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INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S FORUM ORAL HISTORY PROJECT**

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**ADRIAN BRACY INTERVIEWED BY BLANCHE TOUHILL**

Blanche Touhill: Would you introduce yourself?

Adrian Bracy: Yes, my name is Adrian Elizabeth Bracy.

Blanche Touhill: And would you talk about your early life: your mother, your father, your siblings, your elementary school, your secondary school. Who helped to put you on the path of the success that you've had in life or what interesting experiences did you have which had great meaning for you, or something in that...what made you what you are today?

Adrian Bracy: Okay. Well, I was born in Miami, Florida. I have two sets of siblings. I was adopted at age 10, so my biological siblings, I have five, there were six of us and I'm the youngest on the biological side. My adopted side, I'm the oldest of four and it is family. So fortunately I was adopted into family, a very interesting, as you can imagine, but what really shaped my character, the person who I am, was my adopted mother, Dorothy Brown, and she basically told me that I could be whatever I wanted to be in a career aspect because I came from humble beginnings and grew up in Miami, an area called Liberty City which is infested with drugs, prostitution and so forth. So she told me that I did not have to let the environment be my reality and I was about 13 at the time. So I joined church and became very active in my church, a very strong religion and when I went to high school, I met six other girls and I thought that they would really be successful. That's just the perception. I met them in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade, we became friends and, to this day, we are still friends. All seven of us went to college, successful. We have PhD professor at Princeton and we have a couple of lawyers and so forth. So, really, it was

about having the right women, young girls in my life. It was all about having positive people in my life, people who put more deposits in my life versus withdrawals. There was some competition with the girls. We all wanted to be successful and so we all just stuck together and to this day, we get together every other year and have a spa, girls spa weekend and I am the leader of that because that's my hobby; I love to go to the spas. So after high school graduation, I went to college at Morgan State University and I wanted to be a lawyer and my counselor said, "Adrian, I've checked out your SAT scores and your transcripts. I really think you should take accounting," and I said, "Well, I really didn't have accounting in high school." She said, "Well, (go into?) Bookkeeping. Would you be interested?" and I said, "Absolutely." So I took a course in my freshman year, Accounting Course 101 and graduated with a degree in Accounting and ended up becoming a CPA. So it was because of that counselor that really took time to mentor me, which I think is so important, mentoring is so critical, besides my adopted mom, my grandmother also mentored me. I remember asking her in my sophomore year in college, how was she able to work 40 years for the same family, the Goldman family, and she said it was being honest, trustworthy, being on time, and all those characteristics. She said, "That's what you're going to need if you want to get promoted and become successful." So my grandmother also helped shape my life. So out of the six siblings on my biological side, I'm the only one that went to college and I try to be a role model to my nieces and my nephews because they're in an environment still that's not very positive. So it's important for me to continue to promote them and push them and encourage them. Then, on my adopted side of the family, my adopted mom made sure that all four of us went to college. So I think I've had a very interesting but very good life because I didn't know that I was poor growing up. No one told us and so I didn't know. We just had love for each other and we had strong faith in God that, if you trust God, everything's going to be okay and that's pretty much how I lived my childhood and young adult life and even to this day. So...should I keep talking?

Blanche Touhill: Well...

Brian Woodman Can I interrupt for one second? I'm getting a little bit of a paper rattle so if you need to take it off...

Adrian Bracy: Okay, that's just to remind me of some of the awards that I received.

Blanche Touhill: When you got out of college, where did you go to work?

Adrian Bracy: Well, when I graduated from college with a degree in Accounting, I knew that I did not want to work in public accounting. At the time, in 1982, public accounting was tough, number one, to get in, but it was really hard on blacks and so everyone that I knew at the time did not succeed in public accounting. So I decided that I wanted to work in corporate. I was working part-time at the Baltimore Sun which is equivalent to the St. Louis...the Post Dispatch here in St. Louis, worked there during college and then after graduation, I was promoted to full-time staff accountant, stayed there for a number of years and my grandmother was getting older in Miami...I'm still in Baltimore at the time...and decided that I wanted to go back to Miami and be with my grandmother. So I did. I ended up working for an aviation company in Miami and I just literally sent my resume through the mail and went and interviewed with three companies and was offered two jobs and I took the aviation job. Fortunately, I did that because nine months later, my grandmother died, just a sudden heart attack. So after that, I decided to get really active with the National Association of Black Accountants, we call it NABA. Someone that I didn't really know received a call from the Miami Dolphins, Brian Hankerson and they said, "We're looking for a minority to work for the Dolphins as a controller," and he referred me and that was in 1991 so I took the job with the Miami Dolphins in 1991 and was promoted two years later to the treasurer for the stadium. At that time, unfortunately, the owners, the Robbie family, did not plan estate planning properly and they were forced to sell the team to Wayne Heisinge, who at the time owned Blockbuster and previously owned Waste Management. So when Wayne Heisinge took over, we went from more of a family-owned operation to a true business operation. So I learned so much from Wayne's management style, really enjoyed it but I really wanted to get back into football because at this point, I'm working at the stadium, Joe Robbie Stadium. Then I heard about the St. Louis Rams moving to St. Louis and I sent my resume to a colleague in New York and the colleague sent my resume to John Shaw who was the President of the St. Louis Rams in 1995, interviewed and I took the job. So I moved to St. Louis in 1995 and I was here probably almost 12 years and I was just getting a little bored, thinking, you know, I wanted to do

