



Loretta Smith Oral History Interview, January 21, 2015

Title

“The Roots of a Public Servant”

Date

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Location

Multnomah County Board of Commissioners Office, Portland, Oregon.

Summary

In the interview, Smith discusses her upbringing in Michigan, her school experience growing up, her motivations for attending college, and her family ties in Oregon that led to her enrolling at Oregon State University.

From there Smith recounts her initial impressions of the OSU campus, her close involvement with the school's Educational Opportunities Program, and a negative encounter that she had with an early dorm roommate whose family was not comfortable with the idea of their daughter living with an African American. She likewise recalls her extracurricular and social activities while at OSU, including her participation in theater productions and her love of soap operas and Beaver football. She also describes her academic work while an undergraduate, including her shift in majors from Political Science to Broadcast Communications, her involvement with KBVR television and radio, and her memories of spending a term in London on a student exchange.

The session then changes its focus to Smith's life after OSU. In particular, she notes the means by which she came to work in the office of Ron Wyden, a Congressional representative based in Portland, and reflects on the changes in responsibilities that ensued over a period of twenty-one years working as a member of his staff. She also reflects on the birth of her son and the struggles involved with raising him as a single mother.

The final portion of the interview is devoted to Smith's activities in elected office. She recalls her decision to run for election to the Multnomah County Board of Commissioners, the platform on which she campaigned, the dynamics inherent to being a woman in politics, and the emphasis that she places on mentoring other young women. The session concludes with a discussion of Smith's broader community involvement and a few final thoughts on the impact that OSU made on her life.

Interviewee

Loretta Smith

Interviewer

Janice Dilg

Website

<http://scarc.library.oregonstate.edu/oh150/smith/>

Transcript

Janice Dilg: So, today is January 21st, 2015, I am here with Multnomah County Commissioner Loretta Smith at the Multnomah County Headquarters in Portland, Oregon. My name is Janice Dilg and I am doing this interview as part of the OSU Sesquicentennial Oral History Project. Welcome.

Loretta Smith: Thank you. Thank you for having me.

JD: Well, it's going to be great to record your recollections of your time at OSU. But before we get to OSU specifically, I want to start just a little bit earlier, about a little of your family background and where you grew up.

LS: Mainly I grew up in Michigan. I would come to Portland, come back to Portland to visit family members. My dad's from Portland and he and my mom, they divorced at an early age, but I would come out and visit him and my grandparents in summers and Christmas break. So, primarily I grew up in Michigan, but I think where I really grew up at, where I really grew up was when I was in Corvallis. I mean, it kind of gives you an opportunity to exercise all those things that you were taught as a kid. And so, I had to use all the skills that I had learned on how to live independently. So, I think I really grew up when I was in college.

JD: So, I know that you were one of three sisters.

LS: Yes.

JD: Talk a little about sort of what your interests were; what your hobbies were when you were growing up in Michigan.

LS: Well, I'm the oldest of three girls, and we spent a lot of time in the summers at the library and in the parks. The parks bureau had so many programs for kids, and so we spent a lot of our discretionary time in the parks, and I spent a lot of time being the babysitter to my two little sisters, so that was fun. Yeah, there was always one that didn't want to do something the other did want to do.

JD: Sure, sure. And what about school and favorite subjects, did you have some in elementary and high school?

LS: I believe English was my favorite subject. I would win spelling bees, but for the most part I was a pretty decent student, but compared to my sisters, my younger sisters, they were really smart. They were much smarter than I was. You know, they were a wiz in spelling to math. My younger sister under me, she was really good at math and I just couldn't figure out why she got it so quickly. And so, I think the difference between us is that I had a lot of discipline, because I would work really hard at trying to master something, and things came so easy to them. And I was wondering why didn't I get that gene.

JD: And what about sports or kind of non-academic topics? Were there things that you really loved to do?

LS: Yeah, I mean in high school I was in the Black Student Union, I ran track, I was on the pom-pom team, so I was always in an activity, and I think that that kind of molded who I am, because I spent a lot of time at school either doing tutoring or practice or something that kept me busy and not idle. So, that really helped me a whole lot.

JD: And when did you start envisioning that you wanted to go to college?

LS: My pom-pom adviser, she would talk to all her girls—and I was under her for four years— about the importance of going to college. She had gone to college, my mom—I was the first one in my family to go to college, but she was the first person who I knew who, actively, I looked up to who had gone to college and who had the experience. So, she would talk about it. And I don't know that I ever thought that I would finish college; I always knew that I wanted to go, because it sounded so much like fun. In fact, I went and visited her old college in Florida this past year, and I can see where she—in Daytona—where she had so much fun doing what she was doing. But I'm glad she shared that with us, she actually treated us like her daughters, in that we will do this, we will do that, it was no question about whether or not we were going to go; it was just where and how it was going to be paid for. So, that was the other issue.

So for me, I took a lot of direction from her and from the other girls, and we pretty much went our own ways. And my cousin was here and she was a couple years older than I was and she was already attending Oregon State and she said "well when you graduate, you just come out here and go to school with me." So, there was another option that I could do. So, it made it really special. And I think I was a little lost, maybe; the first couple weeks I got there, she dropped out. So, that was not good.

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JD: First she lures you.

LS: How do you bring me here and then you leave? You're older than me.

JD: But you did know something about Oregon, because you had family who had lived here—

LS: In Portland.

JD: And I think it went even a little farther back than your father being from Portland, is that correct?

LS: Well, how my family got to Oregon; my grandparents moved out here from Brooklyn, New York to work in the Shipyards, at the Kaiser Shipyards in 1942-ish. And that's how our family moved to Oregon. And you know, we've had three or four generations here in Oregon. We have a long history and roots in this community. So, for me it just felt like home, even though I didn't grow up here. It just always felt like home to me.

JD: So, describe when you first arrived on campus. Had you ever been on the OSU campus before?

LS: I had never been on OSU's campus, and it's probably a good thing, because I actually thought I was applying to University of Oregon, and I went to the wrong school. I did not do a drive-through, I just assumed it was okay because my cousin was going to school there, but I was not at the school that I thought I was at. But that was probably the best mistake that I ever made, because I truly do believe that I would not have gotten as far as I did in school and meeting the right people on campus, who really took a vested interest in the students, particularly through the Educational Opportunities Program with the kids of color, farm workers, children who were there; there was really a very deliberate effort to make sure that everybody felt like this was their campus to.

