Carlottia Scott
Chief of Staff, Representative Ronald V. Dellums of California (1984–1998)
Chief of Staff, Representative Barbara Lee of California (1998–2000)

Oral History Interview
Final Edited Transcript
April 24, 2018

Office of the Historian
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C.

"I want to say one of the things that folk got to know me for is that I would stand my ground, both as an African American and as a woman. I was trying to be a person of increase and change for any new folks that were potentially going to follow in our footsteps. Particularly for minority staff arriving on Hill, because the challenges were as much about being African American as it was about being a woman. Then, in terms of being a woman, having to balance that family life with professional life was really, really rough. Then having to prove yourself among, for lack of a better term, the guys was doubly hard. It was both a challenge to the institutional structure and the authority that had been kind of developed, given the history of the institution."

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Abstract

From 1979 to 1998, Carlottia Scott worked for Congressman Ronald V. Dellums, who represented a district that encompassed Oakland and Berkeley, California. As the daughter of a union member and community organizer, Scott fit in with the district's activist spirit and became chief of staff of Dellums' office in 1984.

In her interview, Scott reflects on growing up in segregated El Paso, Texas, and her father's involvement in civil rights and labor organizations. Before moving to Representative Dellums' office, Scott worked part-time for the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation and for Congresswoman Cardiss Collins of Illinois. She recalls the atmosphere of the House and Washington, DC, during the 1980s and the support she received from her colleagues as a working mother.

Starting in the early 1970s, Representative Dellums called for comprehensive economic sanctions against the system of apartheid in South Africa. Scott remembers the celebratory moment in 1986 when one of Dellums' longstanding anti-apartheid bills passed the House after years of hard work and dedication. In addition, Scott discusses how her responsibilities expanded when Dellums became chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, the challenges she faced as an African-American woman in the House, and the importance of women of color in leadership roles.

Biography

Carlottia Scott was born in El Paso, Texas, to Florence Broyles Washington and Harvey L. Washington. She attended the all-black Douglass Grammar and High School, even though it was across town from her home, until El Paso's school system integrated in 1956. Her mother volunteered at a nearby nursery school and her father worked for the Southern Pacific Railroad as a janitor.

Scott's father was active in the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, a black-led railroad workers' union. Stationed in Texas, he stayed up to date on the news that traveled with workers crisscrossing the nation's railroad network. He was also one of the presidents of the El Paso chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). At a young age, Scott grew accustomed to meetings and elections in her home.

In 1970, she began her political career as a volunteer on the campaign of California congressional candidate Ronald V. Dellums—an opportunity her father discovered through his union connections. Scott experienced the "grunt work" of campaigning: buying water, fetching supplies, licking envelopes, knocking on doors, and answering phones. After Representative Dellums won the House seat, Scott attended The Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio, for a degree in political science. She graduated in 1972 and returned to El Paso.

While working as a dental assistant in El Paso, Scott traveled to DC to work for the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) Foundation each fall. In 1979, she moved permanently, with her three children, to the capital to work for Illinois Congresswoman Cardiss Collins. Soon after, Representative Dellums, by then the chair of the Committee on District of Columbia, hired Scott as a committee staffer. In 1984, she became chief of staff in his Member office.

During her long tenure in the House, Scott continued to work closely with the CBC, developed a new-Member orientation, and became a member of several peace organizations at Dellums' request. Both she and the Congressman encouraged their staff to engage with current issues of their choosing. For nearly two decades, the office worked tirelessly to pass economic sanctions against South Africa, as part of the anti-apartheid movement. This work culminated in 1986 when Congress overrode a presidential veto to pass the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act. Four years later, Scott joined Representative Dellums in welcoming African National Congress President Nelson Mandela to the Capitol.

Congressman Dellums resigned from the House in 1998. Scott's closest childhood friend, Barbara Lee, succeeded him in Congress. Scott served as Representative Lee's chief of staff to help establish her House office before retiring from the Hill in 2000. She remains active in political organizations and peace advocacy groups and currently lives in South Carolina.

Editing Practices

In preparing interview transcripts for publication, the editors sought to balance several priorities:

- As a primary rule, the editors aimed for fidelity to the spoken word and the conversational style in accord with generally accepted oral history practices.
- The editors made minor editorial changes to the transcripts in instances where they believed such changes would make interviews more accessible to readers. For instance, excessive false starts and filler words were removed when they did not materially affect the meaning of the ideas expressed by the interviewee.
- In accord with standard oral history practices, interviewees were allowed to review their transcripts, although they were encouraged to avoid making substantial editorial revisions and deletions that would change the conversational style of the transcripts or the ideas expressed therein.
- The editors welcomed additional notes, comments, or written observations that the interviewees wished to insert into the record and noted any substantial changes or redactions to the transcript.
- Copy-editing of the transcripts was based on the standards set forth in *The Chicago Manual of Style*.

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Interviewer Biography

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— CARLOTTIA SCOTT—
A CENTURY OF WOMEN IN CONGRESS

ETHIER: This is Grace Ethier with the Office of the Historian, U.S. House of Representatives. Today's date is April 24, 2018, and I am on the phone with Carlottia Scott, former chief of staff for Representatives Ron [Ronald V.] Dellums and Barbara Lee. I am in the House Recording Studio, and Carlottia is in her home in South Carolina.

This interview is part of a series we have been working on to commemorate the election and swearing in of the first woman in Congress, Jeannette Rankin of Montana.

Carlottia, thank you so, so much for agreeing to be part of this project and taking time to talk with me today.

SCOTT: My pleasure. It's an honor to do so for such a wonderful, wonderful project.

ETHIER: Great. My first question is an easy one. When were you born?

SCOTT: Oh, I was born on October 28, 1946, in El Paso, Texas.

ETHIER: Excellent. What were your parents' names?

SCOTT: My mom's name was Florence Broyles Washington, and my father's name was Harvey L. Washington.

ETHIER: Where did they grow up?

SCOTT: My mother grew up in Tennessee. She was born and reared in Greeneville, Tennessee. My father was born and reared in Plum, Texas.

ETHIER: So you grew up in El Paso. I'm wondering why your parents settled there.

SCOTT: That is a long, funny story. Both my parents were teachers. They taught for a while at Christian University in Mississippi, and then my dad accepted a professorship at Prairie View A&M in Texas where he taught for 30 years. They just decided one day, "Okay, we're going to take an adventure, and I'm going to do a sabbatical," and they traveled, and ended up teaching on reservations in Arizona and Nevada. After several years of teaching, they were headed back to Prairie View. They stopped to see a friend of theirs who lived in El Paso. As soon as they got on top of those Franklin Mountains, they fell in love with El Paso and decided to stay. Why? I'll never know. But they did.

ETHIER: Great. What schools did you attend while you were in El Paso?

SCOTT: In El Paso? I went to St. Anne's Mission as part of preschool and early kindergarten, and then I went to Douglass High School, which was the, quote, "colored" school in the city. Then, after integration, I went to Alta Vista Elementary School, which was in East El Paso and then on to Austin High School, and there I was.

ETHIER: Great. We talked about schooling yesterday a little bit, and I'm wondering if you can describe the way segregation affected your family on a daily basis.

SCOTT: I guess, for us in El Paso, it was really, really sort of an uncommon scenario because the communities were so close. Given both El Paso's history and its connectedness to Mexico, the majority of the population was Mexican. So we, in our neighborhoods, didn't really know that we were segregated until we had to go to school or we had to ride a bus. So the import of the lessons learned was that even though we were separated, we still had sort of a oneness and a connectedness that allowed us to function as a community.

