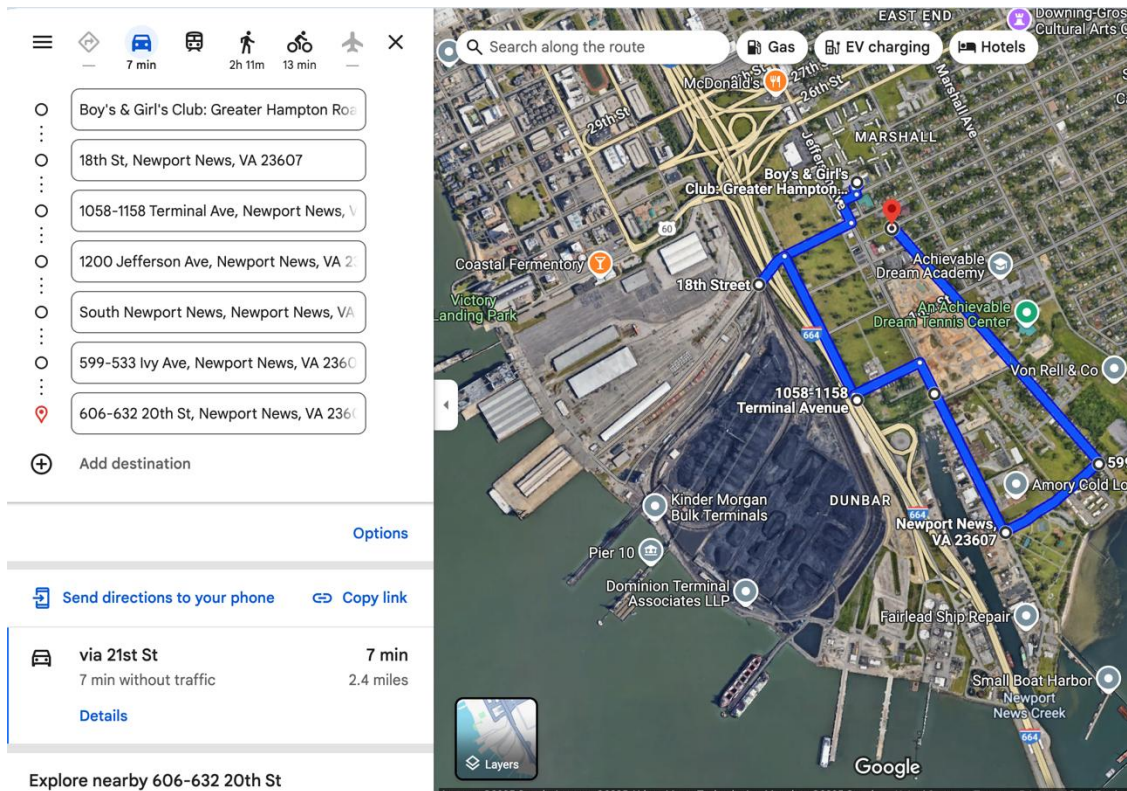


# Yugonda Sample Jones (2/3)

27 February, 2024

*Summary: A car ride with East End Newport News resident and advocate Yugonda Sample-Jones. The trip starts at the East End Boys and Girls Club, then crosses under I-664 to loop around part of Dominion Terminal. Sample-Jones has a brief exchange with a truck driver making a delivery to the Port of Virginia. Then, the drive continues out of the Terminal, down Terminal Avenue directly beneath the I-664 overpass where Jones investigates a new development. The next stop is the "death ditch," a site where raw sewage leaked into the neighborhood from Hampton Roads Sanitation several years prior. Jones drives down Jefferson Ave to show the sites of some of the new developments with the Choice Neighborhood Initiative including a fabrication educational space and a seafood market. Finally, she reflects on Pickett's Beach at the southern tip of the neighborhood, loops past the Towers and Lassiter Courts, and ends at the community garden adjacent to Zion Baptist Church. [00:00:00]*



Above: Map of the sites of the drive documented in below audio.