So for me, it was a good deal. It was a mistake, and I do tell it at times, but I don't like to let people know that I went to the wrong school. But it was a good wrong school, it was good. And you know, I had an opportunity to go and study abroad; lifelong friends. One of the things that my advisor told us was "the people that you meet in college will probably end up being your lifelong friends," and she was so correct. I mean, the women that I met at Oregon State, they are still my best friends. And so, it really opened up a wider community for me, which made me try a little bit harder. Like I said, I don't think that I really felt that I was going to graduate maybe until my junior year.

We had a cluster of girls who came in together and we all stuck to it, so I said if they're going to continue, I'm just going to keep up with the group. And they worked hard, so I worked hard. I mean, we were kind of, I don't know if it's vicariously through each other, you know, really lifting each other up. I mean, I think we were standing on each other's shoulders to make sure that we all crossed the finish line, and we all did, and I was so pleased with that. There was a group of young women who came in the class of '87 and we all graduated together. It's amazing when I think back on it. I mean, because I was just waiting for the other shoe to drop.

JD: Well, you had mentioned when we spoke previously that—and you just mentioned the Educational Opportunities Program, talk about how you engaged with them and what you're—kind of the kinds of things that they did for you and other students.

LS: Well, one of the things that was really key to the EOP program was that the freshmen who came in, they had a retreat of sorts before school actually started so you could meet all the new freshmen in your class who are going through the Educational Opportunities Program. We had an opportunity to meet all these folks over a weekend, kind of know who people are. They gave us the lay of the land, of how to approach a professor in their office hours and the steps to do that, things that you can do to get success, and they told us about tutoring opportunities, they told us about different classes that

might be interesting to us and different professors who might be a little bit difficult, and they just laid it out for us. And it was so—it felt like they really cared that we were there. And it was obvious that the university liked this program, because they supported it. And also through this program we were able to get scholarships. So, I got an academic scholarship through the EOP program, and that was huge for me, because I was paying out of state tuition.

JD: Well, and paying for college is a topic often discussed nowadays, but it's always been an issue.

LS: Yes. It's always been an issue, yeah.

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JD: And so, you were paying for school both through some scholarship and then—

LS: Scholarship and financial aid.

JD: And were there other ways that—I'm assuming that EOP, you kind of maintained connections.

LS: I did. I am still very good friends with the director then, Larry Griggs, and I talk to LaVerne and I talk to Janet, who was there, she actually, Janet Nishihara is actually the director of EOP now. She was a counselor at the time that I was going to school, so it's really nice to know that you have a friend someplace where you kind of grew up. A couple years ago I got an opportunity to speak to the Black Student Union graduates and they had a big program and I was their keynote speaker, and I mean this was a huge group. I mean, much more students of color than I had seen at any other time before. And so, for me it was really an emotional time because for me to be able to come back and talk to them and see how the community has grown so, it is very, very good. Thank you, Oregon State.

JD: Well, it's clear that that was a key, along with your personal group of friends—

LS: Exactly.

JD: It was a support network, I guess.

LS: It was a huge support network. And I'm kind of happy my mother—I stayed in Buxton Hall and I was seventeen when I got there, and I lived in the quad and my girlfriends, they lived in Cauthorn and Poling, and I wanted to go over there, because I was in an all-girls dorm, and those dorms were co-ed. So, I called my mom, I said "you need to sign a paper so I can get in the other dorm." She's like "no, you're not going into a co-ed dorm." I was so angry with her, and I was like "why? I'm over there all the time anyway." But it was the best thing for me. That's where I needed to be, that's where I met a lot of friends.

And I talked to you about my really first challenging experience in the dorms. I moved in with a young lady, she was from somewhere, was it the Dalles she was—no, I know; Grants Pass. She was from Grants Pass. And she told me after a couple of days that she would be moving, that her dad said that she had to move because I was black and that he didn't want her in a room with me. And that was just, it blew me over, because I was so excited to be on campus, so excited to be a place where I could be independent and kind of act like I was a grownup, and thought that that kind of stuff was not done anymore.

And I felt so bad, because I knew I hadn't done anything. I mean, I didn't even get a chance to turn my music up loud or have a lot of friends over. I mean something like that, if you move because of that, then I can understand that, but just because I'm black, that was kind of—I wanted to go home. So, I called my mother and I said "I don't want to be here, because they don't like black people here, and it's not many of us, and I just don't want to be here." And so she said "okay, just wait. Wait until Christmas. If things don't work out the way you think it is, then you can come home and go to another place, but I really want you to spend some time there and don't be, you know, have some patience for this." And I was like "it's different, it rains out here a lot," you know, I was giving her all the excuses, and I said "you know, it's really expensive, we really can't afford this," and I was trying to figure out every way to—because it was a shocker to me. But it turned out okay. It was fine and I stayed there and I became really close with some other young ladies on campus, and it was okay, because I had a friend network at that point.

But I was really—it wasn't the university, it was just I thought that the people there were progressive and I just could not put together or reconcile that this would be something that someone would say to my face. I mean, you can assume a lot of things. I mean, if it were me, I probably would have said "I have to move, I'm going to move with another girlfriend," but she said, specifically, her dad didn't want her living with me because I was black. So yeah, that was, that was really something that could have changed my whole world. And I was talking to someone, LaVerne Woods, he started talking about—he's from the EOP program—about this guy who was on the football team, and they called them the "Giant Killers" back in the sixties. You remember them?

JD: Mhmm.

LS: And one of the guys who was—he's an African American guy who was one of the team leaders; he had a beard, and so the coaches had asked him to cut his beard off and he said he wouldn't, and so he didn't get to play and so he got removed from the football team. And so, I remember Larry—not Larry, but LaVerne—saying "you don't want to be like this. This is not the 1960s. You don't want to make that stand right now. This is okay to stay here." And I was asking him to talk to my mother to tell her that this wasn't a good place to go and he said "no, it is a good place for her to be. She needs to be right here." And so, he told me that story, but fast-forward; so he ended up going to another school and he ended up working at Multnomah County, so he's like twenty years older than me, he worked at Multnomah County and he ran for county commissioner. So, I kind of feel like there's some kind of connection between us, because he had an experience, he needed to do that in the sixties to make a point, and it wouldn't make a good point for me to leave. It would be a horrible thing for me to do, to kind of say goodbye to my educational opportunity because of this. And he went on and he got his college degree somewhere else. I think it was in Utah or somewhere.

But anyway, for me, I would tell all young women you've got to give it a shot, because we tend to, if we experience some adversity, we want to correct it soon, but be a little more patient. And so, through patience it allowed me to stay at Oregon State one more year and then another year. And then I had an opportunity to be an actor in *A Raisin in the Sun*, which was the first African American play that was done at Oregon State University, and I played Ruth Younger. And so for me, that was a huge deal. It helped me to get out of my shell, because I was really shy.