something different. What I really wanted to do was to own my own day spa but I was afraid so I stayed in the NFL business and heard about a CFO in Arizona, which was a colleague of mine, Charlie, was retiring. So I sent my resume to the Bidwell family in Arizona for CFO and I ended up getting the job in 2007 and the next day, I realized I made a mistake, that I didn't want to leave St. Louis, but my husband said, "Just suck it up and figure it out." He really, from day one, enjoyed the area and so I said, "Okay." Six months later, I said, "Dear, I'm still not happy. I don't like..." number one, I wasn't happy on the job, did not like the weather, did not like the city and about a year later, a colleague friend of mine who was on the board of the YWCA, Toni Bailey, came to Phoenix for a vacation. We went to dinner and she said, "So Adrian, tell me, how are you?" and I said, "Toni, I'm miserable. I miss St. Louis. It's like home to me and I want to get back, even if it's not in football. I've been in football for 18 years. I'm okay now. I've done a lot, had an opportunity to go to three Super Bowls, two with the Rams, one with the Arizona Cardinals. I have three rings. I've done a lot, more than people who have been in this industry for 30 years." So she said, "Okay." Well, months later, maybe 10 months later, she called me and said that Joy Burns, my predecessor, was retiring and I knew Joy because I sat on the board of the YWCA in 1998. So I sent my resume and I was hired in 2009, so I was with the Arizona Cardinals from '07 to '09, moved back to St. Louis in '09 and it has been the best move that I could tell you; it's just been awesome. This is truly home to me.

Blanche Touhill: And did your husband stay in St. Louis while you were in Arizona or did he move with you?

Adrian Bracy: No, he moved with me in 2007 and he found a great job. So he was very happy in Arizona. He loved the weather. He said, "Where else can you live that you can wash your car and not have to worry about it for two weeks?" and so he loved the clean. I mean, it was just great for him but I was just unhappy. I just missed my friends, June Fowler and Barbara Turkington were, like, my big sisters and Toni Bailey, so I tried. I really tried to make it work but it just was not a good fit for me.

Blanche Touhill: Well, now, when you came back, did he come back too?

Adrian Bracy: Of course.

Blanche Touhill: So, did he find another dream job?

Adrian Bracy: No, actually, so we moved back to St. Louis and the first three or four months he was miserable and then I think around Christmastime, there was this show at the Fox...or was it the Symphony...there was a Christmas concert and we walked out and we saw the lights and all and he said, "You know, honey, I'm so glad we moved back to St. Louis," and that was the beginning. So he became engrossed in the community. He decided to go...he did have a contract. He's in sales so he decided to open up his own business. So now he has an IT company that he's in partnership with a guy and they pretty much install telephone systems, security systems, cabling, and right now it's been three years and it's not where he wants it to be but at least it's in growth stage. So he's happy trying to build his company and he's happy playing golf now with his buddies. So he's happy.

Blanche Touhill: So you're saying he was always supportive of you?

Adrian Bracy: My husband has been supportive from day one, even as friends. When I told him about the opportunity in Phoenix, he said, "Let's do it. I'm in it to win it, whatever makes you happy," and I thought, wow, "Okay, you are a keeper for sure." We just celebrated 15 years last week, 15<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary, yes.

Blanche Touhill: When you married him, did you realize he would be that supportive?

Adrian Bracy: Oh, yes. I knew immediately because of the way he treated his mother. His mother, when I met him, she was sick with cancer and I saw, wow, I just saw the way he tended to his mother, with care and concern and love and compassion and patience and I said, wow! That's the way you treat your mom, then I think you're someone that I want to have in my life. I didn't tell him that at the first...of course, yes, just my thoughts and then it turned out to be real and so he treated me the same way and he's treated me the same way. Everything is about me. It's like, "How are you? How can we make you feel better?" It's just amazing, it's amazing. He's like my number one fan.

Blanche Touhill: Well, how was it to work in athletics with such a male-dominated group?

Adrian Bracy: Well, it was very tough working in a male-dominated environment in the beginning because I really didn't know the game but once I learned how

to play the game, I thought, okay, I can do this, and what I mean by that, when I first started, I was emotional a little bit; things didn't happen the way I wanted them to hap...and I took things personal and then I learned, well, you know what? Men really don't like working with women when they're all emotional and take things so personal. So then I started practicing, okay, I'm going to act like a woman but think like a man. I toughened up a little bit. I didn't take things personal and what I really learned, a friend of mine said to me, "Adrian, you have to make men feel wanted. So you have to ask, 'Well, can you help me with this; I really need your advice on this, and, what do you think about this?'" and when I started doing that, it was like, whoa, it worked! So I was invited into the meetings. Before I was kind of not invited into the boardroom, I guess...number one, I remember one coach or someone said, "Well, Adrian, we really wanted to have you but we curse and our language is just not appropriate for women" and so I said, "Well, that's okay, I still want to understand what you're talk...I'm not going to learn the business by keeping me out of the boardroom," and so once they figured, "Okay, you know what? We can...if you don't mind, we don't mind." So it opened up but it was years before that happened.

Blanche Touhill: You liked accounting then? Numbers were your strength?

