



# Kai Davis and Kimberly Graham: WAACA Oral History

October 15, 2022

Location: Windsor Historical Society

Interviewer: Sulema DePeyster

Transcriber: Katie Lapkin

Editor: Sulema DePeyster

This interview is part of a series conducted with former members of the Windsor Afro-American Civic Association. The content of this transcript has been edited for clarity purposes.



**WINDSOR**  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

**Sulema DePeyster:** Okay, I'll start by saying good morning. My name is Sulema DePeyster. I am the Community History Specialist here at the Windsor Historical Society. Today is October 15th, 2022, and I'm joined by Kimberly Graham and Kai. Would you state your full name for me?

**Kai Davis:** Sure. Kai Davis.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Kai Davis. Okay. And we're here to do an oral history interview on the WAACA exhibit. Would you two begin by giving verbal consent? You can just say, "We agree to have this interview conducted." Something along the lines of that.

**Kimberly Graham:** I'm Kimberly Graham and I agree to have this interview conducted.

**Kai Davis:** Yes, I agree to have this interview conducted.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Okay. Thank you so much for joining me today and agreeing to have this conversation. So our first question is [about] childhood and growing up. Were you both raised in Windsor? Is that where you were raised?

**Kimberly Graham:** I was raised in Windsor. My family moved to Windsor I believe in September 1967 or [19]66, something like that. We moved to 50 Grand Avenue in Windsor.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Okay, and were you also raised in Windsor?

**Kai Davis:** No, I was raised in North Carolina.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Oh, okay. Also, can you describe your relationship to one another? I believe you said you're the niece of Ms. Graham.

**Kai Davis:** Yes, I am Kimberly's niece.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Okay.

**Kai Davis:** I am Willie's granddaughter. Her first granddaughter.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Okay, okay. And so can you talk a little bit about growing up in Windsor? What [was] that like for you?

**Kimberly Graham:** I believe that we were the first Black family in the neighborhood. That's what I recall, and I recall my parents telling me that before we moved there, [the] neighbors had gotten together and offered them some money not to move in. But we did move in, and my parents were there until their ultimate death. My mom died in November of 1992, and my father died in July of 2007.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Okay, and do you know why they chose to settle in Windsor?

**Kimberly Graham:** I think they just found what they wanted in Windsor. They had a nice yard [and] a nice home. It was a three-bedroom home at the time that we moved there. They had three children and they had three bedrooms. It was what they wanted, as far as I know. I don't know, other than that, why they chose Windsor.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Can you speak a little bit about the diversity in Windsor at that time and maybe how it's changed?

**Kimberly Graham:** It's been a long time since I've lived in Windsor, but from what I can see, it has totally changed. As I indicated, I think that we were the first Black family in the neighborhood, and I remember the first friends that we met there [were] Jackie Borstein and Maura Begley. They saw my sister Karen and I outside in the yard playing and they came over and they became our friends. When I walked into my kindergarten class, I remember Maura standing up and saying, "I told you we were getting a new girl! I told you!" But that's pretty much the way it was. There weren't many Black people in the school that we went to. Eventually, we got a Black neighbor. The Duhart's moved in while we were still in elementary school, and I think I remember maybe one other Black male that was in my class later in the elementary school. We went to Clover Street School in Windsor.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Okay. Can you both speak about your family life [and] what that was like?

**Kimberly Graham:** My father had his own business, Graham's Acro. He and my mother ran that business together. My mother was home for part of the time that we were young, I think. [00:05:00] I know that she worked, and my dad also began working for the State of Connecticut. So he would work at his gas station during the day and at night he was working for the State of Connecticut. I think he started out there as a guard at night and I don't remember what he retired as, but I think he was a mechanic by trade and he was checking out buses or something for the State. I can't remember the job title, but I think he ended up retiring from the state of Connecticut. He also retired from Trinity College and my mom, I think before we were born, she was working for the Department of Motor Vehicles. But she always worked with my dad at the gas station, she worked at CBT [Connecticut Bank and Trust Co.], and then she also began working for Chris Dodd. She started working for him when he first started running for Congress. My dad was also a sheriff for a while for the state of Connecticut. They don't have that position anymore where the sheriffs were serving papers, legal documents, subpoenas and things like that. I don't think they have that position anymore, but my parents were very loving to us and family was very important. We always had family around. We had big parties in our backyard. We had a very nice backyard with a pool and a swing set and a garden and there was a rock patio and a slate patio. I do have some pictures of some of the parties that we had there, the big parties and how it was used. My mom belonged to a lot of different organizations, [and] she belonged to Makalia Court. They would dress in their Egyptian garb.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Oh, wow.

