

Transcript of a recorded interview with Miss Gloria Clark, 30 March 1992

The following is an unrehearsed taped interview with Miss Gloria Clark. The interview was conducted at the James Lane Allen School Computer Lab in Lexington, Kentucky on the 30th of March, 1992. The interview was conducted by A.G. Dunston, History Department, Eastern Kentucky University, Richmond, Kentucky.

AD: I am with Gloria Clark today. I am going to do an interview with her. Does she need you? Oh, okay. An interview with Miss Clark. And since we are at Lane Allen School, I need to find out something about your current life. What is it you do here?

GC: I m a computer lab attendant. I run a computer lab for kindergarten through fifth grade students and they come in twice a week for twenty minutes a session and they work on reading and math as a supplement. It targets where they really need work on in certain areas of reading and math.

AD: Are you . . . How did you get to become computer literate yourself?

GC: We had a training, and we have training every month.

AD: For you to go to?

GC: For each one of us. We have 32 lab attendants in this, well, lab schools, in Fayette County. Elementary lab attendants.

AD: Okay, well, I know you re from Richmond. Don t they have the same kind of program in Richmond?

GC: Uh, I don t know. I found out about this through a friend of mine that works with the Fayette County school systems and she told me about this about four years ago.

AD: So, when you started, you didn t know . . .

GC: Type. I couldn t pass typing in school and everything is on the job training and they stay up on the training monthly.

AD: Oh, okay, okay. How long have you been doing this?

GC: I m in my fourth year. This is my fourth year.

AD: So, you come here every day?

GC: Mmm-hmm, Monday through Friday.

AD: Alright, I happen to know something else about you. When you leave here, you go back to Richmond.

GC: Yes, ma'am.

AD: Okay. Tell us what that is. What waits for you in terms of work when you get back to Richmond?

GC: I have a beauty salon, Gloria's Hair. I have operated it for about 15 years and I work there on Wednesday, Thursday, and Fridays when I leave here from 5 to 9 and on Saturdays, all day.

AD: All day on Saturday? Okay. Is that what you came out of school wanting to do, was to . . . um. . . be a beautician for yourself?

GC: Cosmetology? Yes, ma'am.

AD: Did you come out with a degree in cosmetology?

GC: We have to attend a cosmetology school. Where I attended was Central Kentucky Vocational on Leestown Road, and it was a two year. We had to take a state board test in Louisville at that time for our apprenticeship license and then we had to work under a hairdresser for six months, and then go back and receive our permit license. So, we have to take two different types of tests.

AD: Okay. Is this your shop?

GC: This is my salon. Mmm-hmm.

AD: Is it?

GC: Yes, ma'am.

AD: Alright then, let's back up a bit. You are from Richmond?

GC: Mmm-hmm.

AD: How long have you lived in Richmond?

GC: Thirty-six years. All my life.

AD: Have you? You were born . . . Where you born in Richmond?

GC: Mmm-hmm, born and raised here.

AD: So, Gloria Clark. Is Clark your maiden or married name?

GC: It s my maiden name.

AD: Clark is your maiden name.

GC: Yes.

AD: Okay. Let s talk about . . . Were you born in a hospital? Were you born in a home?

GC: Mmm-hmm. I was born at Pattie A. Clay Hospital, December 1, 1955, which happened to be the same day that sister Rosa Parks took the stand. Uh-huh, the same day.

AD: Was it?

GC: Uh-huh.

AD: Okay.

GC: She is one of my idols, because she stood up so I could sit down where I wanted to.

AD: Okay. What s your middle name?

GC: Darlene.

AD: So, it s Gloria Darlene Clark?

GC: Mmm-hmm.

AD: Okay. How about your parents? What was your mother s name?

GC: My mom s name is Gloria May Clark. I m named after my mom.

AD: Okay. What was her maiden name?

GC: Uh, Ballard, Gloria Ballard.

AD: So, she s a Ballard from Madison County?

GC: Mm-hmm. Yes, ma am.

AD: And your father?

GC: Is Sidney Thomas Clark. He s deceased.

AD: Is he?

GC: Yes, ma'am.

AD: Okay. When did he die?

