not making it safer, particularly not for long-time residents— how do we address this as discriminatory policing?

And the NYPD would send their community affairs officer and he'd say nice things but, but they didn't actually do anything, right, they couldn't do anything and part of that was revealed when there was -- a really violent raid on a block of Franklin that is still, as a friend of mine put it, gloriously un-gentrified. So if you walk down Franklin on the east side of the street, right across from where Rosco's is now, there's a block of buildings where folks still sit out on the stoop; play dice, drink, have fun. And frankly it's, I mean, there's nothing threatening about it, never was. But there were sometimes altercations there that brought the police very quickly and then led to a scene that seemed more threatening, I think, probably than anything the residents were doing. But so, at one point -- and this is completely insane and I wasn't there to see this, but I talked to a number of people who I trust and who were not distorting it; lying, making this up. Basically, the police showed up— again, this is lots of Impact Zone officers— and [they] started, sort of, manhandling people; shoving people around, you know, reaching into people's pockets. One young guy who had his back turned, had somebody put a hand on his shoulder and instinctively shrugged it off and in doing so, caught the, his elbow on the sort of neck/shoulder area of the cop and it was like he flipped a switch. The police just immediately grabbed everybody, threw them on the ground, caught them. They beat the ever-loving crap out of this guy. They ran into the building; they maced a guy in a wheelchair, they dragged people out into the street. I mean, I mean, they had 40 cruisers there in no time at all.

I mean, they put in the call, they said “An officer’s been hit,” they had a helicopter floating above. There was no threat, no credible threat of any kind here. And then when there was a community meeting a week afterwards and people got up and they actually had the, I think the captain, the head of the precinct there, from 77th. He was all sweetness and light until this issue came up and then he flipped, flipped here. This, again, African American captain; the guy’s been in Crown Heights for years and he was screaming and veins were popping out of his neck, “I will land a helicopter on Franklin Avenue if you touch one of my officers,” and it was just that. That’s the “blue line,” right? Like, none of you human beings are worth anything. “I will do whatever I, anything it takes, to defend -- again, some perceived threat, a completely nonexistent threat to my officers.” This has nothing to do, at that point, even with like, even with real estate. This is just, you know, an occupying army. But I think in its more subtle iterations, it was clear that this kind of, really discriminatory protesting only accelerated the process of gentrification, even though it had been requested in some respects by the very people it was harming.

KITTO: How does it defer to the police relationship, like in the past? Like in the decade before.

JURAVICH: Well, so I can’t speak to that. But people I talk to would say --

KITTO: Yeah, I want to hear what people you talked to because I know you’ve talked to lots of people, so --

JURAVICH: Yeah, absolutely. So Frank, Mr. Frank Esquilin, who is the president of Crow Hill now, long-time resident, he’s been here 35 years, likes to say, and he uses this often in his introduction, when he talks to young people, I mean, not just me, “Listen, for years there was nothing they could do. You could call about anything. Police, fire, whoever -- nothing they could do. And if you had a real problem, they wouldn’t show up. Nothing we could do. We’re stretched thin -- nothing we could do. Now that you’re here, there’s nothing they can’t do,” and by “you” he doesn’t just mean young White people; he means capital. Right? He knows. He’s a very smart guy. He’s clear on the, sort of— Now that there’s a different set of demands being made on the city by

a different group of people who have influence by way of money, which is real estate, all of the sudden, all of this, this city, the force, I mean, all, every— whether there's garbage pickup, whether it's fire, whether it's police, whatever, it's just very visible to long-time residents, the massive change in city services. And the fact that they still don't really benefit, except in a kind of, you know, almost unintended way— many long-time residents, particularly long-time Black and, and Caribbean residents— is really frustrating and rightly so, to those folks. And they also highlight something, you know, I spent a lot of time on the blog talking about interpersonal relations; I think there is value, in and of itself, to living well with one's neighbors. I don't think that has to be a means to something else. But there's only so far that can go. Right? And certainly, I think, there are a lot of ways in which, you know, these interpersonal interactions come to be flashpoints for large attentions around gentrification, as the stand-in for much bigger structural issues.

But it's important also, you know, you go to Crow Hill meetings. Or I used to go to, you know, lots of these little events and things, like Launch Pad, which is no longer there. These other little, you know, kind of community-type spaces, back when rents were cheaper and they weren't all— it was possible to have a space like that. And you know, people would get up and say things like, "What? I, I actually lived in Detroit!" or "I lived in Philadelphia," and I suppose I could have said that, you know. "I'm not like these others," and there was a sort of performance of, you know, of enlightened-ness on the part of— you know, recent arrivals.

And I think -- and look, it's important to be enlightened, yeah, but like ultimately that's not the point for a lot of these big changes, and you can be as enlightened as you want. But unless you and we and everyone else are actually sort of organizing and trying to take active steps to, to either curb— in the case of the police abuses— or to address and try to mitigate and/or reverse some of the displacement that comes with, you know, rapid real estate and then city-fueled rapid real estate investment, you know, all the niceties in the world aren't really worth much.

KITTO: So obviously there's a lot --

JURAVICH: There's a lot in there, yes.

KITTO: There's a lot in there, so, how about— Can you tell me just some stories? Like, okay, just, I mean I was going to say, I can guide you, you know, like stories about particular businesses, stories, more stories about policing. Stories about displacement that you came into contact with through your blog, like developer— you know, kind of, like I have stories about this block that I've seen. You know what I mean? Like that kind of thing.

JURAVICH: Yes. So a range of things. So let's take them one-by-one. So businesses. So one thing I think is interesting. Right? When I first moved to Franklin, one of the reasons I think I was really enthusiastic about a lot of the new businesses -- and again, I was a bit of a goober. But it was because actually a lot of them were, independent, Black-owned businesses that were opening, you know, because essentially young people, many of whom had grown up in the neighborhood, not the slightly older folks, but people who had a connection, you know, and often had some connection to the building; maybe they owned it. Maybe a relative owned it, maybe somebody owned the building they were in and these storefronts, some of them had been vacant, others had been, you know, sort of low turnover shops of one kind or another; they saw an opportunity to, like, have some fun and do something exciting, open a new business and, and there were— lots of really interesting places opened up. Something of, like, everything; from Breukelen Coffee House, which is still there, Black-owned business, to you know, Nairobi's Knapsack, which was a really cute, kind of, kids' shop and play space, way ahead of any kind of curve, in terms of there being enough people around with kids who had the money to patronize that kind of a place, but a really cute spot. Lily & Fig, which was this lovely bakery and teashop or— Kevin's, Kevin's various businesses; he opened a restaurant called Tastebuds, and he had a place called The Candy Rush on the other side of the street. All of these places; I think the first thing I noticed was that they really struggled in a number of ways. Right? And I noticed this by, like sort of, 2011, 2012, 2013. First I mean, you know, we know this, right? It's much harder for African American folks to get access to credit and capital and there's

discrimination in an interpersonal way. That bankers don't give loans to people with darker skin, but there's a historical and structural account of that in redlining and all the rest. So you know, and of course, you know, it's just harder to access, not just capital and loans, but also family wealth. There's been a systemic effort to keep African Americans from accumulating that, historically. But aside from those big things, it's also true that at the very minute level, you know, Yelp reviews of these places would be unkind, right? "It was sketchy," you know. "It was slow," right? And it wasn't. I mean, I was in these places. I watched these people, sort of, and I watched the encounters, too, between young, slightly newer than me White folks and Black counter staff and it was, it was uncomfortable because of in-born bias and fears, often unaware. But another thing about it was, I think; this is right at the moment when Yelp and Seamless and these things are taking off, and writing a bad, a bad Yelp review can kill a restaurant in its early days, can kill a business. And particularly it can kill businesses that aren't aware of what's even happening on Yelp. So I talked to the guy who owned A Slice of Brooklyn, which was a pizza place before Roscoe's in the same spot and look, I like Roscoe's a lot, pizza's great. It's a little better than A Slice of Brooklyn. But A Slice of Brooklyn was a perfectly serviceable pizza place with a lovely space. They got terrible reviews on Yelp, as far as I could tell, because people just did not feel comfortable with the counter staff. Which was outlandish. They were lovely people. I talked to the guy, Elwin, who ran it, a bunch of times. He was fabulous. And I mean that in a sense of like, it's not just sort of naked racism as much as I think there's this, this way that like these platforms like Yelp and Seamless and others amplified that. And made it harder for those folks to do business and then, coupled with everything else that's happening, with the incredibly rapid rise of commercial rents, because there's no, you know, there's no first right of refusal [for commercial tenants when leases are renewed] or commercial rent control or rent stabilization. You know, some places have their rents triple and quadruple, you know, after three or five-year leases and so, you know, there was just a big report in the

Times, coming off of a big, a bigger study done by some social scientists showing that New York has lost a ton of Black-owned businesses over the last decade.