**Kimberly Graham:** I think I have pictures somewhere where they're all dressed in their Egyptian garb in the backyard, but we always had a lot of family and friends around and in the house. My mom was a great cook and people would say they could smell her fried chicken outside and they'd come in looking for a piece of fried chicken.

**Sulema DePeyster:** And what about you? Do you recall any memories of Mr. and Mrs. Graham and just the family life overall?

**Kai Davis:** Yes. My grandmother passed when I was seven, so I had some years with her before she passed. But I remember her taking me to get my nails done. We would go get our nails done and she would let me pick a little rhinestone to put on my nails, and we always got red nails together and we would ride around. I remember going to the parties in the backyard and having family reunions and watching TV with her or spending time in the house. Since I was the first grandchild and the only girl for a while, I was particularly spoiled, I think, and I got to spend a lot of time with her. Whenever we would visit from North Carolina, she would spend time with me and with my brother. But I remember having a good time with her. If I would fall and scrape my knee or something and I would cry to her, she would ask me, "Who did it? Show me the ground where it happened." I would point to the spot where I fell, and she would go yell at the ground and spank it for messing with me. So I remember she was always very protective of us and she would cook for us and spend a lot of time with us and she was a very proud grandmother.

**Sulema DePeyster:** That's great. So I had some questions about how you could describe Mr. and Mrs. Graham, and you did a very good job of laying out what Ms. Graham was like as a person primarily. Kimberly, did you have any other ways that you describe your parents?

**Kimberly Graham:** Yeah, I was thinking about my dad. [He] always took care of the yard and we had a beautiful, landscaped yard and people would say that he mowed his lawn like night and day. [laughing] [00:10:00] And I remembered as Kai was talking that he would give them rides while he was on the tractor. But [the yard] was his domain. He loved the yard. He kept the cars nice and clean. When we would go to church, that was his excuse for not going to church back then. He [would say], "I'm cleaning the car for you to go to church." My mother would always make sure that he had his refreshment while he was out in the yard. She would bring him homemade lemonade or homemade iced tea with mint in it. She grew mint in the yard and [would] bring that out while he was mowing the yard and that was just their thing. When he saw her coming, he would stop on the tractor and just wait and grin. [laughing] But she was always, always very active in her community and in her children's lives. Her education was extremely important to her. She always told us, "Get your education because that's something that no one can ever take away from you." She didn't get her college degree until late in life in 1983, but she made sure. After she graduated from high school, she grew up in New Britain, primarily.

**Kimberly Graham:** Her father did not know how to read or write, but he raised ten children and was there for them and became a barber in the state of Connecticut. [He] owned his own business, and although he couldn't read or write, he was an entrepreneur. He raised his children, he was a great father and grandfather. I guess that may be why education was so important to her. Even though no one in our family had ever gotten a private school education, she insisted that we each had that opportunity. So my sister Karen went to West Ledge. She ended up graduating from Windsor High, but she started out at West Ledge. I don't think that exists anymore. My younger sister [Kristen] and I both graduated from Loomis Chaffee. My brother graduated from Windsor High, but she gave us that opportunity and that desire to better ourselves. All of her siblings were active in their community. My uncle, Clifford Willis, was the first Black chief of police in the city of New Britain. My Aunt Ruby and Aunt Annie became

nurses. My Aunt Ruby went to Hampton University and graduated in 1958. I can't remember what school my Aunt Annie went to. My Aunt Mary Suggs became a high school teacher. She was a teacher at Hartford High, and her husband was the mayor of the town of Bloomfield, Connecticut, and I had another uncle who was a police officer in Baltimore, Maryland. There was another uncle [who] was a mechanic – Luther Willis. I think that's just about everybody, but all of my mother's siblings did something in the community.

