University of Houston
Oral History of Houston Project
Paulina de Paz with Adrian Shelly

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Interviewer: Paulina de Paz

Interviewee: Adrian Shelly

Transcriber: Paulina de Paz

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Abstract:

Paulina de Paz interviews Adrian Shelly, executive director of Air Alliance Houston, at his office on October 16, 2015. Shelly discusses his own early life and education history before focusing on the creation and goals of Air Alliance Houston. He then enumerates the group's educational curriculum, outreach efforts, and research goals as well as their cooperation with other organizations.

PDP: Could you start by stating your full name?

AS: Adrian Shelly.

PDP: Where were you born?

AS: In Houston, I am actually from Spring Texas. About 25 miles north of Downtown.

PDP: When is your birthday?

AS: January 3rd, 1983.

PDP: Where did you go to school?

AS: I went to Klein High School in Spring, and I went to Trinity University in San Antonio for my undergraduate degree, and then I went to the University of Texas School of Law in Austin.

PDP: Is there a reason why you decided to go to school in San Antonio?

AS: I knew that I wanted to stay in Texas; I knew that I wanted to go to a small liberal arts school, and Trinity University fit the bill.

PDP: Is there a reason that you came to Austin to finish?

AS: Austin, I wasn't certain about law school and I only applied to a few of the best law schools. I got into two of them, the University of Texas was one of them; it was a strong law school, and it was the only one in Texas that I applied to, I made a decision to go there.

PDP: What did you plan to study first when you went to college?

AS: When I started college, I was an English and Biology major. I eventually stopped taking science classes and ended up as English and Philosophy double major.

PDP: Is there a reason why you chose those two?

AS: English because I love the written word, reading and writing. Philosophy because it was very interesting and I felt it was actually a useful discipline for understanding how people think, how systems work, how culture works. Meanwhile, I stopped taking science classes because I was more interested in the other subjects. I saw myself pursuing a career in some sort of writing in a liberal field, as opposed to say being a doctor or a scientist.

PDP: Your law, how did you decide on that?

AS: Well after undergraduate school I was teaching for the Princeton review, I was doing test prep classes that included LSAT classes, the Law School Admissions Test. I was very good at the LSAT, I enjoyed teaching the classes. So I applied to law school because it was something I had an aptitude in, I wasn't really sure that I wanted to become a lawyer; in fact, I'm still not sure if that I ever want to be a practicing attorney. It's an option that's open to me, and it's a paid degree that has been very useful to me.

PDP: Did you have any influences during school?

AS: I had particular teachers who I considered mentors. Particularly at Trinity University in the philosophy department, there were two gentlemen. One of them was Dr. Curtis Brown with whom I took something like 18 hours total. Another one was Dr. Lawrence Kimmel with whom I only took I think three hours, but he was pretty influential in my thinking and my developments as a thinker and as a student of philosophy. In law school, there was a professor Gerald Torres,

who is no longer at UT, who I considered something of a mentor. There was also a professor Kelly Haragan, who was then the Assistant Director and now the Director of the UT Environmental law clinic.

PDP: Can you tell me a little bit about the history of Air Alliance Houston?

AS: Absolutely. Air Alliance Houston was formed in 2008 from the merger of two predecessor organizations. The first one was GHASP: the Galveston-Houston Association for Smog Prevention. GHASP was formed in I believe '87 or '88 as an offshoot of the local Sierra club chapter to focus on clean air issues. It was incorporated as a 501(C)3 non-profit in 1992. There was another organization, Mothers for Clean Air who was incorporated in 1996. For a while in Houston, we had both organizations: GHASP doing technical research, producing white papers, doing regulatory advocacy and Mothers for Clean Air, doing education, youth education, grassroots, organizing public outreach. Those two organizations merged in 2008 and formed GHASP and Mothers for Clean Air, which was then re-christened to Air Alliance Houston in 2010.

PDP: How did you get involved?

AS: My involvement started with GHASP in 2008… I believe, yes the fall of 2008. I was in the Environmental Law Clinic at UT we were doing research for a Clean Air Act citizen suit against a chemical plant here in Houston, and we came here to tour East Houston, the area around the Houston Ship Channel and the petrochemical complex in Houston. We went on a so called "Toxic Tour" with the then executive director of GHASP, Mathew Tejada. That was my first introduction to the organization. When I graduated from law school in 2010 I came back to then Air Alliance Houston as a legal fellow. I did some legal research for the organization for

about three months. I went and did a few other things for a while and then I came on full time in October of 2012. I was the community outreach coordinator at that time and I was promoted to executive director on April 1st, 2013.