And I think, you know, I would wager -- I didn't see this in the article, but I'd wager some of these online platforms have accelerated that, because they bring disproportionately negative reviews to, to Black-owned businesses. Then I think it's also a factor of, you know, people who open businesses and these gentrifying bands that have moving east across Brooklyn or you know, north in Manhattan and into the South Bronx now. You know, they found themselves caught, you know, at the sort of as, at literally, sort of, first wave businesses. You know, the guy Elwin who owns Slice of Brooklyn sold his pizza oven to Roscoe's and he owns that building so he's okay. But it's sort of like, they did some of the -- a lot of the early work and they didn't actually reap some of the benefit in many cases, of, sort of, the first round of new business openings. Now again, that's a business class of folks, they're not the worst-off of people who've been screwed by gentrification and I think, you know, it's— One group of people I don't think I was ever talking to very much and to, you know, [residents] who are now far better represented by things like the Crown Heights Tenant Union and other kinds of efforts, were the long-time tenants in the area; who are the ones who are displaced by all kinds of horrible landlord chicanery and I witnessed a little of this right on Dean Street. So there was a brownstone that was sold and it was sold to be done as a condo conversion, right, and this is actually -- one thing that's interesting, as far as I can tell, the price of brownstones has outstripped the appraisals to the degree that, at this point, you have to have a ludicrous amount of cash on hand to buy one. It's not even like they're being bought by your, sort of, old school Park Slope, you know, family fixer-upper gentrifier. They're being bought by people who are going to gut-renovate and sell them off for even more money or often break, you know, a big three-story brownstone off a stoop into four condos. You know, buy that thing for a million, a million and a half, break it into four condos, sell each of them for \$750,000; there's your profit. And so the people who lived in this building-- and this one they had rent stabilization because it had been broken at some

point into six or more units-- were just terrorized by, basically sort of, thugs. I mean in like the old sense, like hired goons who were, who would do things like show up with dogs and let them roam the halls, you know, urinating, defecating, barking at residents, who would put on music in the building and then leave, like in any empty units, so it would thrum all night in there. They came in, you know, in the middle of the day and ripped out sinks, ripped out toilets, saying it was improvements, all this stuff. I mean, just literally terrorize these residents until they left. And I had neighbors and we talked about this and we wrote stuff about it. I blogged about it and there was nothing we could do. It was just, because it was just, by the time they get to Housing Court, by the time they fight it, you can't live like that, you can't. There's one woman who hung on as long as she could. I mean -- and eventually -- and what happens is they just take the buyout, right, the initial buyout offers are like a thousand bucks, you know; peanuts. You could never, never use that for anything beyond like short-term, you know, cost of living. And she got a better buyout because she hung on, but like -- given real estate in New York, she's not finding another place in Crown Heights for what she paid in that space, you know. And that, I mean of course-- news reports-- I think there's been good reporting on that all over the city and Crown Heights Tenant Union's doing great work and really important work. I think they're actually building, and smartly building, alliances between recent arrivals who were overcharged in places that are supposedly renovated, often right next door physically to people who are being, you know, evicted, harassed, you know, terrorized by landlords in an effort to flip those units to market rate and then slap a new coat of paint on and call it, you know, "pre-war beauty" and rent it for some exorbitant sum to a new group of new arrivals.

So I think highlighting how, you know-- and I do, I really respect the work Crown Heights Tenant Union's been doing because they've been able to highlight how, like, on both sides of that dual housing market, that racialized dual housing market; people are getting, are getting screwed and it's worth, it's really worth highlighting that. And that's something, again, you know, a group like Crow Hill was not able to

do -- is not able to do because it includes a lot of long-time landlords. Not people who own big buildings, but people who own brownstones and maybe have a couple of tenants, right. And their story and their experience is quite different and much like Black-owned business owners, Black landlords, long-time residents. I don't mean to suggest this just falls along the lines of race, so perhaps we should say, you know, long-time residents, the vast majority of whom are Black and Afro-Caribbean. And it's worth distinguishing not just among those two blocs; African-American and Afro-Caribbean, but also all the different islands. Right? There's actually a tremendous amount of diversity in Crown Heights before any gentrifiers arrived.

But you know, those residents, those long-time tenants and landlords have very different relationships than, you know, a new arrival does to a management company. And likewise, a lot of these businesses— I mean, the example I gave earlier, Kevin and Garnett— poured thousands of their own dollars into those Kids' Days, right? I'm not saying they're not capitalists; they want to make a buck. But they're, you know, they have a commitment to community that overrides, you know, or doesn't override but, but tempers their commitment to profit. Right? And I think that was true of many of these landlords, too and Crow Hill is an organization where that happened, right; where there was a sense of, okay, you know, "We're all trying to do better, trying to make the neighborhood better. We want to improve it," and they did. I mean, from the '80s and '90s, the time when, you know, nobody was writing about Crown Heights on a blog and no one was really paying a lot of attention to it except, sort of, you know, [to] write these lurid stories on crime and riot. These people worked really, really hard to beautify the neighborhood. Eve Porter; who was president of Crow Hill before Frank, who I hope you all are able to interview, she's probably in her nineties. I don't know how well she is, but she was a, a dynamo in her day. Brilliant activist and knew everybody on every, you know, community board, city council and in every local school and everything else. And she would say, when you showed up at a Crow Hill meeting, "You all are here because we were here." She really wanted to emphasize, like, "Don't, don't buy this story of the urban pioneer, that you sort of, you

know, sallied forth among the natives and carved out a place for yourself." Like, "These neighborhoods are beautiful; these brownstones are beautiful and attractive to you because of the efforts of people, at a time when the city did nothing for us, did not care. We had to fight tooth, claw and nail for every, you know, broken manhole cover and every, you know, fire department response or whatever it was," and that's true and actually, there's a lot of good, recent history about this, you know. Mike Woodsworth's book on Bed-Stuy is a good example, [among] other stuff. I mean, there's really good work showing that's exactly the case. The real cruel irony is those are the very folks who, you know, maybe if they own property they're doing okay, but even if you own property and you're cash poor, you can get taxed out of your building, to say nothing of the people who are renting. And there's this very cruel irony where people who spent a long time and a lot of years building a lot of really good things with those organizations were completely unprepared to respond to the kind of rapid, you know, real estate-driven gentrification that hit Franklin by, you know, '10, '11, '12. And often found themselves inadvertently, sort of, apologizing or trying to manage it when it couldn't be managed. And I was, I was one of those people, I think, both on the blog and at the organization, sometimes. Because I, too, was not prepared for how quickly the change would change; how quickly it would go from a sort of, an exciting story of "Look at all these new businesses run by people who were at Crow Hill," to "Look at how quickly people are forced out. Look at how ugly the language gets on your own blog. Look at how nasty the police are. Look at how violent [laughter] this process that we call 'capitalism' is." My other -- I'll finish that rant here by saying my running joke about the blog is, you can trace an arc from sort of liberal optimism to socialist pessimism on it over the course of five years. [laughter]

KITTO: So let's go back a little bit. So can you just tell me a little bit about what, like just tell me or list the businesses, when you first moved here, the businesses that you were writing about, talking about? Like, just tell me and tell me if they were Black-owned and etc.

JURAVICH: Yeah. And I did keep a very detailed account of a lot of this on the blog over the years.

KITTO: Well, like what you can remember. Yeah.

JURAVICH: Yeah, if we're remembering, so I mean, businesses and business owners I talked to. So Tony Fischer, who owns Bob & Betty's, whose name is not Tony Fischer, as you know— who's a long-time resident, not resident of the neighborhood, long-time business owner in the neighborhood— he's a resident of Bay Ridge. With some, and— going into Fischer's before it was redone completely as Bob & Betty's, back when it had, you know, just bricks and no, no glass. And Tony, you know, had a lot to say about the neighborhood and a lot to say about how it had changed. So he was one person I talked to. Sort of moving down the block, imagining my walk home from the 4 [train]— then there was— so the guys at Breukelen Coffee House, when they opened, both of whom have Crown Heights connections as kids, and who were also very active in kind of early organizing in the neighborhood, and who knew the Franklin Park guys well, also, just 'cause they were sort of friendly, so the Franklin Park guys a little bit.