Adrian Bracy: Really, I truly thought, there's nothing else in life that I want to do but accounting and not only because of the numbers, because I do like numbers and I can remember numbers but I can't remember your name, but what I really enjoy about accounting...and I still do...is you get to see the picture, the whole picture of the organization. If you're in marketing, you're only going to see your marketing budget. If you're in community affairs, you're only going to see your community affairs budget, but when you're in accounting, you see the entire...it's like a mirror, you see the whole organization all at once and you're first to know when there is a problem financially and I like being the first to know.

Blanche Touhill: How do you convince the people you report to that there is a problem?

Adrian Bracy: Well, I start with tough, so I would always first go...before I went to my colleagues, let's say the vice president of marketing or what have you, before I went to my colleague, I would go to the president first and just...

Blanche Touhill: And would they see you?

Adrian Bracy: Oh, yes. Most presidents are going to see the CFO. The CFO is critical in every organization and that was one of the reasons why my counselor encouraged me. She said, "Adrian, you will never go without a job if you major in accounting. You're critical to any organization, I don't care if it's \$100,000 or \$200 million; you're critical," and so, yes, every time I asked for an appointment to meet with the CEO or the president, I got it, yeah.

Blanche Touhill: Did they always react, trying to help you solve the problem or did they say, "Wait" or...

Adrian Bracy: No, no, no. I always encouraged them to proact and even to this day, that's how I operate. That's just my management style. I don't like to react because you make really sometimes bad decisions. So let's proact. So that's just been my management style and I've been able to convince my boss, the president, to do the same. Usually, for the most part it's always been very supportive relationship. There are times when the president didn't agree with my theory and so...but as long as I explain it correctly, that was the key, to make them understand that I'm not just crying wolf, that was the key. You don't want to cry wolf too much because then no one really takes you serious and they don't have time for you. So I rarely went to my boss. It would have to be critical. We had monthly meetings but it was just your monthly meetings but, between the monthly meetings, only if there was some urgent situation which happened rarely in the NFL, except for my last two years, it was just about the time of the bargaining agreement, the collective bargaining agreement was going to end, was really a critical time and so I spent a lot of time with the president at that time, maybe weekly, just going over forecasts, what if's: So if we strike, then what happens here? So that was probably the most critical time in my career, my last two years.

Blanche Touhill: I've always heard about accountants that they're in charge of the ethics of the firm, that it's the accountant that begins to suspect something may not be quite right and somebody said to me once, "Well, the accountant has to decide whether they're just going to leave the company and not say anything or whether they're going to go to the president and say, 'I think we have to look into this situation more closely.'"

Adrian Bracy: And that's true.

Blanche Touhill: Do you ever run into those situations?

Adrian Bracy: Well, yes. When I started with the Dolphins, we actually had...and ethical has always been number one. When you're a CPA, you take an oath to be ethical, period. Now, if you're working for a company that disagrees, then you may want to leave. I've never experienced that, fortunately, in my career, ever. But when I was with the Dolphins, we were having cash flow problems and there was nothing unethical; it's just, we were having cash flow problems and I'm thinking, I'm not sure if this is where I want to be because there's nothing I can do. I'm not into sales so, really, the sales department would be the department that could really help make things better. Now, the only thing I could do was suggest cuts in expense. That's pretty much all I could do, is say, "These are the areas that I think we should reduce" and so that's pretty much been my role, is how to cut expense, not how to grow the revenue. That's always the marketing and sales department. But that was the only time that I really became nervous about the continuity, just financially, from a financial standpoint: will we make it? And then, unfortunately, like I said, they really ended up selling the team but I was nervous. My first couple of years in the NFL I was quite nervous. Prior to that, I've always worked for companies that pretty much had deep pockets so there was no cash flow...very ethical and I've been very fortunate because I can't even imagine working for a company or an agency or anyone that's not ethical. That's not my background as far as my religion. Trust is important.

Blanche Touhill: Why did you believe your adopted mother, that you could be anything you wanted to be?

Adrian Bracy: You know, I believed it because she loved me. It was the love that I felt for her that made me...it was just confidence and it wasn't anything that she did per se, even to this day, when she tells...it's just a confidence that she says it with. It's that power of belief. She didn't go to college and it started from when I was 10 years old. I was in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade and I was making C's and D's before she adopted me and I really thought I was dumb because my family pretty much didn't care and I felt that I was dumb. So I thought I was dumb and I can't learn. And that's unfortunately what a lot of African American kids go through and that's why it seems as though you can't learn, because you're kind of taught you're unequal. But when she adopted me and she said, "Nope, that's not acceptable. C's and D's, not acceptable in this house. You can learn and you will learn. You just have to put forth effort in whatever you do. If you put forth effort,



you'll do well and you will succeed," and so I just believed her. It was like, "Okay, really? So let me try this out." So that was the 5<sup>th</sup> grade. By the time I graduated from the 6<sup>th</sup> grade, I was, like, a B student and I believed her. So from that start, when she told me that I could really become...and I don't...she was married into my family even so this was my cousin who adopted me by marriage and she said it with conviction, that "You can learn and you will learn" and I believed her. And so I did. I studied and, wow, so I ended up graduating with Honors, all the way through college.

Blanche Touhill: Did you get a scholarship to Morgan State?

Adrian Bracy: I did, I received a scholarship because she told me when I was...early on, 6<sup>th</sup> grade, 7<sup>th</sup> grade, "We don't have money to send you to college so it's up to you," and I thought, whoa, okay. So that's what I did. I said, this is what I...it's up to me to go to college, first of all. It's up to me. If it's up to me, then I need to start now. I remember her telling me, "You can't wait until you're in the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grade to try to get good grades because it's so hard to bring your grades up so you need to start right now in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade," and I thought, okay, and that's what I did. Then, joining the group of girls helped because now I'm with a group of girls that believed in themselves and had confidence and so...