GC: Two years ago, June.

AD: Oh. Okay.

GC: It has been two years, but they were separated.

AD: When your father died?

GC: So, we were raised with him.

AD: As a family unit?

GC: Right.

AD: Okay. Do you have any brothers or sisters?

GC: Yes, I've got two brothers and four sisters, and a niece and two nephews.

AD: Okay. Let's talk about . . . let's talk about Mom. Born in Madison County?

GC: Mmm-hmm.

AD: Born in Richmond?

GC: Yes, ma'am.

AD: Okay. Father born there?

GC: He was born in Berea, Madison County, in Berea, Kentucky.

AD: Okay. Your mother is still living?

GC: Yes, ma'am.

AD: Okay. Do you ever talk about her parents? Who were her parents?

GC: Her mother is still living. Her father is not living. Yes, my mom's mother is still living.

AD: Is still living?

GC: Yeah.

AD: Okay, what is her name?

GC: Lillian Walker.

AD: Lillian Walker?

GC: Mmm-hmm.

AD: Okay, Walker was your mom s . . . ?

GC: My grandmother s married name is Walker. She was a Maupin.

AD: Is she from Madison County?

GC: Uh-huh. Madison County.

AD: Is she vocal? Is she able to speak? Is she is able to talk?

GC: Yes. Yes.

AD: Would she talk to me?

GC: Yes.

AD: So, she would be about . . . ?

GC: Well, my grandmother says that she is 77, but she is really 80 going on 81.

AD: Okay.

GC: Because somewhere her records and all, and when you go back to her birth date, she is really 80 and, I think, she will be 81 in May. The 30th of May.

AD: The 30th of May?

GC: Mmm-hmm.

AD: Okay. When is your mother s birthday?

GC: February 11th.

AD: Do you know the year she was born?

GC: 1933.

AD: And your grandmother was born May 30th, and . . .

GC: I think Momma said 1912.

AD: 1912?

GC: I think that s what she told me.

AD: That would make it about right.

GC: Uh-huh. I think she said 1912.

AD: Eighty or eighty-one, uh-huh. About 1912. Yeah, because Miss Curry is 80.

GC: Uh-huh.

AD: And I think she said 1911. So, it would be . . .

GC: Okay, her and my grandmother are just a few months or something difference in their ages.

AD: Oh, okay, okay. Because I would like to talk to her. Because you know she has a memory of things that went on before your momma grew up and before you grew up. Okay. What did your mom do? Did she work outside the house?

GC: Uh-huh. My mother did house work. There were six of us and my mom would work one job during the day, and then she would come home and fix dinner for us and then go back and fix dinner where she worked there at. I remember . . . the earliest I remember is three jobs, and

AD: All in service work?

GC: Yeah. And my mom always instilled in us responsibility and nothing in this world was given to you. And, even we came up and started working and we always gave money at home because nothing is free. Everything costs something.

AD: Okay.

GC: She s my idol too.

AD: Is she?

GC: She instilled a whole lot and she did it one parent.

AD: Okay.

GC: You know.

AD: Yeah. So, she raised all six by herself?

GC: Yeah.

AD: You said she had three jobs. Was it like, one day is with one, with each white family?

GC: Uh-huh. There were white families that she would clean. There was a family - the McPherson s, McPierson s and she would clean, say maybe to 2 or 3 o'clock. She'd leave there, go across the street to the Norris and do something. She'd clean. And then, she would come home, tend to us, and then she would go back to the McPherson s and fix their dinner in the evening. And, a matter of fact, she quit one job or I think she quit that job or threatened to quit it because we were having a play at school and that was something that she was always strong about, being there for us especially at school. She told one of the families that she worked for that she had to be off because we were in a play. And there was a big ruckus about that, and I don't remember . . . I remember she was at the play.

AD: Okay.

GC: I don't remember how she got there as far as her job or not, but that was important.

AD: Okay. What kind of work did your grandmother do? Did she work outside the home?

GC: I don't remember. My grandmother said she used to work in a restaurant, but I don't remember a lot about my grandmother. I don't remember a lot.

AD: Okay.