**Kimberly Graham:** We helped people. All of them are very compassionate people and like I said, they all were very concerned about their family, and they all did something to help other people. They helped their family, they helped the community, [and] they were very involved. My Uncle Joe Willis was also an Alderman in the city of New Britain.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Okay.

**Kimberly Graham:** So a lot of them went into public service and my mom was very active here in the town of Windsor. As we know, she started the WAACA organization because she was concerned that Black kids were not getting the scholarships or the opportunities that they deserved to get and that's why she started the organization. [00:15:00] She was very active in an organization called the Makaila Court Daughters of ISIS which I believe is still in existence, and they did a lot of charitable events. She was active in her church. We were baptized and grew up in the Metropolitan AME Zion Church in Hartford, which is still in existence.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Oh, the Metropolitan.

**Kimberly Graham:** So they kept us active in school, in church, in our community, and with our families and that's how we were raised. It was God first and family second, but we always had family and friends around. All of my family were kind and generous people.

**Sulema DePeyster:** It sounds like compassion and excellence just ran in the family.

**Kimberly Graham:** Yes, I think so.

**Sulema DePeyster:** I did want to ask if you've ever attended Archer Memorial in Windsor. I know that had been mentioned in one of the newspaper articles, so was that a church that you attended at all, along with the Metropolitan AME Zion Church?

**Kimberly Graham:** No, they're both AME Zion churches. We attended the church in Hartford.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Okay. Can you speak a little bit more about the community involvement that both Mr. and Mrs. Graham had in Windsor and neighboring towns?

**Kimberly Graham:** I know she was active in the Windsor Democrats. She was active in the Black Democrats, the Windsor Democrats. So I know she was very active in politics. I'm trying to remember if she had any [other involvement]. I don't think she herself ever ran for office, but she was very active in helping other people run for office, and I know she helped Eric Coleman get his start. Senator Wilbur Smith and she were great friends and did things together. She was the backbone or the support of a lot of other people who stood up front, and I think that's why [Senator Christopher Dodd] gave her honors even after she died. He came to our house while she

was very ill, [and] he made it a point to be there for her. He would always say that she was his girl because she was the kind of person that you could count on, that everybody could count on to be there and do things and support other people.

**Sulema DePeyster:** I know your mom was very active in the community and played a role in starting WAACA, [but] did your father have an equal role in starting WAACA? Or was it mainly Mrs. Graham?

**Kimberly Graham:** I think my mom started [WAACA]. It was her idea, but they 100% supported each other. So I don't remember his specific involvement in WAACA and I wasn't there when it started, but I know my parents and I know [what] my mother did in starting organizations or being involved. He may not have been there out in front of the organization, but he was definitely there supporting my mother. I know that the first meeting was held in their living room. So if they met in her living room, I know for sure that my father was there to help set up whatever she needed. I'm sure that the yard was looking good, the porch was painted, [and] the grass was cut. If it was during the summer, the vegetables were growing so that people could see they [had] tomatoes. He was that kind of support to her. So he may not have been [at] the front of the organization, but he definitely supported her in whatever she did.

**Kimberly Graham:** In terms of meetings and organizations, he was a quiet person. But when it came time for him to speak, he was also an eloquent speaker. My mother made sure that he was honored when he retired from the state of Connecticut. I think that may have been one of the first times that I heard my dad speak, and he was just an eloquent speaker. When he was called upon when I think WAACA was honoring her, [00:20:00] he was the one who spoke about what should be done and how it should be done. He stood very proudly for and with his wife. And they did [that] for each other, just like with the gas station. I know she didn't want that gas station, she really didn't. But that was something that my father wanted. He was a mechanic. He was an entrepreneur at heart and so she was there. She did the bookkeeping and the record keeping. She always said, "I hate that stuff," but she did it because she supported him and she was always there while he was working.