KITTO: Is Franklin Park Black-owned?

JURAVICH: No. Franklin Park's owned by the guy who owned Southpaw over in the Slope and by Toli, lovely Russian dude, who also owns Crown Inn and a couple other places. Also these folks, most of them I'm mentioning were involved in the Crow Hill Association. Moving down the block -- Lily at Lily & Fig was someone I spent a lot of time with, a friend, I mean, she made cookies for favors for our wedding, so a lovely, wonderful person. And we paid for those, obviously, that wasn't a favor. But -- she, and she was someone who was reading, you know, not just my blog, but like really avidly gobbling up everything in "The Times" and everything and all the newspapers. About, not just gentrification, but sort of like, where the city was going and so she wanted to talk to me about, you know, Bloomberg's third term, about this and that. We had these great running conversations, me and her, her husband, other people who gathered around her counter, too. And that's a Black-owned business, was.

Kevin's spots; so, first About Time, then The Candy Rush, then Taste Buds, always, him and Garnett, his, his wife who she -- was very active in the Crow Hill Association for a while and other efforts.

Also Hadiyah— who's the accountant, who has her spot there; Had Associates, on, just south of, just north, sorry, of Sterling— who is the treasurer of Crow Hill, so I'd pop in and say hi to her. So those're all long-time residents, Black-owned businesses. Definitely also pop into the Crown Inn, say hi to Toli, knew some of the bartenders there. Later the guys at Barboncino. Actually, Barboncino's a great example of a business that, like, in every way is gentrifying and yet is not [as segregated], has managed to, I think by virtue of just the ownership and the staff being, like, thoughtful people. You know, it's not all-White, right? It's a place that lots of people feel comfortable. And it just doesn't, doesn't evince the same kind of— like, evinces maybe the wrong verb— doesn't ooze the same, kind of like, gentrifying privileges that say, like, businesses like Little Zelda and Wedge have; have and have really led to controversies with local residents, long-time locals.

I mean, one thing that was interesting; by the time some of these next generation, you know, fancier spots started opening, Little Zelda, Barboncino, Gladys, it was interesting to talk to people about where they felt comfortable and where they didn't. Long-time residents as well -- so I talked to lots of, again, folks I knew from Crow Hill and people also on the block, people who said, "I don't feel comfortable at all, as a Black person going into Little Zelda. I just don't." And that's no knock on the owners, exactly. I think that has to do with just the, one, the price of the coffee and two, the fact that a lot of people working behind that counter. This is the reverse now, were, you know, recent young arrivals, like me, you know, who may be had been raised or had come to fear anyone with dark skin [laughter] in Crown Heights and would treat people who entered those establishments accordingly.

So it's sort of the reverse now happening. You know, one observation I made with a friend was when I moved to the neighborhood, you had to work very hard to live in a bubble where you only went to, sort of, you know, White-owned, White-staffed

businesses on the Avenue. Now that's easy. You can live in a world that's only, sort of like, shiny, sort of perfect, you know, catalogue-Brooklyn in Crown Heights. But you couldn't do that when I first got here. And I, and that was, and that generated a certain interaction to conversations that had the potential, I thought, to be productive. Who knows how much? Anyway.

So businesses, what other ones? No, those are the main ones, I think. Oh, and Mayfield; Mayfield, which when it opened, I put up a short blog post about it and it generated 53 comments worth of vitriol about whether it was acceptable to them to use the name "Mayfield" followed by a lot of really just ugly stuff from people about, like, "I'm richer than you and can do what I want." I mean, it was, that was towards the end of my blogging day— my sort of, my period when I was really invested in the blog and it highlighted for me; I reread it again today and I was like, God, this is exhausting; five years later, this is terrible. You can't -- this is like intolerably racist and cruel, the things people are saying here essentially about -- I mean the people who're using it somehow, criticism saying that maybe, like, borrowing the name "Mayfield" is a little appropriated or whatever. And turning that into, like, "All you lazy people who could have bought houses didn't and now you're mad and you're all so awful," and it was like, yeah, I can't believe [laughter] like anyone would put up with that. But, yeah.

So the Mayfield guys themselves are actually quite lovely and also do a lot of community-based stuff and programming, and so I got to know them a little bit, too. They're New Yorkers, native New Yorkers, both White guys, grew up in Manhattan but live in Crown Heights now. At least the, one of the owners does. I don't know where the other one lives. Sorry, that's a little over much, probably.

KITTO: No, no, no. That's really good. It's really helpful. What about other kind of stories that emerged from the blog and the comments, like -- it seems like an interesting way to sort of talk about the change.

JURAVICH: Yeah, yeah. Well, so --

KITTO: Like what you just, the story you just told.

JURAVICH: One thing I wrote at the end of my time blogging and this kind of long sign-off post; little self-aggrandizing, probably, but was, you know, when I first got there it was -- a lot of the people who were living in the neighborhood, I think by virtue of the fact that folks you know, they're a sort of different-- Within the waves of gentrification that happened, right, there are different strata of income brackets and the people, I think, who are first in these first waves are often very ambivalent; in part because if you're not making a lot of money it's because maybe you're, you know, a musician or maybe you work at a nonprofit or some other social justice organization that doesn't pay you very much. And so you have some ambivalent sense of what's going on in the neighborhood and also I think there were still -- this is another thing -- there was this fallacy, there is this fallacy -- I tried to lean against this in my writing, that Crown Heights and other gentrifying neighborhoods were just sort of lying there supine, full of like either the deserving or the undeserving poor, depending on how nasty you wanted to be. But that's just utterly false. Right? Crown Heights, again, it had a landowning class; it had a, had a business-owning class. It had a really diversified economy, driven in part by the fact that you have many different people from many different islands all doing all kinds of local things, whether that's restaurants or hair braiding or whatever else it is. You know, this was not a place that was empty or supine, and yet that's how it gets constructed in these gentrifying narratives. And I say that because those folks, again, the property and business owning folks, this sort of, you might call them middle class-- though I think class gets muddy here because it's unclear, like, if you're talking about like economic class or power or culture-- but they, you know, those folks would write on the blog and respond and would call me out if they thought I was being racist or if I, if they thought I was being too Johnny-come-lately to things.

I remember I wrote a very like enthusiastic post about MLK Day in 2009. Going out with the Crow Hill Organization and picking up garbage with my little rubber gloves and sort of saying, "Yes." I mean, it made me feel a little more ownership of the neighborhood. And someone wrote back, "Ownership, kid?" Like, "No, uh-uh, like

that is, first off, dispense with that language and secondly, how long have you been here? How much trash have you picked up? Like, have some perspective.” That was a very fair critique. That was, it was a [important] critique to hear.

That and, and some of that also came from fellow bloggers. There was a great blog run by a guy named Ferentz Lafargue, with Laurel Brown and Abeni Garrett posting on it. They were great. They [were] called "Nostrand Park." And they only ran for a couple of years. You know, three smart, young Crown Heights, Brooklyn-raised, you know, Black writers who were fabulous and who would challenge me or go back and forth with me in a very friendly way, but like, but were clear, like okay, you're offering a certain perspective. We're offering a different perspective. Where and when there's tension we should explore that; we should highlight that. They did an event, Laurel and Abeni were doing a documentary on the gentrification of Crown Heights. I don't know that it ever got finished. I hope it does someday. But at one of the events they said, "So are we the black blog and are you the white blog? You can't tell that from your analytics, but who reads what?" It's a good question. I think I did have more of a White readership in a lot of ways and I also noticed that, this other funny thing that was in addition to the comments, I would get—in the early days— private emails. So I had my email address up there, from people who were like, "We're thinking of moving, is it safe? Is it safe for kids? Is it this or that?" Which highlighted for me, of course, how the very act of writing this blog itself contributed to the process of gentrification, whether I wanted it to or not. And you know, it's funny. Initially I would write things like, "Oh yeah, it is." Like, "Don't let people lie to you about Crown Heights and don't call it Prospect Heights, and I thought that was very like progressive immediately." Like, "Yeah, it's great and yeah, people are awesome and yeah, like you know, you shouldn't have this stereotype of it being so awful." But actually that's --like eventually I just sort of wrote back to people saying, "Yeah, you know, look, I like it here very much, obviously. But you know, you should make your own decision." Because I realized that like, that variety of boosterism itself was contributing to [gentrification]-- not that like-- Not in a macro sense, but at the