GC: I mean, I stayed with her though when I was maybe 1 and off and on until about 5 years old, until I started school. I was kind of back and forth. She spoiled me a lot.

AD: Okay. Go ahead. I'm sorry.

GC: I'm through. I'm finished.

AD: Okay. Let's talk about the siblings and then we will talk about school a little bit more. Um, there are six of them.

GC: Mmm-hmm.

AD: How many boys? How many girls?

GC: Okay. The youngest is a boy. His name is Tony Ranier Clark and he works at the Okonite Cable Company and, uh. . .

AD: Can you tell us where that is?

GC: It s in Richmond, Madison County. And I have a sister, Sheila Bernice Clark, and Sheila is married and she lives here in Lexington, Kentucky. Sheila Bernice Rush is her married name.

AD: Okay.

GC: And, I have Opael Novelia Clark. She works . . .

AD: Start over.

GC: Opael Novelia. N-O-V-E-L-I-A. Novelia.

AD: And the first name is Opael?

GC: Opael. O-P-A-E-L.

AD: Opael.

GC/

AD: Novelia.

GC: Clark.

AD: Okay, where is she?

GC: She works at the University of Kentucky in housekeeping here in Lexington, and then my oldest sister is Sidonia Carol Clark.

AD: Sedo . S-E-D . .

GC: S-I-D.

AD: S-I-D-O-N . .

GC: I-A.

AD: Okay.

GC: Sidonia Carol Clark, and she works at Exide Factory in Richmond.

AD: Okay.

GC: And, my oldest brother is Thomas Monroe Clark, and he doesn't work at all. Butch is . . . His nickname is Butch. Butch is 40 or 41 years old. He has emotional, I won't say mental, because it's not. It's an emotional disorder.

AD: Okay.

GC: Then, I have a niece, Paula Denise Clark. She is . . .

AD: Whose child is that?

GC: That's Sidonia's daughter. She works at . . . She attends Eastern Kentucky University, and then, I have my oldest nephew, which is Opael's son, Daniel Scott Clark, and he attends Bellevue Elementary School.

AD: In?

GC: In Richmond.

AD: Okay.

GC: Then, my youngest brother's son, Tony's son, is Tevon Onne Clark.

AD: On?

GC: Onne. O-N-N-E. And, Tevon is a 1-1/2 going on 50+50 (laughter).

AD: (Laughter) You said Tevon Onne. A?

GC: O-N-N-E. Onne.

AD: Where are these names coming from?

GC: I have no idea. I have no idea.

AD: When you, um, you graduated from high school?

GC: Mmm-hmm. Madison. Richmond Madison High School in 1973.

AD: Okay. So, you spent what years there, 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th?

GC: Uh-huh. The high school years and then I graduated from junior high, elementary, and junior high from Richard Junior High School where Miss Curry was a teacher.

AD: Okay. She taught you while you were there?

GC: She taught . . . Yes.

AD: Okay. That s the same one that is located now on, what is it, First? No, Main Street.

GC: On Main Street. It s now the Telford YMCA Building.

AD: Right. Okay. Okay. So, you went to Richmond when it was a junior high school.

GC: That s right. Elementary and junior high.

AD: I told you the other day, you know, before we had the conversation that, as it started taping, that I had picked up your name because you were instrumental in designing certain kinds of programs, or somebody told me you were. The NAACP gave an appreciation banquet, explain that. I don t, I don t really get it. I don t know what happened.

GC: The NAACP appreciation banquet . Switch it for just a moment.
(PAUSE)

AD: I was asking . . . I was saying to you that the students seem to treat you as a teacher and they bring you all kinds of things and you replied that . . .

GC: Students or the children here need a lot more than the teachers have time to give them. They need a hug. They need somebody to talk to.

AD: Okay.

GC: They need to be fussed at in a loving way, and they need to know if it s something bothering them they can come to me. I will fuss at them and they know that, but it is okay. You know, I mean . . .

AD: Yet, I noticed how you handled them. I also noticed how strict you are. .

GC: You have to be.

AD: When they are on and when they leave the machine, what they have to do, and . . .

GC: Responsibility.

AD: Yeah, uh-huh.