**Sulema DePeyster:** I know you said you were at college when WAACA started, but do you remember attending any events that WAACA held or anything in relation to Mrs. Graham's community involvement? Any events that she attended, did you attend as well?

**Kimberly Graham:** [As I was growing up], my mother always had us involved in politics. We were Ella Grasso Girls. Ella Grasso, I believe, was the first female elected to governor in the state [of Connecticut]. I remember we were out with her colors. [They] were green and white and so we were involved in that. We were involved in Dodd Squad when he started running for office. I went to the event where she was honored by WAACA. But I went to Howard University in 1979. I finished there in 1983 and then I went to law school in Miami until 1986 and I stayed there until [1986]. After I graduated in 1986, I worked there until 1988. So I was gone, I think, most of the time when she had started WAACA. Do you know what year it started?

**Sulema DePeyster:** So our records say 1982.

**Kimberly Graham:** Yeah, so I was not around. I was in college, law school, and then I worked in Miami for a couple of years. By the time I came home, my mom was sick with cancer and that was part of the reason why I came home. Then she died in 1992, but I was gone almost 10 years.

**Sulema DePeyster:** And after you returned, is that when you stayed in this area?

**Kimberly Graham:** Yes, I came back in December of 1988.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Okay. And so one event in particular that comes to mind is the 10-year Anniversary Celebration and that, I think, was also in memory of Mrs. Graham. Did the family attend that event at all, and do you have any recollection of it?

**Kimberly Graham:** When was that?

**Sulema DePeyster:** I believe it was in 1992, though it might have been in the months preceding. So I'm not sure if there was an additional event to commemorate the life of Mrs. Graham and if there was anything else.

**Kimberly Graham:** She died in November of '92.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Okay.

**Kimberly Graham:** So if it was before, I know that she was honored. She was honored a lot right before she died. And so I know I was there. If she was there, I was there. I think my sister was a speaker. I may be mixing up events, but there was one event where my sister spoke [and] Gayle King spoke. But she was honored quite a bit towards the end of her life. So I'm sure I was there, I just don't have an independent recollection right now.

**Sulema DePeyster:** That's okay.

**Kimberly Graham:** I think that we have a picture of us and I think that was the WAACA event.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Since you had mentioned that she was given a lot of awards and also just celebrated for her activism, are there any other awards that you can think of or any ways that she was celebrated for her efforts?

**Kimberly Graham:** She was honored by I believe the Black Democrats of the state. I think she was honored by the Windsor Democrats. I think that she was honored by the state Democrats. I can't remember anymore. I know she turned down an organization that wanted to honor her, [00:25:00] but there weren't a lot. She was honored quite a bit in the latter part of her life.

**Sulema DePeyster:** And so, in your opinion, I know you might not have been physically in Windsor at the time, but what is your perception of the impact of not only WAACA, but your mother's continuous efforts throughout Windsor and the neighboring towns?

**Kimberly Graham:** I think that because of who she was and the things that she did in the organization, it allowed people in this town to see Black people differently. Because they wouldn't have expected the things of her that she did and what she became. Even though we weren't necessarily welcomed into the neighborhood when we first got there, we became a very

important part of our neighborhood that people depended on us or looked to us. They looked to my mom for what was going on in the political scene. They looked to my father, too. He would help people, especially ladies who lived alone or the lady who lived across the street from us. He was always shoveling her driveway [or] mowing her grass. There was a young man who lived next door to us and he either saved my father's life or my father saved his life. I can't remember which, but his name is Greg Costanza. He's still around. He's not in Windsor, but he has a lot of old videos of our neighborhood and what it was like. I can remember that we were not always accepted into everything, but we were there. I can say that even in his videos, he made videos of my brother, and it was a good neighborhood. When I look back on it, I'm proud of what my parents did and how they raised us. I think that because of her activism in the community, it also made us be concerned about other people and about what we're doing in the community. And I think it made all of us want to do something with our lives to get our education [and] become involved, that type of thing.