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** So Boys and Girls Club, there's all the bigwigs right there. There's Rob Coleman and Hound Smith. They're the top-- they're the CEO and the COO of um, the Boys and Girls Club.

**Adrian:** Okay.

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** But you see how close it is to everything. So all of this was apartments. And, you know, it's been torn down.

**Adrian:** Was that uh, Dickerson Court?

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** Dickerson Court-- Court, and Harbor Homes. Okay.

This is Ms. Pearly's. And I'm not sure where her air monitor is. She said you could see it.

**Adrian:** It might be on the roof...

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** But I don't see it.

Oh, I see a little monitor right there. I don't know. But um, she's wanting to talk to us actually.

And that's our elders. That's Mr. Linwood Debrew. So he's in the house, he's, um, bedridden now, but that's who we go to, to, for everything.

Um, Miss Joanie Ivy, she is, um, Congressman Scott's right hand person.

Abdullah Maha, he did, um, boxing out of here and helped a lot of young men just get on the right track.

Uh, I'll go this way down here.

**Adrian:** I love that mural.

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** Yeah.

So here look, the interstate's backed up in the middle of the day. The interstate is backed up.

**Adrian:** Whoa.

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** All day we deal with this. We've been asking for traffic studies and everything.

Um, so here is where they're actually going to build the Virginia Peninsula Community College.

This area here is gonna be retail, so they're keeping it open for retail.

And then over there is what Ms. Millie was talking about, which is the, um, the S 23 Holdings. It's a fabrication business that's gonna support the shipyard.

And people just dump their trash everywhere!

So I guess this is how you get in. I've never really...

**Adrian:** Uh, yep. Looks like it.

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** Hey, adopt a spot. Wow. So they have adopted the spot. Well, this is scary in itself. I've never been, I've lived down here for like almost 20 years and I have never been here. It's just like, not forbidden, but it's like you don't talk about it.

That's just scary.

**Adrian:** Yeah, like, does, do you know anybody who's been over here?

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** No.

You can't even get in!

Wait a minute. Oh! my goodness. Adrian, look at this!

**Adrian:** Oh man.

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** Oh my goodness.

**Adrian:** That's nuts.

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** No photo. Okay.

**Adrian:** No photography allowed. Oh my gosh.

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** Is there office? No, I can't

Oh. Okay. Who's this?

Hi. You got a new car?

It's no office out here.

Oh my goodness. Look at all this crap! And we're breathing all this in! Even when coal moves from there, I'm sure it's like causing smoke and the wind is just blowing and there's nothing blocking the wind from off the water. So all of that wind is just going into our community. Oh my goodness. I'm more pissed off.

I'm so pissed off.

**Adrian:** It's really a lot.

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** This is a lot.

What are in these silos? Is coal in there too?

I'm gonna go in and ask for a job application. But they don't have a office?

Dominion Terminal Associates.

Hmm. This is really interesting.

Contractor work permitting. Is that a office? [00:05:00] That's a work area?

**Adrian:** Yeah. I don't know.

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** Hmm.

I want, I really want to go in and ask for like a job application.

All of their doors say no trespass-- "Visitors sign in the main office prior to entering property." Where's the main office at?

Hmm.

Do you mind if I leave you in here for a minute?

**Adrian:** Oh, I'm good.

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** Okay. If any work is being performed...

Let me ask this kind sir.

Excuse me, sir. Hi, how are you? I'm well. My name's Yugonda Sample- Jones. I'm looking. For your main office. How do you apply to work here?

**Anonymous Truck Driver:** You have to go, uh,

I'm trying to think how, how you get outta here,.

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** Uh huh.

**Anonymous Truck Driver:** But you gotta, uh, get back over, uh, 664.

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** Oh!

**Anonymous Truck Driver:** Yeah. And take that exit-- you came, came off on Terminal Avenue?

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** Yes.

**Anonymous Truck Driver:** Which is where the GPS probably led you.

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** Yes sir.