margin. Heck, when the blog started, "The Observer," there's a reporter there I know, Dan Rubinstein, who wrote a very funny piece that was sort of "Gentrification Watch" for them for a few years. And her post about my blog was "Gentrification Watch. Crown Heights gets a blog." It's a good point, right, that the very fact of there being someone there who has the time and inclination to do this, you know, is indicative of a certain kind of change. So where was I going with that? Stories from the blog and comments. So one, that was really interesting early on was -- so posting about that, about policing, really revealed people's biases -- and starting right away with things like that raid I talked about -- but even a little later, I guess this would have been, was it 2012, '11? Yeah. So this was -- I want to say this was '12, yeah. I was walking behind two Impact Zone officers and I'm right behind them. They were younger than me. They must have been in their early twenties and one says to the other, "Hey, is that the guy earlier you said you thought might have been drinking." And they're pointing to an older African American guy who's going into the BNI Laundromat and going in to say hi to a friend, it looks like -- and they just start going, "Yeah, let's fuck with him. Let's fuck with him." And they're like a couple of, just, meatheads, just complete lunatics and they -- and bullies, high school, you know, schoolyard bullies. So they march eagerly and I sort of quickened my step to keep pace with them. This is before I had a phone with a good camera. I should have filmed this in retrospect, knowing what I know now. Right? But -- so I walked with them down to the BNI and I stood outside watching them, you know. They went in, and this guy, yeah, he was older, he was not, he didn't look-- I mean, there was this, the sort of, construction that they had of him was that he was some kind of like, you know, guy drinking on the stoop. But like, there was nothing in his pre-- he doesn't have a beer with him. There's nothing about his carriage that indicated any of that. Right? Like, not that even that's an acceptable reason to harass somebody, mind you, but like, he was literally just clearly walking to say hi to a friend and they drag him out and they're yelling at him and finally he yells back and he sort of storms off and they laugh and sort of walk away. So I wrote about this and the comments I got were unbelievable.

People saying, you know, there was one person who had this whole, like sort of, "Well, the real tragedy here is that the homeless have no place to go." I was like, "This guy's not homeless." And then someone else was like, "Well, I'm sure the laundromat doesn't want people loitering there." It's like, the staff were at no point involved and he wasn't loitering. I mean like, I go into, heck, I've gone into BNI after a beer, you know, [laughter], coming back and seeing a friend in the laundromat to say hi. Like, that's not weird. And, but just the -- and like, the kind of assumptions that were read into this incident that I had described as straight up, just start to finish as possible, by people who I'm pretty sure, you know, I presume to be young, youngish new arrivals, White, often perhaps property owners, which I'm not, but which many of them are -- were just sort of like, "Oh well, there must be a justification for these cops' behavior." Right? It was the rush to justify, just blew me away. Aha, this is, this is a clear-cut case of just idiocy. Like I, and I replied, "No, look, everything you are saying is wrong. All of these assumptions are false. I watched this start to finish." I wished I'd taken a video of it. Like, it just was complete overreach in violence and stupidity. And then people wrote back saying, "Well, yeah, I mean, that's what you get in New York." Like, so immediately substituting this sort of like -- "oh, there must have been a reason for like the" -- and that's another variety of, of sort of New York exceptionalism, that also becomes New York racism; this idea of that like, "Well, everybody gets screwed, so whatever happens, okay," is okay. I've been thinking about this in the context of our current president. Right?

Like, his racism is not "good old boy" racism. Right? It's not Jeff Sessions's racism. His racism is New York-borne right? It's that kind of, that sort of -- protect your turf. Fight and rumble and it's all good because everybody hurts everybody so it's all okay, kind of attitude. With a heavy dose of, "Hey kid, let me tell you something. If you think it's going to be different, you're naïve." So that was an example of the comments kind of getting, getting ahead of the story, in a way, and revealing something to me about my audience; something pretty ugly.

KITTO: Mm-hmm. Do you have other ones?

JURAVICH: What are the—? Oh, here's another one. So this is another example of policing. Right? After the West Indian Day Parade -- and I also did coverage of that every year, you know, Labor Day -- it's [the news coverage] always ridiculous, right? There are shootings; it's true, on Labor Day all over the city, a higher proportion than normal. That's because people are outside drinking. Right? And that's what, that's what you're looking at. And violence correlates more with unemployment than it does with race, but you know, you have these social scientists, you know, you don't need these from me in an oral history. But the point here, that like, every year the coverage, and the local conversation about the parade— particularly as more and more sort of, you know, gentrifiers, or more gentrification happened— was about like, "Oh, it's so dangerous. Oh, it's so scary, oh, it's so this." There's a million and a half people at the actual parade site. Not in the parties that happened before and after, but actually at the parade site, there have been a couple of incidents of shooting in the course of a few years. Now that's not good, that's bad and of course, gun crime itself is a big problem; it has little to do with people and more to do with policy, but -- you know, this always became a story of like, the violent West Indies. Right? And an example of this, which drove me absolutely insane, was so -- on Park Place at 9:00 p.m., so long after the parade has ended, after, this would be the 20-- 2012, 2011 parade -- so one guy got in an altercation with another guy and started shooting at him. That is bad. Right? This is a shootout in a doorway. So there's footage of it. The guy basically pulls a gun and starts shooting at his friend, his, not friend, this combatant in the doorway. The place, of course, is crawling with cops. From either side of Park Place, here come these officers. They fired 73 bullets in a minute. Right? And when the smoke cleared, Denise Gay, long-time resident -- I never met her, [but heard she was this loving, caring] lovely person -- has a bullet in her head and is dead. Right? They, of course, then drag her daughter into a cell, not a cell, an examination [room] for 12 hours to get her to con-- to, to issue a statement that clearly her mother was shot by the guy wielding the gun over there. You know, who is dead in seconds. Even though the ballistics revealed it was clearly a police bullet. Right? And like, and then

again, this story got told as a story of violence at the parade and it was like, no, this is a story of completely out of control police firing 73 rounds in a minute. The story -- like what happened here and the way it's told are just so radically different. And I think policing is where that's -- the contrast is highest. But it's true about change of many kinds. It's true about change on the Avenue and businesses; it's true about -- presidential change as well. And that -- I mean, that thinking, as someone who does oral histories sometimes that, you know, the narratives are really important to the stories we tell ourselves about what's happening. And one thing that the blog revealed to me was how radically different the stories different groups of people in the neighborhood were telling to themselves about what happened every day on the avenue. Whether that was violence, whether that was displacement, whether that was, you know, just a transaction at a business. Right? We had, I mean, people were reading these things through-- not just you know, lenses of race and class, but through like-- inherited, whole philosophies about how the world works and how people work and what happens. And which are themselves racist and classist, but are, you know, are surprisingly like -- sort of bringing whole world views to bear, that they can distort the very things in front of your own eyes.

KITTO: Do you -- I remember talking to Chadon Charles. Do you know him?

JURAVICH: Mm-hmm. I don't know him personally; I know who he is.

KITTO: About, because I used to go to his gym. I remember him telling me about developers harassing Black business owners. Did you hear stories about that when you talked to people who--?

JURAVICH: You know I didn't -- so -- I'm quite sure it happened, but I didn't hear stories of harassment as much from business owners. What I heard were more just stories of, of like lies, of just like people saying like, "Oh, yeah, you're going to be fine," and then like when the rent came, so, "Oh no, you're definitely out." Like, just unceremonious ends of contracts, rent hikes, dis--[unintelligible] and I'm sure that came with harassment in the cases of, you know, people who had leases and wanted to keep operating and the developer wanted them out, for one reason or another, wanted a

different kind of business in there. It's entirely believable. I didn't personally hear any stories of that. But, yeah I mean, it— the story checks out.

KITTO: Mm-hmm. So, what about other stories of, like, the different—? So the categories of business, the categories of businesses that were here when you first got here were Black-owned businesses that had been in the area for a long time?

JURAVICH: Or new Black-owned businesses.

KITTO: Or new Black-owned businesses.

