

UHC: So, where did you grow up?

Yolanda: I'm actually from Brooklyn, New York.

UHC: Oh, okay. Brooklyn.

Yolanda: We've been here since I was about 16 almost 17. I've been in Spartanburg since I was 15.

UHC: Did your family move here?

Yolanda: Yeah, my mother and my stepfather, at the time I had 3 sisters and a brother and one on the way. My stepfather died in '85, so now it's just my mother and both my siblings. I've got one sister in Maine and a brother in Mauldin, and the rest of them are here in Spartanburg.

UHC: Big family.

Yolanda: Yeah.

UHC: So, what exactly caused you to become homeless?

Yolanda: It was kind of a chain reaction type thing. I mean, I always have, I've always worked. I've always had a job. I was working at BMG, and I took a voluntary layoff. At the time I took the layoff, I was going into management with Cato. And, of course, Cato had some upper management changeovers, and I didn't get the position that I had been promised. So I was working part-time. Then I had to... I started working for temporary agencies. I got pregnant with my, my youngest son, Cameron, and I couldn't work. And so here I was without a job. If I had stayed at BMG, I would have had disability insurance. But here I was without a real job, and I was pregnant. Couldn't work. I was, like, getting child support for my son and a very small unemployment check. You know, so I got behind on my rent. I actually got a job as a temporary at BMW, but when the manager found out I was working at BMW, he wanted all his money (she snaps) right then and there. And I didn't have it so, I had to go. I stayed with friends. I was still working. It was, it was crazy. I was working my old job and going to work every day, but [???].

UHC: So, you stayed with a friend?

Yolanda: Slept on her couch. Me and Cameron on one end and Robert on the other end. (She laughs.)

UHC: How long?

Yolanda: Three months.

UHC: Where did you go after that?

Yolanda: That's when I got into the program. I kind of jumped ahead a little bit. But it's kind of, it's hard to put it in chronological order. That's basically, that's it, though. I had a friend when I was living in the apartment where I had Cameron who had a friend who was in the program. She had told me about it. Of course, at that time, I didn't think I would ever need it. It was...she was just telling me that she knew a girl who was in this program. Said she didn't have anywhere to stay, and I just remembered the name. So one day when I was at work, and I knew I was getting put out of my apartment, and I was trying to make arrangements with the [???] property. The manager was this lady named Marie. But they're owned by a management company. So I had went online at work one day and went to the management company and was just begging them for more time because I had a job. I was just trying to get on my feet. And I was begging them for time. And they were saying they couldn't do anything about it. So I thought of looking up, you know, somewhere to go. I called my mom and told her my situation, and she said, "Well, you got to pay me up front. You got to pay to stay here." And I didn't have any money to give my mother. So I contacted Glenda from off the internet, and she had a waiting list. And so I was actually going to stay in a shelter, and I was talking to a friend of mine. And I told her what happened, and she went, "You can spend the night here." And one night turned into another night. And I wound up just giving her some money every time I got paid. And she let us stay there until I got an apartment. I didn't have anywhere else to go. My sister actually started calling around shelters trying to find out which shelter I was in. They didn't...they weren't willing to help me. They just...

UHC: They were trying to find a shelter for you to go to?

Yolanda: Not trying to find one. They were just figuring where I was staying because they knew they wouldn't let me stay with them.

UHC: What was a typical day like for you while you were there?

Yolanda: I mean, it was just like anywhere else. Nobody on my job ever knew that I didn't have anywhere to stay. I would get up in the morning and get ready for work. I still took my kids to daycare, and I would go to work. I had a job. And, you know, people think that when you hear "homeless," people think about bums, and they think about, you know, people on drugs, and people who don't want to work. And that's not the case. I lost my job...I mean, I lost my home while I was working. I got a job through a temp service, and they sent me to the sheriff's office. [???] People probably will figure that out. I was working 40 hours a week job and didn't have anywhere to go home. I had a car. I looked normal. It was crazy if anybody had looked. I used to drive this van, and if you had looked, like all our clothes were in laundry baskets in the back. And my covers were folded on top of those. Because the girl I stayed with had roaches, and she had mice. And I was scared to leave all my stuff in the apartment because I thought the mice would get in them. And I didn't have anywhere else to go.

