

Parks 1

Interviewee: Rosa Parks

Interviewee: Unknown female

Interviewer: James S. Haskins

Date: circa 1990s

P: And I had-

H: Did you read your beast book?

P: I have never seen it in years and he ask, Mama I want to read my beast book.

H: People have said that to me, oh I cannot find that book. I guess, sure that's one we are not going to see again.

P: Well, I don't see that. I'm just afraid they, somebody threw it away. I just don't know.

H: Well, until civil rights...

P: A woman did rebind it for me but it was very old, beat up, brown looking book, and the pages are so delicate you could hardly turn them. But she, a woman did, who worked for a publishing company, her name was... Bertha Jenkinsin, she was a Jewish woman and she took that book and rebound it from her plant, it would stay together better.

H: Uh huh

P: And so it just... went from me.

H: Did you read your beast book with your brother, your mother? Your mother had a copy of it?

P: Well that was... see it was her book but it originally belong to, I think, my mother's sister who was a little older than my mother. She was... hmm, I don't know, but she was old, a lot older than she was from my aunt Fanny who was about six or seven years older than my mother and this sister was in between the two of them. Bessy was never photographed because when they wanted to take pictures of us she had become ill. And she thought she looked too bad and too frail and had lost some weight. Anyway, she was too sick to permit the photographer who was passing through the neighborhood to take a picture of her. So she died without anyone ever knowing except those remembering her, so there's nobody living now who knew her, I think. She died in 1905. And I was eleven.

H: You were eleven.

P: There was a minister of the church who wanted to marry her. He wrote-

H: Which church?

P: The Mount Zion A.M.E. Church. The same church that my, um... well our family were members of...

H: And the minister wanted to marry her?

P: Um hmm.

H: And he—

P: And they said, I don't know if there was ever an actual engagement, but he was in love with her and I guess she was in love with him too. She was very thin, he was real real dark, real about someone like about Esau Jenkins.

[Laughter]

P: And he used to tell my mother, um-

H: I had something-honest, I'm saying- Esau totally did it, yeah that high buddy. I remember they saying he said-

[Laughter]

P: Well then, we had his picture though, this minister's picture that, I don't think he looked like-

H: Is that picture that I like, that I remember of Esau, cause I took those pictures myself.

P: Oh you did?

H: Yeah. Is that picture of Esau?

P: You got me along with Willis.

H: Willis?

P: Willis.

H: I thought I had

P: By his cars-

H: Esau in that too-

P: I don't see-

H: By his truck, by his van

P: Here's something that says Steveland Furniture

H: Is that Esau there? It may have a picture in there-

P: Uh uh. I haven't seen all those pictures yet.

H: Yeah, okay. I think I've got a picture of Esau in there.

P: Uh huh.

H: I know I took a picture of him.

P: I used to show parts, pictures of that book forever and he said don't ever let that book get away from you, but people packing up, I guess, either tossed it out or put it somewhere it was when my things were taken over to different places including the Stamps house.

H: Yeah, we're gonna need some of that Stamps stuff, are you going to be able to get any of that?

P: No, I don't see-

H: There's a picture of Esau over by his trucks somewhere.

[Sounds of papers, photographs being shuffled through]

P: Now here is a truck here, and do I recognize him? Let's see this is of –

H & P: That's David Bralingwood

P: Willis, Steve Goodman wearing craws.

H: Yeah. Remind of him, that's not Esau there is it?

P: He lives on John Vile, knows every faith, every name every problem in Mt. Tavis High and now pediatricians widespread since the [inaudible: 13:05:22] black people are almost nonexistent, most babies are born at home. And I believe here, this are our young children, now this is an adult here. Esau-

H: All right, I took a picture of Esau-

P: And down-

H: I've got all those photographs. I took over 1,000 photographs.

P: That may be the minister there because there's a chain that looks like it comes down here with a little cross right there and it might be him.

H: Esau?

U: That's his nickname-

P: Yeah that's his nickname-

H: No, that's Goodwin.

P: Oh is it-

H: Yeah, yeah.

P: And I remember, this doesn't even look like Esau to me.

H: No, that's Goodwin, that's John Goodwin there. And that doesn't look like Esau, the picture I took of him-

P: Now this says Steveland Furniture on the-

H: Truck-yeah no-

P: On the truck-

H: No Esau, no that's not his, that's where he-

P: He had a bus.

H: A van, he had a van-

P: A van or something, they called it a bus but I guess it was a van.

H: I'll certainly write about him but um, what year, what was his name who was running for um, not in but the Ernest Collins' assistant? [Long pause and mumbling]

P: All right.

H: Well, I'll tell you what I'm ought to do, I'm going to send Esau Jenkins' photo to you, show you one that didn't... of these, uh, but he took me to a church here.

P: Now he, now in this album that I have of um, I may finish reading that but I just-

H: I'll get it to you.

P: Um...