PDP: If someone promoted me on April 1st, I would take advantage of it. (Laughter)

AS: Yes well, that has occurred to me before that previous executive director left in February and there was an interim for a while. The previous executive director had actually brought me on October with an eye toward me taking over the positon, unbeknownst to me but that's where I ended up.

PDP: Can you give me some of the examples that Air Alliance… their involvement in the community?

AS: We have a tendency to organize our work around three areas; research, education, and advocacy. I'll mention two research projects that are community based. One of them is in Pasadena, Texas, and it's a two-year project looking at community health and environment in Pasadena. It's going to be a particular matter of air monitoring that's conducted and that will be conducted with the assistance of community volunteers. We also are engaging in training workshops, community mapping workshops. We have two years there to build community capacity and also gather some of our own data about air pollution and air quality in the community. The second project is called the Metal Air Pollution Partnership Solutions project, it's kind of a mouthful, but we call it MAPPS. It is a national institute of health funded project. I should mention that the Pasadena project is funded by the Houston Endowment and it includes only Air Alliance Houston. The MAPPS Project is National Institute of Health and it includes the UT School of Public health, Rice University, the City of Houston and Air Alliance Houston. In

that project, we are looking at four communities, and four particular metal recyclers in those communities. We have a community outreach staff person that is dedicated to that project and spends time in those four communities canvassing, attending community meetings, engaging with local leaders, and basically guiding the community through the process of having the study done to understand the risk posed by the metal recycling entities in their communities. Those are two research projects that were doing. The MAPPS project involves the communities of Magnolia Park, East Lawndale, Fifth Ward, and South Park. The project that I mention is taking place in Pasadena, other areas where we engage the community quickly on the education side. We have a youth education program, last year we reached about 6,400 elementary and middle school students. Mostly in Harris County but we served the eight county regions, so Harris and the seven contiguous counties. We also are the presenters of Earth Day Houston, which is the city's Earth Day festival. It is the biggest event we have all year to engage with members of the general public, and we see about 10-15,000 people at that event. We have other community events throughout the year such as tonight [October 16, 2015] the Eado Pub Crawl, which we hope to see maybe as many as 100 maybe more people from this community Eado (East Downtown) join us for socializing and a little bit of supporting our organization. That's some of what we do to work with communities and to engage with the community.

PDP: I read about the Ozone Theater on your website, could you tell me more about that?

AS: Yes, so that's the education program that I mentioned earlier that reached 6,400 students last year. Ozone Theater was created by Mothers for Clean Air, one of our predecessor organizations, it was created with a grant from the Environmental Protection Agency. There are three age appropriate curriculum. Kindergarten through second grade is called "Pesky Polluters"

and it teaches very young children about the concept of air pollution and it helps them to identify sources of air pollution: cars, busses, trains. The next level three to five, third grade through fifth grade, program is called “Good Ozone, Bad Ozone” or GOBO. We teach kids about the difference between the ozone layer, which is above the Earth in the upper atmosphere protecting us from the harmful UV radiation from the sun. Then ground level ozone, which is a pollutant that is formed at ground level and has health impacts for people who are exposed to it. That program the “Good Ozone, Bad Ozone” teaches about that distinction and then it teaches the students about the air quality index which is a grading scale that the EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) and the state agency. The Texas Commission Environmental Quality (TCEQ) use to rate the severity of air pollution, it’s a color scale, ranges from green to yellow, orange, red, purple, and black. We teach students what each color means, we have activities that we do to play games with them, we use flags to indicate the particular air quality index color and then the students response with appropriate activities. For a green day, there is no air pollution kids can go outside and have fun, on a purple day children especially want to limit their exposure so we have them model an activity like staying inside and playing a board game so that’s the third grade to fifth grade program “Good Ozone, Bad Ozone.” At the middle school level, we have a program called “Air Pollution Solutions” also teaches about the ozone and the air quality index. It models a scenario in which a young student with asthma is asked to participate in try-outs for the football team on an afternoon in which there is high ozone pollution. The students engage in a little play in which they model talking to the football coach about the needs of the student with asthma and developing alternative solutions for that student. So something like conducting a try-out in the gymnasium for that student or waiting for another day, later in the week, in which there is not high ozone. Essentially teaching students, number one that asthma is

something that some of their peers will have or maybe they will have that is manageable and that it is important to understand the causes of asthma and things that can exhilarate it like ozone pollution. Number two, it teaches students that they can take charge of their own health and their own exposure. If you have asthma you can take steps to limit your exposure to ozone pollution, steps like informing a coach ahead of time and you may have particular needs on high ozone days so that's the middle school program "Air Pollution Solutions." Those are the three programs for now, we have looked at moving into high school and in fact, we do a high school class here or there. We are also working with the University of Houston right now to create some new curriculum. So that's the program.

