

The Guardians: Reshaping History Project and Exhibition

Interview with Audrey Carter, 2021

Audrey Carter ([00:00](#)):

My name is Audrey Carter. And, I'm primarily in the Oliver community. Kind of lived there pretty much all my life. I am 58 years old, and I just do a lot of, I guess, different things in the community. I work in the community as a head start teacher. I worship in the community. Definitely it's signed Baptist church. I do a lot of community work in the community definitely with young people. That's my ministry. So I've, I've just been doing various, multiple things in the community. Right now, I live just like a couple of blocks outside of the Elva community, but, still, I still do so much in the community because I've been doing it for so many years. Yeah.

Speaker 2 ([01:02](#)):

And, when you say that you work with young people, you work with them as an educator. And what else, what does that work look like?

Audrey Carter ([01:12](#)):

Yeah, I work with people on various levels as a head start teacher. Uh, so I work with children in the school system. I've also substituted in, in the school system from middle school on down. No, yeah, middle school and down the high school. Didn't get to that, but middle school on down. I've I work in the I'm a part of the church, and I'm the coordinator over the children and youth ministry. So I do a lot of work with just organizing the various things with the young people in the church, in the church, as well as outside of the church. I do a lot of community stuff. I used to work for rec and parks as well as one of the leaders there and again, doing things with the young people there.

Audrey Carter ([02:03](#)):

I do work projects, last year. We did we received a grant for the cleanup project, some in the community. So I was able to hire some of the, young people in the community. And one of them was my grant. Well, yeah, one of them was my grandson and my other grandson tagged along. So I had to give him something. So when he was too young to officially work, but he was kind of there. And so, so we do cleanup projects, you know, with the community, also work with other churches, you know, their youth groups come in and we do clean-up projects. So either I go to them and help them out with their cleanup projects, bring, argue with them, that sort of thing, interacting. but that's pretty much, yeah, I, my ministry is pretty much with young people and doing various things with them. Um,

Speaker 2 ([02:57](#)):

Yeah. And, you grew up in that neighborhood. Did you grow this, what schools did you attend or what, what was life like growing up there?

Audrey Carter ([03:07](#)):

well, my life was pretty good. I am next to the youngest of nine. So I'm the youngest girl and then I have a younger brother. And so I'm going to say, and I always say this, I had the best brothers and sisters in the world. you know you might have contention and different things, whatever, but, I really was

protected and shielded and provided for by my brothers and sisters. And I'm going to say pretty much my whole family. So I was like none of necessarily kid gloves as in, you know, I'm so fragile or whatever, but in the sense of, I always felt cared for. I, I never, I mean, to this very day, never felt, that I was without anything needing anything was left alone uncared for, it was always a situation where, I just knew I was cared for and loved.

Audrey Carter ([04:08](#)):

I share quite often with maybe my grandchildren or other young people. How, when, when, you know, somebody is looking out for you, you, you just, it motivates you to do more, you know, you're, you don't have the apprehension of, I'm scared to do something and I want to do something. It was always, you know, I go, you know, I want to go to the moon and they go, well, how do you think you're going to do that? You know, it wasn't, no, you can't, you know? and I had brothers and sisters where, as they say, when the street lights come on, you know, children go in the house, it was always whatever it was. It was like, they would say, go in the house and I just go in the house, you know, it, wasn't why I got to go in the house or whatever.

Audrey Carter ([04:56](#)):

Even to this very day, I only lost one of my brothers, my oldest brother, everyone else is still alive. And even to this very day, if my brothers and sisters, any of them say, don't do something, I would go, okay. Because I believe as they cared for me, I trusted them. And they, they care for me very well. So I look at that as I still trust them to this very day. And I believe that relationship is the same thing. They will, you know, still care for me, even in the sense of making sure I'm okay and things like that. And, so, but, and I, and I just want to share that, in this whole scheme of things, I have I'm going to say I have, because he's always in my heart one son, and, but I lost him.