- H: You how this started? Like something something leaves New York at blah blah blah and goes to the coastal terrain near Charleston. They changed it to they're conspicuous by their Atlantic coastal terrain near Charleston. [Laughter] It shows what an editor can do to your work-
- P: Uh hum, uh huh. Probably a trend, they can...
- H: But that, that disturbs me.
- P: This uh, this woman-
- H: And her children, I mean that was a tar paper shack. And I've seen tar paper shacks, but you ain't never seen a tar paper shack in a humid coastal terrain with mosquitoes as big as your thumbnail. And I saw that lady with that baby and my camera... I took those pictures with me. And then I had to ask her, I was taking the pictures right even before I got there and then when I got close enough I had to ask her if I could. And that's one they used. You still, you've been in the storm that long, you've been out there too huh? That was another one from the sea islands, I've been in this town, that's part of why I've got a right to tree of life that, that guy who said he also wrote, um... you know, the anthem. Oh God. The guy who wrote, he said we shall overcome too. Carawan, Guy Carawan, remember that?
- P: Well, he uh, now the person who actually sang *We Shall Overcome* as they sing it now, was Zilphia Horton, Myles' [Myles Falls Horton] first wife before she died. And Guy Carawan, he was a young teenager then, he was a musician, too and he was right there.
- U: Who was that group that when we were at Septima's [Clark] funeral?
- P: Well, that was Guy and Candie [Carawan], the white people.
- H: Yeah. Guy Carawan?
- P: See when they arrested him, when they arrested Septima, why Myles was away and the raiders of that town they put her in jail, Carawan was one of the young white fellows that went to jail with her.
- H: Yeah, yeah, I remember Guy. That's the book I gotta, you know I gotta write too, right?
- P: And Zilphia died-
- H: Died... where's Carawan, where are they now-

P: Died mysteriously too-

H: Where are they now? I'd love to see them again.

P: They still at Highlander [Highlander Folk School]. But how long they have not moved, um, I mean, the Highlander has moved from Monteagle in Grundy County over to New Market, Tennessee, twenty miles from Knoxville. So that's where they are now. And they burned the building, where we used to stay and have a...

H: Yeah, I remember-

P: Remember what?

U: Septima's funeral-

P: Oh yeah, uh huh-

U: And, uh, then after the funeral, how we were socializing-

H: I mean, I thought Guy had gone back to New Hampshire, isn't that where he is from, New Hampshire or thereabouts?

P: I don't know if I know where he's from, he spent his teen years and he's still down there in Tennessee.

H: Still waiting for the-

P: Um-

H: Waiting for Godot.

[Laughter]

P: Well they carry on pretty good, but they spend most of their time working with the Appalachian-

H: Poor-

P: Poor. With whoever is needed most.

H: Yeah, the coal miners...

P: See they worked hard through the, our period when we were in the struggle about ending segregation and so on.

H: What do you think about and ways Ralph has ended up? Abernathy I mean. He's a, he almost was a Demopolis boy, we used to like call him a Demopolis boy, he's from Linden.

P: From Linden, Alabama.

H: Yeah, which was the county seat of Marengo.

P: Well maybe he hasn't completely ended yet, maybe he still have a little... a few more... Cause he's seven years younger than I am, and um. He's got a little of Martin in him.

H: Yeah, he's all right.

P: Uh huh.

H: But you know I taught his nephew how to play the trumpet. [Laughter]

P: He still has an alto, he gets that and talks and moves around some. He's had a very serious life, Elvis.

H: Yeah, well he used to be diabetic.

P: Yeah. Uh huh, his life is hard.

H: Everybody from around that area had to be.

P: He had two, he had to-

H: Close that door will you?

P: Have that [door slams closed] surgery. Oh yes, Levi Watkins what takes care of him at night at-

H: Levi the youngest one-

P: Johns Hopkins-

H: Takes care of Arthur?

P: Uh huh.

H: Who all's gonna save our lives in Alabama? You'd better put my name on the list like he's floating names. [Laughter] Ask him he can do anything about the love. [Laughter].

P: Well he's a hot man. [Laughs] A brave man.

H: The heart's a lonely hunter Miss Steele.

P: Well I...

H: Rock, rock, love.

P: Well I've been bothering him by fooling with me lately, by stopping...

H: How long you been playing this part, trusting him. You no worse than home.
[Laughter] There are probably those who would not give you the kind of service you require.

P: Well...

H: No, I meant, I...

P: Who? Somebody was in Detroit was talking about um, why did I have to go away to Johns Hopkins to go to a doctor when there was so many doctors in Detroit. So you see my doctors in Detroit never, that I was going to...

H: Who was that? Who was that.

P: Lets see, uh.

H: I mean I know who that lady is, I know it's little Levi.

P: Yeah [laughter] it Levi. There's Elaine, and this is Frances Hooks over here. And then this is Ms. Mitchell and this lady is-

H: I know this lady-

P: The president, who is she in the NAACP?-

U: Ella-

P: No, no her name isn't Ella, it's-

H: I know this lady-

P: But she is a, one of the great-

H: She's a Delta-

P: Yes-

U: Top ladies of the NAACP too-

H: She's a Delta-

U: Yeah, but... oh it starts with an e.