JURAVICH: Right. And starting to have a few new of, like kind of, classic gentrifying businesses; some Black-owned, some White-owned. But like, you know, Franklin Park opens in April '08, that's right before I get here and things like that. Yeah

KITTO: Right. Yeah. And so what— I mean, I'm sure that you know lots of different things. But I'm wondering if you have any stories about, like, like businesses changing hands and like, for instance like I, you know, I've heard stories about the guy who, I also know, you know, have had interactions with him like, with the guy who owns Hullabaloo and Little Zelda's and --

JURAVICH: Of course. Yes, Michael de Zayas.

KITTO: Yeah. And --

JURAVICH: Oh, should we not name him? Is that bad? Oh, he's a business owner; he's out in the world.

KITTO: No, I think it's kind of important. So yeah. I just wondered if you had stories. Like you've talked a little bit about what the businesses were when you first got here, some of their owners. And then maybe you could talk a little bit about— not all of them, obviously, but sort of— anything you know or were privy to or were able to document about the new— like the set, like we, I— I moved here six years ago and so that was like when I came here I think it was like, I was in the first wave of gentrification, right. And so what I've experienced since I've been here has been like the second wave, that's like really intense and really fierce. So, yeah that; examples of that new class of gentrifying businesses.

JURAVICH: That's great. And so, a few thoughts of the way I contextualize it, I guess. So, I do think there's been a change both in degree and in intensity of gentrification, but also a change in kind. So like, absolutely I think you see more turnover, more rapid turnover. I used to joke that, you know, once a business— and this, I think the first time this happened was the "Hummus Place" on Franklin, but like— when it opened and closed before I even had a chance to get into it, so it's like, "Oh wow, okay, this is new." So there's that, there's more turnover, more turnover. But the difference of kind is also the different kinds of money. Right? And it's not just chains like Starbuck's or whatever, it's also, you know, the fact that, like, the guys who opened 1000 Dean and Berg'n and got a loan of \$25 million from Goldman to do that. Right? You know, and that -- so there's a new, like a -- and I think that's -- you see global capital of different kinds backing the acquisition of buildings. The building of new buildings here along the avenue and that -- and not just along the avenue, but all through Crown Heights, particularly western Crown Heights. And that transition, right, it's not just that, you know. Yeah, this is more of the same, in terms of displacement and, and turnover. But it's also, you know it's, these folks are accountable to a very different group of people. Right? Maybe not even with the city at all and, and have much more influence or have much more power. Both to obstruct and delay the kind of justice for people who are displaced, but also to work the boundaries of laws and zoning and everything else that are in their favor in ways that make it, you know, much harder to resist them. Albeit, I think, you know, actual community-based pressure of the type the Crown Heights Tenant Union brings in various specific instances, can still do that. So, what do I mean; why is that important as preface? I think, when I look at, like, businesses that have changed on the avenue, you know; some of what's happened has been— right, you see, you know— new successful, high turnover kinds of, you know, things like coffee shops, that are compete— out-competing other coffee shops. Right? And they, you know, and they're sort of like a transformation of, you know, you see more and more, you know; there will be endless openings of coffee shops probably, but like more and more. It's a very specific kind of very successful

model of a coffee shop that's either like very twee and very expensive or it's, you know, really rapid turnover. Others struggle to keep up or they close. But another thing is that there's new actual kinds of businesses. Things that wouldn't have survived probably before because they didn't have the clientele nearby to patronize them. And then so, you see that in, like, bodegas go organic and that's a kind of common thing people observe, but you also see it. You certainly saw it in the transition that Tony made from Fischer's to Bob & Betty's. And something like that, you look at that and you say, well, on the one hand, right, like you know, long-time business owners keeping up with the pace of that, there's— That's, that's nice, that's not displacement of a kind, but then you have to ask about, what happens to customers? Interestingly, I've talked to Tony about this and he has some customers who he's been able to stock some things for that they still want and like. It's funny what shelves they're on and where they are in that, in that store. But Tony, given that he also has a building full of people who live there who he is a landlord to and who are rent stabilized and he's not as sort of aggressive as some of his fellows, has at least some kind of relationship to the neighborhood, as compared to perhaps other folks who are rapidly turning over what they sell and turning over their clientele in the process. And I've seen altercations about that. One actually, story was at Nam's; Nam's put up a sign when their EBT machine was broken, but whoever wrote it didn't have very good English and so it said "No EBT" and the assumption was they'd stopped taking it. And I saw people yelling about that in the store; I saw people decrying it on various message boards and blogs. I actually talked to the owners and put up a thing saying, this is actually what they meant and [told them,] "you should fix that sign." Because that was seen, of course, as a sort of indication of who they wanted in the store, of who their clientele should be. Just like --

Michael, Michael's business is, it's funny, I actually also think when Michael first arrived he was really welcomed by the neighborhood, by the other business owners there. It was really sweet, you know, like the guys from Park Delicatessen brought him flowers when Little Zelda opened and Kevin and Garnett were in there and Lily

was in there; everyone was really nice. And it was the bike corral fight that I think really changed the tenor of, of what happened there. And so, the bike corral that's in front of Little Zelda; the way that works with the Department of Transit is a business can sponsor a bike corral, and they sponsored it and they put up planters and all this stuff. But even though they went through all the sort of technical motions one needs to go through to get community approval, it was a complete surprise to everybody on the block and that really ticked people off. And then there was no means of recourse. Because it had already been approved by the various committees of the Community Board and the DOT and everything else and, and— I think, you know, Michael's wife Kate— who has worked in government, does work in government and is very savvy— did try to work very hard to sort of mitigate the damage done by that incident. But I think it, it was emblematic to a lot of people of both, you know, the price of that business -- I mean, it's just differential. Right? Like, you know, so if you look at Little Zelda, now they've got this open space onto the streets and it was kind of, and they— and it completely opens out over the entire sidewalk. Right? And people can sit and stay and it's kind of a, it's a little gauntlet of, you know, of young White affluent people. That same gauntlet, created by the folks down on Prospect Place, when they're playing dice or drinking, is heavily policed. Right? It just highlights the different access different populations have to the very street. Right? And in a very visible and unequal way. And again, did Michael do anything wrong? No. But, but did the tenor of the whole thing and the, and the inequalities it made visible, create a real problem and did he do much to solve it? No. I mean, is it his job to, as business owner? That's a matter for debate. But I think, I think there's a real reason why people are angry and continue to be and continue to see that kind of business as having a different, you know, an occupying, colonizing ethic, as opposed to a, you know, a more community-based one. You know, a similar thing happened with the Crow Bar, which has now changed its name, on the other side of Franklin; Franklin and Union there. The guy came in; he called it Crow Bar. He thought he was just borrowing the name Crow Hill, I'm sure. People protested and said, "Sorry, you can't

use that word because that was a slur. It can be in the Crow Hill Community Association, but you can't just apply it willy-nilly." He said, "I can do whatever I want," and my sense is people either didn't patronize the bar, or he had enough bad press, that he eventually issued a mea culpa, said, "I was wrong. I should not have called it that," and now it's called Franklin 820. That was interesting. I don't know if he's got clients, I haven't been in [laughter] in either iteration. I'm all over the map. I'm sorry.

KITTO: No, you're not. You're answering the question. What are the, what are examples of businesses, the newer businesses that are more, like, involved with the neighborhood, more like geared towards community than, just a little bit, than profit, just a little [inaudible].