JD: So, how did that play come about, and how did your involvement in that play come about?

LS: Well, there was a graduate student who was from Grambling University and he was doing his thesis and he was working with Educational Opportunities Program. His name was Nat Turner. And so, he said "we need to have something for our folks to do there." And we had a great Theater department, we were on-the-round, and so he said "okay, we're going to do a play." And so, I actually wanted to be the sister in the play. I didn't want to play the wife. So, it turned out that I played the wife; it was the perfect, perfect person to play there, and it just made sense.

I remember my grandmother, she passed away shortly after she came to see the play, and because Ruth Younger, she was pregnant and she didn't know it at the time, she faints in the play. And we're on-the-round and so my grandmother's sitting like two rows up, and so as we fade to black I fall down from—I'm ironing clothes and then I just fall down, and so my grandmother, she screams "oh my baby! Oh, she's hurt, what's wrong with her?" So, I'm laying there with my head down saying "Grandma, I'm okay. I'm okay, Grandma." But it was good. It ran for a couple weeks and it was really, really good. I mean, that really helped a whole lot. And I was probably one of the younger kids in the play and it kind of put my stock up and it helped me to come out of my shell a little bit more. So, it was a really good thing.

JD: And then did you go on to do other acting?

LS: I didn't do other acting at all. I didn't do any other acting, but when my sister, she followed me a couple of years later, and she came in and they did the play called *Colored Girls*, and I think she was "Lady in Yellow" or something like that, but do you see what the relation is? You don't really know that you're leading people until you find out that someone follows your path. And so for me, I didn't realize that my sister was paying attention to me so far away. And she wanted to come to Oregon State, which she did, and then she did very—she did the same things that I did when I was there and she went on to be in a play and get involved. So, it was, it's kind of nice to think—at the time I didn't really think much of it, but just thinking back on it that you know, like my cousin had on me, I looked up to her and so I followed her. So for me, it was a good thing. It was really, really nice.

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I mean, Corvallis is one of those places for me, I could go back there and live. I love it. I mean, it is what I consider a really small college town. It is nice. You can walk everywhere, it seems like it was yesterday to me, it really does. It seems like it was yesterday.

JD: So, you had talked about some other sort of just fun traditions that you had when you were at school. I think one of them involved every day at noon at the MU?

LS: Yes, *All My Children*, and I'm telling my age; we all used to go to the MU at twelve o'clock to watch *All My Children*.

JD: Which you might just elaborate what that is.

LS: *All My Children* is a soap opera, and at the time, they were one of the top soap operas in the country, and not just me, I mean it was standing room only. I mean, Jesse and Angie, there was a whole lot going on. I mean we actually planned our classes around watching *All My Children*. That was the equivalent to watching *The Kardashians* now. But it was where you could always check in. If you knew that you needed to talk to someone, you knew you would see them at twelve o'clock, because they would be there watching *All My Children*.

JD: That's great.

LS: It's kind of a like a cult following, but it was great.

JD: Yeah, that's great. And I think you also were a pretty avid football fan.

LS: Yes ma'am, yes ma'am. I sat there for five years and I watched that football team, who wasn't great, but it was a sense of community, it was the way in which we could meet up with our friends and show our school spirit. You know, it's nothing like what we have now. I went to Oregon State a couple months ago, to a football game, just outstanding. It blew me away, the stadium and all the different add-ons that they had that we didn't even think about having. We had no booths and no, none of that kind of stuff. I mean, it was just an amazing place.

JD: So, describe a little bit what the stadium was like during the years that you were there.

LS: It was almost like—they were filled, it was almost like a high school atmosphere. Everybody came to the football games. And we all knew that it was probably likely that we would lose, but we kept going and we kept rooting for the team. It was a place that we could, like I said, meet up with our friends. That was a good thing. And then we would go to the basketball games over in, it was Parker Stadium. Parker Stadium, we used to live behind Parker Stadium on Grove, but it something that you had to do. It's almost like it's something that they put in our water when we become freshmen and say "okay, this is what you will do." Everybody was crazy for the football team. And all my friends were on the football team. And we lived in the dorms and we supported the guys who played because we knew them, and it was just a good community activity for us at the time.

JD: And of course, there's also the academic side of being in college, so I don't want to miss talking about that either. I believe you started out thinking you wanted to be a political science major.

LS: I started out in Political Science and I actually changed over to Broadcast Communication, but one of the nice things, it's really funny because you should probably take your best, first advice; politics ended up being my world. And I still use some of the principles that I learned early on. Professor McClenaghan, he was the head of the Poli Sci department and I had some coursework with him, four hundred level classes. I'll give you an example. One of the classes that he had, we had to get the newspaper every day, we had to sign up for a subscription, and we didn't have a book. And I'm thinking this is a four hundred level class, you need to give me a book, do something, and we have to read the newspaper. I'm like this is not a real class. I need you to teach me something out of a book. So, really kind of narrow-minded.

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And I laugh, because the first job that I had was a receptionist for Congressman Wyden, who I ended up working for twenty years, and one my job responsibilities was I had to read the paper every day and identify articles that probably would be around his priority areas, and places where he was quoted and identify local issues that were important that I should send up to him in D.C. And it clicked right then, that was why Mr. McClenaghan had that exercise. And it didn't click with me why it was important. But I learned how to do that, to issue spot and to identify different issues. And because I wasn't from Portland, reading the newspaper helped me to learn what's going on in the community. So, it all goes back hand in hand, and if young people have a little bit of patience, it will all come together. The universe will make sure it's right.

And then I switched over to Broadcast Communication. I worked for KBVR News and I worked on the radio station, I got my license and I had a radio show.

JD: What was that?

LS: It was kind of like "A Midnight Storm," where really mellow soul music was playing and then we'd have people who did rap and that kind of thing. But Daryl Mitchell, who was the student who ran the radio station, and he—I also learned under him on how to be a disc jockey. He is here today. He is the cameraman for the Blazers, and I've run into him several times, just absolutely love, love, love him, because he took the time to teach me so that I can get my license while I was in school. So, I got the license, I really, I mean I was trained to be able to light, produce, edit and cut the news. Now, if you put me in a newsroom today or even an editing box, I probably couldn't do any of that or understand the technology that's going on today. But that was what I got my degree in.

JD: So, it was you kind of learning about the radio station that redirected your academic studies.

LS: A little bit. I did the radio station just because I like music, but I spent a lot of time at KBVR learning that because I thought I was going to go into television news.

JD: Oh, okay. And were there other professors that were memorable during your years there?

