

Mr. Smiley

30 June 2023

Summary: This recording picks up at the end of the Yugonda Sample-Jones interview of the same date, 30 June 2023. In the brief exchange, we hear convenience store owner Mr. Smiley respond to some questions about his experience with coal dust around his store on Jefferson Avenue in the East End of Newport News, within eyeshot of the coal terminal. [00:00:00]

Yugonda Sample-Jones: Let's work it out.

Hey, Mr. Smiley. How are you?

Mr. Smiley: Good. good. How you doin'?

Yugonda Sample-Jones: Well. I'm well. You remember me?

Mr. Smiley: Yep.

Yugonda Sample-Jones: You do?

Mr. Smiley: Yeah. How you doin'?

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

Mr. Smiley: Whatch'yall up to?

Yugonda Sample-Jones: I brought a friend.

Mr. Smiley: For real?

Adrian: Hey. My name's Adrian. Nice to meet you.

Mr. Smiley: Hey, hey! How you doing? Nice to meet you

Adrian: Mr. Smiley? It's a pleasure to meet you.

This is his store, its been here longer than I've been!

Mr. Smiley: Oh my gosh!

Yugonda Sample-Jones: Its been here for years.

Mr. Smiley: Don't, don't, don't be telling me. (laughs) Please don't tell me these kinds of things....

Yugonda Sample-Jones: But he does really good. I love his store. I actually protested the other store over there because I was like, y'all need to shop with Mr. Smiley.

So we um, we talkin about the coal hub.

Mr. Smiley: Okay.

Yugonda Sample-Jones: Whatchu know about it?.

Mr. Smiley: What I know about what?

Yugonda Sample-Jones: About the coal.

Mr. Smiley: The coal?

Yugonda Sample-Jones: Mm-hmm.

Mr. Smiley: That's over there?

Yugonda Sample-Jones: Over there. Mm. She's recording stories about the coal terminal. The coal dust.

Mr. Smiley: Okay. Coal dust.

Yugonda Sample-Jones: Has it affected you here?

Mr. Smiley: Uh, I can't say.

Yugonda Sample-Jones: Mm.

Mr. Smiley: I can't tell.

Yugonda Sample-Jones: Mm-hmm.

Mr. Smiley: Who knows? Could affect a lot of people. I've been here for a while, so yeah. You really can't, can't really tell.

Yugonda Sample-Jones: Do you have it on the outside of your building?

Mr. Smiley: Um, I never really noticed it or paid that much attention to it. It never really, I heard talk, heard about it before. People talked about it. This the first time I heard it in a while.

Yugonda Sample-Jones: Mmhm.

Mr. Smiley: When you, so, you know mean it's not a, you know, I don't know what's going on. But they ain't coming up with these, um, with this building next door. You know what I'm talking about?

Yugonda Sample-Jones: mmhm.

Mr. Smiley: The big, big building.

Yugonda Sample-Jones: Yeah.

Mr. Smiley: Yeah. Now-.

Yugonda Sample-Jones: Have you been included? Cause I remember when I was over there I asked did they come to you and talk to you. Have you been included in the conversation?

Mr. Smiley: Well, I don't think I was included in that conversation. But um, yeah.

Yugonda Sample-Jones: Hey, how you doing?

Yeah, it's a lot happening. It's going to be finished in 2025.

Mr. Smiley: 2025?

Yugonda Sample-Jones: Mm-hmm.

Mr. Smiley: Yep. Gotcha.

Yugonda Sample-Jones: Yeah. Yeah.

Well I wanted to stop in and say hi.

Mr. Smiley: Okay, okay..

Yugonda Sample-Jones: See how you doing. Check in.

I'll be back. Its summer, it's summertime, so I'm outside now.

Mr. Smiley: I can see it's sweet outside.

Adrian: It's nice to meet you!

Mr. Smiley: Alright sweetheart, its nice to see you.

Yugonda Sample-Jones: Take care.

Yeah, this building just got painted too. I don't know everybody, they just don't pay attention to me.

Adrian: Yeah. It really depends on who you ask. Some people are like, it's ruining my life, and other people are like, I've never thought about it. I, you know.

Yugonda Sample-Jones: I have a girl, I have a young lady she lived in Ridley Circle and she um. So would it be okay if I get you a list of people that you should talk to?

Adrian: I would be so grateful.

Yugonda Sample-Jones: Oh yeah.

Adrian: Oh my gosh, that would be amazing.

Yugonda Sample-Jones: Yeah, so I have (redacted) she was in Ridley Circle and her respiratory, like she was in the front part. So she was right here on 16th Street.

Adrian: Oh?

Yugonda Sample-Jones: And she has doctor's notes and everything about her respiratory.

Adrian: Oh that's terrible.

Yugonda Sample-Jones: It's really interesting because she moved away and now she's back, because she moved in a new building. And she was like, 'Girl, my problems are like--' she can breathe easier now. And I'm like, okay.

Adrian: That's cool.

Yugonda Sample-Jones: Exactly. But you coming back to the same community, baby!

I think she was living in Hampton and she's coming back, so I wanna, I'm just keeping tabs on her cuz she had like heart surgery because of it. Even a young lady named (redacted) and that's why I know it's a lot of people that live downtown.

They, um-- maybe we'll walk up here to the Moton cuz they're the ones, if somebody, hopefully somebody's out there. But they're the ones that were really focused and keeping the momentum about the air quality out. Um, but with our community, if it's not in your face, then not gonna remember.

He just said, 'I ain't heard nobody talk about that in a while.' So (laughing) If it's not in your face, we just don't pay attention.

Adrian: Well, there's a lot, a lot of life to live.

Yugonda Sample-Jones: Mm-hmm.

Adrian: That requires a lot of attention, yeah.

Yugonda Sample-Jones: Yeah.

So we'll look over, see if Ms. Millie is in.

They are new, these owners, that are new. I actually protested this spot before. I was the only person standing out there with a stick. 'Don't go in this store!'

But it was because they were like, treat-, I had, I was in front of some young people and they were like maybe 5 cents short. And she was like, 'No, we're not giving it to you' . And she was rude!

So I'm like, no, we can't just tolerate this in our community. Everybody would walk past me and I was like, why are y'all going here and not to Mr. Smiley? Mr. Smiley doesn't sell alcohol. He doesn't sell beer. So people don't go there, or they go for [00:05:00] like cigarettes.