P: You know her, she is one of the top people in, on the national voter in NAACP, but I can't think of what her position is. She's not that...

H: I know this lady, I know this lady-

U: Yeah, she is big too.

P: Um hmm.

H: I know this lady. I've been on the stat dais or dais or whatever they call, I've been on a dais with her... God, come on help me! I know this lady.

U: I do too!

P: I wish we would have had the names on the back of the pictures.

U: I'd better do that.

P: Uh huh.

H: Yeah.

P: Yeah, she's very powerful-

H: Do something with the pictures-

P: That was during the time when they, I was curling up my, my um [laughter] [inaudible: 13:15:25] when I was back home to-

H: Where was that picture taken.

P: This was taken at the-

U: Hotel. We were in Baltimore-

P: It was that old hotel.

U: Who's here?

P: That was right after I had had my implant.

U: No, that wasn't an implant, that's when you wearing your-

P: Raymond, Margaret saw it. Yeah.

H: Do you go through the airports with that one that usually fit in-

U: She's got the top of the line.

H: So you don't have to go around, you can go right... I noticed that, cause I've been injected you had had it, and the-

U: She's got top of the line-

H: I noticed you at the airport, you went right through the thing and it didn't bother you.

U: Microwaves, anything, she can go through it.

H: All the people that got the other one, they can't, you know.

P: That when I ran the monitor, for the examination-

U: And she did it so nice because we had her-

H: That buddy come a long way from the lab school [Alabama State Laboratory High School].

P: [Laughter]

U: He's a good doctor, he is really very distinguished-

H: I used to send him copies of my books when he was at the lab school.

P: Very distinguished-

[Everybody talking at once, hard to make out individual comments]

P: He got as many awards as you do.

H: Tell him to put them in the drawer. [laughter] Bricktop used to tell me, only thing a dead man holds in his hand is-

U: Had his space on the battlefield too.

H: Got to.

[Laughter]

P: He always, he was very very family-

U: He's family like you-

P: Finally broke the bus-

H: Yeah, where else you going with this-

P: Broke the bus around us-

H: Well somebody didn't meet me, I come to know him. Hey, what we gonna do? What else can we do? It's a rainy night in Georgia, far far from old Alabam. But down here they call it moon over Miami. Boy, that Levi's come... it's amazing. See people don't understand, Elaine, Elaine... People don't understand, I mean um, Alabam and Mississippi is something else.

P: And Georgia, don't leave Georgia out-

U: And really, don't leave Georgia out-

H: I can't leave Georgia out, cause then you really know how it feels to be a problem. Did you know that that's not a United States, Library of Congress called the race relation problems in America, how did they catalog it?

P: Unh-uh

H: U.S. - Race question. [Laughter] Yeah. And what's the other one? Dewey Decimal system called it U.S. – Race problem. Dewey says we are a problem and the Library of Congress says we don't know. [Laughter].

U: Can I open one of these Perriers?

H: Yes maam-

U: Thank y'all.-

H: They are for y'all. I won't be dealing with no bottled water, you know.

[Laughter]

P: You don't fool with bottled water? Anything in a bottle got to be more than water-

H: In Mexico, I drink, I drink bottled water in Mexico, so when y'all come to Mexico bring all the water y'all want. Cause I don't even bother with the cantalopes down there. Levi Watkins, Jr. Isn't it amazing-

P: And his parents-

H: And you knew him before he was even famous-

P: Expect his father was against him going to-

H: Medical school?

P: Going to this medical school, because he said he was going to medical school, it said I think I guess he want to go higher-

U: He went to Vanderbilt.

P: And he went to Vanderbilt instead.

U: Then when he ran into some trouble his daddy wouldn't even back him. That's white folks.

H: Well daddy was doing that, and that was for the state.

U: It was his son.

H: Yeah. Right. H. Consul the pooper general, whatever the boy did have...

U: At least I said you don't understand because his daddy ain't going take care of him-

P: There's [inaudible: 13:19:37] the Colonel.

H: Yeah, it's them. [pause] That boy's been to the Lab school, I remember, I was playing... He's in the Lab school. He went to school with [inaudible: 13:19:52] children at the Lab school.

P: Who go?

H: With Levi, Levi Jr.

P: Oh yeah.

H: Why'd you look so young there Elaine? Miss Steele, I'm sorry.

P: Why, did she look young?

H: In that picture with you.

U: I don't look young now.

H: Yeah, I mean you look like a preppy, you look like a preppy in that one.

U: I was dressed in a honky dress.

[Laughter]

P: Who's that lady though? I know that lady.

P: Miss um...