Blanche Touhill: How did you gravitate to them? Did you gravitate to them? Did they gravitate to you? Was it just an accident?

Adrian Bracy: I gravitated to them. No, it wasn't an accident. I just watched them, like, from...they didn't know me in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade but we all went to junior high, 8<sup>th</sup> grade together and so I watched them for about a year, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade. They're friends. They grew up in the same neighborhood so they're friends. I grew up in another neighborhood, in Liberty City. They didn't know that. No one knew that I caught the bus to go to school. They thought that I that, I guess, I had money. I worked since I was, like, in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, taking care of kids, babysitting, usually babysitting and then by the time I was 16...15, I was able to get a job at Burger King. So I always looked nice. I always made money from the time I was in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. So I always looked the part. No one knew the difference and they just saw me and I guess, they were all cute so I guess they thought I was cute and they're like, "Whoa, you're pretty enough to be in our group; come on in. You can hang with us." And it was true. I mean, physically, they were all just beautiful girls and that's, I think what drew me to them. They were

just really striking, beautiful young ladies and I thought, wow, they are so pretty and they get along together and they're smart, because I knew they were in Advanced, AP courses, so I knew they were in the Advanced classes and I thought, well, I'm smart too, and I think I'm pretty and I dress nice. I think I need to be with them. So I just went and introduced myself to one of them and then, of course that's history. Now we're just, like, the closest friends.

Blanche Touhill: Now, tell me about spas. Why do you like spas?

Adrian Bracy: Well, you know, I just get so excited when I hear the word "spa." It started when I was with the NFL and I went to John Shaw and I said, "You know, John, I really need to go to the owners' meetings so that we can talk about the budgets." He said, "Okay." So my first owners meeting was, it's every March, every year and it's always at a very nice resort, Breakers Hotel in West Palm or Palm Desert...the Biltmore Hotel in Phoenix. So I thought, okay, this is what I need to do, I need to go to those meetings and I had learned how to play golf as well because I said, they're always playing golf and they're always going to the lovely resorts and I needed to be a part of that. So I went, my first experience was in Palm Desert at the Marriott and when I experienced the serenity, I was in love. It was like, there's nothing else...there's just nothing else to give me this high. When I go...and even to this day, even if it's just a day spa at Massage Luxe or Massage Envy, I walk in just feeling relaxed. It's like every stress, every tension that's within me, mentally, physically, whatever, it's gone and so that was my first experience in 1998 and that was it; I was hooked and it's just the serenity. It's just a feeling that all is going to be well. It's like, you know what? Everything is going to be okay. It's so peaceful. I can do whatever. I just feel like I can do whatever and I can deal with whatever, especially, more so it's more emotional, I think, for me. I just love it.

Blanche Touhill: You said that you tried to dress nicely. Was that something that you wanted to do or was that something your adopted mother wanted you to do or a combination or did she admire your clothes when you picked them out?

Adrian Bracy: Well, it started with her and that's so ironic you brought that up because I never had a wardrobe before. So when I was born, my birth mother, she became ill and she took me to my grandmother's sister's home and so I

grew up with my grandmother's sister and they were not rich; they were...not poor but not well to do and so I had three dresses for a week and so I had to rotate the three dresses and then the other two days, I think I had slacks or something, I remember, but I remember rotating and so when my adopted mother, she married my cousin, my grand aunt's son, she married him and saw the environment...I didn't really grow up with my five siblings. They grew up with my father and my grandmother and so it was like, "Oh, no, we're going shopping" and to this day, she's a shop...well, not anymore because she's sick now but before she became sick, that's her hobby. Her hobby is shopping. She was a seamstress as well, part-time or just hobby, I think and so she made everything that was nice. Schools clothes, not so much but my church clothes, my Easter outfits, everything was just...everything was matching, my shoes. I really looked well to do, I have to say.

Blanche Touhill: So she had style.

Adrian Bracy: She had style. She had style. She's sick today but she's still...before, yeah.

Blanche Touhill: So then, you liked what you saw?

Adrian Bracy: Yeah, I became in love, like, oh, my gosh. I felt pretty. I felt smart. I felt like, you know, when I dress nice, even things are not so well, I feel good. I just feel good about myself and that's how she made me feel, just good about myself and smart. So I always got good grades so I always...she always bought me something new. It was, whatever; it was just something new. It wasn't expensive but she always took care of...yeah, she made me feel special.

Blanche Touhill: As you worked in your working life, did you come across the glass ceiling?

Adrian Bracy: Well, the closest was with the Rams. That was probably the closest and there was [inaudible 30:07:1], I was the CFO so, of course, I'm right there in the boardroom with the guys but I'm sure there are things...not, I'm sure, I know there are things still that I didn't get involved with because I'm a female. It's like, in sports, so they're not going to tell me all the intricacies of the plays and that's one thing I really wanted to...I really wanted to get involved with that. It never materialized and I don't think there are many teams, if any, with a female general manager. I think Oakland Raiders had one who was close to it, before Al Davis died. But

that's the one area that I could say no. For me, that would have been the glass ceiling, being able to be in the...