UHC: So it wasn't really a nice place that you were staying?

Yolanda: She had bugs, and she had mice. But my other option was going to be a shelter with a bunch of strangers, and, you know, wherever.

UHC: It was better...?

Yolanda: It was better than what I had. It was a lot better than what I had.

UHC: Was it like a friend from when you were younger? Or how did you get to know her?

Yolanda: No. It's just somebody that I met since I've been in Spartanburg. She was actually, you know, just somebody that I met through another friend. And I mean, we're still close. She just...she didn't want me to have to go to a shelter with my kids. So she let us stay there.

UHC: Did she have a big influence on you? Like in having her let you stay, is that a big thing that gave you hope or...?

Yolanda: I mean, yeah, because I was...god...the feeling...oh, god. I just felt so alone. You know, it was just me and my kids. And that somebody would actually let me stay with them, and she didn't ask for anything. My own family, you know, I had to go in there with money in my hand. She didn't ask for anything. But, I mean, you know, eventually, you know, I did give her something to try to help, like. Because, you know, her light bill went up. Of course, you know, we ate there, and I'd try to keep the house clean and everything for her. But, yeah, I appreciated that. I didn't have anywhere else to go. I was literally...I did not know that night when I was leaving...I didn't know where I was going. She was like, "Where you going to sleep at tonight?" And I just kind of looked funny, and she said, "Well, you can stay here." And I mean, I don't know what we were going to do. I really don't.

UHC: Did you expect it to be a long thing?

Yolanda: No. At that time, I did not have any money left. I mean, you know, before I got that job, I had spent whatever little money I had in the bank. I was still having to make the car payment. I was still having to pay daycare because I had to have somewhere for my kids to stay so I could go to work. The only thing I had to hold onto was that little \$8 an hour job. And if I lost my job, I would have never got out. So, you know, people think, you know, if you didn't have nowhere to live, you should have been able to save up money. No, I still had bills. I was paying...well, at that time Robert was in daycare, too. Oh, gosh. It was probably about \$150 a week for daycare. And, you know, of course, eventually, I had to, I had to let the daycare go, and I had a friend...a family friend watching them. But I mean, it was just...I thought I would be able to get something. I mean, I even applied for like housing authority, but the thing with housing authority is when you have a job, they go by your income. And they were going to pay...I was going to pay as much to live in the projects as I was living in, you know, a decent place almost because they went by your income. And I just...I didn't have...you know, when people say "I don't have money to do anything, it's hard to understand. Even now, and I mean, I'm really not that far away from now. If I lost this job, it wouldn't take me very long, probably one or...it's not that easy just to go walk into a place and, you know, fill out an application. You don't get an apartment, most places, you don't get an apartment that

same day. You know, I went to this place, and they're like, "Oh, we'll have something in here..." And, you know, like I said, she had a waiting list of 2 or 3 months. So I didn't have it. You know, I used up every option. Because I knew I was getting put out, so I started calling places before I got put out, and I still had to wait three months after that. So...

UHC: And so, did your work know what was going on? Or did they just think you just wanted to work more?

Yolanda: Oh, it wasn't, it wasn't any even working more. I worked my regular hours, and I would go home...I would leave like I was going to my home. They never knew. Since then I've told a couple of people just, you know. That's...that was...[???], that was four years ago. August or September of '04. I had just started my new job. I had only been there, well, I had been there in that particular position since March, so I mean, I didn't know anybody there well enough to ask for help. One day I got real overwhelmed. That was the day when I knew I was going to get put out, and I asked my mother if I could stay with her, and she told me, "Well, you got to have some money." And I went in the bathroom, and I cried and I cried and I cried. And I probably...I probably awful. One of the ladies caught me in the bathroom crying, but she never did know why.

UHC: And you said you were making \$8 an hour?