PDP: Could you tell me some more about that?

AS: About the new curriculum?

PDP: Yes.

AS: It's probably going to be middle school. Although I like it to extend down to elementary school as well, if possible. It's going to be looking at the issue of lead pollution; lead is present in older homes. Homes that are built before 1978 have paint on them that probably has lead in it, so there are certain things that need to be done when working in those homes. There is also an issue with exposure of very young children in homes that have lead paint. It can chip off and end up on the ground, it can end up in the windowsills, in very small places. Young children are very low to the ground and have the tendency to put their hands in their mouths, to put things into their mouths. Lead paint actually tastes sweet so you can have a problem with children actually intentionally ingesting chips of paint. We also find that older homes can have lead contamination in the soil. So we don't know yet exactly what the curriculum is going to do but the effort around

lead contamination in Houston is to get very young children blood screening. When an early blood test is done the first few months of a life, it is checked for blood lead levels and depending on what those blood levels are certain remedial actions are taken, consultation with families, home consultations in order to remove that source of contamination in order to eliminate that lead from the child's blood stream. The curriculum that we develop will in some fashion introduce the concept of lead exposure and lead pollution in a way that is not alarming or stigmatizing to young children but similar to our ozone education, in a way that is educational and empowering for children. High school curriculum that I've mentioned that we've done a couple of times, this is introducing high school students to our real time map of ozone pollution in Houston area. That's called the Houston Clean Air Network, it's available online at houstoncleanairnetwork.com, it's also a free app for iPhone and Android called Ozone map. In our high school classes, we're either in a classroom where all the students have computers in which case we do the activities together or else we use one computer with projector. We look at different ozone days, we look at days when there is no ozone pollution and the map is green, and we compare that to days when we have elevated ozone pollution. We talk about how ozone forms in the atmosphere, we talk about the atmospheric conditions that are necessary for ozone formation. The students enter different addresses into the map, different dates, and they compare different days of air pollution in Houston. We also look at the state of Texas emissions event pouring database. Companies that emit pollution into the air have to do what are called Emissions Event Reports. We take students to the Emissions Event Reports database they search the database over a period of time, and they see if they were any emissions events during the time period they searched in Houston maybe potentially near them. They look at the pollutants that came out of those emissions events, and we discussed whether those pollutants might have

contributed to ozone formation. The precursor pollutants to ozone are Nitrogen Oxides, and volatile organic compounds. Typically, Emissions Events reported in this area is going to have some volatile organic compounds in it. We point that out and we say you know this was an Emissions Event that included volatile organic compounds, it happened on such and such day, we know that ozone pollution was elevated on that day because we already looked at the map. Is it possible that the volatile organic compounds emitted during this event contributed to the ozone formation on this day? It is introducing sources of data to students; it is allowing them to work with maps, and looking up government reports, drawing conclusions about potential relationships between data that is publicly available. So that's the high school class, we've only done that a few times. I've started to formalize it into a lesson, but we have not started offering that on a large scale yet.

PDP: You mentioned on the research part that you're working in Pasadena and parts of Houston mostly the East end, is there any school that has done the ozone fair?

AS: Schools in those areas that have done the ozone fair? Certainly yes, I can't name them off hand, but we keep very detailed records. If you'd like to see the records of which schools we've attended over the last two and a half years, one of the things that I did as the executive director of the organization was to institute a pretty strong record keeping system, you could look up schools in that and see. I know we've done Port Houston Elementary for example, I know we've done schools in Galena Park ISD, I don't know for certain whether or not we've done Pasadena ISD hopefully we have. The high schools classes that I've mentioned we've done at Milby High School, which is just over here in the east end. We have extensive records if you'd like to see those.

PDP: Could you tell me about Air Alliance Houston's vision for 2020?