Blanche Touhill: But you would have said no?

Adrian Bracy: They would not allow me to.

Blanche Touhill: But if they did, would you have liked it?

Adrian Bracy: Yes. Oh, my gosh, to be able to go into the...let's see, what did we call that room? It was the boardroom but it was...it was right before draft day and so all the guys went into the room...the draft room...and they had all the plays and all the players, first round, second round, who were going to take in a third round. I never had an opportunity...I think I went in once in my career but it was just an area that was closed off and for me, that would have been the glass ceiling moment, to be able to go in and actually participate in the selection of draft pick.

Blanche Touhill: Who they're going to really go after and why?

Adrian Bracy: That would have been my...and why. That would have been a dream. That would have been, for me, the glass...if I compare it to corporate America, that would have been my glass ceiling in sports.

Blanche Touhill: Did you go to all the games?

Adrian Bracy: Every game.

Blanche Touhill: And you go now, when you're not working there?

Adrian Bracy: No, I don't go as much now. I really enjoy being at home watching it on TV with my popcorn and my jamies or whatever, no traffic. I enjoy it. I love it. It's like, wow, this is what I've missed for 18 years because it's obvious, I mean, you know, you think, wow, you don't have...but for management, for the president, for the football coach, when you're senior leader, you're supposed to be there. That's just part of your job, whether I had work to do or not, I had to go to the game, but I enjoyed it at the time, yeah.

Blanche Touhill: Well, I know the senior management of the Cardinals always go to the games.

- Adrian Bracy: Absolutely, yes, yes. It is expected. It's part of your job. I was fortunate because we didn't have 81 home games; we only had 10.
- Blanche Touhill: Did you get to know any of the players well?
- Adrian Bracy: Yes, yes, actually, working for the St. Louis Rams was different than working for any team, the Dolphins or the Cardinals.
- Blanche Touhill: Really?
- Adrian Bracy: Yes, it was family. Dick Vermill was the most family-oriented coach, I think, on the planet. We were all together. It wasn't the business office against the football operations. It wasn't business operations/football operations. It was one operation. We win with everyone involved. So with that said, we had lunch together, the players. They have lunch every day and...front office, just go down and have lunch, "Hey, Tori, how are you?"; "Hi, Isaac"; "Hi, Kurt, how are the kids?" You sit at the table; you talk.
- Blanche Touhill: And they do that purposely?
- Adrian Bracy: Yes, then. It's not like that anymore. And then when I went to the Arizona Cardinals football team, it was different. Front office business operations, you're on the second floor; football, first floor and that's it. There's no interact...none, zero, at all. So when Kurt heard that I had moved to Phoenix and I was now working for the Cardinals, I sent word downstairs and he actually had come upstairs to give me a big hug and I said, "Kurt, we're going to the Super Bowl," and he said, "Yeah, we are." That was in '07. So we ended up going in '09...'08 football season but February of '09. So, yeah. So that's the only player that I knew with the Cardinals, was Kurt Warner because I wasn't allowed to interact with the players but at the Rams, where my whole, almost 12 years, we knew each other like family, in the malls, wherever.
- Blanche Touhill: How was it then to move to a non-athletic kind of job?
- Adrian Bracy: It's different because, not only non-athletic, but from male-dominated to female-dominated. Our board, it's all women, 30 women on the board of directors. So, it was just a whole different extreme but it has been good, not all four years, but it's been good through the support. Women support women a little bit better than men. Men support men in a

different way but there's a different nurturing with women: more patience. With women, you can actually build the clock and not just tell the time. With men, you have to just tell the time. Don't build the clock; just get right to it. And so for me, I had to learn how to be more patient now because I didn't have to be patient before. All I wanted was the bottom line: "Okay, just get to the bottom line." So now, especially in social service, people like to tell the whole story, 30 minutes and then you finally get to the bottom line whereas in the NFL, in five minutes you've got the bottom line. So that has been an adjustment for me, just understanding the whole scenario now, and accounting, because numbers, you don't really need to know all...it's like marketing, that's your story, just give me the bottom line. So that's been a change. It's been a transition. Another transition has been accountability. When I first came, people pretty much did what they did, kind of what they wanted to do and coming from where I came from, no, you're accountable. You don't just do what you want to do. This is a team effort; we all work together, and so that was a change for me but it's getting better. People are starting to understand accountability now and people in our business, our business is kind of siloed so you have your Sexual Assault Center in Clayton and then you have your Head Start Center in Overland, and then you have 10 other Head Start centers and then you have your Metro on the campus of S.L.U. (Saint Louis University) and so everyone was kind of independent and I came from a team-oriented...there is no independence. There's no "I" in team and it was all "I"'s. You had an "I" at every location. So trying to make a more cohesive organization has been a challenge.

Blanche Touhill: How did you do that?

Adrian Bracy: And I'm still doing that. I'm actually still working on it but we did not have joint meetings. Every location had its own meeting. So now, twice a year, we have a mandatory staff meeting. All 300 employees get together and you co-mingle, you talk. Monday, we're having a staff appreciation day. All 300 employees must be there. It's mandatory and we want you to sit at a table that you're not familiar with the staff. Then I have a monthly newsletter to try to keep everyone connected and so every month, I send the newsletter and just let them know an update on what's happening throughout the entire agency. So I've learned it's communication, just making everyone feel a part and I try to visit the different sites so they

can feel that, "Oh, wow, Ms. Bracy really cares about us too. It's not just the Sexual Assault Center, but Head Start is important." So it's been a struggle but, you know, I'm putting the pieces together.