Audrey Carter ([05:51](#)):

he was killed two years ago and so I have two grandchildren, which are his sons and, but it's almost still the same of, they're just like, are you okay, everything good? I know you have your moments, I'm here for you, you know? And especially my grandson, they've been with me for, oh, their life, you know, living with me or, you know, back and forth kind of thing. And I have the oldest one who's 15 now looks just like my son acts like him a whole lot, but he has a humble heart in the sense of my son was more defiant he's in his own boyish way, defiant. But if I say fix it, he'll go. Okay. And I go, thank you, Lord. You know, so, but I've always had a sense of, peace and caring and, you know, so, oh, and I, oh, my car and I had a stepfather who is my older brothers' and sisters' father.

Audrey Carter ([07:04](#)):

And, and I always say how he got to make sure I was okay or cared for me so much from my older brothers and sisters. I don't know, but I say I'm so very, very grateful. yes. So I had a great, upbringing. I lived in east Baltimore where now Johns Hopkins and all the things on Broadway and eager. I used to live on Rutland avenue as a, as a young child. And when I went down there one day and I went, who let somebody do, this is what I said, because all the houses are gone. My grandma's house was gone as was gone, you know? I was like, what happened? when I got to a teenager, we lived on central avenue and, and that's pretty much kind of where I'm in the location now, where I work at churches and stuff like that.

Audrey Carter ([07:58](#)):

And, so I still kind of do a lot of community work around there. As a matter of fact, across from the house we lived in on central avenue, we had a community, we have a community garden, which they, some people bought the property. I'm praying about that, but it is not in stone yet. So I was still praying about it. So, but we had a community garden and that's where I would take the kids from school. And we'd go do projects in there and read in there, take the young people to do, work projects in there, things like that, community organizations come. And we do, you know, we grow in corn and strawberries and all sorts of vegetables and things like that. Yeah. So, and, and that's just in general around the Oliver community, whereas Oliver center worked in there lot, still do stuff in there and things like that. So, just in general, just overall throughout the community, just wherever there's a need, where it's in senior homes, you know, they need some help bring some kids over that's work, you know, or food drops or something like that. You know, they, what can I do that sort of thing? And then let me get some kids involved.

Speaker 2 ([09:15](#)):

Yeah. And same question. Do you like, how do you, where does that come from? And I'm like, why do you do that work? You know, why do you think,

Audrey Carter ([09:27](#)):

I, definitely from my upbringing, with my older brothers and sisters and everybody kind of looking out for me. Yeah, yeah. And surprisingly, we're not as close now because my mom, you know, passed away also. But, but I'm going to say, I could call them up and say, you know, I'm sad. They would go, oh, what's going on? You know, we're going to work it out. You need me there. You know, regardless of whether I've talked to him in a while or not, but, you know, they kind of give me my space because of just growing up situations. But at the same time I can just call them and they're there. and I look at my upbringing, I look at my stepdad, I look at my brothers and sisters and I go, they did great. You know, they, they took care of me.

Audrey Carter ([10:14](#)):

And I, I, I make a joke about definitely my stepdad, because literally he was just an amazing guy and just was there. And I always said, after he passed, I said, Lord, he had to be saved because he couldn't have been saved and made it that much of an effect on me and God, if he was, this is I truly prayed this and God, if he was not saved, could you figure out a way to kind of still get him into heaven because of what he did for me and God, I'm trying my very, very best to do for you, what you want me to do. So, so it's almost like me saying, God, can you do me a favor? You know, and I know you can do that. I don't know. But, but when I, when I die, Lord, I want to be able to see him when, when I get to heaven, because he truly made a difference in my life.