AS: Ah yes, so you saw that document. Great, so earlier this year our organization developed a long ranged plan which we call "The Vision 2020," because that's what everybody calls their long-range plan right now, it's a fashionable name. Five-year plan for the organization that outlines goals in four areas, I already mentioned that we have a tendency to categorize our work as, research, education, and advocacy, we have goals in each of those areas and then we also have marketing and fundraising goals for the organization. We developed the long-range plan after posing a question that is behind a difficulty that this organization has had in quantifying its success and explaining its work both to the public and to the funders. That problem is that it is difficult for us to directly impact the items that affect our mission, namely air pollution, and public health. The mission of this organization is to reduce air pollution in the Houston region, to improve public health and environmental integrity through research, education, and advocacy; the first part of that mission to reduce air pollution. Well, this organization does not emit air pollution, we cannot directly reduce air pollution. In fact, it is very difficult for us to quantify air pollution reductions that have been realized as result of our work or our advocacy efforts. Air pollution has been improving steadily in Houston over the decades. Air pollution reached something like a crisis in the eighties, kind of late seventies early eighties, about the same time our organization formed in the late eighties. We do know that this organization is having a positive impact on air quality in Houston but we cannot measure our success in tons of air pollution reduced, or asthma attacks avoided, or missed days of school or work avoided. I mentioned those kinds of metrics because those are the metrics used by the Environmental Protection Agency when it issues new rules. If they issue a rule limiting pollution from the oil and gas refining industry they make estimates, this rule will result in one million saved work or

school days. We can't quantify our operations in a similar fashion, so we use other metrics to quantify our work things like; how often are we present in a particular community? how big is our newsletter subscription? We have other email lists that we maintain for particular projects, how large are those. How often do we show up at civic club meetings? How many people are attending the civic club meetings? How many air samples are we conducting and gathering during the year, using different equipment? I mentioned [earlier] I know exactly how many students we taught last year. Those first kind of goals were sort of our research goals. How often do we hit a community? How often do we gather data, and that sort of thing. Our education goals, how many students are we reaching every year? Last year 6,410, I know the exact number. We know the exact number of schools and districts. Earth Day Houston, we know how many booths we had. We don't know how many people attend, because the festival was at Discovery Green, which does not have plans of entry; we quantify our success there in similar fashion: How many booths? Estimate how many people. On the advocacy front, how many times do we submit comments to the EPA or to the TCEQ on regulatory issues? How much time do we spend during a legislative session, lobbying for legislative change? How often do we stumble onto support letters that other organizations are issuing to advocate on particular issues? We track the number of times we appear on local media: So how often are we in the Houston Chronicle? How often are on NPR? We're on lawsuits occasionally, so we track the progress of those suits. How many suits are we apart of? How many of those suits were resolved over the course of the year. Obviously in marketing and fundraising, we have finical goals. How many corporate sponsorships can we bring in for Earth Day Houston? How much can we sell our art for at the art contest auction? How much can we bring in from board members, from individual donations? How much can we fundraise through events like the pub crawl through our State of the Air

Luncheon We've done our best in our long range plan to come up with ways to quantify success, we've also laid out some pretty broad length goals for the organization. I've already mentioned we are adding new curriculum to our education program, that's one of the goals we laid out for ourselves. We are trying to increase our profile as a research leader in Houston, so in September we were involved in two research forums, one at Rice University and one with The Union of Concerned Scientist. We are also looking to endow a research physician at this organization within the next couple of years, we are looking to continue to add air motoring capabilities particularly as low cost personal air monitors become reality. We're looking to purchase a couple of those to get them out into communities once they are technological feasible. We have some specific regulatory goals; we'd like to see an anti-idling ordinance passed in Houston for example. We've been advocating pretty strongly over that over the course of the last year. We do have some concrete goals one; one year goals, five year goals. We have ways that we are quantifying success of many of our projects that have been codified in our long-range plan. The four to five page document that you saw is a summary. There is a 30-page document and also a spreadsheet that lays down all of the programs and quantifies them with metrics that we have available to us now.

PDP: I also saw that the University of Houston was a sponsor for the Earth Day, is there any other universities that you work with?