**Anonymous Truck Driver:** Yeah. So you gotta get back on, uh. Go back out. Okay, go back out the terminal.

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** Okay.

**Anonymous Truck Driver:** Go under the bridge and come out to that terminal, go straight across.

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** Okay?

**Anonymous Truck Driver:** Make a left at the light on Jefferson Avenue.

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** Okay?

**Anonymous Truck Driver:** And then make the next left at uh, right where you see the McDonald's at.

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** To get on 664.?

**Anonymous Truck Driver:** That. Yeah, that'll be the six 64th, uh, okay. To 64th. All right. But you don't get on the interstate. You just go all the way across the bridge.

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** Okay.

**Anonymous Truck Driver:** Get across the bridge and make a left, and then a left.

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** Oh. And that's where the main office is, is

**Anonymous Truck Driver:** the main office. That's road to take you into the main gate.

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** Oh, I thought that's where the port was.

**Anonymous Truck Driver:** Yeah, that is the port.

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** Oh, so this is a part of the port?

**Anonymous Truck Driver:** Yes.

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** Oh, okay!

And you're a truck driver? Because my husband's a truck driver and I'm trying to get him closer to home 'cause he is over the road.

**Anonymous Truck Driver:** Okay.

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** Yeah.

**Anonymous Truck Driver:** Oh, the name of the company is Cross Globe.

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** Hold on. 'Gon write it down, sir.

Excuse me.

**Adrian:** Yeah, you go.

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** Cross Globe.

**Anonymous Truck Driver:** Yeah, lemme get you a number.

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** Thank you.

Look at the water's right there.

**Adrian:** Oh my gosh. It's like a, like a hundred feet away.

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** Exactly. With all these diesel trucks, I bet you they change their oil out here. The oil, everything leaking into the water.

So Cross Globe pulls trucks for the, did you know that? So they imported to the port (inaudible)

**Adrian:** Uh, I think it might be part of the Port of Virginia.

What do they haul though?

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** That's what I'm about to ask.

**Adrian:** If the train pulls the coal, what are the trucks moving?

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** So he has his hazard license, like his hazard, um, certificate. And he, because he used to pull like, um, gas.

**Anonymous Truck Driver:** Mm-hmm. Right.

(unintelligible)

**Anonymous Truck Driver:** Right, yeah.

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** Because we live right over here.

**Anonymous Truck Driver:** Okay. Yeah, we stay, we actually stay-- you got drivers that don't even leave this area

Uh huh.

And uh, the farthest we go is like Northern Virginia, North Carolina.

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** What do y'all pull?

**Anonymous Truck Driver:** Uh, cardboard, paper, [00:10:00] wood.

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** Oh, okay. So y'all do everything here?

**Anonymous Truck Driver:** Yeah.

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** Cool, cool, cool.

**Anonymous Truck Driver:** Yeah, because we, we, uh, actually we like tasked with the Port Authority,

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** Uh huh.



**Anonymous Truck Driver:** Stuff comes off the ships. Some the stuff we pull from there.

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** Okay. Well he pulled for the port before. So he has,

**Anonymous Truck Driver:** so he has his twerk and all that.

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** Yeah.

**Anonymous Truck Driver:** Call that, that lady there is Tracy. She's the one in charge of the truck drivers. And so she'll direct you to, uh, what you need to do. It might be an online application. I'm not sure how they do it now.

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** Okay.

**Anonymous Truck Driver:** So.

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** Thank you so much!

**Anonymous Truck Driver:** You're welcome.

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** What's your name?

**Anonymous Truck Driver:** (redacted)

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** I'm Yugonda.

**Anonymous Truck Driver:** okay.

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** It's nice to meet you,.

**Anonymous Truck Driver:** She asks you, tell 'er (name redacted)

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** I got you. Yes sir. You have a great day.

Alright.

I'm gonna look him up and get his phone number.

I dunno what this is a route to get, (inaudible)

So he said they pulled like, um, they pull paper and marble.

**Adrian:** Whoa.

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** So where's the marble coming from? And they pull things off of the port.