Audrey Carter ([11:19](#)):

And so, when I look at other kids, whether their parents are from different homes or circumstances they're at, and I go, that has absolutely nothing to do with everything. It has everything to do with you and how you receive this. So if you come from a drug home or whatever at home, you can, you can do what they do, you know, but really is that what you want to do? So you can, you can turn that around and you can say, I can be the first one not to cause in my home, we did have that kind of stuff, but it's like, I don't know why it didn't stick. And I go, maybe because of my brothers and sisters saying go out, don't, you know, they must, I don't know, but I just know, I knew it was there, but at the same time, it, uh,

Speaker 2 ([12:04](#)):

Okay. So now even role models that you knew were looking out for you.

Audrey Carter ([12:10](#)):

Yeah, my, my nephews, even now everybody, it would be, oh, I can't do it around Aunt Audrey or I can't do this, you know? No, y'all be you, you know? No, no, no. So I'm like, well, I'm grateful. I'm grateful. They still kind of look out for me. No.

Speaker 2 ([12:31](#)):

So grateful. So, you talked about this a little bit, but how much east Baltimore has changed, in the last 10 years? Do you want to share a little more about how that's impacted you or that, you know, your immediate community and neighborhood? I know from being in Baltimore over 18 years, there's a lot of tension out in east Baltimore around how Hopkins operates or how, what that relationship looks like. But yeah,

Audrey Carter ([13:02](#)):

Well, I grew up a few blocks on Rutland Avenue and Ashlyn a few blocks from where Hopkins was, of course, you know, the houses were around, but now everything is pretty much gone. So you have where I think it's the park. I can't remember [Inaudible] is kind of I can, I can see where my house was, where a lamppost is, you know, that sort of thing. So, but I remember when I went to Dunbar, graduated from Dunbar and they did a pilot program in the ninth grade for peer counselors. And I was a part of that pilot program. So it's like, you know, young people going out of the communities to kind of see, you know, how other young people were dealing with drugs and things like that. And, so it was, I think it was Hattie Harrison and McFadden at the time they were down there, and they did this pilot program.

Audrey Carter ([13:56](#)):

And so, as we're going out into the community and through the projects and things like that, I'm asking you all these questions, you know, why, you know, how are you using drugs and taking, you know, and I would hear all these stories like, wow, you know what I mean? I'm thinking like, wow, man, you know, your, your life is rough, you know, just in my head. And I go, okay, well, you know, let, I can't say just stop it because I don't know what you're dealing with to figure out this, but just kind of sharing, you know, well these are the programs we have. If you need some assistance, I'm here for you of thing. What kind of resources do you need? But from all of that, my thought was Hopkins collects all this data, but you still see there's no effect or no progress from this data.

Audrey Carter ([14:51](#)):

You say, you see where people are hurting and things are happening, but then there's nothing afterwards, you know? So you get the data. Are you getting the data just to satisfy grants or whatever it is, people, but you're not doing anything to implement or putting anything into effect to make a change from the data you received. Yeah. So I always looked at that. And then with the other, with communities in general, I'm looking around and I'm going, wow, you got a lot of churches. That's why the flag with the churches, I'm thinking, wow, you got all these churches and nobody's kinda connecting. Nobody's kind of, you know, coming together and say, Hey, we need to do what churches need to do is help the community, help people and then, and ultimately help the community. And so, when you have you know, churches all over the place, but people are still hurting.

Audrey Carter ([15:51](#)):

And I'm going to say, because I've been in the community for a while, my presence has generational now. So I know people in the community from when I was younger. I know people from when I grew up, then I know people from my son's generation and then, and they know me and now they know me from my grandchildren's generation, you know? And so I found that, I think people are comfortable with people. They know, you know, that they've seen because you know, whether I've done projects with young people or handout flyers, or, you know, I, I could we do community things. I can be the only one out handing out flyers and, you know, okay. You know, talking to people as I go along and oh, we have in this, oh, you need this the church got this you know, oh, go around to the rec center, you know?