- H: I know that name, what was in that picture... next to you.
- P: Well I know her too and I don't know why I can't call it but...
- H: I know she's a Delta because I was on the stage with her. She's from New York, or what? I'm trying to figure out where I know her from. Where is she from, is it New York?
- U: Baltimore.
- H: Her home is Baltimore?
- U: Oh, I don't know.
- H: But where is she from?
- P: But she was active in the NAACP and was at the dedication of the opening of that new building in Baltimore. They bought this new building and left New York completely, headquarters of the NAACP.
- H: Do I know her from New York, though, that's what I kinda fearing.
- P: Could be.
- H: Cause I was over, I was on the board of directors of the-
- U: She is a very active, civic girl-
- H: Was she Manhattan NAACP, Manhattan president?
- P: She was, she is a president, of something about the NAACP, but I don't know whether it's the Manhattan...
- U: We could call Levi and find out who she is.
- H: No, no. But I do want to know who she is cause I know her, I mean-
- U: You think... it starts with an e, I know that.
- P: Is that her last name, starts with e-
- U: No, it's her first name.
- P: Can't think of who, Enola...
- H: See, being an English professor you say Enola, and I start thinking about the Enola Gay which was about the plane that dropped the atomic bomb.

P: It's e something.

H: [inaudible: 13:22:11] I'm still dealing with Esau-

P: Well, I just have to remember.

H: But that was at where, in his house, in-

P: No, that was in the Hotel Belvedere. An old hotel in Kokomo.

H: That old hotel, that old world hotel, the old European style one that-

P: Uh huh, and see it has rooms in it, it was once a residence. So Eli was a, Levi-

H: Levi-

P: I was about to say Eli I guess I found my-

H: Esau, yeah you're confused, yeah yeah-

P: No, I was thinking when I said Eli's name about Septima [Clark] and her Eli and Nerie her son, and grand, her son, but... she was-

H: I'm sorry that I never met her, I mean everybody talks about her.

P: Uh huh, she's gone away now.

H: The women, the women really um, aside from you that would be really styling is Clark. So amazing. We talked about that, I don't want to, we talked about why women were able to do things and black men were not able to do. And we know we want to make your book a tome. Black women getting arrested. You give me all these looks, I love your looks.

P: You talking to her [laughing].

H: No I'm talking... we're just rambling, you never know what comes out of my head until you really tell me I can't say it. Um, but I've always been fascinated by that because even in CORE when I ended up with those guys, cause SCLC and SNCC wasn't crazy about me.

[Laughter]

H: I mean, they really were, I mean they were preachers, they are, we used to think they are all Sigmas you know. Kappas and Alphas always thought that the Civil Rights Movement was run by the preachers and we were always taking it to be Sigma, primarily Sigma. The interesting thing is-

- P: What about the uh, that man in Louisiana, the deacon's beacon, yes.
- H: Oh, Kirkpatrick? [Laughs] Kirkpatrick is in Hawaii. [Laughs] Do you know that?
- P: No, I didn't know him personally but just read about him.
- H: Yeah, Kirkpatrick went-
- P: I didn't get to [inaudible: 13:24:42]-
- H: Hawaii, he went to paradise, after he'd been beaten up down there in cockamamie parish or wherever it at. What's his name, Elando Perez, the man who ran... you talking about Hughie Long, but Elando Perez who ran cockamamie parish which is where the electric chair is for black folks, did you know that? Cause there is only one electric chair in Louisiana and that's for black folk. [Chuckles] It's true. I mean, white folks don't get the electric chair because they have what they call Napoleonic justice.
- U: Well-
- H: Kathy, Kathy, I was going to say Kathy can tell you. She went to LSU law school. It's Napoleonic justice. And she's having a difficult time passing the, she's passed the bar here and in New York and in Maine, but she can't pass in Louisiana.
- U: She said she's waiting-
- H: And she went to law school in Louisiana. And she's mad at me because I'm supposed to come down, to celebrate her taking the test with her. And I said I'm only gonna come down if you pass it. And that upset her, I shouldn't have said that to her.
- P: Um hmm.
- H: I should have said, yes I will come down and she probably would have passed it. But this is second time she's taken it, she got one more time. But blacks and women can't make it in Louisiana easily, forget it. And... I mean, I'd love to see Ernest Morial and all those guys making it positive in Louisiana but the Cajuns still run that state.
- P: Um hmm. Yeah I remember meeting him when I was in Louisiana.
- H: So what do you think of Miss Clark like women doing this spearheads, I mean, of the Civil Rights Movement aside from the fact of their being activists but in terms of firm fundraising.

P: When I think about how successful that they have been?

H: Um, in terms of courage, I think of courage-

P: Courage-

H: I'm thinking about black women's rights. I'm thinking about all the Deltas I knew, who taught me at Alabama State. One thing about all the black women who were outspoken in the civil rights movement, um. I think if you would ask me, if you would ask me the same question I would say that I would know more women who were civil rights activists than-

P: Than men-

H: Yeah, than men [long pause].

P: Well, it is... of course going back, to, I guess you say the late thirties and even earlier days, to the early thirties, the late thirties I've always... I really didn't know that many women who were involved in it, I wasn't that much involved myself, being rather young then. But when you turn to the late forties and fifties and sixties and women became more vocal. I know when you're trying to get registered to vote we had our voters meetings. We didn't have... As I remember when I first joined the NAACP and became a secretary, there were two women who attended meetings and that was Joanie Car and me for the most part. Once in a while Mrs. Nixon may go to some special meetings. She wasn't a regular, just kept it with me cause he was always on the scene. And Mr. Nixon [laughs], I'd be working hard trying to get things out for him, trying to get articles out, sending letters and then he'd say women don't need to be nowhere but in the kitchen.