AS: We work with most of the universities in Houston in some capacity or another. University of Houston is a big sponsor and a big attendee of the Earth Day Houston Festival, University of Houston is also our major partner in the Houston Clean Air Network project that I mentioned earlier about the ozone map. That's the University of Houston and they're on the

same team working together. We work with the law school a little bit, I show up to some of their classes from time to time. We work with law students to write comments on regulatory issues about once a year. I've already mentioned that our metal recycling project includes the University of Texas School of Public Health, and Rice University, we're all co-grantees in that project. We also fund research at the UT school of public health research into air pollution and public health. We fund that work at UT school of public health. Texas Southern University, Barbara Jordan-Mickey Leland School of Public Affairs, the dean of that school is Dr. Robert Bullard, who is often called the father of environmental justice. We do a lot of environmental justice work in this organization, and we do a lot of that work with Dr. Bullard with Texas Southern University and with others on the faculty there. Baylor College of Medicine has a project that is looking at asthma in the African American community in Houston, and our community outreach director Bryan Butler serves on the advisory committee for that project. We also know Dr. Hamilton over at Baylor Med, do some things with her here and there. Most recently, I served as a content expert on Toxic Tours that they led for the Texas Pediatric Society; maybe other relationships I am missing. We used to be pretty good friends with Barry Lefer at the University of Houston Department of Atmospheric Sciences, he has moved to NASA, we still have connections to that department. No body yet that we worked with is as close to our relationship with Barry. We still do have friends at other departments at the University of Houston, including the Atmospheric Sciences Department. So you got Rice, UT School of Public Health, TSU, Baylor Med. We have a good relationship with UT medical branch down in Galveston, John Sullivan down there often partners on community work shops that we do, we do an annual of them called the State of air. Which is a community based

education and community training cadent. We work with John Sullivan and UT and beyond that. There are some other things, here and there that we do with schools.

PDP: You mentioned earlier I read about it too. I know its in November, 10th?

AS: Yes that's correct.

PDP: Can you tell me more about the event?

AS: Sure the State of the Air event has been going on since perhaps 2007, so close to ten years. It's an annual luncheon features a keynote speaker and then maybe one to two other speakers. It's just an opportunity for us to engage with our followers and peers in Houston provide an educational service to the Houston community. We spend a little of bit time talking about the state of air quality in Houston. We used to do it in February, when we talked about the previous year we moved it to November and we talk about year to date. We try to have a good keynote speaker, so last year we had EPA Region 6 administrator Rollin Curry. This year we'll have the Texas State Climatologist, John Neilsen-Gammon, we'll also have Jim Blackburn who is a local environmental attorney. We have of course that event as a fundraiser at times, it is not a big fundraiser for us we do try and break even by selling tickets to the event; we also give away tickets to followers, friends. That's an event that we see as service to the community and a way to bring our friends and followers together, and make connections.

PDP: You mention earlier about lawsuits, I read one that you filed in 2012 along side with Texas Environmental Justice Advocacy Services, Community In-Power Development Association, Louisiana Bucket Brigade, California Communities Against Toxics, Del Ammo Action Committee and others. Could you tell me about that?

AS: Yeah sure, that lawsuit was filed in 2012 it included the organizations that you mentioned and a few other community organizations. We were represented by two organizations: Earth Justice and the Environmental Integrity Project, who provide attorneys for environmental legation. Typically, those organizations and [national] organizations like them, the National Wildlife Federation, Natural Resources Defense Consul, Center for Biological Diversity and others,. Those typically national organizations have attorneys and community groups like ours or else citizens, service plaintiffs, on lawsuits over environmental issues. That particular lawsuit was against the Environmental Protection Agency and it was concerning a rule making that was overdue regarding toxic air pollution emissions from the oil and gas refining industry. Now it is very common for environmental organizations to sue the Environmental Protection Agency, typically when we sue the EPA it is over deadlines and failure to have under taken certain actions by deadlines that were put in place by congress. So the Clean Air Act, for example, is full of deadlines, the EPA has to revise clean air standards periodically. It has to designate areas of the country as meeting or not meeting those standards, it has to evaluate risks from certain sectors of the economy. In this case, the duty that was overdue was an evaluation of the risk posed by toxic air pollution from oil and gas refineries. That risk evaluation led to a rule making to minimize the risk presented by toxic air pollution from oil and gas refineries. In 2012 we were suing to compel the EPA to undertake that rulemaking to minimize that risk that it had found. That lawsuit was settled and the rule was issued on October 1st, 2015. It is a very good rule for us, it did a great deal to limit emissions from certain sources at refineries namely flares, delayed coking units, pressure relief devices and a few other sources at refineries. It also removed an exemption from certain types of pollutions emissions called Startup, Shutdown and Malfunction Emissions. Startup, Shutdown and Malfunction or SSM emissions were not included in the total