Yolanda: \$8 an hour. Which I mean, people do it every day. But I was already so far behind, you know, when somebody says, "Well, you're \$900 behind, give me my money Friday." You're making \$8 an hour, and you know the first \$100 out of that's got to go to daycare, you know, what do you do?

UHC: And so, you said you heard from just a mutual friend about Upstate Homeless Coalition?

Yolanda: All I remembered about it was the name. So I found it on the Internet and looked it up.

UHC: Was that an easy process?

Yolanda: Actually, it was. It was.

UHC: How was that shift from living on your friend's couch to finally getting a place again?

Yolanda: When she first showed me this apartment, well, not this one, but showed me an apartment, I cried. I mean, it was just like, you know, and it's funny. And I don't think I ever told Glenda this, but I looked at these apartments one time before when I was looking, when I was first moving out, and I didn't like them. (She laughs.) So, I didn't put in an application for them. And it's funny how your priorities change because, I mean, I'm so proud of this apartment now. You know, it's just, when that's your living space, literally. I mean, that's not even yours. You don't have anything. All my stuff was in storage. At least, I had somebody that got my stuff, got my stuff out of the apartment so it

wouldn't get thrown out. Everything was in storage except maybe six or seven outfits, and I mean, my kids, that's all they had. My kids didn't even have toys or anything because I didn't know where I was going. I put everything in storage. Cameron was still in diapers. My baby was still in diapers, and, I mean, we didn't have anything. When I first walked in here, and it was like, this whole apartment was ours. This is crazy. I'm just so much more grateful, and I, I appreciate stuff so much more. You just do. I mean, you can't...if anybody could go through the process of being homeless and not be more appreciative, I mean, I just don't understand how you, how you can...how you can go through that and not appreciate things?

UHC: Who was the most helpful to you during that transition?

Yolanda: I didn't have anybody. I did not have anybody but Glenda. And, you know, and even now, if my family will get so mad when I say that, but I was in the program. So that shows you right there what kind of help I had from my family. And she'll tell you herself, I got sick. I got so sick. I literally almost died in October of 2006. Literally almost died. Glenda came to see me. Came in here and sat and talked to me. My mother came to the door, and she stuck her head in. "Ooo, I don't want to come in. You sick; you might make me sick." I didn't have anybody the whole time I was in this program but Glenda.

UHC: Where do you think you see yourself in five years?

Yolanda: Honey, I'm about to buy me a house. I told Glenda I was looking on...we're actually...I'm going through, it's called the Hope Program. Have you heard of the Hope Program? It's the housing authority, but it's the Carolina First funding, or something. I put my application in there. I put in my application, and, like, you have to go through this, like, budgeting classes, and housing classes and everything. And they will...they do 100% financing after you find a house. So, I'm going to this class so I can buy me a house. I have been...when I started I kept making \$8 an hour. I've been hired on my job. I've gotten some pretty good raises. I'm going to school. I will have my bachelor's degree in business in May, and then I'm going to finish...I have an associate's in Sociology. I'm going to finish up my degree in Sociology. I'm kind of torn because I really love what I do. I love the sheriff. I like the people I work with. I want to work in training for SLED or criminal justice academy, but I have been volunteering with the Fatherhood Coalition, and I've been, I've got two girls that I counseled that have boyfriends in the Fatherhood Coalition, and I really do enjoy that. So, I might wind up doing something like that. It's kind of like, it's not really the same thing, but I feel like I'm helping somebody. I kind feel like I'm giving back, and, I mean, if I can help somebody else. Well, you know, it's funny because I don't feel like there was any, like, one bad choice that I can point to that I made that put me there. It was one of those things that's just...that just happened, you know. If I could, you know, kind of encourage somebody else to go to school, and learn a trade, and get a good job, and, you know, keep them from having to go through what I did. That's the best thing I could do. So, I'm actually, like I told Linda, you know, I'm always doing something else. I try to, you know, I'm trying to give back. But I'm trying to, like, I just feel like there's so many young people who, for whatever reason, don't have, like, a positive role model or an older person that they can look at that can help them and give them advice. And it's really important. And I mean, For two years, I felt like I by my...I

didn't have any family support. And, you know, there are so many young people that need that kind of support, and that's...I think that's what I want to do.