H: Oh that was the old attitude, that's old attitude. But when I think about what I know about civil rights and what I know about rights-

P: In your days it wasn't women-

H: Yeah, it was me.

P: As the time came on... And the only woman that I knew-

H: Well I think about who taught me English, I think about who taught me writing, and I think about who taught me consciousness, in fact, it was unfair. They were women, men never said anything but play football, but play in the band. I mean, you know...

P: Oh, that was at school.

H: Yeah, I mean at school, I mean my whole life in terms of my consciousness.

P: Of what the real world is like-

H: What the real world was like-

P: And what it was like to be in the South-

H: Yes, I could learn all of that from women. My mother, I mean you haven't heard me say very much about what my father has taught me. My father taught me about putting money in your pocket and turning it back and letting everybody know what's in your hand. And my mama taught me all the things I know about humanity and... It's true, and my father was here the other night and my father walks in and it was the first time he had been in this house; he's in the other house. My father walked in the house and he said, "Hard work." [Laughter] "You did it all by yourself did you?" And I look at him one time, and I said no Pops, I said, you helped. He said, "Yes that's true." My mother would have whopped him, my mother would have said, you have arrived haven't you? [laughter] You know, so, I mean I vacillate even in my consciousness at my age between how do I respond to my father. I've always responded to my mother out of emotion, my father I've got to respond to out of thought. I mean, one has to think about what it is because he takes the credit for something he didn't do. Well yeah. I'm gonna tear this tape up because I don't want this on my life story.

P: [Laughing] He's tearing me too-

H: No, I've got it. It's in my hand, don't worry. Even if someone told me, today is the day...

[tape ends, side two]

P: Well the war ended-

H: War I, yeah?

P: Yeah. And the Yankees, well they called all them people Yankees. And they... and that was getting some used to hearing them talking about the Yankees coming through. And at the end of the slavery, and people didn't know that they were free until somebody told them. And the Emancipation Proclamation and all that. And then by the time I was old enough to realize that we actually were not free was right around the end of World War I, when the Klansmen were riding through communities and burning churches and killing people, beating up people. And you could hear about it. The time when my grandfather and my mother's

father would have a shotgun close by at all times, a single barrel. I think he had a double barrel gun.

H: Double up! Double up.

P: Yeah, but I think he had a double barrel gun and he kept it close by, he was talking about just in case the Klans would frequent our house, we had to not undress to go to bed, just keep your clothes on whatever you were wearing. And my mother's sister had after her husband's death, he was over in Opelika somewhere, in one of the counties above,-

H: Opelika yeah, I was up there, yeah.

P: It was Lee county and...

H: Neal township-

P: Well, I didn't ever go up there but that was where they were living but after he passed they had these small children... Where am I? Oh, this cousin was-

H: Are most your people from north Alabama?

P: No, from south of there. But she went up there cause she married her husband [inaudible: 13:34:50] They were from, I guess you say from the mid part of Alabama around Montgomery, Montgomery County and Raymer and [inaudible: 13:35:00]. Well my mother went to Tuscaloosa and got married.

H: Cause Opelika is way up, Opelika is way up near Columbus, near La Fayette, Lanett-

P: Uh huh, well that was where my mother's oldest sister was living-

H: But your mother isn't from up there.

P: No, no. My mother is from Pine Level. She was born in Pine Level. In Montgomery County-

H: And your grandmother? I mean-

P: My grandmother was too. And my grandfather was too. And my great-grandfather on my um-

H: How'd y'all get educated in there?

P: Mother's side was, they called him a Scotch-Irishman-

H: You Scotch-Irish...

- P: They came through South Carolina, and was brought down there and was in-
- H: Have you traced your family? Back to-
- P: We been working on-
- H: South Carolina-
- P: No, I haven't gone that far yet but-
- H: It could be Charleston you know.
- P: But he was brought over on a ship, when they used to bring them through in-
- H: Triangle favored-
- P: He um-
- H: Traded them for sugar- they came south-
- P: But he was white though, he was not black. He came from Ireland or England or something-
- H: But your mother must be, your great-grandmother must of have been black in Charleston-
- P: Yeah, but my great-grandmother didn't come from there. She came from down to Pine Level. But he met her there, after they-
- H: How'd she get up there?
- P: From Pine Level? I guess she was just another slave. Her family name is Level. But I don't know anything about her being traded or being transferred at all. But uh, there maybe some history of it because she was an unmixed African as far as I know.
- H: Unmixed?
- P: African. Not mixed up with whiteness, but my great-grandfather's not mixed with black. And they were married and had, and started a family before freedom was declared. And then of course my grandfather was a son of the plantation owner. And um, his mother was the house girl that never went to the field. I guess she was probably octaroon or whatever they call them, so close to white. His father was white but he was treated very badly and was mistreated after his owner's death and his mother's death. I think she died first. And he was very young. He remembered her but he didn't live to see her after he was any size makes, and