**Adrian:** Yeah.

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** That's very interesting. Very, very interesting. Look at this.

**Adrian:** Wow that's something else.

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** And just how it moves through like, (sigh) and that's the only. Sprinkler system that it has.

So if we go for a dome, won't, wouldn't it have to be like multiple domes to go over everywhere? Because one dome is isn't gonna cover all the coal

**Adrian:** Yeah it would have to be so big.

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** And the coal is just sitting here

**Adrian:** and it sits on the train.

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** Yes. It just sits here. And that the trains are closer to our neighborhoods.

**Adrian:** Yeah. They come through the neighborhood.

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** (sigh) Gotta lot of work to do, Adrian.

**Adrian:** Oh my gosh. Yeah. It's a lot. I think you have a really good point about the dome. Like it kind of makes sense of, it's sort of like a smaller site.

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** Yeah.

**Adrian:** But because it's so big,

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** We would have to...

**Adrian:** it would have to be either multiple or like, I don't, I don't know.

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** And then who's to say that they're going to make sure all the coal is inside the dome?

**Adrian:** Yeah. Like how are they, how would you make sure that it's fully contained?

Um,

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** South, Nor-, Norfolk.

**Adrian:** Good questions.

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** But look, even right here, that is a pregnant, so that's Community Service Board. That house right there, and it is for, we can drive down there. It's a dead end, but um, it's for pregnant women who are trying to get off of drugs.

**Adrian:** Oh dang.

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** They're just right here being polluted. And they're right here by the interstate!

Wow, this, this house is pregnant women and they stay there until their child is like, I believe two and through their whole program.

**Adrian:** Two years old?

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** Mm-hmm.

**Adam Morrow:** Oh, wow.

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** It is real, it's a really good program. Now it all depends on how many people they have that are trying to come in, but um. They, I worked with a young lady, they certainly did let her stay there till her daughter was two years old. But she was clean. She speaks, you know, high val- value, um, of that place.

It's really interesting that they adopt like, what spot are they adopting? Where the coal is?

**Adrian:** Yeah, like their driveway.

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** Because if there is adopting this, this trash and stuff, that's always here.

These.

There's stories when I was running for office, there's stories of cancer clusters in Newport News, the people that live by, like, the many power plants and things like that. That was really interesting.

**Adrian:** Hmm.

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** But I've been asking questions about like, does anyone know what is happening? Because this construction stuff has been here all summer, but no one has an answer.

But I think, look at this.

**Adrian:** Oh this construction!

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** Yeah, right here. But like a wind fence that would go right along on the other side of the track, that would be so perfect for us.

**Adrian:** Yeah, [00:15:00]

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** I mean, it's not the perfect solution. The perfect solution is to get rid of it all together, but Huh. Take a picture of that. Hold on.

**Adrian:** "Building resilient environments. "

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** Yes. So that is actually showing what the project is. Said "boat harbor", something.

This big old trucks coming up here and I'm just gonna park up here. Boat Harbor, treatment Plant Pump Station. Huh? Take a picture of that.

So that's with our water plant.

"Sustainable water, innovation for tomorrow". Okay, interesting.

Okay. And it's so funny, like these projects, I take pictures of all 'em. 'cause you don't ever know what's happening until you see it happen. And then you got to like, go back and figure out what it is and what's going on.

**Adrian:** Yeah. Yeah. So did you, did you look at the QR code or you

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** I, I pulled it up. Um, the one for R-S-S-R-H-R-S-D.

But, um, I'll look at it later. But yeah, I want to go down here 'cause I've never been, I've gone down here to get on the interstate, but I've never been like stra-- I think this goes to the water treatment plant.

It's just so many factors that are affecting our air, right here in this tight area. The water treatment plan, and what was happening with that? Talking to Mr. Raymond, um. I'll show you the death ditch too. Yeah, so it's a death ditch. Um, there's our water right there and then I'll show you where we're doing- quality control? So what they take the water somewhere else?

"Quality coatings". Okay.

What is this? MEB?

Lemme figure out who that is.