UHC: So, you see your job changing?

Yolanda: I do. I do. Right now, I'm content to volunteer or, you know, and I do it on a small scale because I do work. And I do go to school. I've got two small kids, you know. And I can't, you know, I got my own priorities, you know. I have to put myself first before I can help somebody else. But I think that if everybody just did a little bit, it would be so much better. I, you know, I just, I feel good doing it. It's something I enjoy doing. And I think, you know, once I finish with my school and get my degrees and stuff, there might actually be a career in it.

UHC: That's really good. Is the person that you were before you had this whole experience different from who you are now?

Yolanda: In some ways, yeah. I'm more appreciative. I've been humble. I wasn't a bad person before. I understand now because people go through life, and they never really need anything. They don't really have needs. You know, everybody has wants. When you get to a point where you need and you don't have, you know, it makes you appreciate stuff once you get it. It really does. One of the things in this program, a big thing with Glenda was budgeting. And, you know, I've always, like I said, I've always had a good job. I like to shop. I'd go to Wal-mart and spend fifty bucks...and I used to spend fifty, sixty bucks not even think of it. Now, I'm so careful with my money. I make sure I put money aside every week. I'm careful of my spending. I make sure my bills are paid on time. I have learned a lot. I'm a much better person. I'm a much more responsible spender. You know, I'm more responsible with my money now. Truth of the matter is, I think, more people that we realize in this county are a couple of paychecks away from being poor or homeless, you know. You look at people in their homes every day. With foreclosure market the way it is and stuff, it's so, so easy...and I think for me having that experience, I'm just a lot more careful. I can't say that it'll never happen to me. But it would be, it would have to be, I'll never [????] ever again.

UHC: Do you think that there's anything that, like, schools can do or parents can do to, like, really help kids understand? Like, what do you plan to do?

Yolanda: I think it's important for people not to stereotype homelessness. Homelessness is misunderstood. It is...and I'll be the first one to tell you, before it happened to me, I didn't, I didn't really understand the problem. Because I always thought people didn't have a place to sleep at night because of a choice that they made. You know, either they're drunks or on drugs or they won't work. And here I was, never been drunk in my life, never done a drug in my life, and going to work every day, and I didn't have a place to live. And I think that people need to understand that it is something that can happen to any...it is, literally, something that can happen to anybody. And you might know somebody right now that's homeless. It's very possible that you might know somebody right now that's homeless. And it's one of those things that unless it happens to you or somebody close to you, you know, we don't even think about it. You know, it's, it's like a

social disease, you know, we don't worry about stuff that don't affect us. That's just human nature. It really is. But it's something...you know, the projects and the welfare and the Medicaid and all that stuff, that's fine and good, but that's not a solution. That's not a good enough solution. If you...the way our social system in this state is set up is to keep people there. Once you get on welfare, if you go get a job, they take you off welfare. They take you off before you're ready, and you're not able to handle, you're not able to handle responsibility. Welfare, I mean, you know, food stamps and it's the same way. As soon as you get a job, they take you off food stamps. If you haven't learned how to manage that money you made yet, then you're in the same situation. This program is not just helping. It's education and, you know, the budgeting, the counseling, and everything. It helps you to see where you're at and to see how to get out of it. And if you don't understand how to get out of it, you have people that are helping you. And most of the social systems that we have in this state don't do that. So...

UHC: Do you think people understand that?

Yolanda: No. No. Not at all. And it's one of those things that we already have our mind made up about. If I walked in my job right now and told most of those people that I was homeless for two and a half, three years that I worked there, they wouldn't...they can't comprehend that. They wouldn't even believe me. Because, you know, how can you be homeless if you got a job, and you work every day? How can you be homeless when you got, you know, an associate's degree in sociology, and you don't do drugs, and you go to church? How can you be homeless? You know? It's one of those things that happens to other people. It don't happen to us.

UHC: What advice would you give to, like, high school students who are about to go out into the real world, I guess?