**Sulema DePeyster:** I think that's actually a good segue to ask if something like WAACA existed today, would that be something that both of you would be interested in?

**Kimberly Graham:** Absolutely.

**Kai Davis:** Yes, for sure.

**Sulema DePeyster:** And how do you think an organization like WAACA fits into today's society? Because one thing that's interesting is WAACA disbanded at a time [when] Windsor's population was more diverse than it had ever been. And so with today's issues, how do you think your communities could benefit from an organization like WAACA?

**Kimberly Graham:** I think any organization that gives us pride in ourselves and our history is important because even though [Windsor] is very diverse now and we have the young people now are doing so many things, they're getting so very well educated and having money for themselves. I think it's important, and even as I look back through these pictures and my mom's history, it is so important that we know our own history and be proud of that and be willing to share it with other people. So I think it's always important, especially for Black people who came to this country enslaved, that we share our history. Don't allow it to be lost and share it so that our children, that each generation, knows that you stand on this. [Our children should understand that] what you are doing, somebody else made it possible for you to do it. [00:30:00] [Someone] made it possible for you to vote. Somebody had to stand up and do that. Somebody had to stand up to make it possible for you to vote. Somebody had to be the first to go to the schools that we went to, to live in the communities that we did. Somebody had to stand up and do that first and to be there for you so you could stand on their shoulders.

**Sulema DePeyster:** And Kai, did you have anything that you would like to add?

**Kai Davis:** Sure. I just think it's very important to have programs like WAACA that focus on especially the Black community. As much as I think that we are more educated now than we've ever been, it's just so important to continue that momentum and to keep encouraging young people to go to school and making a way for them to be able to afford it. And I think it's just



invaluable that there was something even in the '80s that allowed for this opportunity that some students would not have had otherwise. So I think it's very important to continue that. Even though we're making strides, there are still lots of people who cannot afford to go to school and think that it's out of their reach. So they think that they can't, and I think the more that we put programs out like this, the more they'll realize that it is attainable. It is something they can do and it's something they should strive for.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Great. So I think I do want to go back a little bit and talk about as much as you might know about the early lives of both Mr. and Mrs. Graham. So do you know much about their childhoods, where they were raised? I know you said that Mrs. Graham was from New Britain, and so that's where she spent most of her life. But what about Mr. Graham?

**Kimberly Graham:** Well, my mom was born in Washington, Georgia. The small town of Washington, Georgia.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Oh, okay.

**Kimberly Graham:** She was born in a house, and she told me that as a child, she picked cotton. Her father would also pick fruit and vegetables. He was in Florida for a while, and they came to New Britain. He came to New Britain in search of a job, and he had to leave his family behind initially. He was here for a while and he was living in a boarding house. I was told that there would be people who worked during the day and people who worked during the night. So the people who worked during the day would leave the house and the people who worked during the night would sleep in their beds and vice versa. That's how it went. And so when he brought my grandmother here from Georgia with the two youngest children and she saw how he was living, she [said], "Oh no." [laughing] According [to] the story that I heard, she went downtown somewhere in New Britain. They didn't know where she went and when she came back, she had the key to a house. They moved into a house and eventually he brought his whole family here to live. Then my father grew up in Cleveland, Tennessee. Although I have pictures [of when] we went to visit down there, we weren't there much. I wasn't as close to my paternal grandparents as I was to my maternal grandparents, just because I didn't see them.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Okay.

**Kimberly Graham:** But we have a lot of relatives here from my father's side that came to Connecticut as well. My father came to Connecticut after being in the war. I believe he was in World War II, and he also came here looking for work and he was a mechanic. He started working for a gas station I think in Waterbury, something like that, and then he opened his own gas station. His first gas station that I recall was on Main Street in Hartford, and the second gas station was on Albany Avenue. The first gas station on Main Street was right across the street from the Ford James Pharmacy. That was a Black-owned pharmacy that no longer exists, but [00:35:00] Black people were doing things as well even then. So I remember that and it seems so much more important now. When you're a kid you don't realize the importance of that, but that was very important. They had two businesses right across the street from each other.