**Adrian:** MB dot group.

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** Yeah, I figured that whole situation.

This- hey! So he's all, that's what they was saying! Okay.

**Adrian:** S 23?

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** Holdings. S 23 Holdings.

So he, so he's already doing work at the Piers and he's working with, is being supported by the shipyard. S 23 Holdings is the guy, he's, he fixed these piers up down here and he's building the facility that [00:20:00] is, um, going on 14th Street.

So when they talk about like fabrication, I automatically think it's like welding and stuff like that,

**Adrian:** Uhhuh.

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** But I need to really research what fabrication is and what it involves. Like is it a blast radius, are they doing sand blasting? Is it particles that's gonna be in the air?

**Adrian:** Yeah. Like what's in here?

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** This is our water treatment plant.

**Adrian:** Oh, this is the water treatment plant?

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** Yes. That during the summer, this thing was smelling so bad. I said it gotta be a leak somewhere. But this is the water treatment plant here. Um,

**Adrian:** Oh and so this is where it leaked really bad that one time and Mr. Raymond did all the testing.

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** I'm gonna show you where it was. That's, it was leaking. Into the Death Ditch.

Yeah, all that's the water treatment plant.

So monitors why are they , maybe it's for the, the signs?

**Adrian:** Oh yeah. What is that?

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** I guess it's for the signs on the interstate.

**Adrian:** Oh?

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** Oh, because they do have that one sign that tells you what the bridge is backed up or what's going on with the bridge.

**Adrian:** Yeah. It said six sense like, um, s it was like S-I-X-E-N-S-E. Which I guess is in brand, but I feel like I just saw that name. Smokey? Maybe not. Okay.

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** Probably one signs when I have some more time, I'm gonna come through and take some pictures and I gotta be in Denbigh at one o'clock.

**Adrian:** Oh right.

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** But this is the death ditch right here. And Mr. Covington, he owns this block here.

**Adrian:** Mm-hmm.

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** Um, he owns most of 14th Street and he's been asking like, what are you going to do? What's gonna happen? And we're sure they're not gonna clean it up until, um, until they get the people that they want back here, but yeah, it's a ditch.

**Adrian:** You mean like new people?

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** Mm-hmm. Who the community is gentrified. This is where we did the groundbreaking for S 23 Holdings. That warehouse used to belong to the Housing Authority, but now, um, he owns it. Jose Rivera. He's a really nice man. He has a beautiful story to tell. That's a new school. So you see

how close it is to everything that's happening. And these are the new houses, I mean, new apartments.

The townhouses that we're building, we're extending 14th Street. So this is gonna be a road through the community and it's a lot of development happening. But I'm just so worried, like, if this land was like unbuildable, you can't build residence, like housing on that land because of the toxic ground.

**Adrian:** Yeah.

It's like a brown building, right?

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** Isn't this toxic?

Yeah, like it's right across the street.

You know, one thing that's really separating it is a manmade street. So it is the same land. Isn't this land toxic as well? Or is it less toxic because it's a little bit further away?

**Adrian:** I don't know.

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** Yeah. Um, see at 14th Street, Death Ditch right here. Oh. It goes back where we rode past, but this is where the pipe from the, um, Hampton Road sanitation was, um, leaking out sewage.

**Adrian:** Oh, that's terrible.

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** Mm-hmm.

**Adrian:** Oh my gosh. Raw sewage?

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** Yeah. So it only makes sense that we build a brand new state of the art seafood market.

**Adrian:** Oh my God.



**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** Right next door! Like, I, hmm. I, I, I have faith that this stuff is gonna be cleaned up once, you know, demographics change and stuff like that. But it's like, why do we have to wait for days to change? We're being like, I have the plans actually back there for the seafood market.

**Adrian:** Mm-hmm.

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** But, um, it's gonna be, we're gonna be, it's gonna be overlooking the water.

