

Devin Roth interviewing Patti Wilson-Aden clip 1
Topic: Experiences with University of Delaware

[Patti Wilson-Aden discusses the role of the University and its impact on the community.]

Patti Wilson-Aden: So that gradual encroachment is not only... The University of Delaware not only did that, I think, because they could, but it was there way of, I think, creating an environment that they felt was more conducive to their growth and their ability to attract students. I remember one community meeting, and the University of Delaware has been doing these kinds of projects that you're doing for a while, and, you know, one kid said, one student said, that they had been warned not to go into the Black neighborhood because of the crime. Well, you know what, that's not true. We all knew each other, you know, you don't steal from people that you know. I mean, growing up, we never locked our doors, literally, we never locked our doors, and didn't lock our doors until after I went away to college. So, you know, it was not the dangerous environment, it's not the dangerous environment that the University painted it to be. If you look at early Newark, you know, the railroad tracks were always very significant, and, you know, it is the stereotype of across the tracks but in Newark that was very much the case. In fact, you know, city services up to the Sixties, and actually, it's one of the things that my grandfather ran on... city services stopped at the railroad tracks. Zoning enforcement stopped at the railroad tracks. Coding, you know, code enforcement, all those things stopped at the railroad tracks, so property within the Black community was very vulnerable to development. And whether it's the University itself or speculators that came along later, those Black families that had been long-time property owners were prime because the housing was, in some instances, sub-standard.