**Sulema DePeyster:** And how did your parents meet?

**Kimberly Graham:** How did they meet?

**Sulema DePeyster:** Yes.

**Kimberly Graham:** Someone introduced them and I believe they met in Waterbury. Someone introduced them. My father would tell the story. My mother worked at the Department of Motor Vehicles, so he had seen her at the Department of Motor Vehicles, and he said he heard this click, clack, click, clack, click, clack. And he looked around and saw my mother in her heels and I guess he wanted to meet her. So whoever set them up had told her that he wanted to meet her, and that's how they started dating.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Okay. And I know that Chris Dodd plays a really big role in the career path of your mom. Can you talk about their relationship a little bit more and the specific role that she had while she was working alongside him with his campaign?

**Kimberly Graham:** She started working for him when he first ran for Congress. So I think that was when I was in college too. It may have been around 1980.

**Kai Davis:** Okay.

**Kimberly Graham:** I think somewhere around there. But that's when she started working on his campaign, and once he got elected, she worked for him as a liaison. Well, with his office and the community. And again, I think I've talked about how my mother was a behind the scenes person and helped people, and that's what she did for Chris Dodd. I know that he was very appreciative of the work that she did for him.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Do you know how long she worked with Christopher Dodd?

**Kimberly Graham:** Until she died. It was from the time that he started running for Congress. She started on his campaign. She was a member of the Dodd Squad. I remember the Black and yellow buttons. And then she continued to work for him until she died in 1992. She had cancer and she was sick. But she was still going into the office because she didn't like staying in the house. She was always out doing something, and he was very gracious about allowing her to continue coming into work. When she stopped working, he would come and visit her. He called her to make sure that she was okay. They had a very loving relationship, for lack of a better word, and I mean that in the terms of friendship. He was very appreciative of her, and she was very appreciative of him.

**Sulema DePeyster:** This question is for both of you, [and it is] about this family legacy of compassion, becoming involved, [and] striving for better. I do want to know where the influence comes from and what the impact of Mrs. Graham's legacy might have had on both of you. And also, just other sources of that motivation within the family.

**Kimberly Graham:** My mom's life and her push for me, I graduated from Loomis Chaffee, and I was encouraged to continue to go on. I went to Howard University and graduated from there with a political science degree. And then I went on to law school and after leaving law school, I was a state's attorney for Dade County. I worked for Janet Reno. I came home and I worked for the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities for a while, for a year or so. And then I

became an assistant state's attorney in Hartford, and from there became a state's attorney in the appellate unit. And then I started my own business. Now I've been working for 12 years as a hearing officer for the state of Connecticut, and without the [00:40:00] push from my parents, the encouragement from my parents, I wouldn't have done any of that. They encouraged me 100% along the way. And during that time, I took care of my mom when she was sick [and] helped to take care of her. I took care of my dad when he became sick, and I have to take care of my mother's sister as she suffers through dementia. I realized that all of that was because of what I got from my parents [and] my grandparents.

**Kimberly Graham:** Family has always been important. Community has always been important. Public service has been important. I'm active in my church, the Metropolitan AME Zion Church. My God has always been important, and I know that none of this would have been possible without our faith in God and the faith that my parents had in their families. The compassion, the public service, it all came from them. It's all part of our history for all of us. My sister, Kai's mother [Karen], became a minister and she lost her husband early in life. He died at the age of 40 unexpectedly, and she used that grief that she suffered to start another ministry which was called Fragile Hearts. She was first introduced to Christianity by my mother. My mother used to gather us for prayer. We prayed before meals. We prayed together as a family whenever something was going on and we watched my mother. She had a green chair in the basement that she would always go to for privacy and we could hear her pray. She prayed for all of us. She prayed for her family. So that was all very important, and she made sure that we were educated not only in our schools but educated in a church. We grew up in the church. We went to Sunday school. In Sunday school, [we learned] our oratorical skills, as well as our public service and charitable giving. All of that was always taught to us. My mother was always a great entertainer as I told you about the big parties in our backyard. And my sister Kris Davis works for the Bushnell now and does –

**Kai Davis:** Event planning.

**Kimberly Graham:** Event planning, programming, and all the behind-the-scenes work. [She works in] the education department, but they do so much. She and her boss – what's her boss's name? As much as I hear it.