not too long after her death was that, a man that was named John Edwards who died and after he's dead, this overseer who's named Babel, last name was Babel, took over and of course he disliked my grandfather so much, he just beat him all the time. And he said, I used to hear my grandfather say that, when he was small the only food that he remember getting as a small child was when some of the people working the kitchen would slip some bread or something inside the clothes, in the bosom. And would give him like that. He really wasn't, they tried to starve him and they tried to do everything to him. And so he really had a very... a very um, intense and passionate hatred for white people. And um, he, the one thing he wanted never to see any of his children, uh, anybody related to him have to work as, what do they call it? In servitude, doing the house and cleaning and all like that for the whites. Of course, and I suppose that is the reason he wanted his children to be educated. But my mother's oldest sister was several years her senior, and she got grown and just left and went on to Montgomery. She didn't go off to school too, but she went into domestic work. Even though she herself didn't have any use for white people either. But she worked in the field. The second sister on that book, I think that she died. And then when my mother was in her teen years, was when I guess he got enough money or whatever he could together to send her off to school or to take her. I guess he took her really. He took her down to Payne Institute in Selma and then of course she went to Montgomery.

H: Okay, that's three more go to Payne now, as far as you went right where I wanted you to go.

P: Yeah.

H: Now I'm going to tell you a story about my family and Payne College. What is it Payne?

P: They call it Payne University-

H: Payne University-

P: But I don't think it was-

U: In Augusta?

H: No, no. Selma, Alabama.

P: But Selma Alabama is where my mother went and the school was Payne [Daniel Payne College, affiliated with AME church].

H: See, cause, you know we gonna discover we're all going insane in about twenty minutes. [Laughter] My mother's family, though they were from Arkansas, were part of the land of Smith School. Now my mother had my mother's mother, my grandmother's mother-

U: Your great-grandmother-

H: My great-grandmother had a brother named Blue Carter. Blue Carter. He was one of the original founders of Payne, and so. And I'll tell you right now, Nell Carter is from southern Alabama. She doesn't know she's my relative. Um, lived on the St. Phillips Street. And we're talking Presbyterian church I think, probably, Payne was Presbyterian wasn't it?

P: I don't know if it-

H: Methodist-

P: Was one of the AME schools at that time-

H: I think it started out Presbyterian-

P: It could have-

H: But it ended up being Methodist, but they broke away, um they broke away. Cause my mother's, my grandfather, my great-grandfather was an AME Methodist. I told you how I got to be Catholic, cause my mother was a Methodist AME and decided that was the best education I could get. Do you know in Selma, my brother was at one time vice-president of Selma University-

P: There's a Selma University-

H: Yeah Selma University-

P: And then there was a Payne, I think in Selma-

H: In Selma, right.

P: Selma was a Baptist-

H: There are a lot of black Paynes by the way, in Atlanta and they are from Selma. And uh, they are working east too, which is interesting. And most of them went to Xaxier too, which also takes you back to Broad Street and, you know Mt. Zion?

P: Zion?

- H: Yeah, part of Zion. Father Zachary was, which was... don't tell me, don't tell me, my mother died in that hospital... I want to say St. Elizabeth but this was Chicago. Saint, off Broad Street, what's that Catholic hospital you got, tell me, I'm going crazy.
- P: Is that in uh-
- H: The Catholic hospital in Selma, off a Broad Street.
- P: I don't know anything about that hospital down there, I guess I just never even knew-
- H: But anyway, the Paynes and the Carters, I'm trying to dig out too much history, that's the reason you on overload...
- P: Uh huh.
- H: I'm trying to dig out too much history. But anyway, my mother-
- P: Were you ever related to anyone name Nobles? Cause that was my great-grandmother's maiden name.
- H: Spelled N-o-b-l-e?
- P: No, I think they put an s on the end of it.
- H: Oh, back to Jeannie Nobles?
- P: Well, I don't know but that was my great-grandmother's maiden name.
- H: The Halls?
- P: I can't remember any Halls, but Harrison Nobles, uh some other Nobles and they were my grandmother's uncle, cause he lived in Montgomery, was a well digger.
- H: The Hendersons, Fanny and the Hendersons?
- P: I knew some Hendersons one time in Maryland. There's Sally Henderson, but so did you get some of your information-
- H: They are very white, very white and very fair.
- P: No, these were very black and unmixed and weren't white folks mixed in all the Hendersons that I am thinking of now.
- H: Okay, these are the folks, some blacks from um- fair, Fanny Henderson-

P: They were very good looking people.

H: She was a midwife.

P: My great-grandmother was. A midwife, but her name was Mary, Mary Jane Percival. Because that was my great-grandfather's name and his name was... he belonged to some white people named Reitz in the Pine Level but they never changed his name from Percival which I guess he brought with him from the old country, Europe. And, but he was always a Percival and never took on the name of the white master. While my grandfather was born in the Edwards family so he was an Edwards.