Um, let me see. [00:25:00]

They had to do quite a, um, well, they, they are having to do a lot of work to make it the land, prep the land so that we can even build the market. But, um, it's gonna be overlooking the water and everything. And I'm like, but we have this over here, and what are we going to do? Like I said, I'm sure it's gonna be cleaned up, but why do we have to suffer now for it?

**Adrian:** Who do you think is gonna clean it up?

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** Oh, the city.

**Adrian:** Oh.

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** Yeah. Once they, I mean that seafood market is. It's going to be amazing. We have, um, franchise opportunities on the inside. It is a rooftop entertainment, um, a lounging area outside. It's gonna be beautiful.

**Adrian:** It sounds really amazing.

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** And it's a huge investment.

I love our city and our EDA for investing and seeing the value in the East End. But it's like, okay, who are you really doing this for? How are the people through the process?

Down here is our seafood industry, and I was surprised to learn that our seafood industry here brings in, um, over 30% of the world, of the United States seafood.

**Adrian:** What?

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** Yeah. Right through here.

**Adrian:** Wow.

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** Because what comes through the port. Um, I forgot which one of these businesses do, deal with that. But, um, yeah.

And down here they got in quite a few, uh, grants to redo their buildings and stuff like that through the city of Newport News.

B&C Trawlers. A lot of these, they don't have like, um, sales in the area. Uh, like we can't go in and buy food ,unless you know somebody, but they sell to big business.

**Adrian:** Oh, okay. So they don't have like a storefront?

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** No. One of 'em, a couple of 'em did. Um, I don't know.

Fairlead, them, they're really big. They got a lot, they got quite a lot of grant money from the city and the state to keep their operation going. I'm not really sure what they do, but I know they do hire from the community. They hire a lot of people and they pay them really good wages.

This is Key Lincoln Park. But, the cultured people in our community call it Pickett's Beach. and that's because Mr. William Pickett bought this land for us, um, back in segregation time because there wasn't anywhere on the waterfront where people could be.

Um. We have a pier. That pier right there, we got that built to make the waterfront more accessible. But there's still a lot of work that we have to do. Um, they classify it as a wild beach so it's not cleaned. Um, which really doesn't make sense to me because like Huntington is right up the street and they clean that one off. They make sure the rubbish and the bushes are gone. So why not do the same thing with this one so we can enjoy our waterfront?

**Adrian:** When you say Mr. Pickett bought the beach.

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** Mm-hmm.

**Adrian:** Um, is this the same beach that I was talking to, um, Pastor Michael Mines about his, um, project about the Contrabands-

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** Mm-hmm.

**Adrian:** -In Fort Monroe.

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** Yes.

**Adrian:** And he was talking about the first beach that enslaved people landed on.

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** So that's in Hampton.

**Adrian:** That's in Hampton?

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** That, um, that has been recognized and it's on Fort Monroe, but that has been recognized as the first point, which kind of doesn't make sense to me because it's all along the same waterfront.

**Adrian:** Right.

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** So I'm like, doesn't Newport News have the same history that Hampton has when it comes to that? But Hampton celebrates and they value their history.

**Adrian:** Mm-hmm.

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** Um, whereas we don't have that type of engagement here.

But this is, I mean, he bought it for us. He was actually a, a trombone player with Duke Ellington and that's where he got his money.

**Adrian:** Get out.

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** Yeah. I used to come out here when I was a kid. My mom used to bring us out here and I remember it was like none of that rubbish and stuff. It was a beautiful waterfront.

It was a lot of Black families that were out here. We used to sit out here and like, eat crabs and stuff. So when I returned back I was like, what in the world happened to our beach and where are our children? Like they're not [00:30:00] enjoying outside. And it's just once you don't pay attention to things, it kind of falls by the wayside.

These are apartments. I did a lot of activism, door to door groundwork in these because they had, um, so many issues with, brick and mortar issues. Um, the AC wasn't working. The bottom floors, if you could see, their bottom apartments are kind of underground.

**Adrian:** Yeah.

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** That caused so many plumbing issues.

**Adrian:** Oh my God.

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** I, we would go door to door and it would literally be puddles of raw sewage in the basement area.