ETHIER: My next question, which you're sort of touching on—but in case you want to say anything else—is how did the U.S.-Mexican border shape segregation in El Paso?

SCOTT: It's difficult to say. I think, in El Paso, because Mexican Americans were the predominant population, it shaped our culture, it shaped our history, it shaped how we looked at things. I grew up in a household speaking Spanish first, before I spoke English. When I went to Saint Anne's, the nuns were really, really upset with me because I didn't speak English. My mother made Mexican food every morning for us, and consequently, in my adult life, the only thing I really know how to cook is Mexican food. The impact of Mexican culture was our dominant culture in El Paso and still is, from the art to the history—everything that is going on in El Paso today.

ETHIER: I did not know that you grew up speaking Spanish. Did you speak Spanish in your home with your parents?

SCOTT: Well, my dad, when they settled in El Paso, wasn't able to get a teaching job because there was only the one colored school. So he, consequently, went to work for Southern Pacific Railroad [now Southern Pacific Transportation Company] as a—they called them porters, but what it equated to was being a janitor. He took care of all of the Southern Pacific office structures and buildings and grounds, etc. My mom, during the day, primarily volunteered at Saint Anne's. She volunteered for the nursery school. The interesting part about growing up in El Paso is that everyone, not withstanding your—what's a good word?—stature in the community was able to have household help. We had a maid, and she came every day to take care of us. That's how I spoke Spanish.

ETHIER: Okay. How did women experience segregation? Was the racial divide also

shaped by gender?

SCOTT: Oh, absolutely. I'm a child of the '40s and '50s. Women, quote, "had their places" in both life and within the segregation realm. For many years, women couldn't have a bank account unless a husband or a spouse signed for them. They didn't have credit. They weren't able to do anything without the OK of the male figure in the family. It was really, really difficult. And in a segregated community, I don't think that the norms were that much different than in regular communities. It was a sign of the times, given what women were encouraged and not encouraged to do.

ETHIER: When did you first experience desegregation?

SCOTT: Third grade. The schools finally desegregated in the mid-'50s, and I went from Douglass to Alta Vista. My best friend, to this day, lived across the street from Alta Vista School, and she was a little, teeny, tiny—they called us Mutt and Jeff. She was blonde, had blue eyes, and she stood under my arm. Her mom fixed us grilled cheese sandwiches and tomato soup for lunch every day.

ETHIER: I found this article online, and I think it was 1956 when your schools desegregated. I'm wondering if there was desegregation in the community also.

SCOTT: It's hard to say with El Paso, given the way the city was laid out. My neighborhood—I could say for two blocks—was predominantly African American. We were "colored" in those days, but it was predominantly African American. Across the street, I went to school with Javier, who was Mexican American, and around the corner, some of my classmates were Syrian [American] and Lebanese American. Around the other corner, our neighbors were Jewish. One of the most enjoyable things in our neighborhood is that everybody lived together. It was almost like we weren't in a "segregated,"

quote, society.

Debbie Reynolds' grandmother lived down the street from our McCall Daycare Center, where my mom volunteered. On those days, when the daycare center was closed, Mrs. Robinson babysat for all the kids. She lived next door to one of my mom's best friends, who was a local beautician, and she did all of the African-American women's hair in the immediate neighborhood.

We didn't really know what segregation was until you had to do something that was equated to public. Example, we would go to the theater, and it never dawned on me, as a kid, why I had to sit up in the balcony, or why I had to go to the back of the building to get my baloney sandwich to take up to the balcony to watch the movie. It never dawned on me that I was actually sitting—had to sit—in the back of the bus, because to me, that was the most fun place to sit on the bus. It was the structural segregation that you noticed, often, when you were out having to do public things.

ETHIER: When you left Douglass and went to Alta Vista, what was that experience like?

SCOTT: It was different. One, it was an exciting time, and I think we had wonderful administrative staff in the school districts. I think they had prepared well for children of color to be coming into the school. I think I may have been—I'm trying to remember my third grade class. There may have been three, maybe four, children of color in my class. The one thing that I can always remember is that the teachers were very, very kind and tried to protect you from the bullies in the class and in the school and watched over you on the playground. But no, the children were more brutal than the adults were.

ETHIER: Wow. I'm wondering if you ever visited where your mother grew up in

Tennessee, and the reason I'm wondering that is if your experience in El Paso differed from other parts of the South at that time.

SCOTT: My mom, as I mentioned, was from Greeneville. My mom—just as a backstory—my mom looked like she was white. When I would go to visit in Tennessee, I had aunts and uncles and lots and lots of cousins and didn't ever dawn on me that there was any difference until it came time when the kids were going to go to the swimming pool. The adults kept me at home when the other kids went to the swimming pool, because I'm the darkest thing in my family. They never took me with them when they went into town, and usually we did everything around the house and around shopping areas. So yes, I could tell that the differences were more stark in Tennessee than they were where we were in El Paso.

ETHIER: How did growing up in a segregated school and community shape your worldview? I know that's a really big question.

SCOTT: I think, growing up in our colored school, we had magnificent teachers. The teachers cared about each child, and it was all about learning and all about dealing with the world. Remind me at some time to send you some of the history of Douglass. I don't know if you've been able to pull up the history of Douglass School in El Paso.

ETHIER: I just pulled up one article, but I would love to read whatever you have to send me.

SCOTT: Okay, great.

ETHIER: Because there's a historical marker there now.

SCOTT: Absolutely, at the original school. The old high school is—and the

neighborhood is still there, but the marker is there.

The teachers were caring, they were compassionate. The one thing you knew, and particularly the graduates of Douglass can tell you, that the education you got was far more superior than the regular public education. They taught us not only our ABC's and everything that we needed to know, but they taught us about life. These are the things you need to succeed. If you're going to succeed, you have to do three times better than another student in a school across town.

We were primed to be successful at Douglass. We were always encouraged. We were always nurtured. The Douglass School family was indeed a family. That's what it actually was. We were better prepared coming out of Douglass than I personally think that I would have been prepared initially coming out of Alta Vista.

We do reunions periodically for Douglass High School, and the number of professionals far exceeds the average numbers of students coming out of public schools.

ETHIER: Wow. We could spend the whole two hours talking about this.

SCOTT: Oh, I know, but it's a fascinating school. Fascinating.

ETHIER: Thank you for spending time talking about it. I have one more quick question that just came to me. Were any of the teachers who taught at Douglass able to or [did they] want to go over to the school that you started to attend?

SCOTT: The majority of the teachers at Douglass stayed at Douglass. I'm trying to remember. I want to say it was maybe mid-'60s, early '70s when my

stepmother became a special education teacher, and she rotated among all the schools. But the majority of the teachers stayed at Douglass until either they retired or when the school closed. Once the school closed, they were dispersed into other schools.

ETHIER: Did you have a choice to stay at Douglass?

SCOTT: Yes, I could have stayed. Had it been my choice, I would have stayed, but the problem was the distance from the neighborhood. Douglass was all the way across town, and there was not public transportation to get from our neighborhood to Douglass. So my parents or the maid took me every morning.

ETHIER: Okay, thank you. Shifting gears now from your schooling—again, thank you for talking to me about that—and moving more into your parents' work realm, you mentioned that there were no teaching jobs for your father.

SCOTT: Right.

ETHIER: So he worked for Southern Pacific Railroad.

