

INTRODUCTION TO NOLA RESISTANCE

Grades 6–12

LESSON 1: Stories of Resistance

Malik Rahim Oral History Transcript 2

February 27, 2018, for the NOLA Resistance oral history project. Below is an excerpt from their 95-minute interview.

CAVE: What kind of community actions did you engage in when you were in the Desire projects?

RAHIM: Well one of the first things we did, we established a free breakfast program. My first wife, Barbara Thomas, she ran the—she started the breakfast program. But by the time that we found—the end was a community-driven breakfast program. Then we did a cleanup program. We believed that no civilized people live in filth, so at that time, the projects was in deplorable condition. So, we did a cleanup. Then we started a pest control program to deal with the fact that this housing development was allowed to become inundated with rodents and different insects, roaches, so we did community pest control. It wasn't like what was known to happen, like, you spray for the roaches in your house and they just go to your neighbor's house. And then when they out, they come back to yours. But in the interim, you and your neighbor is constantly battling among each other, because they didn't know that all these roaches is coming because you didn't spray at your house. So, again, you know, that made us start the pest control program.

And then we went into a crime abatement program. The first, what you would call neighborhood watch in New Orleans, we started. And the first drug-free zone in New Orleans, we started. We went out and asked guys that was selling drugs, "Don't sell them around children. Don't sell them around the elderly. If you have to do this, then don't do it where it have this type of impact upon your community." Because all of us was from other public housing, basically, other housing developments in other part of the city, you dig, but we was there to help them in their city, I mean, in their community. And for that, we had to respect, you know, what guys would give us. We started the first cleanup program in the city, the first drug-free zone, and then we started the sickle cell awareness, which is one of the things I'm truly proud of out of the things that we did at Desire, you dig, but we started the sickle cell. But not only did we start sickle cell awareness and testing, but we also started testing for high blood pressure and diabetes and a lot of people found out that they was diabetic or that they had high blood pressure by coming to our office.