Audrey Carter ([16:50](#)):

So sometimes I feel like I'm a walking resource box or something. It's like, you know, oh, you don't, I will, you know what, call the church, the church should, you know, be able to help you with something. But if they don't say, can I leave a mess for Sister Audrey? I do. As you know, and then from there, you know, find a why some, I couldn't hook you up with something, you know? So, I look at, people will, I still it's like their stuck or something. And, I know sometimes when I talk with people, I don't dunno. I guess I I'm, I motivate them or something. And I go, who says, we can't do it almost like, you know, as we can get this, who says we can't get money from, so us, you know, or, or we can't get a hold of the politician who says we can't, that's what they public, number four, let's him up, you know, you call them on your phone, I'll call them on my phone.

Audrey Carter ([17:52](#)):

We go see what somebody say, you know? So, so kinda, you know, those kinds of things lighten up things to let people know that, you know, the better it's going to happen, but it's going to come and, and things won't happen unless you do something. You know? I do a lot of things almost by myself, but then along the way, you know, I could be cleaning up and then I go, anybody could be walking past, you know, it could you mind or somebody say, Hey, how you know, you're doing a great job. I said, oh yes, you might help come over here for a second. I don't even know who they are, but, and, and I believe that's because with, with growing up, it was like, there was nobody that I could not talk to. And I don't know if it was because my stepfather saying, that's my daughter don't mess with her. And, you know, I would, I would talk to everybody and you know, it's like, you know, you don't know what I'm people ask like, well, how are you going to get to know him? If you don't say hi, you know, like you can't get them to do that. Who says I can't get them to help clean up. This is their community. This is, excuse me. We had cleaning up, you got some trash bags.

Audrey Carter ([19:16](#)):

I do. I do. And I don't know. I just, and I say, I must be having God behind me cause people aren't mean. You know? I mean, I guess I have encountered some, but it's like, I don't know. It's just something where it just rolls off. And I got, maybe they're having a bad day. Maybe. I don't know. All right. Maybe next time I bring cake or, you know, whatever I bring, you know what, I'm not here to ask you for anything, but I'm here to give you something, you know, those kind of things to, to, I don't lighten up mood. You know, we're all in this together thing or whatever I gotta do. I don't know.

Speaker 2 ([19:56](#)):

I'm like one word is like, you're a connector, right? You connect people, you inspire people.

Audrey Carter ([20:03](#)):

I try, I try the change. I want to see. Yeah. Islet me see sense of hope in that a community or the sense of unity back into communities, where we are helping one another, or, or if nothing else not hurting one another. And it's just, generational, because again, when I look at the older individuals and those, oh, them young people, and I say the young people and all them old people, and then like, you know what, but we can help each other, you know, we can help each other. So I'm looking that, that, that, that unity, that bond, that trust, that, you know, back in, in the communities. And I think we can build from there, when it comes to the, the community environment as a whole, where, I guess where we're looking at the government or the city hall or whoever to come in, that they have more buy-in from the community and say, stop taking away.

Audrey Carter ([21:15](#)):

Maybe you can offer things to them that they can, you know, have to, to whether it's you know, offering a vacant home to somebody and, and teaching them how to do certain things or creating a program where can teach people how to do certain things. And maybe they can be self-sufficient. So it's just the change I'm looking for is to see young people, know that something is coming is something's better and they can do better, but we gotta get the connections together and, and the consistency of the connections, you know, and, and, and that's kinda what I'm looking for. And, and that's why I'm driving for,

Speaker 2 ([22:00](#)):

If that, how do you take care of yourself? like, you know, cause you're doing so much right. For everyone all the time.

Audrey Carter ([22:11](#)):

I think I take care of myself when I'm, I literally want to think I'm, I'm, I'm taking care of people when, when I know people are okay. I'm okay. I always say I know death is a part of life, but I am truly a life person, truly a life person. And not to say that I don't comfort people when they're, you know, I do. And when, when people pass on whatever, but I always say to them, you're here for a reason. We don't know why God allowed them to not be here, but remember what they taught you, what they said, you remember something gets something out of it, cause they just wasn't here for nothing. And then you hold them to that. And then you build on that, you know.