Blanche Touhill: How do you support all that activity?

Adrian Bracy: It's very tough. It really is very tough, financially, especially now with the government shutdown, and then the sequestration. We lost over a million dollars for the Head Start program so we actually had to close one of our centers, Manchester Center, but being an accountant has really helped because when I first came to the agency, we were kind of cash flow strapped and so I cut expenses immediately. I eliminated the COO position which is my right-hand person so I, for two years, did both jobs, as CEO, COO. I cut other expenses. We were living on a line of credit at the time. We have not touched the line of credit in three years and so, that has helped. Having the financial background has really helped me to manage all of it because the biggest problem really is the finance. We have great program directors. They're very good at what they do but they're not concerned with payroll and the likes. So I have really worked on expenses. I have not worked on growing the revenue yet because I've not had the right fundraising director, the right...it's called a chief development director. So that's what I'm working on now. When I get the right development officer, then I'll start working on the revenue side. But as far as expenses, just keeping the expenses flat and not over stating revenue but a lot of companies, profit and not-for-profit, when they budget, they budget unrealistic revenue and then they look pretty: "Oh, wow, look, wow, our budget shows that we have two hundred thousand dollars surplus." Well, you really don't. So you spend all your expenses and that two hundred thousand that you plugged in doesn't come through and now you're in a deficit. So I budget on a realistic basis and so it's worked. So that's kind of how I manage the finance side, just being realistic but the actual services, it's been pretty tough during this time because it's growing, unfortunately, the need is growing and I can't afford to hire more counselors for the Sexual Assault Center so they're working a little hard. So what I try to do is to maybe give them an extra day off somehow. I try to give perks that seem to help the morale. We implemented professional development now so we have, once a month, a professional development course of some sort, whether it's professional or sometimes it's personal like how to manage stress and I

think one was de-escalation of a situation. So things like that. We try to make it realistic but also that will benefit the...and we always have volunteers to come.

Blanche Touhill: You know, I have to give the Y credit for that annual luncheon.

Adrian Bracy: The leader lunch.

Blanche Touhill: Leader lunch, because it started at a time when organizations didn't honor professionals. The Women of Achievement is really volunteers...

Adrian Bracy: Right.

Blanche Touhill: And I just wondered, how did that start? Whose idea was that? Do you have any idea?

Adrian Bracy: Yes. It started long before my predecessor, Joy Burns and her predecessor, Marilyn Robinson. It started back in the '80s and it was just because of that, because there was no vehicle for recognizing business women in the St. Louis community. And so the CEO at that time and the board, it was really the board of directors because at that time, they had a lot of heavy hitters on the board and the board decided that, "We need to do this." So it was really to honor and recognize the women but it was also to raise a little money, it was, "Okay, how do we now raise more money?" and so the two just made sense and now December will be our 33<sup>rd</sup> leader lunch.

Blanche Touhill: And you have hundreds of people.

Adrian Bracy: Twelve hundred.

Blanche Touhill: Twelve hundred?

Adrian Bracy: Twelve hundred to come and support these women and it's been a success. It's been a success. One thing we don't do well at the YWCA, including myself, we don't get our academy leaders involved. We don't cultivate them; we don't do anything with them. Other YWCAs, of course, across the country, they have an annual reunion. The academy leaders are still active. They volunteer. So that, I think, is an area that could really use some improvement and I'm hoping the new development officer can help me with that. I have started. I reached out to Maxine Clark, founder of Build-A-Bear and I said, "Maxine, I'm stuck



here. I really want to get the leaders of distinction involved with the YWCA" and so next month...no, this month, October...she came up with something that she does for other agencies. It's called speed mentoring, because her passion is mentoring young girls, so our YW teams, we typically have four to five hundred young girls, high school girls at the conference and we're going to have a speed mentoring session. So we'll have a table of 10 and we'll have about 5 or 6 or 7...right now I have, like, 12 signed up already, 12 academy leaders, so we may end up having more tables. But we'll have the young ladies just do a speed mentoring with each academy...so they'll go from table to table and find out about that person and ironically, United Way had an event last night, a women's leadership giving event and they actually had it. They had a table of 10 and they had a mentor at each table and the other 8 ladies would get up and move to the next table. And so that's what we're going to do with the girls. So I think that could be something for the future to get our academy leaders involved and volunteering with the YWCA.

Blanche Touhill: I think that's a very good idea.

Adrian Bracy: Yes, yes.

Blanche Touhill: If you had been born 50 years earlier, what would your life be like?

Adrian Bracy: Fifty years earlier in Miami, Florida would have been probably depressing for me, I think, because it would have been during an era of segregation still and Miami as it is even today, it's just not a really good place, in my opinion, for African Americans just because of the layout. I don't particularly care for Miami and living there 50 years ago, when I tell you what I know about my grandmother and what she had to go through with in Miami, it would have been very depressing. It would have been an era that I'm not sure if I would be successful today, no, not Miami.

Blanche Touhill: How did you get into the International Women's Forum?