JURAVICH: Yeah, it's funny, I mean like so -- the thing I think is interesting; Michael would say he's very community-oriented, it's just the way he defines it I think irks some people. So you know, when he talked about opening Hullabaloo, it was about, "I'm bringing all this culture to Crown Heights," and of course, that language suggested it wasn't there before and I don't think that's something he'd thought about. Right? And I, and I, you know, anyway— So, I got to know Michael pretty well when Little Zelda first opened, and so I have a, I personally like him, even though I -- and I have had some conversation with him about this, but not to the extent that I'm talking about here. You know, I [don't know if I] disagree with, perhaps, the way he's run his businesses, but at least I, I think there's, there's real reasons people are angry and they're legitimate about his businesses and about the way he's sort of carried himself in that context. But again, I really like him, so I— he's a nice guy. And so that's a conundrum, right? So, the question of where my politics take me versus like having made a friendly connection; this is the danger of the blog, this is the danger of trying to tell a nice story about everybody, maybe their's is not my story to tell. Michael aside, the— you know, starting a business is [tough]— So, Frank Esquilin, that I mentioned earlier, likes to say that, you know, "Look, 95 South is a black bar. The Crown Inn is white bar. Franklin Park is a black and white bar. Why?" Well, does it

have to do with what they do at the bar? I mean, yeah, you can, Franklin Park has, you know, these great dance parties on Friday and Saturday nights, or at least it did years ago. [laughter] I haven't been in a long time; I'm too old now, but we used to go. And yeah, that dance floor was everybody and anybody and it was a blast. And they spun, you know, a mix of everything. So is that why? I don't know. Did it have to do with the way the servers treated people? Maybe. Did it have to do with the fact that it showed up early and it was sort of a place to drink that anyone would want to patronize? But similarly, Barboncino showed up later. Barboncino could have absolutely been the same caricature that I think people think that, you know, Little Zelda or Hullabaloo is, but it's not. Is it, again, is that the question of who staffs it or is it a question of how it's run? Is it a question of the service? I don't exactly know. I've tried to think a lot about it and I think there, I think there are a few things. I mean, I do think it has to do with the way the owners talk and speak in certain contexts. I do think it has to do with the way the staff treat people. I think that those things matter but, I'm not 100 percent sure that's why. I am -- I would be hesitant to make a, kind of, strong statement as to why it is that some businesses succeed in being open and others, others take on a kind of closed quality. I think it's easier to see when they take on a closed quality, perhaps. Because people, I think, [are clear when] they feel exclusionary. And [these businesses] are often priced as such. But.

KITTO: Do you have other stories that you want to tell about businesses? I'm going to move on.

JURAVICH: Yeah, not about businesses. I mean, I, I could talk forever, but I don't think I have any that are jumping out at me at the moment.

KITTO: Okay. I wanted to ask you about your involvement with the Crow Hill Association— so—

JURAVICH: So I started going to meetings regularly in 2009 or '10. Actually and what happened is they initially, they had a meeting over on Bedford and they moved to Franklin; first to LaunchPad and then to the Panamanian Storefront Church. Side note about businesses; the disappearance of storefront churches on Franklin is

something worth noting. Not just because they clearly were priced out, but also because, you know, churches, more than a business, are centers of community life.

And I think one of the stories about displacement that's worth telling is that— you know, while people are displaced from their home at an alarming rate, even if you're able to stay in your home if it's rent stabilized, you know, seeing businesses you can afford to patronize and churches you might have attended displaced is going to really change your experience of the neighborhood radically. And there's a lot of storefront churches that are gone. One's the Excelsior Bike Shop now, one's the Crabby Shack, which is a Black-owned business. But I mean, just the -- there are far fewer of those than there used to be. But so they [Crow Hill Community Association] meet in the tabernacle, Franklin Tabernacle; Pastor Green is there. Anyway, so I started going when they started moving their meetings to Franklin and at first I would just cover things, I'd go out. I got more involved because of the Kids' Day because actually when I was at Road Runners, they said, anyone here have any connection to like stuff they can bring to the Kids' Day? I said I can bring all my obstacle course gear. We used to set up these obstacle courses for kids to run at end-of-school fairs and things. So I brought it and I spent the whole day out there just, like, encouraging kids to race each other up and down the obstacle course and they had a blast. And so that, and then I got more involved, going to those. So every year I'd get involved with Kids' Day and then, because of that, also the Halloween Parade and also the -- which they do from the Dean Street Walt L. Shamel Garden. They used to do it up to the other garden, but then that got displaced. It's now a big condo. But that was the one that was on Franklin, right across from, from Had Associates there, yeah. Anyway, so— right next to Little Zelda— But the, you know. So these things, I'd just get involved more and more. And then where I really ended up getting involved was actually, so 2013, in part I think because that community garden went away. And it seemed like there may have been a certain amount of, not collusion, but a lack of transparency about the terms of access that Crow Hill had to that garden. Because MySpace [Realty], who were both a donor to that garden and also a major driver of

displacement and generally kind of an unpleasant and nasty aura to it, at one point threatened me for what I was writing. So it was entertaining; made me feel like a real journalist, to be threatened by a realtor for writing something mildly critical of them.

KITTO: You'll have to tell me what that is --

JURAVICH: I will, bracket that for now. I -- anyway, so what happened was that garden had gone away. Because the lot was sold and it felt like, to a lot of people, we put in a lot of effort to beautify a lot, so that a landowner can sell it and build a condo there— like, instead of building a community garden for ourselves— and they were ticked and Crow Hill had known that was a possibility. They didn't think it would happen as rapidly and they were blindsided. But they, the leadership, the long-time leadership appeared, I think, out of touch in that moment. And a number of people said this organization needs to do more and say more about change. It needs to stop living in the past, etc., etc. and some of those folks included people, other long-time residents; a Mr. Frank, others I'd worked with. And so what ended up happening was, there was this challenge where people said they were going to run— again, there's always been these elections, but they had always been a formality, like, for the same people every year— "We're going to run and challenge the Board," and that set off, kind of, a firestorm. People said, "Well, we're not going to run. If you really, truly think our leadership's bad then we don't run," and that felt wrong. And then also it exposed a rift in the organization between some older folks and newcomers and also different factions within the -- so what ended up happening is we did these three big town hall meetings. Two specifically about the issue of neighborhood change and one in the middle, actually, about rezoning. And I got very involved with this. I emceed the first one down here at, it's now PS 705, I think, a couple other schools, but it's the one on St. Mark's. So we had about 200 people in the auditorium. We did an opening set of statements. Then we came into small groups and had conversations about neighborhood change, and then we, kind of, did, like, working group style. What kinds of issues should Crow Hill work on? How should it approach these? Who should we talk to? And then we came back and shared them and it was a great event,

it really was. And drew a really wide range of people politically. We had Occupy folks there, Tenant Union folks there. I guess Tenant Union wasn't formed yet. We had other people; long-time residents, newcomers, you know, the works. It was good. That meeting was good. The meeting about rezoning was really contentious. And this was the one where I was up in the front because I had gone and sat through a very detailed explanation of what all the different [zones mean:] R-1, R-2, R-6B, you know, commercial overlays. Man, and I was up there trying to explain this, and the confusion was that a subset of folks in Crow Hill were making an effort to landmark a larger portion of the area and they saw this [preservation]; both as an effort to deter future development or at least rapid development— because it [zoning] would've had an effect on limiting heights, of course, [and development] along Franklin— and as an effort to preserve lovely homes. But presented together, they became conflated. And so rather than actually having a meeting about this rezoning, which— and the reason we had these big tall buildings along Franklin, now the big eight-story condo at Dean, like that's because it was rezoned that way. Right? It was up-zoned. The avenues were up-zoned. The side streets were downzoned; that's the model, that, the entire Bloomberg rezoning model for the whole city. And people were just furious, right. They felt like Crow Hill wasn't representing them well. They felt like this landmarking thing was a boondoggle. They, the zoning, we couldn't, no one could get their heads around that I was trying to [explain, but] people— and it was just like, it's, it's an important experience, I think, in the world of like small, small "c" civics, to stand up in front of a room and have, you know, a hundred-odd people just screaming at you.

But it also, it was depressing and then our third meeting, which was at the synagogue on Park, or on St. John's there, across from Franklin Park, was meant to be a follow up and, sort of, what kinds of working groups can we get together to keep doing the work we talked about in the first meeting. And it was smaller and there weren't as many people and enthusiasm was clearly dimmed. And it led to a new structure for Crow Hill and a new board and all that. And those folks are doing a lot

of good work. I came out of it feeling pretty fried. And unfortunately, that was the exact moment which I actually had to travel a fair amount for dissertation research, so I took a step back at that point. I have not been as involved since. I stay in touch. I don't get to as many meetings as I used to; haven't been to one in probably over a year at this point. Which I feel bad about, but also, I confess, I worry that the model Crow Hill works under is simply just can't address the issues of the day. If I were to get involved with one of these orgs it would probably, more, be like the Crown Heights Tenants Union at this point. It's nobody's fault. I still want to go to Crow Hill meetings. I think they can do a lot of good. And actually, I should say I was a judge for their Halloween costume contest this year, which is a blast. So there's still a lot of good to be done, like living well with one's neighbors. But it's just, it's not an efficient organization, structurally, and that's not their fault. That's just making neighborhood change, or resisting certain kinds of change. It's just, it takes a different kind of organizing, I think.