LS: Yeah, Jackie Bobo. She worked in the Broadcast Communications, and I talked to her a lot about going into broadcasting, and she really helped to shape what that could look like and where I should focus my energy. So, Jackie Bobo was somebody that I felt that really understood. And she was very strict and she was known to be very, very hard, and I could appreciate that, and she was, but I also appreciated her taking the time to explain what my opportunities can be as a graduate from the Communications department. So, that was really, really nice.

JD: And you were talking about you knew how to edit, and just expand a little about what the technology was like when you were there, because you're right, it has changed a lot.

LS: I think it was more so manual editing. We didn't have the digital stuff that they have right now that you can be so precise to the .006. That was not what we had. But the other nice thing, when I did learn how to work a radio station box, my first job in radio was the same exact console that I had in college. So, it was like being at home. It wasn't the pushbutton, it was the dials; it had everything that we had in college. And I was like oh my goodness, why don't they upgrade this? But it was good for me because I knew it. I absolutely knew it.

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You never know what kind of life you're going to have, because life happens to everybody, and I don't think there are any accidents about what happens to you in life. I think these things are going to happen to you and there are reasons why you take the track that you take, because I believe when you have so many friends at a place—and the new adventure of coming to Corvallis was a very positive one, overall, for me—probably if I would have gone to Michigan State or Michigan, and they were really college towns that I had a lot of friends at, I probably would be partying all the time.

JD: So, having to start over and make all-new friends—and I know you talked about you had decided kind of specifically, I guess, not to participate in sports, you really wanted to focus on being a student.

LS: I didn't want to be an athlete. I was an athlete all through high school. I just wanted to be a student. I wanted to know, I wanted to have the college experience where I was just a student. Being a student athlete is so much responsibility that goes along with that. You don't really get a chance to experience the real student life because you're insulated, to a degree. And you also have a job, a fulltime job to do—

JD: Absolutely.

LS: --in addition to your homework. You're playing for the university, and I didn't want that. I just wanted to have friends and just experience the college, that's all I wanted to do.

JD: And one of the opportunities that you were able to take advantage of that you just touched on earlier, which was the student exchange program and going to London, talk a little about how you got involved in that and your time there.

LS: Well, one of my girlfriends went to London before and she said "you should go to London on exchange," and I said "okay," and so I talked to a couple of my roommates and I said "you guys want to go? Let's do this," and we did. But it was absolutely, hands-down one of the best experiences that I have ever, ever had. I have gotten a chance to go back again since then, but it really opened me up to different cultures and to travel. I mean, I had only been maybe to Chicago, Michigan, to maybe Detroit. No one in my family has ever went out of the country, let alone to a place where they were having some challenges.

And it's funny, a couple weeks ago, you don't know this, but during Thanksgiving I had an opportunity to do a dinner at my house for Reverend Jesse Jackson. So, I tell him this, he knew this story before, and he wanted to talk to some African American tech start-up companies, and so I pulled this group together to talk to him about how to gain access to Silicon Valley and blah blah blah. So, I tell the group this story about when I first met him—I didn't meet him personally—but I first met him when he was in London doing a Free Nelson Mandela rally; it was in Trafalgar Square. So, me and my friends, we go and I say "Jesse Jackson's going to be there," and I was so excited, I had never seen him in person and I wanted to see him. And all the sudden they start throwing these homemade bombs into the crowd, and we couldn't move. And I told the reverend, I said "I was not obedient, because you kept saying 'everybody hold hands.'" Now, he was on a stage up high and he was saying "close your eyes, keep your eyes on the prize, everything is going to be alright," and I couldn't close my eyes because I was so absolutely scared.

And you know, my grandmother always says "you know, you got to be obedient to your parents," and I said "my mother told me not to come to London," I just knew I was a goner. I knew that it was all over, because it was so many bombs being thrown into the crowd and the police in Britain, they don't carry guns. So, these were homemade bombs that people were throwing; we couldn't tell where it was coming from, they were from every direction, but what he was trying to do was, he was trying to keep all of us calm so that we wouldn't trample over each other. I mean, it was just crazy. And I said "this is my chance to see him and I don't get to fully see him because of this turmoil that they have going on there." But I tell the story about this, and I've picked him up several times over the years for campaign stuff and I met and I told him about this story many years ago and he said "you should have closed your eyes, Commissioner." I said "I couldn't. I couldn't close my eyes. I was afraid. I have to admit it, I was really, really scared."

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But that, having that opportunity, had I not gone or had a friend to show me that this is something that you can do too, and follow through—and she came back again and went the second time with us—so it delayed my graduation but it was fine because I had an opportunity to have not only an academic experience; I had a cultural experience. I also had a growing up experience to learn to be in a different country and how different that was, too, and how people—you know, they shut down from one to three o'clock. People go—

JD: Tea time.

LS: It is, it's tea time. And I couldn't wrap my arms around as how this happens. They go to the pub and get some bitter, which is beer, and it was really cool but I couldn't, you know, and it's not for everyone, but we became—we did what they did, and so it was really great. It was a really awesome opportunity.

JD: Well, and I'm assuming other things were not quite so dramatic; that your experiences in London—or dramatic in a different way than the rally.

LS: There were other experiences that were totally dramatic. I mean I hadn't been to a live play before. We used to go to the theater every week. That was a part of our culture exchange. We would go to the theater every Tuesday or Monday, and that was—you know, to see *Cats* and that kind of stuff. I was just kind of blown away. It was all so new; it was everything was so special. I was taking it all in. And I had good friends with me, so it was really nice to be able to experience that with my friends, and you know, we didn't come from neighborhoods where that was the norm, so all of this was really new to us. And I think that's what college is all about, I really do.

JD: Well, London is slightly larger than Corvallis.

LS: Oh, a little bit. The weather is very similar. It's grey and rainy, yes it is. They have great clothes, and the food, it was okay. But we found ourselves finding the best places to eat on our small budget. That was really tasty for us. But I mean riding the subway every day, going to school, coming into town, it was great. I loved it, I absolutely just loved it. And then we had an opportunity to exchange over to—did a weekend over in Paris and a bunch of us, we would do weekend trips and we went to Scotland, Amsterdam, and a couple people, I didn't go to Germany, but they went to Germany afterwards. But it was really, really nice. And I look at some of those pictures today. In fact, when this is over, I think I have a picture in my office from London when I was sitting up on someplace in Paris somewhere.

JD: Sounds fabulous. You also talked some about—or most college students, also, often have university jobs or perhaps summer jobs where you're both either earning money for your school and gaining some experiences, and I knew you had a couple of different opportunities, and if you would please talk about those.