**Sulema DePeyster:** [laughing] That's okay.

**Kai Davis:** I can't think of her name.

**Kimberly Graham:** But she does a lot.

**Kai Davis:** Yolande.

**Kimberly Graham:** Yolande Spears, I think that's her name, does a lot in the community, and it's all behind the scenes work. People may not know. I mean if you actually do an event at the Bushnell, you would know who my sister is, but is her name out there in lights or anything? No, but she does a lot. They bring a lot of events to the Bushnell. I think she even started weddings coming to the Bushnell, and my brother was a corrections officer for the state of Connecticut. He started out as a sheriff and then became a corrections officer with the state of Connecticut.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Okay.

**Kai Davis:** And my mother also worked for Chris Dodd. She moved back to Connecticut. We moved back to Connecticut from North Carolina in 2007, and then my mother continued my grandmother's legacy and she worked for Chris Dodd as well as the liaison to the African American community.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Oh, wow. Okay

**Kai Davis:** So I think it's definitely in our blood and my mother also made sure that my brother and I [had a] private school education. We both graduated from private school and then attended college. So I think it's always kind of been something that just has trickled down through all of us to the importance and value of education and [00:45:00] giving back to the community.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Can you talk a little bit about where you are now and what you're up to?

**Kai Davis:** I work in insurance. I work for Travelers Insurance now and I live here in Connecticut. When we moved back to Connecticut, I did live in Windsor for several years. I raised my children here for the first few years of their lives and they attended Windsor schools, so I think we've been able to see that there's a lot of differences from what it was like when my grandparents first moved here. It's much more normal to see Black families and to feel more acceptance in the community now.

**Sulema DePeyster:** That's great. So that's actually most of my questions.

**Kimberly Graham:** I'm sorry, I do have a law practice as well here.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Oh, yes.

**Kimberly Graham:** I've maintained my law practice here for over 25 years.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Okay. Can you talk a little bit more about that and what kind of work that you do? [laughing]

**Kimberly Graham:** Well, that's one thing my mother always wanted to see me [do]. She [wanted me to] have my own law practice and I'm sorry she died. After she died, I had the courage, I guess, to leave the State Attorney's Office and pursue my dream of having a law practice. I started out doing criminal defense work, and then very early in the start of my practice, I started doing workers' compensation and I've been doing workers compensation. I started the practice in 1995 and I started doing workers' comp right about that time because my sister had a workers' comp injury. I got involved and I think she was my first case, and my second case was this gentleman, a corrections officer, who hurt his back at work and they were denying him compensation. So I kind of fell in love with the practice of workers' comp and administrative law and I still do workers' comp to this day. As a hearing officer, I practice administrative law.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Okay. So earlier we talked a little bit about whether or not you would join WAACA today. One thing I'm curious about is what you think it would take for an organization like that to kind of restart and what kind of things that [would] require from today's population?

**Kimberly Graham:** I don't know what it would require because there are so many different organizations out there now, and I guess I look at Black Lives Matter. Because that's basically what my mother was saying – that Black kids matter [and] Black lives matter. So how much it would survive, I don't know. I think it would have to be a totally different organization because everything now is on the Internet. It's social media, it's groups getting involved that way. So it would be the same type of thing, I think, but in a different manner. I just think that the world has changed so much since my mother started WAACA in the early '80s. People don't always meet in their houses now and it's just totally different. So I think it would have to evolve the way the world has evolved. But I also think it's more [of a] WAACA Black Lives Matter national organization. WAACA was something that existed within the small community of Windsor, and in that way, it was different but kind of saying the same things as Black Lives Matter. But it took into heart, the community and all of the WAACA people, as far as I know, were involved in other things in the town. They didn't separate themselves. Just because they knew that Black lives mattered, [that] didn't mean that they didn't think that other lives [mattered]. They just wanted their children, their community, to understand that you matter too.