So, um, we did, this is a health and wellness trail that we're building.

Um, that's a Boys and Girls Club, that red building.

But this trail is gonna go from that street that I told you we're creating, um, down here into the waterfront.

On this area, we're gonna have outside exercise equipment, but I'm sorry, I'm talking so this, sorry. I be all over the place, but the, um, the, so they're actually getting the repairs and the renovation that they need because of all the pressure that we put on them. We work with Harold Roach. He would communicate with us.

We worked with key residents out here that weren't scared of retaliation. Um, and things are happening finally. Uh. I don't know what's going on here.

Okay, so these are the towers. Mr. Benny McRay, he was a football player. Amazing man. Actually built these towers to have house in downtown for Black folk. And people don't know there's a pool on the top of these. These are luxury towers.

**Adrian:** Wow.

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** And um, his son is still alive to today. If you want to capture his story, I could call him.

He has a Peyton company, but we talk a lot about stolen legacy. And I was like, yeah, they really stole your dad's legacy. But he is really nice.

**Adrian:** Wow. Um, wait, who stole his legacy?

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** Well, it's now owned by the Housing Authority.

**Adrian:** Oh, did they buy it from him?

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** I don't know. I don't, I. You would have to talk to him.

**Adrian:** Okay.

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** I have no idea. I just know when I came into the fold, it was a really raggedy building. It was terrible and was in major need of renovation, and there were rumors about the city was trying to get rid of it, they were going to tear it down.

And there was a company that wanted to-- okay, what you doing, mama? There was a company that wanted to come in and renovate it, and it was rumors about they didn't want that to happen. So, one of my first acts of activism here was we pulled a Greyhound bus up in that circle and we had all the residents get on the bus and we went right across town to city council and filled city council room.

And before we even could talk, they were like, well, we're gonna let you know what we gonna do right now.

**Adrian:** Yeah.

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** And they voted to do the renovation repairs, which was really good. The residents love it now. They have washing machines and stuff like that. It has really improved their quality of life.

**Adrian:** That's amazing.

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** Yeah. I remember it was this little old man, he was like, "I just wanna live my last days with my waterfront apartmen'." I said, "Sir, we gonna make that happen." 'Cause he lived like, right, um, over here. He had a beautiful view.

Yeah, but it's ran by um, the Housing Authority,

But it is a prime example of, you can fix stuff up, but if you don't give people education or access to opportunity, it's just gonna be the same rundown place that it was before. And unfortunately, that's kind of what we're seeing now that is reverting back to, um, you know, the uncleanness and stuff like that.

One of the first community, um, projects that I did, I had a mentoring program called Royals, and this was a, the guy had actually donated the land because it was hard to sell because a bus stop is right here and he donated the land. So working with Mr. Debrew he allowed us to, um, come out and he taught us farming. He taught our young ladies about um, like agriculture, everything. He was just so amazing. I wish you can meet Mr. Debrew. But he's bedridden and [00:35:00] um, yeah. This is Councilwoman Tina Vick, she lives here.

**Adrian:** Oh, that's her house.

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** Yeah. That's a nice place. Um, this area. Here. So Lasseter Court is on both sides.

They're public house, well they're not public housing. It has converted to rental administration demonstration, rental assistance demonstration. So, um, Virginia as a whole trying to get rid of public housing and this rental assistance demonstration is pretty much saying you gotta work. Like, you can't just say that you're not working and get free living, you know?

So, um, it had a lot of different requirements to it, and it's really interesting.

I wonder what is going on. Well, it looks like they're fixing poles. Okay.

The House of Refuge. This would be a nice little, I mean, I love my church, but this is kind of like a nice little quiet church. They're right in the middle of the construction and everything that's happening. Pastor and Lady Jeter are amazing. They are so community minded. They're involved in everything with the Choice Neighborhood Initiative, and they're great.

**Adrian:** Oh, it's all around them!

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** Yes. Yes. And they had to fight, like they didn't even get the property that they wanted. Because they were like, well, can we at least get to the block so they can, they wanna expand their church.