LS: Yeah. I worked in the Educational Opportunities Program when I was a tutor coordinator, assistant to the tutor coordinator, where I helped to coordinate student tutors with students who needed additional assistance. And I think I worked in the Forestry department. I was a receptionist down there, and I had just a number of kind of random opportunities that kind of helped to shape me, that I know, one: I have to have a good work ethic, because I'm going to have to work once I leave here.

But had I been clever, had I been really, really clever, I probably should have stayed and gotten a graduate degree. You know, there's this big rush: get out of school, get out of school, and if you go to school from high school and you're thinking that you've been going to school all this time, you just want to get into the workforce; no, no, no, being a college student is the best life. You get four vacations, count them, you get four vacations. I mean really, you get Thanksgiving, you get Christmas, you get spring break and you get summer. I mean, where do you get that kind of discretionary time? It doesn't happen. It doesn't happen. So, I like to tell students if you can, go ahead and just go right through, because once you get used to making money, it's really difficult to convince folks to go back. You have to be really disciplined and driven to go back and get a graduate degree.

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And I know it's really hard when you have a family. I had my son and I was going to Portland State for a graduate degree in Public Administration, but it was so hard for me to do both. And I couldn't work, take care of a child and go to school at night. All the classes were at night, so that was the good news for people who were professionals and they can take their coursework in the evening, but you know, it's everything is the way it's supposed to be.

JD: That's kind of three jobs that you just described there.

LS: Yes, yes ma'am.

JD: Three full-time jobs.

LS: Yes.

JD: So, before we move away from kind of your time at OSU, were there any other particular memories or campus traditions that we haven't kind of touched on that you want to make sure we capture here?

LS: Well, what's really nice is that there are some traditions like Mom's Weekend and Dad's Weekend. It was so nice when me and my girlfriend's mom were able to come one year when all of them were there. And I got to participate in the Mom's Weekend fashion show, which was a big, big deal. And to be able to share your world with your parents, just to let them know that everything that they taught us we are exercising and putting into motion, and to see us on campus and have that experience, it was really nice. And the Dad's Weekend, that's nice, that is so important, so important for kids, because we really do, even though we just call home for money, but we really do want our parents to be proud of us and proud of the decisions that we have made. And that was so important. And they had this talent show that they would do and we'd go to the talent show.

There were many things that happened on campus. Had we not been there, we would have never had that experience. And I think it's a bonding activity, doing these different activities that bonds you with the people on campus. And really, as much as I wanted to graduate, I very much wanted to stay.

JD: Well, that would seem to be good testament.

LS: Yes.

JD: To OSU.

LS: Yes, it was.

JD: But graduate, you did.

LS: I graduated, yes ma'am.

JD: In 1987, you had a degree in Communications. Talk a little about making that transition out into the big wide world and kind of how your degree and your time at OSU prepared you for that.

LS: Well, it did prepare me and I was looking for a job; I went back to Michigan to get a job and it was kind of the recession time, it was around the time of the S&L crisis, and basically I had built up a huge amount of networking opportunities in Oregon but I didn't have those same opportunities in Michigan. I'd been gone for five years and I didn't know anybody. The people I knew were in Oregon, so I moved back to Oregon and I talked to a young lady at the Urban League and she said "there is a position in this congressman's office at the front desk and you should go over and try to get this job."

And so, I was thinking I just graduated from college, I need a management trainee program, I need a big-paying job. And I needed to be patient. So, I went back that evening and I talked to my aunts and I was explaining to them what my job search was, where it was taking me and that there was an opportunity that I could go apply, and I was going through all the motions, actually really being high off of graduating from college, I mean really full of myself and not understanding that I didn't have a technical degree like in engineering, accounting, law or any of those kinds of things that required some real technical kinds of skillsets, and that I was in liberal arts and that the jobs that I did want, they weren't hiring at the time, and you'd actually have to know someone. And since I didn't know the community in Portland, it would probably be really difficult for me, and it was initially.

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So, my aunt said "you don't have a job, do you? So why won't you answer the telephones until you get the job that you want?" "But I got a degree, they want to put me at the desk, I could have did that without a college"—because I'm thinking in my head that this college degree is supposed to get me past the front desk. But, as I learned afterwards, and I was offered the job, and the job description said you had to have a college degree to answer his telephones. So, this was truly a job that I couldn't have had, because that wasn't the job description.

But that was the best—the second—and I thought "this is a big mistake for me to do this," but that was the second biggest mistake that I'm glad I made, because what that did for me is that gave me a reality check on what are your skillsets, what can you do, we know that you can write a report, we know that you can go to class and you can complete all this, and they realized that you have a certain work ethic of sorts, so now what do you bring to the table? What do you have to offer?

And what I had to offer was trying to be open and to understanding what the job was. And the job was about the people who called into the office who needed the help from the member of Congress who they weren't receiving the type of help that they thought they should have received from a federal agency.

And he was really known as a constituent services kind of guy, that he'd get things done. And we had to make sure that we didn't push people off onto other local governments, that even if it wasn't something that was a federal issue, we had to find the number of the local government or state government, give it back to that person and not just say "oh, the city does that." Give them a name and a telephone number so that they won't be shuffled around.

So for me, that was a good first introduction into Politics 101, and that's taking care of your base, your people. When people call this office, obviously they are in need of help, and that is our responsibility, is to help these folks. So, I got a huge, huge training ground from someone who was big on constituent services, and that's where I think I kind of developed my own kind of leadership style and style that I have in my office today, because it's about the people, because they're the ones who put you where you are, and we just happen to be privy to information. That's the difference between us and someone on the other end of the telephone. We have the information, they don't, and we need to get them the information.

So for me, it was huge. I got to know a lot of community members. I started off at the reception desk and I moved over to the case work department; I was a case worker and then I became the case manager, then I went into the field, I did the fieldwork, and then I got into appropriations after that. So, there were various jobs that I had while I was there to help, I think to get me to where I am today and where I might be tomorrow. So, all of that has really given me that step up. But without that education from Oregon State University, it would have never happened. And although the Congressman was a Duck, that didn't stop him from hiring me. So, I can say he is nonpartisan in that way, too.

JD: So, you did work for Congressman and then Senator Ron Wyden for many, many years.

LS: Yes, for many years, about twenty-one years; spent twelve years in the Senate and, prior to that, spent about eight years in the house. So, it was real honor for me to have him take me over to the Senate side. There's no guarantee that you—I mean, my mom was like "why would you get a job that you have—he has to run for every other year?" I said "well, he's pretty popular, he's a pretty popular elected official around here and he has an eighty percent showing, so I don't know that anyone can beat him in this area, unless he does something really egregious that people are not going to vote for him again.