Yolanda: I think the most important thing that you can do for yourself is to put money aside. It does not matter if it's \$25 a week. I think it's the most important, one of the most important things to anybody who's going out on their own is to establish a savings account. It's not a cure-all, but if you have that, that extra, little money when stuff goes wrong, then you have something to fall back on. When I lost...and I did, though, that's my thing, I had a little bit of money in the bank. But, you know, you go through that living. But, you know, if I hadn't, if I hadn't had saved up a little bit of money, so I didn't get behind on my rent. Or, you know, at least could pay something toward my rent. It would have been...it would have been a lot different. There are so many people right now that live paycheck to paycheck. I mean, literally, I mean, I work with people who, I mean, like, we get paid every other week. We get paid on Thursday. There are people on my job right now that didn't have anything to eat today because they didn't have money for lunch because they don't get paid until Thursday. That doesn't happen to me anymore because when I get paid I put my...I get money taken directly out of my paycheck into my savings account before I even get it. And then, you know, I, I keep a very strict budget now, and I budget out money to myself for spending money and how much I can spend on this, and how much I spend on that. And I'm very careful with it. You know, like, of course, now, I've got my little house fund. So, if I, if I have money left over after my, like, my two weeks, we get paid on Thursday. So, on Thursday, if I have money left that I budgeted

for myself for this two week period, it goes in my house fund. So, I mean, I'm so careful with my money, and budgeting is so important. If you...you have to know how to handle your money, or the thing of it is, I mean, if you don't have job, you don't have money to budget, then all of that goes out the window. And with the job markets the way they are, I work at the sheriff's office. You know where Flowers Bakery is? Over at Hearon's Circle?

UHC: I think so. Uh-hmm.

Yolanda: They have about 300 people working there, and that whole plant's about to close down. And you can't tell me that those people are not going to suffer. There's some people in there that are going to lose their jobs. There are people in there that are going to lose their cars. You know, with the economy in such as it is, we've just got to, we have got to get in the habit of saving money. And people don't do it, not nearly as much as we need to. Not nearly as much as we need to. I know people right now that don't even have a savings account. So, what do you do when you lose your job, and you don't have that money coming in every two weeks?

UHC: Did you ever have to, like, go without meals or things like that?

Yolanda: No, I...I was fortunate, like I said. With them being the size that they are, and my kids like Oodles of Noodles. You can get six packs of Oodles of Noodles for a dollar. You can feed them peanut butter and jelly, and they think it's a party. We didn't...we didn't always eat, you know, we didn't always have the meat and two vegetables. We always had something to eat, and we, you know, we ate a lot of Oodles of Noodles. We ate a lot of hot dogs and whatever Bi-lo had buy one, get one free. But we never not...we never went without a meal. We never had to go without a meal.

UHC: Were you ever scared that you would have to give your kids to someone else for care?

Yolanda: I did. I thought about that. I mean, when you don't know where you're going to sleep at night, you don't...any parent, any good parent try to think about their kids first. And I really did. I thought, you know, I got to put them somewhere where they can be taken care of because this ain't what they need. But I mean, I didn't have anybody that I trusted to do it. I really didn't have anybody that I thought I could leave with them. I kept them with me because I felt like that was best for them. And, you know, and I know they knew. Cameron didn't, but I know Robert probably knew, you know, we didn't have anywhere to live, but he never really had to worry about where we were going to sleep. It wasn't like we were sleeping in a car, you know. And he never, he never had to worry about that. And I'm very grateful for that. But he, he knew the difference when we got an apartment. He definitely knew the difference.

UHC: Are they excited about maybe getting a house soon?

Yolanda: Yeah, of course, they have their own idea about what kind of house we going to get. Robert wants one with an upstairs, at least, like, a bonus room. They both want, they call it the penthouse. They want a penthouse. And they want a basketball goal, and they

want a fenced yard, which is, I definitely got to have a yard. But, yeah, they're so excited. Like we have really outgrown this. This was perfect when we came, but you see how big they getting. And they are, like, on top of each other now. I mean, we need, we really do need a house. They are excited. Robert wants to stay in this school district. He's gotten so attached. We've been here four years now. But he's been here since second grade. You know, he made his little friends and everything, and he's real attached to this area. But these houses over here are expensive. These house over here are expensive. So, you know, and that's going to be the one thing that's going to make me kind of sad when we do find a house is that I just really don't think that's going to be here. And I'm going to have to take him away from his friends. [????????????]