That was like such a hellish fight with the Housing Authority and it was very upsetting. They didn't get what they wanted.

**Adrian:** Mm-hmm.

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** Um, Achievable Dreams Tennis Center and then of course Achievable Dreams, the school.

**Adrian:** I um, I know you have to drop me off like really soon.

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** Mm-hmm.

**Adrian:** Um, 'cause you have your one o'clock.

But I just wanted to ask you like, um, about the monitoring, like what do you, what do you think of it? What do you think it offers?

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** Man, I'm so excited about this monitoring! Because I can't speak for what happened before me, but this is something that I, I see happening. I'm able to be a part of it, so I'm a part of, hey, asking where's the data?

Because we just need the information, and we can go and advocate, but this is important because it, it kind of, validates us. You know, the da- I, I, I fully believe that this data that's gonna come from the air monitoring, the attention, it's

validating us that we're not crazy. We do have health issues. The people, the families that we're fussing about asthma and heart conditions, respiratory issues, right there in, in Ridley Circle, they weren't lying. They weren't being extra or dramatic. It's really air, like coal dust is coming into our lungs! And it's not fair, and this data validates us.

**Adrian:** Mm.

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** At least they keep the ball running and show them we are not giving up. We need a wind fence.

**Adrian:** Is this something that you would like, wanna see more of? Or do you, you know, like, do you feel like more monitoring would be helpful at this point? Or is it sort of just like-

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** I don't-

**Adrian:** -the data.

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** Yeah. I just want, I want us to, um, start tightening, tighten up our strategy a little bit more.

**Adrian:** Mm-hmm.

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** Like, really bring in Sierra Club. Um, the EPA representatives, DEQ, all of us come together and be like, okay, you have this data, you have this data. We all agree that what's happening in the 23607 is not right. Let's work together to bring solution. I think that nuisance ordinance is really key because there's nothing out there.

And right now we're just, hey, we got a cool mayor and he's working on it. But what happens when he's not our mayor anymore? You know what happens when eyes aren't on the coal dust? So what y'all are doing, what the Repair Lab is really doing, is putting like some "umpf" behind our fight, you know? And, um, really organ- I appreciate for the organization because before it was like, these gatekeepers. And although I'm passionate and I'm concerned about our environment, I felt like it wasn't a place for me to even say anything because of the gatekeepers, community gatekeepers that are in the like kind of barriers.



**Adrian:** Mm-hmm.

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** So I appreciate this opportunity because it's a way I see, it's a way for me to be able to break those barriers [00:40:00] through. And bring everybody on board and say, "Hey, this is what we're doing. It's the opportunity for you to get engaged because I know you had, your baby has asthma. I know you had to have a, a heart, um, open heart surgery for respiratory and issues."

So it's a way to break down those barriers and really bring people in and get their buy-in. So we're a stronger force when organizing against all that mess that we just saw! All that coal, like it's just sitting there.

And it's money. I'm sure they see it, they see money, but I, when I see it, I see little children that can't breathe. And it's not cool. I see my son having to wake up with the freaking nebulizer 'cause he couldn't breathe. Like that's not right! Peop-- that you, because you're operating a certain way, I feel like you need to be held responsible for that and held accountable.

You have a business, that's fine. Like strip clubs, they have to put security measures in place to protect the community from their activities. So why aren't we putting those same demands on big corporations that are doing activities that are affecting us.

Does that make sense?

**Adrian:** That makes so much sense.

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** I like, it's just, it just, it's so easy in my mind, but it is, I guess, political and all this. And I really don't care about that.

I just wanna reach a solution and I feel like this network that we have is really going to get to the solution. Respectfully on, you know, respectful about the work that's been done before us, but, we're moving forward with this because you can't stop the movement.

**Adrian:** Damn. Motion of the ocean.

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** Aye!

**Adrian:** Okay. Well thank you.

Thank you so much for letting me ride with you.

**Yugonda Sample-Jones:** Absolutely. Thank you for riding.