And so, that was the good move on my part, and I appreciate my relatives giving a kind of "come to Jesus" talk: "you don't have any money, you don't have a job, you don't have a place to stay that's your own, so you need to start thinking about that. Thinking about this big job that's going to pay you fifty thousand dollars a year; not going to happen. You need to create your own opportunity and you need to take that front desk job."

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JD: And you mentioned, in passing, that your son was born, so during all this time that you're working for the congressman and then the senator, you were very much a working mom.

LS: Yes.

JD: Talk a little about kind of your lovely son and then how you juggled all of that.

LS: It was tough, but the nice thing, I had good friends and family who helped me to take care of my son, and he went to daycare and then he went to school. But for the most part, the culture of this political area, there weren't a lot of women who had—in fact, there were no women in my office who had kids. So, the men had kids, so their wives were in different spaces. But the women in the office didn't have any kids. So, for many years—I mean, I had a boss who would basically say "if you need to go and do something for your son, and go read to the classroom or something, you can have time off for that." That's pretty progressive back in the nineties, to be able to do that. And so, I had a great network at work which allowed me to do that, but it also allowed me—I worked long hours too, I worked weekends and I worked nights, and then when I had to staff the congressman, that's like six o'clock in the morning, eleven o'clock at night, getting back up, doing

the same thing the next day. So, it was really important that I had other village members to help take care of my son. So, they really were a big support for me.

JD: And at some point you made the decision that rather than work for an elected official, you would like to become an elected official yourself.

LS: Yeah, I had been asked for many years, especially when my son was in the grades K through 12, and my answer had always been "you know, my son's too young, I need to get him out of school," or, "I'm preparing him to go to college for four years, so I need to pay attention to him," and I spent my entire adult life trying to plan for his future. And so for me, it wasn't about me trying to be an elected official at that time. And just having the patience, too, because timing is everything. And when this opportunity came up, my son was in college, and so I had no more excuses. I had no more excuses to say "my son is in school." He was away at college, and that was okay.

So, I either had to put up or shut up. I was involved in an organization called the Oregon Assembly for Black Affairs and we put on a political convention every two years and I always encouraged and engaged young people to run for office, and I said "you know what, I just can't do this again. I can't go to one of these conventions one more time without me having tried to do this at least once myself." And I did and I probably picked the hardest race in the world to win, because eleven other people were in the race, so it was not the ideal primary, but I was one of the two who made it to the final.

So, for me it was really good and it gave me the sense of...what's that state when you're running a campaign? I was never on the Senator's campaign side; I always did his office, his official side, so I didn't really know that side in great detail. I knew just enough to be dangerous, but I didn't know it well enough to know that I was in for one of the biggest fights of my life. And a lot of this is fundraising and getting your name out. My whole career had been about promoting this senator or this congressman and his policies and direction that he wants to see the country to go. It was never about me, so it was really difficult for me to talk about myself. And so, I just kind of messed it up in the primary and I couldn't get it together and I didn't even have one newspaper endorsement, I didn't have one labor endorsement, but one thing that I did know, that I had spent a lot of time with, is seniors, and I targeted seniors, who vote at a higher pace than any other demographic that you can identify. And I took that kind of motto of my old boss, and that's how I won.

[0:55:14]

JD: And you did win in the general election with like sixty-three percent of the vote. It definitely turned around between the primary and the general election.

LS: It did, because I was way below. I mean, the good money said that the person who I was running against, she had thirty-six percent of the vote and this next, second person was eighteen percent. No one has ever come back from an eighteen percentage point deficit to win in the general election. And again, I was not a campaign person. I didn't know all these stats. So, I didn't know I was in bigger trouble than I even knew. And I had a really good infrastructure and staff around me who volunteered to help me, and they kept that kind of information from me, because it probably would have scared me to death. I was already scared. But the important thing is, I felt like if I could be one or two, that I could make my case in the general election that I had enough track record, experience and background, and I cared about the people who we support here at the county.

We're a safety net government. And if you don't like to help poor people, vulnerable folks who need healthcare, and seniors, this is not the job for you, because you're not thinking about what you need to do to help them and help them match-up with county services. If it's a position for you to jump off to another elected position, and it's been done before, you don't get a lot out of it. I mean, I really feel fortunate to be able to represent residents of Multnomah County and District 2. I feel like I give a voice to the voiceless here. I feel like I try to protect our seniors and build a good infrastructure for our youth.

I mean, I'm not all over the place, but you know where I am on certain issues. If I tell you something, like my grandfather said, your word is your bond. If I tell you something, that's where it's going to be. I'm going to do what I say, I'm going to do—and if that changes, I'm not going to let you hear about it on the streets, I will come back to you and say "you know what, there are some complications with this, so I'm going to have to adjust how we do this." So, that's just who I am, because I couldn't feel good about leading people down a direction of somebody I wasn't. So, when we ran in the general

election, I just felt like I would have more time, because I got in on the last day in the primary, signing—I mean, when we had to turn in our paperwork, that's when I got in the race.

So, they were way ahead of me in terms of reaching out to community members and raising money, and I ended up raising more money than anybody else and people thought "whoa, your senator, he probably raised money." No, he didn't. He didn't raise, he didn't. He did give me some money and he donated money, but he didn't do that. I had to raise every dime. And that was better, that was a better way to do it, because if somebody gives you something, you really don't have a true appreciation. If you're running for office, you need to have that stomach, butterflies in the stomach because you don't have five thousand dollars to finish your last mail piece, and you need to get that last mail piece out. You had to know what that feels like, you got to know how to get on the grind and keep making calls, keep making calls even to the detriment of your health; you have to keep doing that, and that's what you have to do because this is the game that was already set up pre-Loretta, so this is the thing that I raised my hand for and said that I wanted to do.

And it worked, and I think my message of helping young people and seniors and jobs, it resonated with people. It didn't have a color to it; it just had the values that many residents in District 2 felt strongly about. So, that's where I was able to kind of get my rhythm in the general election. And it was just unfortunate that one of us had to lose, because my opponent, she was great too, and she worked for an elected official, so we were kind of this group of eleven that dwindled down to seven. We were a group of folks who had worked for elected officials. And I had done it for a very long time and I really care about this county, and I care about the vulnerable people who live in this county, and there's not a day that goes by that I'm not worried about some aspect of what we're doing at Multnomah County and how it's going to impact our most vulnerable.