The bracketed story about MySpace was just that, after the debacle at the garden and people being mad about this, there was then later a protest at their offices by folks involved with the Tenant Union and what was then called the Crown Heights Assembly, over their treatment of residents, and I covered it and in covering it, some people put up comments and I always had a policy. I don't delete comments, which is just my way of punting on the question of moderating the comment board. It means some pretty ugly stuff was up there. But not as ugly as you'd expect, actually, compared to like big news organizations' comment boards or YouTube or something. But -- someone put up, "Yeah, and if you want to, if you want to let them know what you think, call this number." And I got a call from the guy whose number it was; it was essentially like a direct line to one of their owners, being like, "You have to take that down." I said, "I don't have to take that down. It's on the internet." He said, "Well, you're the proprietor of this blog; are you prepared to be sued?" I'm not, what? No, I'm -- this is ridiculous. And then I got an earful about, you know, "Who are you?" and "What do you think you are?" Ceremoniously was hung up on. As I pointed out

in a later post, "I have actually written nice things about you, but if you don't want to be covered in a positive light, the surefire way to do that is to antagonize the people who cover you, especially with, sort of like, specious threats of lawsuits. But -- I think that's the M.O. Right? I mean, that-- And that's the world of New York real estate. It's an ugly business. And that's because there are a lot of margins to work and everybody feels like they're getting squeezed all the way up the chain. Right? Even like Steve Ross and Donald Trump feel that way. [laughter] To say nothing of everybody kind of slugging it out over individual units in buildings.

KITTO: In terms of the landmarking stuff that you were, you know, that you were witness to, I wondered, like, what buildings you could remark on that you saw, like, preserved.

JURAVICH: Well so, it didn't go through. So that was -- so there is a landmarked district on Park Place between Franklin and Bedford. They wanted to expand that, but basically they needed community support to get it rolling. And at this meeting there was just such antagonism to the rezoning in a sense, and just the sense that like, all of this stuff was -- and the problem was coupled together. What was frustrating was so -- right, landmarking does impose real costs on landowners, on people who own buildings. So there were people that were there who were like, "Wait, my house is on this block. What would that mean, I can't paint it without permission? I can't--" and then simultaneously, we were talking about how the avenue's gonna be up-zoned. So it was, like, "Wait a second. You want to landmark this place and I won't be able to like, you know, do anything to my façade without permission from the Landmarks Preservation Commission. And yet this rezoning means like half a block away, this giant new condo's going to come up and my yard's going to be in shade and, like, why on earth would I agree to that?" Like -- it just, and it was tough. We tried to present it as clearly as we could, but there's just --

KITTO: So then what did you end up seeing like getting torn down that --?

JURAVICH: Well, it's funny. I don't think -- I haven't yet seen anything, I mean, the stuff that's getting torn down. There's one interesting block, right; so between Prospect and St. Mark's right now, there's a lot of really little two-story buildings. And some of

those were actually falling apart and now, it's funny, there was a condo going up right next to Roscoe's; they finally finished and the scaffolding came down and immediately the next building got demolished and now there's like -- so it's like, I would not be surprised if like, block [by block], 'cause now— Right, because it's been up-zoned. So even on one of those little lots, you can basically build a five-story building. And so these two-story buildings; I would not at all be surprised to see them get bought one-by-one and then, like, a bunch of kind of mish-mashed condos go up, all five stories there. You know, are those buildings historic? I don't know. Are people being displaced? Yes. That's just, I mean, that's the way this whole idea of rezoning works and of course, there's a cynical sort of -- well, it's either cynical or a naive argument that says, "Oh, it's supply and demand. There's more units. So it'll relieve displacement. That's not what happens. It's just evidentially false, but people keep claiming it. But yeah, what I've more seen is that I think, I think there was a moment and [unintelligible] -- Yeah, right, no.

KITTO: Yeah, it was sort of, yeah, like trying to circle back to the personal like, yeah --

JURAVICH: Well, and then what was upsetting and frustrating to me, I think there was, it would have been possible. And I think we're seeing this now on the individuals owning variances south of Franklin, south of Eastern Parkway on Franklin. So this debate, for instance, about the big lot where the old laundry used to be— that's Erasmus Laundry— that's now zoned to go seven stories high; they want to go 15 stories high. They're right next to a 32-story building and they're across from an empty lot, but at the same time, I think it's right for the community board and presidents— some involved with the Crown Heights Tenant Union and some involved with other groups— to say, "We should not, we should not let any zoning variance go through, unless we can extract more affordability, more community commitment from the people building this. There should not be a pattern of these variances. And likewise, you know --

Right at the moment, it was sort of, you know, de Blasio had, I think, he hadn't been elected yet, but it was like you know, we're, we have this campaign that's going to

clearly lead to a change in zoning policies in the city. We had this sort of last gasp, Bloomberg-style rezoning. It's not particularly pernicious, but it's not going to do anybody any favors. Had -- I don't think I even fully understood that at the time, but like had Crow Hill looked at that and said, "This rezoning doesn't give us what we want and what we want is more affordability [of housing]." And had -- at that exact moment, we grabbed every lever we could and tried to put the brakes on it and said, "Stop this rezoning and do not up-zone. Unless you can guarantee more affordability, unless there's mandatory inclusion, not voluntary inclusion -- unless there's something else in this deal -- change the terms." Now granted, zoning is a citywide policy. It's the code; it's a law. So you would have to either wait for a new mayor to come in and change it, which he did, right, so there's mandatory inclusionary now. Or you'd have to get them to, kind of, do something remarkable. But like that's how politics works, right. It's a power, it's not procedure and so you know, that was, that was a moment at which, I don't know if it would have worked, but we could have tried to throw sand in the gears of everything and say, "No, this rezoning doesn't benefit anyone but developers. Stop. Think. Revise." But we would have had to be all on the same page and none of us were. And I wasn't on the same page as anybody else. But it was, it was -- and that just gives a sense of, I mean— It's funny, [at the meeting] there were some somewhat cynical but very smart Occupy guys there; one of whom was sort of like, "Well, clearly the deal's already been made, man. I was, kind of like, "Yes, it's, we're still talking about, maybe it's not [done.]" But like, they were right and the deal was made and -- and yeah, and I think that's, again, like it -- One of the frustrations, I think about being involved with local organizations is, right, democracy moves slow, capital moves fast. That's an, it's an imbalance in capitalist democracies. I feel like I've devolved to these like enormous statements about capitalism; I sound like a crusty old socialist here. I've told a lot of these stories [on my notes] in the end.

KITTO: Yeah? Were there any other stories you wanted to tell?

JURAVICH: You know -- I think, I think I've probably said enough, if not too much, but one reflection about the blog itself --

KITTO: Yeah, I wanted to ask you about that, like overall impact, reflections, like -- I have a couple more questions, just so you know -- yeah, yeah.

JURAVICH: So why don't you ask them and I'll, rather than me riffing.

KITTO: Well, there you go. That truth, yeah, talk about the blog. What were you going to say?

JURAVICH: I don't think, in this conversation, I've done justice to the number of people it introduced me to, and the opportunities [for what it was], it did give me sometimes to amplify voices that were not White and newcomers. Even though the overriding voice of the blog was me and I am a White newcomer. And so there were times, for instance, when I got to tell really fun stories. Like the story of a guy who owned one of the buildings that's since been torn down on that block between Prospect and St. Mark's; a guy named Jonesy, a Jamaican guy who would have been, I think he was in his eighties when I met him. He used to sit out in front of his building, had a few things for sale, but was comfortable and he would also, he'd go over and sit with the guys up on the block of Prospect there and have a drink. But he was this lovely guy. He had this incredible story to tell about coming from Jamaica; about buying the building from a family who lived in the Turner Towers on Eastern Parkway, about being in this first wave Jamaican new arrivals, the challenges he faced, opening new businesses, the kind of work he did out of this storefront, which was, you know, one of these really old, tiny glass and painted storefronts. I just got to sit with him, for like, 40 minutes and just listen and then I kind of typed it up. You know, that was -- and, and the opportunity to do that, you know, I mean it's fun and interesting from a historian's perspective and from a, the perspective of a -- you know, just a -- the sort of telling a story. But it was worth -- one thing I did learn from the blog that I don't think I would have understood otherwise, was the degree to which Crown Heights was this incredibly dynamic place all through the '80s, '90s and early 2000s. Right? That there were all of these people doing all kinds of really cool things -- none of which was part of the dominant narrative of the gentrification story, even the dominant critical narratives. Right? The problem with the critical narrative is, of course, it has to

highlight the victimization of people who are being legitimately screwed. And so you've got a story that's about, again, a kind of homogenized working class, being ground under by global capital and yes, that's happening, but if that's the only story we tell, what is left to even build on?