SCOTT: When he was at Prairie View, he taught mechanical engineering.

ETHIER: Okay. What impact did that have on your family, this sort of shift?

SCOTT: I don't think that I, as a child, noticed it. What I did notice is that he worked very odd hours, and it wasn't like it was a total day job. But one of the things that it did was it opened our family up to another whole community. The people that he worked with at Southern Pacific Railroad were wonderful people.

I will send you an article that one of the Southern Pacific—they did a

monthly newsletter. They did an article on my father that was called "From Professor to Porter," and it told the story and what he did and his impact on the culture of the work environment at Southern Pacific. Actually, his work at Southern Pacific was really how I met Ron Dellums.

But it was different. It wasn't so much of a shift or a change. It was just a different reality of what had to be done, and the work ethic remained in place, always. Even though he went to work, and he eventually would have to put on his coveralls, he left the house in a tie and a suit. Always had on a tie and a suit.

ETHIER: I'm writing down the articles that you're saying that you'll send to me. I'm excited to read all of them.

SCOTT: And remind me.

ETHIER: Yes, yes, I'll send you an email after this. Was your father involved with the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters?

SCOTT: Yes, he was.

ETHIER: That is my next question. What was your father's involvement with them?

SCOTT: Who knows? {laughter} I was a kid, and all I remember is that I was sitting at the side of the chair and at the feet of all these folks who used to meet at our house or who used to meet at the Southern Pacific building. It was always interesting to have folks flowing through your house.

What my dad did was he was part of the Texas component that worked with the California group to make sure that the policies, the work schedules, and everything was put in place. He and Ron's uncle, C. L. Dellums, worked very closely together, as they did with A. Philip Randolph and a myriad of others

who created the union. While my dad didn't actually travel on the trains, he was the lynchpin and the stationary person when all the trains came in and came out. One of his responsibilities was to make sure that the members that had created the union weren't getting any pushback as they flowed across the country.

ETHIER: Great. How was the union, the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, viewed by your community in El Paso?

SCOTT: Oh, they loved it because it was the guarantor of your security. Because once the union rules, policies, and recommendations were put forth to the railroads, your strength is greatest in numbers in order for the railroads to continue their progress. Folks really, really appreciated what the union was able to do to provide security and stability in the communities across the country.

ETHIER: What did you learn from his experience with the union?

SCOTT: Well, if nothing else, you are a lifelong union person. I want to say the foundation of working people being able to have a say-so in their work environment was absolutely critical, particularly given the state of the union at the time. The community really, really appreciated it.

ETHIER: Great, thank you. Shifting again from your parents back to you, did you have any female role models growing up?

SCOTT: Oh, Lord yes. Growing up, I want to say all of my teachers at Douglass were really the role models, because the majority of the teachers were female. I want to say I had—maybe Mr. Dewitty. I think I actually had two male teachers, but the rest of them were female, like I said, and they really, really nurtured you. Then, through the years—I'm trying to think. Aside from my

mom—and everyone in the neighborhood, because we grew up in a time where the old adage was absolutely true, about it taking a village to rear a child. The community was very, very close-knit. If I threw a rock around the corner at somebody's tire, my mother knew about it before I got around the corner.

I'm trying to think, the major influences when I was growing up. It was really, really all of the teachers and all of the women in the neighborhood. The other thing about our neighborhood is that those women who didn't have professions and stayed at home looked out for everyone. A lot of the women in our neighborhood were teachers. The family on the corner, the Mangrams—Mr. Mangram was the principal of the school, and Mrs. Mangram was a nurse. So all of the folks in the neighborhood looked out for everybody—including their six kids, when they had to work. We were a very, very close-knit neighborhood.

ETHIER: Sort of touching on what you're speaking about, what were your potential career paths as a woman?

SCOTT: Well, initially, I wanted to do something medical, because science fascinated me. I really wanted to do that. But what ended up happening when I got to Alta Vista, the first thing I picked up was a violin, and then music became the real love of my life. I played in the orchestra at Alta Vista. I played in the orchestra at Austin. I played in the orchestra at Texas Western and eventually went on to play second chair to my viola teacher for the El Paso Symphony. It was a wonderful experience. Music was my thing. But then, by the time I got to school, and they say you need all of this, and then when it's time to pick your major, it's like, "No, I don't think I want to do music."

So I picked political science. I personally think that I got into politics by

osmosis, because my father was a community activist, in addition to working for Southern Pacific. He became one of the presidents of the NAACP [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People] chapter in El Paso. He worked with all of the Democratic candidates running for office. It came to me through osmosis. That was my path.

ETHIER: Wow. Did you ever help him out with any of the campaigns or anything?

SCOTT: Oh, absolutely. I want to say that—I'm sorry for this bird. She decided, all of a sudden, she's going to wake up and talk. I'm trying to remember whose campaign was most memorable for me. Oh, it might have been when Raymond Telles was initially running for mayor. This was in the late '50s, maybe '60-ish. As I tell all of my training classes, I come out of the old school. Walk, talk, knock, lick, and drop. We licked envelopes. We knocked on doors. We gave out pamphlets. We did the whole thing. And I was a kid.

ETHIER: Do you know how old you were?

SCOTT: I want to say I may have been nine, 10.

ETHIER: They're like, "Here, lick these envelopes."

SCOTT: Oh, yes. Say, "If you're going to go with me to the campaign office, you're not going to just sit there." That was in the days where they had mimeograph machines, and stencils. You did all that stuff.

ETHIER: Some of my questions are what inspired you to become politically involved? What role did the civil rights movement play in your early years? And it sounds like it came from your parents.

SCOTT: My parents, right.

ETHIER: Then you decided to study politics—political science—at Ball State [University]. I'm wondering why you went to Ball State for undergrad.

SCOTT: Actually, by that time, I was married, and my husband was in the Air Force, and we were stationed at Bunker Hill, and Ball State was the closest—in Muncie [Indiana]—school that would actually accept me as an African American.

ETHIER: And you studied politics.

SCOTT: And I did.

ETHIER: What was the political culture like at Ball State?

SCOTT: Very, very conservative. What I just tried to do there was to keep my nose to the grindstone, do your studies, do what you have to do to move through this place. Where I lived was in the heart of Klan territory, so I didn't dare do anything that was going to rock anybody's boat. It was a difficult haul, but luckily, with some sympathetic and caring professors—one thing I had going for me is that I was a good student, and so no one could deny whatever progress I made. It wasn't because of academics.

ETHIER: So then, eventually, somehow, you made your way to California.

SCOTT: Right.

ETHIER: How did that happen?

SCOTT: That happened—I had gone back to El Paso in, I want to say '69, '70—I can't remember when. My stepmother had become ill, and so I went back to help take care of her. My dad, being always in contact with the folk in California, said that folk had called and said that there was this young man that was

running, and that I probably needed to go help volunteer and do some other stuff.

Actually, my daughter's godmother had really encouraged Ron [Dellums] to run, to challenge Jeff [Jeffery] Cohelan, because we were in the throes, in the midst of the Vietnam War. Once my stepmother recovered, I left the kids with her, went to California, volunteered on the campaign, came back to Texas, and then went back to Ohio. That's how all of that happened, over the course of about maybe eight, 10 months.

ETHIER: He was sent to Congress, but you were in Ohio?

SCOTT: Yes. I was in Ohio.

ETHIER: Okay. I have a couple of questions about Dellums' campaign.

SCOTT: Which—oh, well, any of them.

ETHIER: Any of them. You sort of explained this already, but the question here is why did you decide to campaign for Dellums?