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I overslept this morning, and I never oversleep. If there is something that I wish I could put in a pill or bottle up, is a good night's sleep. It just feels like one long day, but you know, this is—I wake up in the middle of the night, you can ask my staff, that's when I can think. It's quiet, it's a quiet space, and so I'm looking at emails and I'm responding to emails and I'm writing out things, because it causes me to not have good sleep. So, I had good sleep last night; I knew I had to be prepared for today.

JD: Well, as you're talking about just kind of the campaign and kind of the reality of the political process, there was a wonderful forum not long ago that was celebrating a hundred years of women first being elected to the Oregon State Legislature, and two of the panel members also happened to be OSU alumni; Margaret Carter and Darlene Hooley, and they were specifically—I mean, they were talking about a lot of things, but part of what they were talking about was just what it's like to be a woman in politics and how that often has different dynamics to it, from just annoying questions you have to deal with or approaches people expect you to take, to quite honestly something more harsh, like sexual harassment or really unpleasant things. And how have you approached that and dealt with that in your career, assuming that that's been part of your career?

LS: Well, a couple of things: one of the things on the campaign trail that I do know for sure, I know it's easier for men to raise money than women and I know that everything being equal in the same race, there are checks that are written for the same race, higher checks to the men versus the women. Now, people can say whatever they say about that, but I just think that it's wrong. And if you look at the numbers, you don't have as many women in the legislature as men. Because our legislature's kind of an on-again, off-again, every other year kind of thing, it promotes folks who have money and who have businesses, which are generally men, that can afford to really be a legislator.

And so, that's why you see so few women, because they need to take care of their families. And that was one of the reasons why I didn't run for the state legislature, because I just couldn't live off of it, with me and my son. But you kind of, you see this and you just go with the flow, because that is not an excuse; that means that you have to make ten more calls. Ten more calls to maybe get up to where this man is. But I take the other route, too. I look at how men have been successful and I mirror what they do. So, I have to adjust it a little bit but I also can appreciate who they are and how they've been able to make their climb to the top of a political ladder, because you know you have to tweak everything for your own personal situation, but I've learned so much from both sides. It just, you know, it just depends.

JD: Well, and I know you also recently held a wonderful lunch, the Martin Luther King Women Leaders Lunch.

LS: Yes.

JD: So, you're also mentoring other young women to follow along. Talk a little about kind of the importance of doing something like that.

LS: You know, I was thinking about it; it's unfortunate. Women, we have a burden that men don't have. You never hear men saying "you need to get back to men." Do you ever hear men say "you got to go talk to other young men and get them encouraged to come and be in politics"? You don't hear that, but you do hear women. And I sit on the Women in Politics Board down at PSU and we try to encourage women, because sometimes we need to have a different push. We need to have an extra push from someone who looks like us and who understands what it's like to be a woman, and we need to hear from those voices so that we know we can do the same thing too. So, when we did that Martin Luther King lunch this past week, and I always think about this, you know, am I doing enough to show young women that this is something they can do too?

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Being the second African American woman in the history of Oregon to be a Multnomah County commissioner, it's kind of an honor, but it also says someone didn't do enough to show young women of color that they can also be a county official. So, it's been twenty-six years. There were twenty-one years in-between me and Gladys McCoy. So, somewhere along the line people felt that this was unattainable. And I didn't want it to be the fact that women of color thought that this was not something that they could do. I wanted them to feel me, to touch me, to engage with me, ask me questions. I can tell you, I never met any women, professional women when I was in high school or middle school. I never did. And so, I thought—I have a few friends who happened to be lawyers, judges, docs, why don't I pull my collective friendships and let some of these friendships match up with some young women who might find this educational. Because I thought that if we could explore different kinds of careers, just on a very basic, casual basis, I didn't want it to be a real serious kind of thing, or at a hotel, no, I didn't want that. I just wanted us to be able to sit at a table across from you and say "how you doing? How are your parents doing?" you know, "what are you interested in?" and you tell me what you're interested in; "oh, I have a friend who does that kind of work, I can set up a shadowing opportunity for you."

So, I called all these people, and Margaret Carter, she wrapped the whole speaking piece up, because we kind of did like a couple minutes, each of us, about who we are and how we got to where we were before the lunch actually started, and Margaret is absolutely great. I love, love, love her, and I said to the students, I said "tell me how old does she look." And some of them—and I had to remember in my mind—some of them said "oh, she looks like she's as old as my grandmother. My grandmother's in her fifties," and I'm thinking no, no, she's almost thirty years beyond that, and she looks great. Her mind is so fast and just quick and can pick up on every kind of body language from the girls and kind of know what they want to hear.

So, it was real special to me, particularly to have her as the first elected African American, to show them range. And I had people from her age group to younger. I even had my own staff up there, and they said "well, we're not a leader." "Yes, you are. All of us, we're leaders. You're in a leadership position." My front desk, Saba, she just graduated from Portland State University this past summer; "you are a leader because what you've demonstrated is that you can complete a task and you can go forward into a career path that you can see you going up on a ladder. You have a story to tell. They've never been where you've been. So, you are a leader." My policy person, she graduated from Willamette undergrad and she got a law degree. She has four kids. How she did all of that with four kids, I do not know. I just know that she's Superwoman and I want her on my team.

You know what I mean? I don't need people with the same skillset that I have, I need people who are smarter than me, I need people who have different experiences than I do. I need people at different ages to be able to complete me, because I know I'm not the smartest one in the deck, but I do know what I do have; I have a good discipline and I have the ability to analyze situations. And my mother says I have the gift of discernment, and I'll accept that, but they're all way smarter than I am. I just feel like—I did this because I said, "I don't feel like I'm doing enough." And I think that is the mistake that I make in my mind, and it's a good one because it pushes me to action.

[1:10:15]

And when the young ladies said that they had never met—they didn't know there was a black judge in Multnomah County, they didn't know anyone who had a law degree, they didn't know anyone from private industry, it was just amazing to me. And so, it was probably one of the most powerful lunches that I have had to date. It was the spirit, I mean it really kind of...it was very powerful. My soul was really soothed with that meeting. And we made progress. So, from there, I got so much feedback from it, people want us to go on the road with this show. And I'm like, I'm really with it, but my other motive, too, is I do a summer program that I started when I first came here, and I started with twenty-five kids, paying for paid internships for positions throughout Multnomah County. I doubled it every year since I've been here, so we're up to a hundred and twenty-five kids.

I wanted those young ladies to know that there are opportunities out here: "I want you guys, also, to get on the list, so when the website comes up for you to go online to sign up, I want you to sign up, because you know what, I'm going to call you. So, it's your responsibility to go onto the website, put your name, if you want this. I'm telling you when it is, but I'm putting you on my list so I can get back with you when it comes online, and then you're going to have to take some responsibility and go and apply. I can't do it for you."