UHC: So, what are some of the major values that you really want to instill in them as they're growing up?

Yolanda: I want to make sure that they get their education. You know, Robert has said that he wants to go to USC because he wants to play football for the Gamecocks, of course, but because they have a law school. He wants to study law, and he wants to run for sheriff. But I'll talk him out of that. I just want them to make sure that they get their education. You...I can't stress enough how important it is for education to get a good job, and, you know, not be in a position where you having to struggle. But I do, I want them to understand, though, not to take things for granted. Appreciate what they have and understand, I mean, you never know when things are going to happen, how things can change your life. Your life can change like that. (Snaps.) So I want them to appreciate what they have and not look down on people, which I've got really good boys. I try to teach them to treat everybody the same. You don't ever really, you don't know why people are in the situations that they are in. You just don't, you don't know. And see, that was a mistake I made, and, you know, I really do regret that. You can't just assume that you know why somebody's in the situation they're in. Because, you know, oh gosh, when I got into this program, I made the mistake of telling my family about it. And, oh, gosh. They go, "Well, you must have lied, and you can't be in that program. You cheating the system. And you're doing this; you're doing that." I didn't have anywhere to live. I was almost, I mean, I was riding around in a van with my clothes and blankets, not knowing where I was going to sleep. "You wasn't really homeless. You could have stayed with us." But I couldn't. You know? You see people all the time, you know, and they got kids with them. And the kids are kind of dirty, and their hair ain't combed and stuff. And I know I do. I think, "Oh, they don't got no sense that they got that baby with them..." You don't know...you don't know where those people came from. You don't know where they been. You don't know...you just...you don't know.

UHC: Do you think that your experience has changed your family's perception of homelessness at all?

Yolanda: My immediate family or my extended family? My extended family? No. Because they...no. Not at all. For us, and like I say, Cameron's too young. He don't understand. But Robert knows, and Robert knows...he doesn't know what exactly the program's done, you know, Miss Glenda helped us find somewhere to live. And Miss Glenda helped Mommy. And he, I mean he knows we were living on Juanita's couch,

so...Amanda's couch. So, he, he understands what, what a blessing it is and what a privilege it is to have our own house. So, yeah. I definitely think...and he actually had a little friend that was in the program. I don't know what happened. They didn't stay here very long. But he said, "Miss Glenda goes and see them, too." And so really he says, "So that means they didn't have nowhere to stay either." I said, "I guess not, baby." I said, "You know we ain't no different, right?" He said, "yeah." So, I, you know, you wonder sometimes exactly how much kids know what's going on. And, you know, I never said, "Oh, Robert, we don't have nowhere to stay." And I never said, "We're in the program." But he understood at the time that, you know, Miss Glenda was helping us and that it was Miss Glenda that found us the apartment. They love Miss Glenda.

UHC: Do you think that they really care about getting an education, too? Like, do you see that in them?

Yolanda: In them?

UHC: Uh-hmm.

Yolanda: Oh, definitely. Oh, yeah. And Robert definitely, he's 11, so, you know, he kind of understands that, you know, there's a process that you go through while you're in school. You know, you go to college to get a job. And that's exactly how I want him to stay. He have to go to college to get a job. Because you can get a job without it, but I don't want them to struggle. I don't ever want to see my kids go through what I went through. Never. Ever. I don't want them to have to struggle. And that's, that was one of the motivators of me going back to school so I could do better for them now, you know. I want them to see...if they see me go to college, they see me get my degree and trust me, I'm going to blow it up and put it somewhere. Right front and center. Then I want it to be the norm for them. You know, we grow up; we go to college. We get a degree; we get a job. That's going to be, I want that to be the norm. And if I keep that in front of them, Robert is definitely going to college. I'm not really sure if he's going to USC, but he is definitely going to college. If he say he's going to USC, though, I believe it. And if Robert goes then Cameron will want to go. That's how those two are. And I just want them to know that that's what we going to do. College is what we're going to do. I've got to have mine before I can instill it in them. See by the time Robert get to college, I'll...by the time he gets that age, I'll have at least two [degrees].