SCOTT: Because, one, he was right. He was going to be on the right side of history. The stances and the policies that he was espousing were what I wanted my children to look at as they began to grow. He was just really right, which he always is. That was encouragement enough, if nothing else from the teachings of my parents is that you have to stand up for both justice and doing the right thing, no matter what.

ETHIER: You said before, when we were talking about your father and the Southern Pacific Railroad, that that's how you met Ron. Can you explain that connection a little bit more?

SCOTT: Ron's uncle was C. L. Dellums, who was one of the primary coordinators and founders of the Sleeping Car Porters union. It was through C. L. that my dad encouraged me to go help Ron.

ETHIER: Which campaign did you work on first?

SCOTT: The first one. Then, years later, particularly after I got to Washington, I worked on all of them. It's an 18-month cycle.

ETHIER: So you worked on his first campaign for Congress, specifically. Great. Do you think Dellums was influenced by his uncle's involvement in the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters?

SCOTT: I am sure he may have been. I think it is probably another instance of having witnessed history in the making and what it took and both the stamina, the commitment, all the encouragement. I'm sure that he witnessed that being around his uncle. But, remember, Ron was on [Berkeley city] council, so he had been a political organizer for a number of years. He knew the community. He knew what the community needed. It wasn't like it was an inexperienced person coming into the role as a Member of Congress because he knew the district, and the district knew him.

ETHIER: What did you do on his campaign?

SCOTT: Basically, my responsibility, given where Barbara [Lee] and I stayed—because I always stayed with Barbara—I did community organizing. I was in East and West Oakland. The joke, every time I would come to town for any of the campaigns, is, "Oh my God, she's here," because nobody else really wanted to go to East or West Oakland because those are the two—for lack of a better term—roughest areas in Oakland. But having been part of the community, and done a number of things over the years in the community, I worked with

everyone in the community. When I came in to do a campaign, I would immediately go to the homeless shelter. I would go find all my old winos. Everybody was ready to get geared up for a campaign so they could re-elect Ron Dellums.

One of my mentors in East Oakland was Nate Everett, and he used to be called—even though he wasn't really elected—he was called the "mayor of East Oakland." He was a tremendous influence in East Oakland. He was one of those gentle giants that could quell any controversy, and even though it was—I call it a rough-and-tumble area—we got things done, both in East and West Oakland.

ETHIER: Those were for his re-election campaigns?

SCOTT: Yes.

ETHIER: I'm wondering what you did on the first campaign. And it may have been community organizing, but—

SCOTT: I'm trying to remember who—Maudelle [Shirek] put me in Berkeley, and I vaguely remember being at the Berkeley Community Center. I did all of the paperwork, the running, the delivery—what I call them in South Carolina. We call them "come-ya's." If you haven't been here and you just came in, you're getting ready to do all the grunt work. I did the grunt work. That's what I did. All the grunt work. Buying the water. Going to get the supplies. Making sure that the volunteers were taken care of. That was my role.

ETHIER: In a previous conversation, you described it to me as a field rat.

SCOTT: Oh, yes. One of the things that subsequently I did, over the years, is that I grew out of doing the grunt work into actually organizing field organization.

So yes, I'm a field rat. Walk, talk, knock, lick, and drop.

ETHIER: Ever since you were nine years old.

SCOTT: Absolutely.

ETHIER: What role did women play in Dellums' first election?

SCOTT: Oh, major. Major. As I mentioned, Maudelle Shirek, who was on the council in Berkeley, was a major, major influence, and the majority of the primary responsibilities for his campaign were conducted by women.

ETHIER: His campaign sort of groups in with the larger civil rights movement happening—

SCOTT: Well, his campaign was actually—I'm stretching my memory now. We were in the peak of an anti-war movement, so this was the peace community. The one thing that Ron was able to do is he is a firm believer in coalition politics, and knowing that Jeff [Cohelan] was such a popular representative, Maudelle reminded him it was going to take everyone to make sure that we moved people to the right position. So it was the peace movement. It was all of the community organizations. Everyone came together to make sure that that vote turned out.

ETHIER: What was it like being a woman in that anti-war, peace movement?

SCOTT: Once I got to Washington, I participated in a lot of the peace activities, and on Ron's behalf, I was the board member for SANE [National Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy] and Freeze [Nuclear Weapons Freeze Campaign], and then, eventually, SANE/Freeze merged, and it became Peace Action. I just resigned from the Peace Action board two years ago.

ETHIER: Wow.

SCOTT: It was amazing work, and a lot of work got done, and a lot of people moved to the right side of history. From the peace movement flowed the encouragement for, and laid the foundation for, the support for Ron's alternative military budget.

ETHIER: Right. Back to Dellums' first campaign. What was the most memorable moment of that campaign for you?

SCOTT: Most memorable. Well, I never even got a chance to really see Ron because I left the day of the election, headed back to El Paso. I want to say the most exciting piece was having folk call me when I got back to El Paso to say that the numbers had come in, and that it looked like Ron was going to win.

ETHIER: Were you able to talk to him at that point?

SCOTT: I didn't. I didn't. It's so funny. Our paths crossed in the shadows for years and years and years.

ETHIER: Was Barbara Lee working on that campaign, too?

SCOTT: Yes.

ETHIER: What was your overall takeaway at that moment from working on a congressional campaign?

SCOTT: Well, it wasn't anything new. The bottom line is, because I'm a numbers person, if you reach your numbers goals, then you have your 50 percent plus one. But like I said, the takeaway was that not only the Bay Area community, but the nation as a whole, was going to be able to experience this exciting, young man who had practical, doable ideas that could be put into workable

policy.

ETHIER: Then you got a chance to work on that policy, because you came to Washington, DC, to work on his staff. We're about 50 minutes in.

SCOTT: Oh, we are?

ETHIER: Yes, and you've just entered the House. Are you doing good? Do you need to take a break or anything?

SCOTT: I'm okay for the moment.

ETHIER: You're doing great. This is all wonderful, thank you so much. You can take a sip of your orange juice if you want to.

SCOTT: My orange juice. Yes, I just took a sip. If the bird would stop laughing.

ETHIER: What is your bird's name?

SCOTT: Her name is Mauna, which means "baby" in Swahili.

ETHIER: Great. I'm glad she's joining us. When and why did you decide to work on the Hill?

SCOTT: When? I was back in El Paso again. My dad had been ill, off and on. Barbara called and said, "You know, Ron was just elected chair of the Committee on the District of Columbia, and we will probably be staffing more, so think about it." I want to say this was—I'm trying to remember when he took over chair. She just said think about it. She said, "If you come to DC, we'll certainly try to find a spot for you and do some other stuff." I said fine.

But before going to DC, over the years, once Barbara came to DC, I worked periodically with Members of the Congressional Black Caucus [CBC]. Every

year I would come and help to do the lead-in to the annual Congressional Black Caucus weekend. I had been doing that since '71, '72. Every September, I was in DC. It wasn't like I wasn't familiar with the workings of the Hill. Thanks to Barbara, I got an opportunity to do a lot of things. She encouraged me to come, and I want to say it was late—

ETHIER: He becomes chair in the 96th Congress, which starts in 1979, if that helps.

SCOTT: Okay, then it must have been '79. But anyway, by '79, I was in Washington. That's how I got there.

ETHIER: What was the deciding factor for you?