But there are going to be a bunch of jobs. I just wanted to give them some options and opportunities for summer work. I mean, that first summer job is so important, it determines whether or not you're going to get something in the future, and it might help to pique your interest about other kinds of career opportunities. So, I do have a dual motive for coming out, one: because I think it's the right thing for you to do, and two: too much is given, much is required, and I have to do more than what I'm doing to make sure that I'm building up the next generation, because if I don't, that's on me. I can't—I want to leave in a space where it's much better than where it came from. I can say we didn't have jobs for teenagers before I got here. I started that program, and we have built it to a level where people, it's just starting to resonate "maybe public service is a way that I may need to go."

Now, there's another motive too: we got five thousand employees. In the next five to seven years the baby boomers will be retiring, and almost fifty percent of them will be eligible for retirement. I want some of these kids to come back and get some of these jobs. And I want them to go to work, because I'm like Margaret, I want to collect my social security, and I need y'all to work in order for me to do that. It's so true. It's so true.

JD: Well, as you're talking about kind of that particular event that you organized and why that was so important, I know you've had a lot of other community involvement with a variety of organizations, and maybe you've already answered this, but I just wanted to give you a chance you expand a bit, if you feel the need, about the importance of community involvement, both kind of the role that you have used with a larger community—you mentioned "the village" with your own son—but now as you're becoming one of the elders of the community, how that evolves.

LS: I like to work on policies that might have an infrastructure change where it may change the dial. Like for example, a couple years ago we always had our senior center dollars in one-time-only money, and I have always thought that was just crazy, because what happens is then you have to have seniors come down every year *en masse* and push us to say "don't cut this program out of one-time-only money." And I thought we need to put it in our regular budget. I mean, whenever we get to the point that we have some extra dollars, we need to put that—make sure that we take care of those seniors, and that's what I did. I added an amendment to the budget that put senior centers and all their activities in the regular budget, that they didn't have to come back every year and fight to get the one-time-only money that they were originally being funded for.

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So, that was huge for me. And I try to find areas where it makes sense that we have jurisdiction over. The second thing that's been really nice to be a county commissioner, because I can identify opportunities where we can leverage our dollars with other private or state dollars, and I notice that there's been this whole campaign to do—for Portland public schools—to do new fields. And the fields were going to be done; whichever schools raised the most money, they would get their field done first. And I notice, I mean we do the SUN school, and we have two SUN high schools: Jefferson and Madison. I live in the Jefferson district. My son went to Lincoln, but we're very much a part of the Jefferson community, and I just thought they're going to be the last ones to get their field, because guess what: seventy-seven percent of the students there are on free and reduced lunch.

So, you're going to have the Grants, the Lincolns, the Franklins, the Wilsons of the world, they're going to get their field done first, and they'll be last because they can't raise at the same level through their parents as everyone else. So, I kind of walked it around here, and because we do SUN schools, that was my connection, and so I was getting a little pushback, you know: "that's the school's problem, that's not our problem," and I said "no, no, no, they're a SUN school. If we're talking about leveling the playing field for our students who go to those SUN schools, then we have to do a little bit more above and beyond what we're doing, and so we have to think out of the box. If we give them a nice push, it will help them to be at least in the top third to get their fields done."

And so, I put fifty thousand dollars in to—twenty-five thousand for Madison and twenty-five for Jefferson, and that made a big difference. And I had an opportunity this fall to go and kind of celebrate the field, because they both got their fields this year and it was a big, big deal. And so, with the public dollars that we already had and the money from Nike and from us, they were able to be in the top schools to get their field done. And I just thought that that's my job. We do a lot of good work at Multnomah County, but my job is to figure out how to—those more vulnerable populations—how do I figure out how to leverage our dollars with private dollars and other public dollars to make a difference. Because we can't fully fund anything on our own, but we certainly are able to leverage where there's other money, and that it just makes sense that we do it.

So, that's what I've tried to do in everything that I do. We've had a lot of good success with our internet essentials, with Comcast, and we worked with Head Start families to get a laptop and internet service that's affordable, and we've been pushing that for the last four years. And so, I just try to identify different places where we—you know, I write a little note every day and say "would this have gotten done if you weren't here?" And some things I can check yes, some things I can check no, but then I know the reason why I'm here. So, that's my story.

JD: Well, I want to just perhaps bring things full-circle here and give you a chance to offer any final thoughts about your time at OSU and the experience that you had there and where that's led you.

LS: I think there is a ground zero everywhere you go, and I think in terms of identifying what your strengths and your weaknesses are, I think going to college helps you to inform on who you are. So for me, OSU was kind of a muse of sorts, to help me figure out who I am and what I'm best suited to be. And even after graduating, you don't totally know who you are, but it gave me some confidence to think I can do something and I can be something, because now I have a college degree.

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And I have friends who are from different parts of the country; I have friends who are in rural areas, urban areas that I can call on. And that would have never happened. It would have absolutely never happened had I not gone to Oregon State University. And I know for a fact I would have never traveled abroad or had the nerve to, because like I said, no one in my family ever went out of the country. And I think Niagara Falls is probably the most that someone has ever gone. But it gave me the confidence and the courage to do something that was outside the box, and I felt like there was infrastructure set up; that I had people who were kind of watching my back.

So for me, being able to have those little stepping stones, it gives you those big things; it kind of helps you to do the big things in your world by getting those little individual successes at an early age. And there was so much, and I would do things so much—I mean with my mind I have now, I would have been in ASOSU, I would have created a whole network of friends, I mean you just don't have enough time in the day, but I think I probably would have done a little bit more on student government if I would have known that this is the direction that I was going into.

But I still think that we can do more. There's one—the president said last night, "if you can do one thing, you can hire a graduate." It is so important that young people know, too, that there are people who have sacrificed their lives to give us the freedoms that we have here, and I know that there are a lot of folks who don't want to—there's a program for work study for veterans. Hire these folks. Hire these folks. I mean, it's okay, they have so many great skills. And so, for me to be able to understand how this whole thing works and to be able to walk back on the campus and kind of reflect on where I was and to see it move forward, I'm so pleased. I'm happy with the direction that my old alma mater has taken and I really appreciate it, because I know I have been blessed beyond anything I could ever imagine, but you know, that

foundation, part of that foundation came from OSU. Without it, I wouldn't be here today, because I wouldn't have a degree and the senator would have never hired me.

JD: That's seems like the perfect ending spot. Thank you so much, Loretta.

LS: Thank you, thank you so much.

[1:23:25]