of a facilities emission for the year. They were not reported in the same way; they could not be the subject of violations. They were essentially exempt from a lot of the normal regulatory framework from air pollution emissions, that exemption was removed. Finally, there was a new ambient air standard created for benzene, which is a very common air pollutant at petrochemical facilities. There was a fence line standard set of 9.0 micrograms per meter cubed, that's called the Corrective Action Level. Refineries are going to be required to monitor at the fence line around the fence line of their facilities, they are going to be required to monitor for benzene. If they monitor a value that is above that Corrective Action Level, they will have to be remedial action taken to bring down benzene levels. That was a big victory for us, it was the first time that fence line monitoring has ever been required in an EPA rule. They didn't require the technology that we would have preferred, they are in our opinion better and more useful types of fence line monitoring technology but they did at least require fence line monitoring. That is very important, it is very significant to us because it confines in regulation a principle that is very important to us. That is the principle that people who live next to refineries or really any source of industry, people have the right to know what is leaving those facilities and entering their community. Fence line monitoring helps people realize that right, by giving them access to data about what is leaving the facilities and entering their community. We believe people have the right to know and we believe they need information in order to make their own decisions about exposure and about their health and their families health. So to get fence line monitoring in a rule from the EPA, is a big victory for us even though we're not happy with the type of fence line monitoring that's been required. In short, the refineries rule lawsuit and rulemaking process was a very lengthy process, involved years of negotiation with EPA and public participation, there was several very large public meeting that were held around the country, [Air Alliance Houston

participated in those.] The result was a very strong rule that will help to minimize risks from oil and gas refineries and save lives.

PDP: In those three years, did it ever feel like you we're getting anywhere?

AS: Well, you know we were frustrated with the process at times. Federal rulemakings are very slow processes, we would of have been happier with a stronger rule. We do feel that all of the public participation that we engaged in: all of the trips to D.C., the big hearing that we organized here in Galena Park, all of the letter writing that we did, all the commenting we did. Did not do much to move the rule from the initially proposed rule to the final version of the rule. We were frustrated with that, we would like to be included earlier in the process, we would like the earliest version of the rule to be the strongest version possible. It's much harder to come in after a rule has been proposed and strengthen it via the public participation process. Particularly when you consider that industries are actively working to weaken the rule, and they are doing so with far more resources than we are, they are lobbing not just Environmental Protection Agency but Congress, lawmakers, up to including the president of the United States. It is difficult for our advocacy efforts to make a difference sometimes we measure success in inches. It can be frustrating to participate for many years in a process and not see all of the results that you want, but the regulatory process and the public participation process is one avenue that is open to us to do our work, so it is one way we work on our issues.

PDP: Is there any other lawsuits you were involved in that has resulted in victories?

AS: Sure, there are. We were involved in a lawsuit not too long ago to revise emissions factor, which are equations used to calculate emissions from particular sources. We got a revision of the emissions factor for flares, for certain types of facilities. It ended up increasing by something like

a factor of four, meaning that if the old calculations told you that a flare was putting out 10 tons a month, the new calculations would tell you it was putting out 40 tons per month. There are other emissions factors that need to be updated we will continue to sue over those. There are other lawsuits that we have, that are pending, so we'd not talk about the specifics of. There are other lawsuits that we have been involved in, in the past, that have resulted in various victories. Typically, an EPA lawsuit is about compelling the EPA to undertake a rulemaking that was already mandated to do by Congress.

PDP: But it hasn't been.

AS: There are other lawsuits out there that are undertaking against big polluters. Air Alliance Houston has not been involved in any of these recently but other organizations have, like the Sierra Club and Environment Texas. Recent lawsuits have included Exxon Mobile their Baytown facility, the Shell Deer Park refinery. I mentioned earlier that when I was at UT Law School, I was involved in a citizen suit, that was against the Chevron-Phillips Cedar Bayou chemical plant. Air Alliance Houston was actually involved in that lawsuit, so there are citizen suits that take place to bring enforcement action against the biggest polluters.

PDP: Is there other organizations you are involved with and work with?