SCOTT: My father had passed, there was no reason to stay in El Paso. My husband and I were separated at the time. Just the thought of having had the kids in DC for education purposes over the years, they were excited as well. It wasn't a hard decision to make. So we packed up the old car. I had three kids and two dogs and two cats, and we drove across country.

ETHIER: How old were your kids at the time?

SCOTT: Oh, you would ask me that.

ETHIER: I'm sorry. {laughter}

SCOTT: No, it's fine. Because folks want to say, "How old are your kids?" and I keep telling them, "They're older than me." I want to say they were between 8 and 10, up to 12, 13. They ended up going to Oyster-Adams Bilingual School, Alice Deal [Middle School] and to [Woodrow] Wilson [High School].

ETHIER: So Barbara Lee invited you to come join Ron Dellums' staff. Was that it for the hiring process, or was there some sort of—

SCOTT: Oh, no. I had to go through the process. I really didn't get hired right away. One of the things that Ron doesn't believe in—even though he might have been a new person coming in—there is both longevity and institutional memory in most organizations, including the committees. He is not one to displace anyone, to disrupt their lives. So I had to wait until a slot opened to actually work on the committee.

Then, I want to say it was late '79 and early '80, I actually went to work for Cardiss Collins. I want to say that that was the year that she was getting ready to be the first woman chair of the Congressional Black Caucus.[1] So I went to work for Cardiss as her communications person and helped to get her settled in as the caucus person. She's an old, old friend. She was excited to have me do that because I knew all the Members of the caucus and knew all of their staffs.

ETHIER: Wow, I didn't realize that you worked for her.

SCOTT: For a hot second, yes. Long enough to get her settled in. She's wonderful. Yes. Bless her heart. Rest her soul. I worked for her for a few months and then came on to the committee when an opening became available.

ETHIER: What was it like working for her?

SCOTT: Oh, she was lovely. I can see her smile. She had a smile that would light up a sky. She was interesting. She was eager to learn because, remember, she had come into Congress when her husband [George Washington Collins] was killed in a plane crash. It had been new to her at the time, too. I think this was her—my brain is failing me. I'm having an intellectual interlude.[2]

ETHIER: It's okay.

SCOTT: But she had finally gotten her grounding and had settled in, and then, with this opportunity with the caucus, she was just really excited to do it and said, "I need somebody who can staff this, to be able to make sure that I don't have any missteps." She was not necessarily the quick study that Ron is, but she enjoyed being briefed, she enjoyed learning new things, she enjoyed taking the reins to move stuff forward in committee and on the floor, and she was really a joy to work with, and an overall fun person. She was lovely.

ETHIER: When you got to be on the committee, would you check back in with her? Did you still help her?

SCOTT: Oh, yes, because we talked every day. She lived around the corner from me. Barbara and I lived on Woodley Place, and she lived right off of Woodley. Like I said, what happens among staff is that you really become like a family. She liked to cook. She became a friend.

ETHIER: Was she aware of this historic position that she was taking during the time?

SCOTT: Oh, yes. She understood that the responsibility, particularly as a woman, was going to be viewed and judged in history. She did well.

ETHIER: Great, thank you. You were committee staff, but you were also Dellums' staff? Is that correct?

SCOTT: Right. What we were able to do in those days, you could actually do a portion of a committee payroll and a portion of a personal payroll to make one check. Minimal as it was, I had a portion of the committee and a portion of the personal, thus the special assistant designation in the personal office and then the staff designation on the committee. I don't even remember what the committee designation was, come to think of it. All I remember is I did home rule and education and—what else? Because this was right when Mayor

[Walter] Washington was—Congress had just passed that they could actually have their own authority.

ETHIER: What did you think of Ron Dellums' career in the House at this point, when you joined his staff?

SCOTT: I had followed it closely. Like I said, we stayed in touch over the years. I remember when Mickey [George Thomas] Leland was running. He [Dellums] came, and he [Dellums] would go to Texas because I went to help Mickey when he was running. He had become the conscience of the Congress early on. When he came in and was able to introduce the sanctions legislation, his very first year there, it was on. He became known as the conscience of the Congress and had developed this rapport among Members and staff that was phenomenal. No one could ever say that Ron Dellums ever had a negative thing to say about any Member of the institution.

ETHIER: So you were feeling excited about coming to work for him?

SCOTT: Oh, absolutely. Absolutely. To be able to carry on that tradition. Whatever I could do to help.

ETHIER: What was the atmosphere of Washington, DC, when you first arrived, when you moved?

SCOTT: I didn't hear you. What did you say? I'm sorry, I coughed.

ETHIER: That's okay. What was the atmosphere of Washington, DC, when you first arrived after moving there permanently?

SCOTT: First got to Washington—well, it was sort of a different time. We had just come through a whole bunch of negative political stuff. We were getting ready to lose the White House. I want to say when [Ronald] Reagan came in is

when the atmosphere changed. I want to say one of the things that I was working on—remember, the Haitian boat lift was happening in '80, the same time the AIDS crisis was on the rise. The issues that needed to be addressed were important, and folks were having to get used to having President Reagan take over. It was a different atmosphere.

But the city is always exciting. It's the most historical city, I think—well, that and Philadelphia. The history is there, it's beautiful, the kids loved school, and there wasn't anything negative about living in DC. It was a cool town. And good food. {laughter}

ETHIER: Along the same lines, what was the atmosphere of the House when you first arrived?

SCOTT: The atmosphere of the House—like I said, it was collegial. It wasn't until after—oh, God, when did Newt [Newton Leroy] Gingrich become Speaker? [1995] That's when it started, at least in my mind, to go downhill. There was an air of collegiality among the Members. They agreed to disagree on what they disagreed on, but they weren't going to stab everybody in the back. Working across the aisle was not a chore, like it is now. There wasn't that clear delineation of partisanship, like you see in the news now.

Just taking as an example the sanctions bill, if we had not been able to work both inside and outside the institution, and work across party lines, the bill never would have passed, not to mention override a veto.

ETHIER: This is for South Africa?

SCOTT: Yes. Members worked together. I could go in the Members' Dining Room and sit and have lunch with Republicans. We didn't have Independents in early days. It was quite different from what it is now.

ETHIER: What types of positions were women in when you started in the House?

SCOTT: Well, particularly on the committees, I would say particularly for DC Committee, there was equal representation between men and women on the committee. Actually, I want to say there were more women on the DC Committee. I would say in the support offices you had great representation of women. The majority of the Office of Personnel was women. A lot of the committees had more women than you would have expected. Granted, they may not have been making the same salary as the men, but they were there. But I know that between DC [Committee] and Armed Services, that Ron served on, women had ample representation.

ETHIER: Along those same lines, was your office a welcoming place for women staffers?

SCOTT: Oh, absolutely. Absolutely. One of the things about Ron's staff is that, until his retirement, he had one of the longest tenured staffs on the Hill. There wasn't turnover. If there was turnover in the congressional office, it was only a shift going to the district office.

ETHIER: Right. You mentioned in a previous conversation how the CBC was very welcoming to you as a new staff member. Can you talk about that experience? Who welcomed you, and how was the way they treated you different than the rest of the House?

SCOTT: I would say that having worked with the CBC over the years on the Congressional Black Caucus weekend—the CBC's executive director, when I came, was Barbara Williams. She's an old friend from California. Barbara, at the time, just insisted that, you have to meet everybody, you've got to meet all the staff people, you've got to get to know people, know what folks are doing, and then that way, you can't say you're not in the know. From that flowed close working relationships with the staffs of the Members. Any time any new

staff was coming to anybody's office, there was a collective of us that would welcome folk and say, "If you need anything, just pick up the phone." We would share information, and I know, for years, I had developed a legislative test. I said, "Okay, if you're looking for an LD, if they can't answer these questions, they can't be your LD. Here's my list." Because I never had to use it. I developed it, but I never had to use it.