Right? And when I -- what I liked about doing the blog is I met all these wonderful [people like] Eve Porter, who was a brilliant, long-time organizer. She was old when I met her and people sometimes point out, they say they thought she was too old to still be leading this organization, but you know. Or Pastor Green at the storefront church and all these folks I got to have conversations with, I really value that. All of that said-- you know, when I look back it-- one, I mean, the writing is hopelessly overwrought and naïve. The project itself, if it traces an arc from sort of liberal optimism to socialist pessimism, it also traces the arc of the neighborhood changing and of my role in that. I mean, I tried to avoid actively profiting from it; I never had ads on the blog, in part because I knew they'd just be real estate ads, right. If I had Google Analytics do it. [laughter] And I couldn't stomach the thought of that. Even my fellow bloggers were like, "You can make money from this [thing], man." [But I thought] I'd feel like a war profiteer. But I probably was anyway. I mean, all those clicks, all that generating of attention, and buzz, of course. I'd had these long conversations; a conversation this long with reporters. And then I'd show up in the *New York Times Real Estate Section* saying, "Crown Heights has a new wine bar, says Nick Juravich, local blogger." You know, one sentence, extracting only this, sort of, the story people wanted to tell. It's a dangerous thing to make yourself a mouthpiece. And I don't think I understood that at the time. And if I'd, if I'd known or had, I think, some of the, the sense of that danger that I have now, when I had started the project at 24, I might have said different things, and written differently. Wouldn't it have mattered? No, I mean, this is a marginal, a marginal thing in the world of major structural change in cities. But it's nonetheless worth reflecting, I think, on how I think the blog itself was kind of a part of this narrative of, you know, plucky newcomers making something of a neighborhood that wasn't worth anything before.

I didn't write that, but I could be portrayed as that and I didn't lean hard enough against that, I don't think. On the other hand, you know, I again, yeah, meeting, [unintelligible], Mr. Frank, Kevin, Garnett, you know, getting to have these conversations, making real friends, like I, you know. I don't think living well with one's neighbors need be only a political goal; it can be an end in itself and I value that.

KITTO: Mm-hmm. I also wanted to ask you, like, what your favorite places are in the neighborhood or—

JURAVICH: Gosh, a lot of them are gone. Lily & Fig was my favorite place. Closely followed by The Candy Rush. I would spend hours in those places and talk to everybody who came in and sit and have a cup of coffee or whatever it was. I loved those places.

KITTO: What did you love about them?

JURAVICH: The conversation. I mean -- I like -- it was -- I mean like, again, it felt, it felt like something you imagine in like the kind of perfect Jane Jacobs-y vision of a city. Right, which itself -- and there's good critiques of Jacobs and what she misses about race and change, but -- you know. Just to sit -- I'd go in, I'd come from work, especially if I got off early, because you know, I worked in schools. So I worked like from 6:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., I'd go and I'd sit; long day, exhausted, cup of coffee or tea at Lily's, chocolate chip cookie. She made incredible chocolate chip cookies. And then like Mr. Frank would walk in and we'd chat and Barbara Jordan, who runs a little salon and jewelry and business on Bergen would come in and we'd chat. Someone would be walking down, we'd wave, come in, intro— hi, this is Lily, oh, hi, yeah. Mike from LaunchPad would pop in, you'd chat, you'd yak, you'd -- but also not just, not just that. But it was, you know, it was a chance to really, like— Lily, in particular, one of the reasons I loved sitting at Lily & Fig was she'd really challenge me. She'd say, you know, like what, you know, "What are you doing with this blog? What was the point of that post? What are you trying to achieve? Where are you, where are you hoping to intervene? Right? You don't— Nobody writes for no reason. You know, what is

Crow Hill doing? Is it going to be effective? Right? Oh yeah, you're very excited about this town hall. Is it going to matter? And if it matters, who's it going to matter to?" You know and that— so it wasn't just, you know, shooting the shit. It was productive conversations; not just for me, but I think for a lot of people. Lots of people miss Lily's, not just me, I should say.

KITTO: What happened to Lily's?

JURAVICH: It's interesting. She owns that building. And it was just, it— the business was exhausting and didn't want to— couldn't -- she -- not just saying "didn't want to" or "couldn't." Neither of those are the right verb, but somewhere in between, got tired of the everyday grind of it, and it was getting harder to do, I think. I mean, most of her business also was cake orders, so -- that was tough and there were competitors and all that. So yeah, they, they closed up, but, yeah. And saying [Candy Rush] -- Kevin's business has been really the same. I sat in Tastebuds for hours on Saturdays. I'd go for a long run and get like biscuits and gravy or whatever. I'd eat and chill and it was lovely. Places I still like -- I still love Franklin Park. I don't get in there that often, but I still enjoy a beer at Franklin Park. I'll confess, I spend a lot of time at Berg'n— and that's a new spot— because it's so big, there's always room. And I know a lot of people who, they spend time there.

KITTO: Your hand. [laughter]

JURAVICH: And Breukelen Coffee House, too. I liked going in there. But I miss, I miss Lily & Fig and I miss Tastebuds and The Candy Rush.

KITTO: I guess my last question would be just like where do you see -- like what do you picture the neighborhood being like in 10 years? Or what would you like it to be like? Because you, you seem to be sort of settled here, right, like you don't plan on leaving?

JURAVICH: Well, actually I, I'm an academic, so, who knows? But, yes, I like being here. I'm not going to try to leave. But I never— It's hard to say. I think it's going to keep looking like, kind of, Seventh Ave. in Park Slope and it feels like, a whole lot like that now. I don't think there's a lot that can be done about that. I hope not everything and everyone is displaced, but I just don't think the balance of power favors a lot of

businesses hanging on; a lot of people, who've been here a long time and worked really hard to make the neighborhood what it is, hanging on. That's sort of depressing. Who knows if we'll hang on? Our rent has gone up a little bit; it may go up more at some point. Or our landlords may sell the building to someone who has very different designs on it than they do. Or renters who don't have any money to buy. And I think, you know, more and more rentals will get, I mean, so the building across the street from me that just opened, that big, you know, condo, you know, when we moved in we were paying \$1350 a month; now we pay \$1500 a month for this one bedroom, nice one bedroom. Across the street it's \$2900 to \$3500 in that new building. That's the high peak of the price point, but that will be the price point, soon enough. I don't know how long our landlords will let us be that far below market, but - yeah, so I think that's where it's going.

I don't, I don't know what the end game for gentrification is in these cities. Right? I mean, it's clear. There's so much investment at such a scale and it displaces things in rings, right to the, to the point that you have a, you know— There's 127 built units in that building; it's eight stories on Franklin and Dean. There's only 122 in the giant tower on Park Avenue; that's the second tallest building in the city now, that Park, 432 Park building. That's just [clear that] those are all investment properties. And I know this is getting way too big. But I, right, is there a vision of certain kinds of resistance? Maybe. Is there a vision of people pushing back? I mean, there's been big push-back on the Bedford Union Armory, big push back on this rezoning south of -- zoning variance south of Eastern Parkway. Could that yield more affordability? Especially in, you know— one thing is, I think, that Crown Heights suffers from, ironically, is beautiful brownstones, because they're not typically rent-controlled. They're [not] stabilized, right? So the turnover is going to be more rapid. They're, they're, they're better commodities for real estate than big buildings. The big buildings south of Eastern Parkway, you'll continue to see displacement, but they're harder to flip. They're harder to -- they're not going to take on the quality that I think brownstones have taken on of almost being investment chips. So that will be interesting. I mean,

there's, there's still a high contrast between north and south of Franklin, when you walk across the avenue. Not as high as it used to be, but it's significant and that's, I think, a feature of the housing stock and I don't know what will happen. I'm also curious to see, as they hit on the south side of the parkway, the Hasidic community, which has a lot of money of its own and has launched many traditions of investment internally -- what will come of that? But I don't know. Yeah.

KITTO: Do you have anything else you want to say?

JURAVICH: I think I've talked your ear off. Look at my notes. No, I think that's it.

KITTO: Okay. Thanks so much, Nick.

JURAVICH: Alright, no problem.

KITTO: That was great.