UHC: You're really being motivated for them.

Yolanda: It's about time. Yeah, I mean, and I don't think I was a bad parent before. It's just, it's just easy when you don't really struggle. If you're just kind of going along, you take stuff for granted that it's always going to be... And, you know, we weren't ever wealthy, but we were always comfortable. Always, you know, had a decent place to live and halfway decent furniture, whatever. I struggled a lot after I broke up with my boyfriend and separated and moved. You know, he went his way, and I went mine. But I still always had a job, and you know, I always had a little bit of extra money. I just, you know, [????]. I just want them to strive. I want them to want more.

UHC: Do you think you're going to encourage him to get a job when he's younger, when he turns 16 or 18?

Yolanda: Yeah, definitely. Probably about his junior year in high school because, for one, I want them, I want them to work. I don't want them to always have to depend on me for everything. But I want him not only...not just to have a work ethic, I want him to be able to manage his money. I want him to earn his own money and save his own money, like, when he gets ready to be buy a car or something. You know, whenever he gets ready to have a car, I want him to be able to contribute something towards it so I'm not giving him everything. I want him, I want him to work for what he has, and I want, I think he'll appreciate it more.

UHC: Really understand the value of it.

Yolanda: Now, see that's one thing, you know, about me when I was growing up, I wasn't given anything. I worked...I've been working since I was 16 years old. Everything I wanted since I turned 16, I've had to work and buy myself. I don't want him to be to that extreme, but I want him to help me get what he wants. Whether I need it or not, I want him to be able to put that into it because I think he needs, he needs it to, you know, "Well, if I want a car, I got to work and get half of the down payment, or I got to pay the insurance or something." It's not just, "Mom, when I get 16, I want a car."

UHC: Is there anything else that you feel like you want to share about your story?

Yolanda: Just that, because you know, I think that you have so many people that go through the program, and they feel like, kind of start feeling like it's owed them, and they don't really appreciate it. I mean, I appreciate everything they did. Because I would have loved to have walked out of this program into my own house. It didn't happen like that. But I didn't give up. I'm still working toward home ownership. I'll have my house by this summer. We will have a house by the summer. It's a good program. You know, people get in, and they don't want to follow the rules, or they don't want to do whatever for whatever reason. It's not for everybody, but for the ones that really want it, it's a good program. I wish, you know, that the government would figure out some kind of way to give more funding to this instead of some of the stuff where they put all of the [???] money. Bad money after bad. You know? Because people, for people to appreciate the program and work the program the way it's designed to be worked. It's really a good program. Whereas, you know, with a lot of the social programs of the state...they're just wasting money. I just, I mean, I appreciate it. You know, I told Glenda, I used to tell her all the time. I mean, it's really hard...it's so hard to put into words, going from sleeping on a couch to having an apartment, you know. I mean, they would give you food around Christmas time. When I first moved in, you know, whatever I needed extra to get, you know, the start-up, you know, they just gave us. And they don't, they don't even ask for nothing back, you know. It's a good program. I don't know what I would have done. I really do not know where me and my kids would be right now if it were not for Glenda. I, I do not know. [?????]

UHC: And you really believe it's, like, the whole lifestyle change?

Yolanda: It is. It's an attitude adjustment. Because for me, it wasn't really a lifestyle change. And by that, and I don't mean, you know, I'm sure you get people that have been, you know, on drugs or some kind of bad way. For me, it was just really just stumbling along one minute and the next minute just like you fall into a hole. You know, I wasn't, I didn't need parenting help. I didn't need to get clean off of drugs. I didn't need, you know, to get a GED or get some job skills to get a job. You know, here I was, you know, relatively intelligent.