All the staffs were not only welcoming, but encouraging. This is an opportunity for you to do your best. As I would share with my interns, every day has to be a learning experience. You have to learn something new every day. If you don't, you haven't done your job. And I did, I learned something new almost every day, for all those years.

ETHIER: Did they offer any advice to you?

SCOTT: Oh, yes. You always had advice. Some of the coolest advice is like, "Okay, when you're in the parking lot, try to park near a light. Or if you're parking under the building, park near a pole. Or get as close to the door as you can. Don't go in so-and-so's line in the cafeteria, because she might bless you out. {laughter} Be careful walking through the tunnel, because you'll get your heels caught on the grate." There was always both practical and fun information. Learning the catacombs of those office buildings was a rude awakening. But once you know them, then you know how to teach other folks how to maneuver between the buildings and the Senate.

ETHIER: On my way here, the way that I usually go is now blocked off. I was like, "What am I going to do?" But I figured it out. {laughter}

SCOTT: Oh, I know. Every time I go to Washington now, it's like, "Oh my God, I can't get to how I used to get from point A to point B."

ETHIER: It's all different, yes. How did the CBC help with your family responsibilities?

SCOTT: Like I said, a lot of the staff—it was CBC staff, it was our committee staffs, and our personal office staffs—everyone was always willing to help out. So, example, I'm trying to think. Who would be a good example? Barbara and I always shared responsibility for the kids until the time she went back to Oakland. Our office, we were always open. You can bring your children if you need to bring your children to work. If the daycare is closed, or somebody has an appointment, bring that child to work. If someone had to go someplace, or say if I had to do something with Ron in the evening, one of the other staff folk would go pick up the kids from school. Theta Shipp, who used to work for Major [Robert Odell] Owens—and for Merv [Mervyn Malcolm] Dymally—would pick up the kids. Then when she adopted her daughter, we would trade off on babysitting. Everyone was amenable to helping. Your children were not only yours, they belonged to everybody else. The kids, consequently, had lots of aunts and uncles. {laughter}

ETHIER: Sort of drawing back to the community you grew up in. In a previous conversation we had—and I looked, and I had emailed you for the first time exactly a year ago, a couple days ago. So we've had many conversations over the year. But in a previous conversation in the past year, we talked about the obstacles you faced as a black woman in the House. I'm wondering if you could talk more about how you were perceived or treated here on the Hill.

SCOTT: I think the primary obstacles were ingrained in the history of the system, given U.S. history. When I came in, I was met with that double whammy, both race and gender. It was a long road. The hard part was trying to get folk to understand that you knew just as much as everybody else. That was the obstacle. One of the things that I used to cringe about is that if I made a statement as a black woman in a specific position, either another Member's

staff person or the Member would go ask somebody else the same question to double-check that I was right in my answer. Used to piss me off, okay? But anyway, that was part of kind of the double whammy.

It's always a long road, and one of the struggles was to break the codes, because in the overall institution, there was this code that women really didn't need to progress as professionals on the Hill. Pat [Patricia Scott] Schroeder taught me, early on, that a woman's place is also in the House and the Senate and wherever she wants to be.

I want to say one of the things that folk got to know me for is that I would stand my ground, both as an African American and as a woman. I was trying to be a person of increase and change for any new folks that were potentially going to follow in our footsteps. Particularly for minority staff arriving on Hill because the challenges were as much about being African American as it was about being a woman. Then, in terms of being a woman, having to balance that family life with professional life was really, really rough. Then having to prove yourself among, for lack of a better term, the guys was doubly hard. It was both a challenge to the institutional structure and the authority that had been kind of developed, given the history of the institution. You know how to work through it.

I want to say one of my biggest struggles was working with the institution when Ron became chair of Armed Services. When he became chair of Armed Services, we got threats on a daily basis. I had a friend of mine, who worked for the FBI years and years before, do an analysis to see how vulnerable we were in the office that we sat in. His response was, "You are vulnerable." So I went to the leadership. I went to the Capitol Police. I went to the Architect [of the Capitol]. I went to all of the, quote, "powers that be" to ask that Ron have a bulletproof glass put in his office. They didn't want to deal with me.

We would meet. They did their own security analysis, and sure enough, their analysis demonstrated or showed that I was correct in what I had been saying. Somebody standing over on Dirksen [Senate Office Building] could shoot a high-powered rifle into Ron's office window.

This went on for months and months and months. The guys at my office said, "You just need to let it rest." I told them, "No, I'm not going to let it rest." I had one more meeting with the Architect, with the chief of the Capitol Police, with the Sergeant at Arms. It must have been five or 10 people in the meeting. Their bottom line was that they didn't think that they could authorize procuring a bulletproof window. I said, "Okay, I got you. We've been going through this for months." I told them, as everyone was getting up, I said, "And when you all wake up and read the *Washington Post* saying that Ronald V. Dellums has been shot in his office, somebody will find me a bulletproof glass."

It wasn't a week later I get a call from the Sergeant at Arms saying, "Oh, guess what we found? We found an old bulletproof glass in the basement over on the Senate side, and we'll come try to measure and put it in." That's how Ron got his bulletproof glass in his office.

ETHIER: Wow.

SCOTT: I'm telling you nicely what I told them. "When he gets shot, it's on you all. It's not on me. Okay?"

ETHIER: Right, you did what you could do.

SCOTT: I did what I was supposed to do. But anyway, we got the bulletproof glass. I'm just saying. It's all guys, and they don't really want to deal with a woman, let alone a black woman. It's like, okay, whatever.

ETHIER: Right. But you got it. Wow. Thank you for sharing that story.

SCOTT: It was like, duh. And it's not like the chief of police didn't have a folder full of the threats. Every threat that came in, I would have to share with them.

ETHIER: So these were mail-in and phoned?

SCOTT: Oh, they would be mailed, they would be on the phone. Yes. They'd come both to our office and to the committee office.

ETHIER: And it really started when he became chair of Armed Services?

SCOTT: It was chair of Armed Services. The world wasn't ready for this Afro-top bell-bottom progressive from Berkeley, peacenik, to be chair {laughter} of the Armed Services Committee.

ETHIER: And they were going to let you know about it. Geez. In his book [*Lying Down with the Lions: A Public Life from the Streets of Oakland to the Halls of Power*], Dellums says, "My staff reflected my politics: progressive, multiracial, young, and determined to change the world." I'm wondering if that's how you saw the staff as well.

SCOTT: Oh, absolutely. Absolutely. One brilliant thing that Ron allowed to happen with us as staff, he wanted folks to pursue their own interest. Consequently, we have many activists and many spokespersons on behalf of specific issues. He took pride and joy in seeing folks bloom and come into their own around the issues that they were passionate about.

ETHIER: Walking around Capitol Hill, what reputation did you have as a Dellums staffer?