[Long pause]

P: And while I try think of that, after the slavery was ended in and the folks right down there found out they were free, that's when my great-grandfather built that little table with my grandmother who was his oldest child at the age of six, helping with pine knot and lard last for him to fix it at night so he and his family could have something to eat on. Even though he hadn't done that work for the white people, him making furniture and things like that, but he... I suppose was using that too, but without any tools at all but just a hammer and a gimlet and-

H: A what? A gimlet?

P: A gimlet is little something light that you bore little holes in wood and instead of having nails, he was sharpening a little piece of wood, done kind of small and put it in there as a peg.

H: Yes! [Laughter]

P: And so that is how he put the table together, as one solid plank of wood. But I still have that.

H: And he solded it, did you know the Rogers?

P: Rogers...

H: They what owned the grocery store on 1st Avenue? Pete Rogers? Rogers' Grocery Store?

P: I don't think, I can't remember too much out of this. Persons I remember most in Selma was the Boyntons. Amelia Boynton.

H: Yes.

- P: I remember her and her husband and Miss Anna May Boynton, and then there were some Youngs that I met in later years. I was at their house in 1941 when the... Pearl Harbor was bombed. That was where I was. The place, the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor and we were visiting in Selma that day.
- H: Were you in Selma, Alabama in 1941 when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor-
- P: That's where I was. At the house of a man named Jim Young. Cause a Mr. Kelly-
- H: Carpenters and architects?
- P: I don't know what-
- H: Build buildings, construction people-
- P: He could have been, but he was an older man and I think he was retired. And he had two daughters. And one of them was named-
- H: [Inaudible: 13:49:09] cause they ended up in Demopolis. If they are the same ones who were construction people. I'm not trying to make a Demopolis, Haskins, what I'm trying to do is... to find out how entrenched your family was in terms of other black families in Alabama who were part of the liberation struggle. Cause my family seems to go all the way back to being subversives and on my mother's side, and they came from Arkansas. On my daddy's side, they could care less. I'm not trying to vindicate my mother but what I'm trying to find out is the female side of activism. And I think that's part of your story too. I mean, I really do think it's women who's done this. I mean, I really do. So if you think about the way I'm digressing in this process, don't think it's in search of me, cause I generally know where I am. I'm just trying to find out the tone, the voice here, because it seems to be always a female link. I mean, I discovered... That's why most of the books I've been doing in the last ten years have been women. It's funny, I got hooked, on what I'm interested in... it keeps going to women, it never goes to men. Now I've got another hook which is the book that I just finished, with Lionel [Lionel Hampton] and that still takes me back to Alabama but it's a man and Dina Washington took me to Lionel and I always thought Lionel had come from Chicago and he's not, he's from Birmingham, Alabama.
- U: Well, I-
- H: And it's interesting what happens here is always that women keeps coming back in terms of the progress of the race. And I know that's not your story, but it part of the story, and when I think of it, what happening in Alabama, it's women, it's women, it's women against the odds, who have made those differences. Truly in terms of... and not just saying, "Mother of the Movement." There's a mother of

the mother of the mother of the mother and if I can make that connection because some Alabamans very important particularly when we talk, start talking about that march.

P: Um hmm.

H: Cause even if you didn't participate, see you got roots there. I mean if you still on the sidelines, then it makes it come join us. At St. Jude, you know, that last four miles. If you didn't do from Selma to Montgomery, you had roots there. Payne, you know. Do you see what I'm saying-

P: Yes, I went to uh, Montgomery (I was living in, I had moved to Detroit, Michigan) to participate in that last lap of the march. And I see so many young in the short while I had been out of Alabama, so many young people had grown up and they didn't know who I was or they could care less because they didn't know me. And they just keep putting me out of the march. So I finally got back in anyway, and went on downtown and that was... What I remember most about that day until we got down to the thing, at the, you know, down to the capitol and stood in front of the capitol building and those very hostile-

H: Is this the march of [19]60-

P: [19]65.

H: That's good. Ralph Bunche-

P: Yeah, yeah-

H: Cause I've got that picture with Roy-

P: Roy Wilkins-

H: Martin, Coretta-

P: Abernathy and Juanita, we all went on one line together when the picture was published in Ebony [*Ebony* May 1965]. There were others too. At that particular point someone did tell me come up to the front, we were in downtown Montgomery then.

H: I tell people all the time, this is only because I know this for a fact, that you know that Ralph Bunche is from Montgomery?

P: I knew his wife was.

H: His wife was-

P: Uh huh.