Adrian Bracy: Well, my dear friends, Barbara Turkington and June Fowler felt that this would be a great organization to network with women and to join an organization where it's truly about friendship and no hidden agendas, no selling or tactics to try to buy anything, where you can just really come and, for me, especially being a little bit younger than some of the members, she thought that I could really learn business and just make some really good contacts. And so she was really right; they were right. It

was mainly Barbara and June, but I said, "Barbara, I don't have time. I'm so busy." She said, "Adrian, I promise you, this is an organization where you can fit in where you fit in, no demands, but I just really feel that this is someplace where you can really grow personally. I thought, okay, now that I can handle. She said, "No stress; I promise you," and she was right.

Blanche Touhill: How did you get to meet Toni Bailey originally?

Adrian Bracy: Originally I met Toni Bailey...gosh, how did I meet Toni? Oh, the board of the YWCA. That's how I met. I was on the board in 1999 and she was, I think, the board chair or becoming the board chair. It was at the time where Phyllis Wheatley Heritage Center was not renovated yet and so she was...I think she recruited me to her committee so it was my first contact with Toni Bailey, was on the board of the YWCA and she's the reason why I'm here today.

Blanche Touhill: And then through Toni, you met Barbara and June?

Adrian Bracy: No, no, I met Barbara and June while I was with the Rams and I really don't remember, I think Barbara or June reached out to me when I first moved to St. Louis and just invited me to lunch, a sister lunch, "We just want to introduce you, welcome you to St. Louis," because the rumor then, and maybe even now...St. Louis is very cliquish and unless you're in the right clique, you're out on your own. So they wanted to make sure that I was in the clique, that I was really taken care of and not...

Blanche Touhill: So it was the old girls again?

Adrian Bracy: It was the old girls, yeah, old girls network. So they pulled me in and took care of me the whole 12 years I was here in St. Louis.

Blanche Touhill: Do you volunteer for some other non-profit or do you have time for anything like that?

Adrian Bracy: I really don't have time but I do mentor a lot. The event last night at the United Way, from that I have, like, three e-mails in my box right now wanting to be mentored. So I do mentor young ladies. I volunteer with my church more because that is still my passion and I don't volunteer on a board for non-profits but I will go, like, and speak but that's about as much as I have time for. I am at an event every night.

Blanche Touhill: Yes. How do you handle that?

Adrian Bracy: My husband, support, because he's home a lot alone, eating dinner by himself and it's just his support. That's truly how I make it, because if he one day said, "Adrian, enough is enough. You can't go every night," then I would stop and so I said, "Dear, I think I just need to stop." He said, "Well, no, this is your job. You need to be at the table. You need to be seen. Your face needs to be there. People need to know...donors need to see you. You need to be able to thank all your donors," so I said, "Oh, you're right," "And plus, you need to be a role model. That's what you're supposed to do." So, because of his support, that's how I make it.

Blanche Touhill: Do you have the weekends together?

Adrian Bracy: Yes. So come Friday, I literally shut it down. I call my family, "How are you? I love you. I won't talk to you until Monday." I tell my staff, my direct reports, "The only way you need to reach me on the weekend, 9-1-1 text. If I don't see a 9-1-1 text message, you will not get an e-mail return until Monday. So, if it's important, you have to send me a 9-1-1." And so far it's worked and so, yes, we get to spend every weekend together and Sunday, church, and then sports, whatever the sport is during the season: football, baseball, basketball, and that's our weekend.

Blanche Touhill: Well, I've known other women to do that and that's why I ask.

Adrian Bracy: Yes, that's it. Monday through Friday, I'm business. I put everything I have into my work and then come Friday at 6:00 PM...5:00 PM if I can help it, shuts it down.

Blanche Touhill: How is the Y doing?

Adrian Bracy: We're doing okay. Up until the government shutdown, we're doing okay and now, with the shutdown, our Head Start program is being affected with the USDA and for some of our kids, it's the only meals that they get and so it's really...it's getting scary now but other than that, we're doing okay. We're not financially in a growth, but we're maintaining and, unfortunately, usually I have to cut throughout the year. I've been able to apply for new grants that we have, probably over three hundred thousand dollars of new grants this year but three hundred thousand dollars go directly to the program so there is no...there's probably 10% overhead, to manage the books and HR and all that stuff. So financially, we're not in a deficit but we're not growing financially but the programs are awesome. I tell you, I'm just so blessed to be where I am because I'm

helping women and that is, like, my passion in life. I remember when I went to the Oprah Winfrey life class. She said if you follow your passion, you'll find your purpose in life and I can truly say today...and I don't know what tomorrow will bring or next year or next month...but today, being at the YWCA, I really do feel it is my purpose and then, being a member of the IWF, I'm meeting more women. So I'm just surrounded by women and I just, I can't think of anything else I would love to do today.

Blanche Touhill: Do you have research on your sexual cases or your Head Start, what effect it has on the children or what effect it has on the women that you try to protect?

Adrian Bracy: Yes, we do have research but not good enough but, unfortunately, it's taken us this long to realize that. So we're working with the State of Missouri to actually track our Head Start kids. So starting this year, there is a new software we purchased and it's throughout the entire state actually and we are working with them as a pilot and so we will take the children from now through 12<sup>th</sup> grade to see if Head Start really is making a difference in the learning skills of the kids. We know it, we really know it does; however, by the time they reach 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, it's out of our hands. Whatever we've taught, we can't...

Blanche Touhill: How do you track them because that was always the difficulty, wasn't it?

Adrian Bracy: It still is but that's the pilot that we started...

Blanche Touhill: Do you use the Social Security numbers?

