



Playback Your Story asks the community around Gallaudet University to reflect on and unite through their connections to community, narrative, and place. Sponsored by Van Alen Institute and the DC Office of Planning, John Johnson conducted interviews throughout the community. The interviews culminated in a final performance by John Johnson's theater troop, Playback Theatre on the Gallaudet Campus in 2016. The initiative weaves together the stories of locals, inspiring us to cross the street, interact with one another, and understand the roots of our community.

Gino Gil: I'm Gino from Obeng International Wholesaler/Retailer In Farmer's Market Washington DC

John Johnson: What type of stuff is sold in this establishment?

Gino Gil: We sell mostly things from West Africa, like Ghana, Nigeria, Sierra Leone.

John Johnson: What is your favorite meal that you would eat out of this establishment?

Gino Gil: Me, personally, it would be foo-foo.

John Johnson: What is foo-foo?

Gino Gil: Foo-foo is made from plantains, or yam, or even cassava. It's grounded, pounded up, you ball it, you beat it. Kind of like mashed potatoes but a lot thicker with starch in it.

John Johnson: How long have you guys been here?

Gino Gil: Our business has been around for a good 25 years. We've been in this location for roughly 20 years.

John Johnson: How long have you actually been working here?

Gino Gil: It's a family business.

My family's been running this, like I said, 25 years. We've been here from the beginning.

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John Johnson: When I came here earlier, you were here informing your customers of something that's going on with this market.

What is going on with this market?

Gino Gil: This market is about to be shut down. There won't be any more Farmer's Market by this time next year. They're breaking the whole Farmer's Market down to build condominiums and apartments in this area. Right now what we have to do is we have started informing our customers that we have another location right now in Woodbridge, so we are directing them over there until we find another place to operate there. This place is going to be shuttered.

John Johnson: How does that make you feel?

Gino Gil: It's bad. Basically nothing good about it because this, like I said, it's a piece of history, it's a family history, that we've established this business. To see it taken away just like that makes you feel...There's not really any words to explain it. It just leaves a hole and a bitter taste in your mouth because it's always good to come and see that you did provide for people when they come to the market. To meet different people and to be able to have a business to sustain the family. Now, it's about to be taken. It's not like they're finding a place for you to move. You have to find your own means and ways. The amount of time that it gave us is really pushing it.

John Johnson: How much time did they give you?

Gino Gil: Well, we were not even officially informed by the county or anything. We had to find out from a friend of ours who was also in the establishment. He informed us so we were able to go ahead and start looking into it. We found out about a few months ago, so we've only had about two to three months to really start preparing and letting people know. I'm pretty sure some of these businesses, as well, don't even know that it's about to be closed down. It's not a good feeling.

*This interview has been condensed and edited for clarity