SCOTT: I don't know what other folks actually thought, but what I've heard as a

Dellums staffer—my particular role as a Dellums staffer was to be that person of change, and to encourage learning and focusing. I was part of the institution's training component for when new staff came on the Hill. I was in the inaugural Stennis Fellows class.[3] That's how Mark [Stanley] and I started running—you sent me that video with Mark Stanley and the crew, and we've remained tight. We had a very close-knit teaching element among various staff on the Hill. So I would imagine that being a Dellums staffer, folk always looked to us as being the most progressive, the most outspoken. We loved wearing the "L" on our shoulder for being left-wing. That's how folks saw us. Because I could walk in, in a room of Republicans—"Oh, God, here comes this peacenik." {laughter} It's like, "Okay, give it up, dude. I'm here, okay?"

ETHIER: "I'm not leaving."

SCOTT: Oh, yeah. "Just give it up."

ETHIER: When Jeannette Rankin served in Congress—she was elected in 1916, came to Congress in 1917—there was a lot of attention paid to her dress and demeanor because she was a woman. Do you think that was the same or that it changed by the time that you came to the House?

SCOTT: I want to say that it changed to an extent, but there was an unwritten standard, institutionally, that you were expected to adhere to. I know folks used to laugh at me all the time because I would show up in my jeans and my daishiki. I had a suit hanging in the closet, so if I had to go to a committee meeting, I would put on the suit and my heels and my stockings, heaven forbid, and go to the committee meeting. {laughter} But in the office, if I didn't have to go out of the office, I was casual as I wanted to be, until Ron took on more and more responsibilities, and I realized I had to stay dressed all day.

I want to say there was an unwritten code—and it may have been written somewhere, but I never saw it. But there was an unwritten code of professional, we'll call it—professional dress was to be a staple of staff.

ETHIER: Thank you. We have about a half an hour left.

SCOTT: Oh, Lord.

ETHIER: I know, which is not enough time. I have questions about you being his [Dellums'] chief of staff, I have questions about him as a Member. But I think I want to jump to talk about South Africa, and then also a little bit about you transitioning into Barbara Lee's office when she was elected to Congress. Then I have some general wrap-up questions. Does that sound good for the remainder of our time?

SCOTT: Yes.

ETHIER: Okay. Thank you. Shifting gears kind of abruptly—I'm sorry—to South Africa [and apartheid].

SCOTT: Oh, that's all right.

ETHIER: Why was it important for Dellums' to take a stand on South Africa?

SCOTT: Why was it important for him? I think it was important for the world to look at establishing and seeking an end to apartheid and racist policies in South Africa. The import for him is, because of the brutalness of the apartheid system—not to mention all of the political prisoners who were being held in South Africa—it was important to the world. It wasn't just important to Ron Dellums, and he knew that. It became a very, very heartfelt action on his part. He will tell you to this day that he wasn't looking at trying to be the hero in any effort. He was trying to do what was right and just for a nation of black

people who were not being treated as human beings.

ETHIER: What was your role with the South African legislation?

SCOTT: Actually, I didn't have a bunch of roles with the legislation initially in '71, '72. But what I did as we began to move the bill forward was I was one of the people who helped focus on—and I became the conduit—for helping to build the coalition to ensure the success of the legislation. I worked with not only Members and their staffs, but also individuals and organizations and unions and folk across the country who could help bring pressure on the institution, to help move the legislation forward.

It must have been '77, '78 when, during one of the Congressional Black Caucus leadership issue conferences, and out of the issue conference was created what eventually evolved into TransAfrica, which was led by Randall Robinson. TransAfrica ended up being our foundation, and housed a lot of the work around doing the organizing to help push for sanctions. Like I said, I worked with organizations, so I had the unions, the peace organizations, the religious organizations, the universities. Bob Brauer, who was on our staff, also worked with labor and the elected officials and municipalities.

What we ended up doing was creating both an inside and an outside strategy to be able to make sure that the legislation passed. Consequently, given all of the activity across the country, it ended up creating the Free South Africa Movement. It was basically to build awareness among the American public about apartheid and to start the change on policy. Reagan and the crew were pushing constructive engagement, and it was like, "Oh no, not today." It was our intent, and it was one of the major objectives, was to be able to get that policy changed.

ETHIER: Dellums and his office worked on legislation for South Africa for more than

14 years.

SCOTT: Absolutely.

ETHIER: Reading that, I wondered what kept your office going.

SCOTT: It was the momentum. It wasn't so much the momentum inside the institution. We tried to make sure that we had our fingers on the pulse of what was happening inside the institution. We had a great coalition on the inside. But it was the outside coalition in all the states that was making and helping Members understand what they needed to do to be on the right side of history.

ETHIER: Also—sorry, go ahead.

SCOTT: No, you had asked what it felt like. It was challenging. It was exhilarating. It was exciting. I know I can remember interns flowing in and out of the office over the years, and the interns getting excited about really working on something that was this concrete. That was always fun, that we were opening to and challenging young people to stay involved and to get involved. Do the work while you're here, and when you leave here and go back to your school or your community, continue the work.

ETHIER: Right. In his book, Representative Dellums says that passing his [South Africa] amendment was the highest point in his political life, and I'm wondering what it was like for you.

SCOTT: You know how you can be so excited and so thrilled that, even though you're crying and excited and boo-hoo, you're really numb, because you can't believe that it actually happened? And as Ron described it, he describes the passage of the final comprehensive act as a football. He used the football analogy. You

start the ball rolling, but you can't always be the quarterback, so you pass the ball here, and you pass the ball there, and eventually somebody else will take it across the finish line for the touchdown. It becomes everyone's effort, and you get excited for everyone because everyone had an opportunity to participate in making history.

ETHIER: Can you describe working with the ANC [African National Congress] to coordinate a visit with Nelson Mandela?

SCOTT: Oh, sure. I'm trying to remember. We did a solidarity conference in New York, at Riverside. I want to say it was '80, '81. I can't remember the name of it. I'll have to pull out my papers someplace. I want to say it was the Conference on the Liberation Struggles of Southern Africa. That's when I first met all of the ANC folk who had come in from other countries. Then in, I want to say '89 I think, the first ANC office was opened, over on 8th Street in DC. And Lindiwe Mabuza came to coordinate that effort and was very, very instrumental in helping to coordinate everything in preparation for Mr. Mandela's release. I'm trying to remember the other part of your question. Oh, how I worked with the ANC?

ETHIER: Yes, to coordinate the visit.

SCOTT: To coordinate the visit. The visit itself was coordinated by a committee that had been set up by—I'm trying to remember who all was part of that committee. It was Randall Robinson. It was—I want to say Willard Johnson. Oh, the names will come to me at some point.

ETHIER: Yes, and we can add them in later, too.

SCOTT: The first U.S. tour [in 1990] was set up after his release from prison for Mr. Mandela to thank the supporters in the U.S. who had helped to push for the

legislation and to raise money for the ANC and to appeal to the foreign governments to forgo relaxing sanctions on South Africa. It was Roger Wilkins, Randall Robinson. Randall coordinated the U.S. tour. Like I said, the tour was to get the message out about the current state of politics in South Africa and the nature of the ANC struggle that continued in South Africa. It was basically like running a campaign.

We did it on a crash basis, and it was simultaneously like running a campaign and like trying to prep at the level of a head of state. We had to work very closely with the [U.S.] State Department because they handled the security, but the rest of the logistics were handled by this committee that worked with the ANC reps that were in the U.S. and with Randall and his team. It was hard. {laughter} But it was well worth it.

You know his first visit was part of a 13-nation tour. It was massive, trying to coordinate dates and times and cities and dignitaries and electives. Because he landed in New York, so Mayor Dave [David] Dinkins was on that coordinating team for New York, and then Boston was another whole team. It was an intricate communications effort. Like I said, execution on the ground was like running a campaign. Does that answer your question?