**Kai Davis:** And to have the same opportunities.

**Kimberly Graham:** Yes. Just because you don't see it at that time [and] we didn't have maybe the national politicians or enough people who were in doctor [00:50:00] or lawyer positions, but [there were] organizations like this. It was people like this who have allowed other people to grow and become doctors and lawyers and billionaires or whatever. Somebody had to start it. They had to get support from somewhere.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Yes, exactly. So I know both of you had mentioned that you do not live in Windsor today. Where are you now? What kind of communities are you involved in?

**Kimberly Graham:** I live in Bloomfield, Connecticut, and I've been active. There was a developer trying to come into our town and he wanted to build a gas station in our town, and I was active and am still active and intend to get more active in the town with regard to him not building a gas station in our town. It was on a Cottage Grove Road. There's a farm there where they sell ice cream and he wanted to build a 24-hour gas station there. And so I became involved in that fight, but it has also encouraged me to become more active in my community. Because of my schedule with my business and being a hearing officer and taking care of my aunt, it didn't allow me to be as active as I would desire to be. But now that things are beginning to change, I will become more active.

**Kai Davis:** I currently live in Rocky Hill, and I am involved in a few committees through my employer that allow me to do some giving back within the community and organizing some community service efforts in that way. I don't do any of the political stuff.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Okay.

**Kimberly Graham:** Did you tell her what you do?

**Kai Davis:** Yeah, I think I did.

**Sulema DePeyster:** About Travelers Insurance, yes.

**Kimberly Graham:** Oh yeah, okay.

**Sulema DePeyster:** And so those are actually all of my questions, but did you both have any closing statements that you would like to make or any other points that you would like to bring up before we conclude the interview?

**Kimberly Graham:** I just want to say thank you for doing this, as I think history is very important because if you don't know where you've been, you're not going to know where you're going. And so because the Windsor Historical Society is here and is taking the time to recognize what WAACA did, what my mother did, and what others did in this community, I think it's so very important. I just want to say thank you for the opportunity to be here and to tell her story [and] our story. Thank you for this opportunity.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Absolutely. Thank you for coming to speak with me. And you, Kai?

**Kai Davis:** Absolutely. I think I'm very grateful that to me, she was my Nanny and my grandmother. But I think it's just beautiful to see that someone honors her legacy and what she brought to the community outside of her family. She truly cared about her community, and I'm very honored to know that other people are recognizing that even today.

**Kimberly Graham:** And one other thing I'll say is [laughing] that my mother showed all of us how to be mothers. And as Kai was speaking, she's a great mother. She has raised two boys on her own and her boys are maturing in such a manner, it just makes me see my mother and her mother, because her mother did a good job of raising her. But her boys are active in the town as well. Her youngest son plays football for the school and her other son is an artist and is planning to go to college. He's a junior and he's ready to engage in track for the high school. I'm just so proud of her and proud of them and proud of all of my family members. I'm proud [of] my own daughter, who graduated from Ethel Walker [School]. My mother started all of that. I would not have known the importance of a private school education. Kai had a private school education in North Carolina, and it's all because my mother encouraged us [00:55:00] to do that. She started that. No one else in our family had done that before. Kai's brother is also a very good family man and very successful raising two children, married in North Carolina and doing very well. So it all started because of our family history. Our family has always made family important.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Absolutely. All right, thank you so much for coming in today and speaking with me about your family. I'm just really excited about this exhibit and all that it can do to educate not only the Windsor community about activism, but just overall knowing how important it is to share a story and just to commit to changing your communities for the better.

**Kimberly Graham:** Yes.

**Sulema DePeyster:** Thank you so much again for coming in today.

**Kimberly Graham:** Thank you.

**Kai Davis:** Thank you.