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My Life In Dayton: Jamesetta's Story

STORYTELLER: Jamesetta Lewis

MADDEN HILLS

My name is Jamesetta and I was born and raised in Knoxville, Tennessee. I was the only child of my parents. My parents built their own house and made it very clear that I had every opportunity to own my own house. Why would you throw money away for rent? They made sure I went to college. I attended Knoxville College and, luckily, the college was right across the street from our house.

I graduated in Social Work and met Chuck in college. We got married and came to Dayton. Dayton has been my home ever since. Chuck and his family were from Dayton.

I worked for the State of Ohio and Montgomery County as a social worker. Chuck worked in many positions in the YMCA, serving at one point



as the Executive Director of the West Dayton. We live in this community and let me tell you why it matters to us.

It Matters: Everyone Can Buy a House

All of the people from the YMCA met periodically. Another white couple about our same age also said they were house hunting and found a house. “We got our loan right away—there was no trouble.” I said, “Really?” The white couple wondered why we did not get our loan. They couldn’t understand. **WE WEREN’T GIVEN THE SAME CONSIDERATION BECAUSE WE WERE BLACK. THAT IS WHEN I TOLD THE WHITE COUPLE, “WELL THAT’S THE WAY IT IS.”**

Our realtor told us she knew this older gentleman who had a company. We met the gentleman and he said, “Oh, yeah, I know Charles, he works at the YMCA, been in the service. I’ll take a chance and lend him the money.” That is how we got the loan for the house. Not from a bank, really.

It Matters: Access to Healthy Food

About the food desert, I never had to do that. We were lucky. My dad was a carpenter by trade but he was a maintenance supervisor in a building for forty years. He didn’t have to go to the military because his brothers did. My mom was a nurse.

THERE AREN’T A LOT OF PLACES AROUND HERE TO BUY FOOD, ESPECIALLY FRUIT AND VEGETABLES. YOU’D HAVE TO TAKE THE BUS TO GET TO KROGER BECAUSE SOME PEOPLE DON’T HAVE CARS. The only places to buy food that are close enough to walk to are some little convenience stores, but they only sell junk food. If they do ever have produce it isn’t very fresh. It’s old. So people who need food can have a hard time getting it. This makes many areas in Dayton food deserts.

It Matters:

Young People Should Have a Safe Place

In Dayton, the libraries are consolidating. Desoto Bass is the name of a large low-income apartment complex in the center of town. It was named after Reverend Desoto Bass who was a community leader in the west side of Dayton. All of the kids that live at the apartment complex at Desoto Bass can walk to the Madden Library. They had a meeting in West Dayton to listen to the community, but their minds were set. They have chosen to consolidate the libraries to the area off Route 35.

Madden Library was the only good place for local children to go after school. They can read or they can do homework or just be somewhere after school. Now, the only place for kids to go after school is the Boys and Girls Club.

It Matters: Clean Neighborhood

Even Montgomery County gave up on cleaning their own properties. They own the Human Society and surrounding land on Nicholas Road. There is trash everywhere behind the Human Society. It looks horrible and is located across from the neighborhood elementary school. Don’t they know it affects the neighborhood? No one wants to live by the trash! No one wants to live where the street looks awful! That’s wrong. **WE CARE.** Our neighborhood association continues to request a cleanup.

The local incarcerated men assisted in the neighborhood cleanup. I made them sandwiches and took some food to the prisoners who were picking up trash and thanked them. They commented on my car. The prisoners liked my car. I told them to work hard in a job when you get out of prison and you can buy yourself a car too. I think I gave them hope for the future.

The City and County let a company put a landfill and sewage treatment at the top of the hill. It’s the highest point in Dayton—it is a landfill. A man-made hill of garbage and trash. It smells for miles in the surrounding areas and residents have filed a class-action lawsuit.

We are trying to find solutions for our Madden Hills Neighborhood. We formed a 501(c)

that protects the neighborhood. The community will not allow the purchase of homes in the neighborhood from people with outside influences. We don’t want people buying homes and renting the homes out to people who don’t take care of the home or abandon the house.

It Matters: People Should Have a Job

McCall’s Magazine was very popular in the 80s. McCall’s magazine plant was here in town and a big part of the area. They closed and we lost all the jobs here and also as the result of GM and other large manufacturing companies leaving the area. Dayton lost 400,000 jobs. We need jobs for the area.

All of these issues are important to the families of West Dayton neighborhoods. We care about the community and the children and the future of the area.