AS: Sure there are plenty, you mentioned a couple of them. Our peers on the lawsuit, so you mentioned TEJAS (Texas Environmental Justice Advocacy Services) they are close friends and allies of ours. I was over there at their office this morning, meeting with their executive director, we work very closely. Just about anything that we we're doing TEJAS is probably doing as well to some degree, any letter that we write TEJAS would probably sign on there as well. We have grants together, projects dealing with the Port of Houston, with goods movement issues that we

are working together on. Actually, the founder of TEJAS, Juan Parras used to serve on the board of Air Alliance Houston. When he formed TEJAS, he did so with encouragement and assistance from our organization. Other organizations we work with you mentioned CIDA, that's Community In-Power Development Association in Port Arthur, Hilton Kelly is a good friend of ours. We work with Texas Campaign for the Environment, Texas Organizing Project, The Sierra Club, Environment Texas, Public Citizen, the Environmental Integrity Project. We do a lot of work with a lot of other organizations. The ones that are based here in Houston that we work with all the time are TEJAS, Texas Campaign for the Environment, Public Citizen is not based here but they do a lot of work here and we are engaged with them almost daily.

PDP: Is there anything else that you would like to add that I haven't asked?

AS: I don't think so, do you mean things about the organization, or about me, or about work, or about Houston? Are you looking for anything in particular that we haven't covered?

PDP: I think a little bit of all of them.

AS: Well I guess you know, one thing that I would say is to kind of sum up the role of Air Alliance Houston here in Houston. Houston is the energy capital of the world and in some ways that is true. Air Alliance Houston is a homegrown organization, we are from Houston, we are located only in Houston and our work is centered on Houston and its issues. We're proud of our role in the city and we're proud of Houston's status as an economic power house and as a leader in the energy industry. That being said, the energy industry has very serious consequences for health and quality of life in Houston and the public understanding of and support of those issues is waning. When Houston claimed the tittle of most polluted city in America from Los Angeles, people were really concerned it got people upset, it made us look bad, it highlighted very real

issues that we have here in public health and with quality of life. People were very motivated at the time to improve air pollution in Houston we were also under lots of federal regulatory requirements. All of the work that industries have done and all of the state regulatory agencies have done to reduce air pollution in Houston, they have done because they have been compelled to do by the federal government. This is not a state that is friendly towards environmental laws it is not a state that offers a lot of social services to its people. We spend less per capita in Texas on our people than any other state in the union. So we have the highest numbers of uninsured people, we have some of the worst education systems here in Texas. Houston is home to the largest medical complex in the world and yet we have one of the highest uninsured rates of the major city in the country. Despite the fact that the public doesn't understand how serious these issues are, they are very serious here in Houston. It is true that over the last few decades we have made great strides in reducing air pollution, air pollution is much better today than it was in the 70's or the 80's and anybody who was lived in Houston for many decades will tell you that. But there is still plenty of work to be done, we are not done, we have not won the battle on air pollution, and we do not have to make choices between our economy and the environment or really our people. It's a false choice between the economy and the environment. It is possible to both thrive economically and reduce air pollution and protect people's health. In fact, the story of Houston over the last several decades indicates that. Our economy has thrived even as we have made great strides to improve air quality here in Houston. We have very real public health threats here that are presented by the industry, we have a very real need to address those threats. The public health that is impacted is typically impacting low income and minority communities, what we would call environmental justice communities. These are communities that struggle with issues like low wages, under employment, low education, high uninsured rate, poor health

in general, high asthma rates, higher cancer rates. These are the populations that are suffering under the burden of air pollution. It is the upper middle class, predominately Caucasian populations that live outside of the city, living in the suburbs, that benefit from the economic wealth that is created by the energy industry. So we have a huge disparity there, and we have a disconnect between the people who are benefitting from the energy industry and the people who are suffering burdens of the energy industry. Air Alliance Houston is absolutely necessary in this city because that problem exists. We need advocates for those who do not have a voice here in Houston, and who cannot have a voice. We need advocates for public health, for a modern economy, for 21st century energy production so renewable energy. Houston needs to become the energy capital of the future. If we continue to invest in fossil fuels and coal we will get left behind. It is Air Alliance Houston's sincere hope that Houston finds a way to transition into the clean energy economy of the future and as it does so improve the health and quality of life of everybody in Houston. So we see ourselves in that role in Houston, we see this organization as essential to the continued success of Houston and we hope that the public comes to understand our role in Houston and supports us and our role in this city. That's pretty much it.