ETHIER: Yes, thank you. And you met Nelson Mandela?

SCOTT: Yes.

ETHIER: Yes. And what was that like?

SCOTT: Oh, it was wonderful. I was speechless. I was in awe, because you know how you look at superheroes, and you think of folk as superheroes and as idols? When I met him, I couldn't close my mouth. I was at Bishop Tutu's house, and I couldn't close my mouth. He walked over to me, and he says, "My

child, I know who you are, and I know who you work with. We are pleased." I almost fell over. Anyway, I couldn't talk for a week. Didn't want to wash my hand or my clothes. {laughter}

ETHIER: That's amazing.

SCOTT: It was like, what can I say?

ETHIER: It sounds like we could do a whole oral history just on that, which is mind-blowing.

SCOTT: Oh, we could, probably, yes.

ETHIER: But here we are, and transitioning to your time with Barbara Lee, rather abruptly again. But can you describe how you became Congresswoman Lee's chief of staff?

SCOTT: Well, I think it was just kind of a natural progression. Barbara and I have known each other since we were babies. We grew up next door to each other, and when my mother died, her mother reared me. It was like, I would say, a natural progression. What I had tried to do early on was to be able to ease her into the new role that she was getting ready to assume because it was so much different than the California legislature. Given the experience and the familiarity with the institution, she thought it was a great thing to do. She reminded me, she said, "Oh, yeah. I hear you train new Members when they come into the House," and I said, "Yes. I train Members. We do Member classes, and we do new staff classes, and we work with Leadership, and we do all that stuff." She says, "Okay, you're on. What do I need to know? What do I need to do, and where do I go?" It was just kind of a given. And given that she is my best friend, it was never intended to be forever, forever, forever.

Like I said, Ron's staff was one of the longest tenured staffs in the House, and given the level of experience and expertise, I asked her to consider, one, being her own person and, two, talking with each one of the staff folks because we had had some folks that had come since she had left. So certainly, the majority of the staff stayed on to work with her, but at the same time, a lot of the staff, because they had been there for 20-plus years, chose to retire. That created the shift in staff work.

Barbara created a wonderful, wonderful array of staff folk. Some were still from Ron's office, and then some new, young people came in because I'm always encouraging her to work with young people. Nobody wants to hear from us old folk because the whole world has changed, and our ideas are old and tired. Now she has a wonderful, young staff, and they're doing her proud.

ETHIER: Thank you. In the minutes that we have left, I have four wrap-up questions for you. What do you think your legacy in the House is?

SCOTT: My legacy. I would hope that it would be that I just tried to help other women realize their own potential, to blaze their own trails, to imprint the institution, and hopefully just move them close to just doing good in the world.

ETHIER: What are you most proud of?

SCOTT: Oh, what am I most proud of? Oh, I think I can be most proud that I shared my life and my experiences and my knowledge, and hopefully a little wisdom, with young women coming in. I'm always asking young women to consider their service in the institution as a career rather than just looking at the institution as a pitstop to enhance their résumés. The institution itself has this wonderful history, and this wonderful component for you being a part of the greater good. I guess that makes me a proponent for real institutional memory

and thus the seniority process. It takes time to learn the ins and outs of the institution and how to maneuver. So I would hope that I was able to impart some knowledge to young women about the wonder of working in this terrific institution.

ETHIER: If you could offer advice to women wanting to work on the Hill, what would it be? But it sounds like you just answered that question.

SCOTT: {laughter} Okay.

ETHIER: Do you have anything else to add to that?

SCOTT: I would hope that they would consider it, notwithstanding the atmosphere now, because I know, having been there a few months ago, the atmosphere—it's almost like you can cut it with a knife—is not really a great atmosphere. But the environment, the institutional environment, is what's so encouraging. Those systems are still in place, they can work if utilized, and that you can make a difference, not just for your district or your committee or just for you, but you can make a difference for the entire country. So I'm hoping that's what they will do.

ETHIER: Great. My last question—we didn't really dive into your time as chief of staff, but maybe we can get you back one day.

SCOTT: Absolutely.

ETHIER: There are articles written about this question, but I'm wondering what your answer is. Why is it important to have women of color as chiefs of staff on the Hill?

SCOTT: I think it's important because women of color bring a different perspective that the majority of Members may not have even considered, thought about,

understood. Women of color bring, I want to say, a broad perspective, a diversity that includes that of being a woman. If more women of color had been in the decision-making process as folk were developing legislation, a lot of the discussions that we're having today would be moot.

I know I recently did a class on racism and diversity, and the one thing that folks don't understand is that if you could walk in a person of color's shoes, you would see the world differently. The example I used was I asked a young woman who was in the audience with a young son, I said, "Do you have a conversation with your son in the mornings before he's going to school about how to walk down the street?" She said, "No, why should I?" I explained to her that, as a grandmother sending my grandsons out the door every morning, I have to remind them that they are young men of color, and this is how you have to conduct yourself in the street, around police people, etc. The entire audience gasped and said they never realized that that conversation has to take place among families of color. It's the same thing with the institution. The experiences and the culture and the diversity bring just that to offices who don't necessarily know. I'm just saying, women of color can help do a whole bunch of things.

ETHIER: That's awesome. Well, that's all I have. Thank you so, so much for being so honest with your answers and open. This has been so great for me, and I hope you got something out of it, too.

SCOTT: Oh, I hope so.

ETHIER: Is there anything that you want to add? We didn't get to cover everything, but anything that is itching at the back of your mind?

SCOTT: Not that I can think of, other than hoping that women, and particularly young women, will consider being part of the institution. They can help

shape it.

One thing I didn't say is that, with women being in the institution, it allows issues that men don't necessarily think of, that are important in the world. When women hold key positions, they are able to, one, be heard in legislative deliberations, and then help shape legislation. Not to mention that, in moving stuff forward, women can also come together. Doesn't matter if you are a Republican, Democrat, black, white, Hispanic, Asian-Pacific—anything. Women gravitate toward each other because they have a common thread.

One thing that women do, women trust more readily than men do, and nobody ever talks about that in the institution. In addition to impacting legislation, particularly legislation that would affect women's issues, they can help shepherd other areas, like agriculture and transportation and the military and the budget. That's just my two cents. I could go on and on forever and ever about the import of women in the House, okay? Because can you imagine what the laws and the public policies would look like if we had a majority of women in the House?

ETHIER: I know it.

SCOTT: Don't get me on my soapbox. {laughter}

ETHIER: That's great. Well, thank you so much for spending time with me today.

SCOTT: I appreciate you doing it. This is such an historic effort, and I am just so honored and moved to be a part of it.

ETHIER: Well, we're honored and moved to have you be a part of it, so thank you so much.

SCOTT: Great. Well, I'm glad we were finally able to do it. I just hate—I didn't get to

DC last month like I had planned.

ETHIER: When you do come here, we'll grab some tea or something, and that will be great.

SCOTT: Okay. I've got you. I've got you. Well, thank you so very, very much, Grace. I really appreciate it.

ETHIER: Thank you. I hope you have a super evening.

SCOTT: You do the same.

Notes

[1] Yvonne Braithwaite Burke was chair of the Congressional Black Caucus from 1976-1977.
[2] George Washington Collins died in an airplane crash on December 8, 1972. Cardiss Collins was elected to the House on June 5, 1973.
[3] The Stennis Fellowship, established in the 103rd Congress (1993–1995), is a bipartisan development program for senior-level congressional staff.