Adrian Bracy: Yes, that's what we're doing now. So that's going to be the new...and it's not the Social Security...I believe they assigned a number so not the Social Security number because of the privacy but we have a number assigned to every child and so that number is going to follow that child through 12<sup>th</sup> grade, today, but that's new now. Like I said, it's a pilot. Now, what we learn about the sexual assault results is that the new grant that I'm telling you about is for people with disabilities, sexual assault and people with disabilities. We did a study, we were awarded a grant last year and the study showed that there's nothing, no research. We have nothing. I couldn't even tell you...

Blanche Touhill: And we know it happens.

Adrian Bracy: We know it happens but there was nothing. Everything was under the rug. So they gave us the three hundred thousand to actually perform services or provide services to people with disabilities and so now we are starting to keep track of the results and the new three hundred thousand dollar grant requires us to do an evaluation. So we do see the before and after with our participants. It was very tough though because parents did not want their adult children talking about sex. You're disabled; you're not supposed to talk about sex. So it was building a case through the case manager, working with the case manager to get to the guardian or the parent. So we're finally breaking down the barrier. It took about four months of having this program and at first I even went to the funder and I said, "Listen, I'm a little nervous. I don't know if we can really make this happen" and then two, three months later, the barrier just broke and it's like, whoa. So we're seeing the partic...I don't want to call them kids because they're not. These are adults. They're 18 years and older, but they are now talking and she's finding out, the program director's finding out, wow, this is awesome. So we're providing services in the city and POB, they gave us a grant for the county. So, yes, she's learning a lot. I don't have all the results or the stats but she's making a difference.

Blanche Touhill: You know, Joy used to have a program where she brought people in and they had a little apartment and they could bring their children with them, where those homeless women that...it was on the St. Louis U campus. It was that house that you have there, where your offices are, I think.

Adrian Bracy: Yes. So now, children are not allowed. It's just women only now. They can bring their kids, of course, but they can't stay. So if they want...

Blanche Touhill: How long do they...oh, the children cannot stay?

Adrian Bracy: Right, and the women, they have up to 24 months, living, and we provide them with all the different classes: financial literacy; you name it, we provide it for them.

Blanche Touhill: And these are basically homeless women?

Adrian Bracy: These are homeless women, 18 years and older.

Blanche Touhill: What happens to their children? Do they go into foster care for that time?

- Adrian Bracy: Foster care or grandparents. A lot of our women, though, their kids are older. We're not really seeing a lot of young girls. Most of our...I think the average age may be 42 so a lot of the kids are kind of, unfortunately, grown, maybe on drugs or...
- Blanche Touhill: And what is the background of those women?
- Adrian Bracy: Varied. Last year, our video...the Circle of Women luncheon, which shows our programs, really, we had featured a lady who was homeless but she had a job. She just lost her job with the economy downturn and lost her apartment and so she ended up with us. So she was a working woman, not degreed but she was a working woman, as a secretary. Then we have some who...unfortunately, we had a couple who were in prison.
- Blanche Touhill: Yeah. So they were getting out and they had to adjust to the society.
- Adrian Bracy: Correct. So it's a variety. It's not just the same and it's just a diverse group: race, education, background, everything, it's diverse. Just, if you're homeless and you're clean...you have to be clean...and it's...the referral is given to us through another agency. They have to do the background check, so when they get to us, we know that that person should be clean and ready.
- Blanche Touhill: And you don't have many of those?
- Adrian Bracy: Thirty-five women.
- Blanche Touhill: Oh, you have 35 women?
- Adrian Bracy: We have 35 women, yes, in our...
- Blanche Touhill: You do?
- Adrian Bracy: Yes, we have 35 women.
- Blanche Touhill: Do you have any research on them?
- Adrian Bracy: No, we don't. Well, not in statistics, we don't but...
- Blanche Touhill: But you know the antidotal stories?
- Adrian Bracy: Yes, absolutely.

Blanche Touhill: I always thought that was such a good idea actually, to give people a chance to regroup and get a job. Maybe it's a part-time job initially and then...

Adrian Bracy: And we help them get jobs, yes. We work with...yes. What I really like about it is that we give them all types of classes: debt reduction. A lot of them, when they graduate, they're clean; they're debt-free...resume, job readiness, how to rent, and what was so great about the program is that one of our board members, Sandy Moore, through her company, she had an apartment complex that they managed and we were able to take our services to those women. So we've been able to really spread the actual services around.

Blanche Touhill: Well, is there anything you think you forgot?

Adrian Bracy: Let's see. Well, I think we covered a whole lot, probably more than I anticipated. I was able to get my husband, Vernon Bracy, on, his support, that's the key, to make sure my husband is happy, and my step-son, Donovan is a junior at Mizzou, I'm very proud of him and, no, life is just...life is good. The awards that I have achieved in my career, it's been several. I like to highlight one, I think, was very important to me. I was actually on the cover of Black Enterprise, which is a magazine that's targeted for African Americans and I received their award, it's the Top 50 Blacks in Sports Award. I received the St. Louis Business Journal's Most Influential Award, 2006; the St. Louis Business Journal, Most Influential Diversity Award in 2006, the YWCA Leader of Distinction Award in 2006 along with some other awards. Those are the ones that I would highlight, that I think are very...I've very proud of.

Blanche Touhill: Well, thank you very much.

Adrian Bracy: Thank you for having me. This has been a great opportunity. I really appreciate the opportunity.