H: People think he was born in Albuquerque or-

P: No, and his wife was one of those very fair women whose father, grandfather or somebody was white and kept getting put in jail. They said, I think she was the one. Must have been her great-grandparents or grandparents, right after reconstruction and they were brought by the Jim Crow laws and were arresting people for staying together and all. And so somebody used to, a woman used to visit us said everytime this particular man would get put in jail for having a black, well, she wasn't black, she was light too-

H: She was lighter than you-

P: Oh yeah. She could pass very easily. And soon as they'd release him from jail, he'd go right back home to his wife and he said they couldn't build any jail that was going keep him away from his wife and children. [Laughs] So I think they just gave up and didn't bother him anymore. I didn't know for certain about Ralph Bunche and [inaudible: 13:55:08], they must have met-

H: His family moved back to Alabama but his family is from there.

P: Uh huh. I've always heard that his wife was from, his wife's family was. I don't know where she was even born down there or not-

H: No-

P: But the family was-

H: The family was.

U: Back you know, when you were asking Mrs. Parks to trace her lineage, what I had heard is, is that her grandfather's, the atrocities that he suffered under, and the beatings as a youngster added to-

P: Not have shoes to wear, that was my mother's father

U: Yeah, your mother's father, and he passing that-

P: On to his children-

U: On to his children, he was... your mother-

P: My mother-

U: And you see-

P: and my aunt Fanny-

U: Right, and see all of that, but you know, it came from him you know, and that built that courage, you know that the entire family possessed-

H: Well, Ms. Parks gonna have to tell me about courage. [Laughter] I'll verify it.

P: But my mother-

H: My god, you two are something in this morning, okay-

P: And she was really independent-

U: You were saying it came from women and it did come directly from women, but you know, that it was her grandfather that really... you know. He was the one that stirred that feeling. And no sir, you don't take anything from anybody.

P & H: Uh huh.

U: And I'm thinking that it's been passed down emotionally, it's passed down in genes, it's so forth and so on.

P: Uh huh. Well my grandmother had I guess you say she was, had her courage in a different way. Because after she was, after you know, she knew she was freed and so on, she lived in a house with a very right family. You know, the ones that... because they had a small child that they wanted her to take care of and she lived in the house with them. From the time she was about, I guess six or seven or so, large enough to take care of a small child, and that was with a woman. The woman was, name of Zula. So she, why she worked around the house looking after this child and I guess, I don't know how much work she did in the kitchen. She may not have too much time to work in the field. See my grandfather's at the particular time going to all types of punishment, he is being mistreated very badly. But when they got together and married, she was, I guess, the most... I guess you would say the most-

U: Calm-

P: Calm one. And he was, they say he was very emotional and he was very, being very white he took every bit of advantage of it as he could, to embarrass as many white folks as he could when they thought he was white. [Laughs] And he was always doing or saying something that would embarrass or agitate them. And he seemed to just be that kind of person. And, so, how he survived with what, as they say, with being very outspoken, and they say talking big talk and saying... I don't know, unless it was because he was so white and so much one of them that they... And I guess being crippled too, because he was always, from a very

young, I don't know how old he was when he became crippled, with what they call arth- rheumatism then. Couldn't hardly wear any shoes and sometimes he couldn't walk at all. Sometimes he could and sometimes he couldn't. I'm still trying to think it was from... So um-

U: I am remembering your mother and how outspoken she was, and then-

H: Did you, did you meet her?

U: Yes-

P: Yes, Mom... [laughs] she was-

U: She was just opposite from Mrs. Parks-

H: Mrs. Parks, actually see I'm starting to smoke Mrs. Parks out. See I wanna know where this business about, my feets is tired but my soul's at rest-

P: But I didn't say that! Other people have said it! I never told anybody yet-

H: I know, I can't find it, that's why um, that's-

P: [Laughing] People have said that-

H: That's-

U: That's one thing that we are trying-

P: They have-

H: Yeah, I know, I know that!

P: You know that expression came from, it seem that there was some woman, an elderly woman when they would be testifying in the mass meetings, in the sanctum in the church, she would say, "My soul is rested... my feets tired but my soul is rested." So somebody supposed to say it like that. But I never did in all of my interviews, tell anyone that my feet were hurting or that my feet were tired. That I was-

H: Go ahead-

P: Had something-

H: I'm listening-

P: No they didn't want to. Why I think it was deceiving people who couldn't... like, respond better about their feet.

- H: People just could not think of why you were a crazy nigger Mrs. Parks!
- P: Yeah. [laughing]
- H: And then you have sat there, after you a crazy nigger why weren't you scared? I mean, I know about the other stuff but your feet weren't tired and your soul wasn't rested?
- P: No. [Laughing]
- H: You just was tired.
- P: Well, I had had so much trouble from many bus drivers-
- H: I got that.
- P: And I felt that, as when they told me saying, like y'all make it lighter on yourselves and didn't let me have a seat. Well I could not see where it was making it any lighter. The more we gave in and comply, the worse they treated us. Well I knew, they going all the way back to the time when I sat up all night and didn't sleep when my grandfather was poor, had his gun right by the fireplace and wherever he was, or if he had a little one horse wagon to go anywhere he always had his gun in the body of the wagon. Now those are two things that would never away from him as long as he was able to get them. He took his horse and bugle and whatever he was driving to that little wagon, his shotgun was always in the body of it. He just kept it like that.

[End of interview]

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