GC: We were taught that . . . I was taught that growing up and it s something that has been instilled in me and it didn t hurt me, you know. I see a lot of kids today that have no

responsibilities, they expect a lot, and they get too much.

AD: Okay.

GC: We didn't have a lot, didn't expect a lot, but we had the basics and the things that I think that'll carry you through life.

AD: That's what I wanted . . . Before we get to the appreciation dinner. . . Did you know how much money, when you were growing up, when the six of you were growing up, did you understand how much money Momma was not making?

GC: Yeah.

AD: Did you notice?

GC: Yeah. I knew because when, when, as far as clothes, we were all close enough where we could share clothes, you know. I had no problem with that. A lot of people gave us clothes. My mom bought us some clothes also. (Voice in background) Okay. Thank you. And she bought us clothes also, but we knew not to ask for things, and I think maybe I got more, and my momma will tell you this today that I got more than most of the children. I think because I was more outgoing. I was more determined, but I was a different kind of child too. I was a stubborn child. I was more of an aggressive child, I guess you would say.

AD: Okay.

GC: We didn't ask for things because we saw what Mom was doing. We saw her work three jobs.

AD: Mmm-hmm.

GC: So, there was no problem. We got love, you know. That was the most important thing.

AD: Yeah, you got love and you got to eat.

GC: Never went to bed a night hungry in my life, you know. I had clothes, you know.

AD: Okay.

GC: But the basics and most important things, we had, you know.

AD: Okay.

GC: I think a lot of kids lack today. They do not have the love, but they got the dollar bills. They got the material things.

AD: Mmm-hmm, but they don't have that that . . .

GC: In my opinion. That's just in my opinion.

AD: So, that's why you handle them like you do. Cause, you know, when they were in here, a couple of them, you know, you go by and just touch them or whatever.

GC: They need that and, and some of the kids, they'll say, Come on, Sister G or Miss G. In Sunday School, my kids used to call me Sister G, but some of them here call me Miss G or Girlfriend, but it's give me my hug of love. The little boy, Keith, that just left, is a child that came from Dayton, and his father is raising him. He comes from a home where his mom is like, dealing in drugs, and he was in a bad . . . you know, when I first hugged him, he looked at me like What's wrong with you? Now, when he leaves, he'll say, Miss G, I love you. Never could say that before, never could hug before, but now he can do it.

AD: Okay. Before we get back to that. . . Um, Sunday School? Where do you attend?

GC: I attend at Mount Nebo Baptist Church. I just recently moved my membership there in Madison County, Richmond.

AD: Mount Nebo?

GC: Mount Nebo Baptist Church.

AD: Where is that?

GC: It's off of old 25. You turn off of old 25, the old road to Lexington on to Jack's Creek, and go down. It's a little country church.

AD: N-E-B-O?

GC: Mmm-hmm. Nebo. N-E-B-O. Mount Nebo Baptist Church.

AD: Okay. Where were you before you changed?

GC: First Baptist Church.

AD: At Francis?

GC: Uh-huh. Francis and Collins Street, yes.

AD: Is there a reason that we can know why you changed your membership? Cause I imagine First Baptist is a family church, isn't it?

GC: Yeah. It s a family church. But, it wasn t about. (Clears throat) Excuse me. That was hard in the sense it wasn t about family. It was.... it was about feeding a need, a spiritual need.

AD: Did you get fulfilled at Mount Nebo? Wasn t it . . ?

GC: I don t want to say it wasn t at First Baptist. I want to say I couldn t find it there. I wouldn t say it wasn t there, I would say I couldn t find it.

AD: Okay, You assuming . . . your taking responsibility. You are saying, you, Gloria Clark, could not find . .

GC: Yeah, exactly. I m not saying First Baptist didn t provide, I m saying I couldn t find it.

AD: Okay. Is it a smaller church out there?

GC: It s a country church and what I m about to say sounds like, Oh, I see why you couldn t find it there, but this is not true, but my fiancé is the pastor there, but that s not . . .

AD: Oh, at Mount Nebo?

AD/

GC: (Laughter).

GC: It s not even him, because when I told my mother that I just changed membership the first of January, the first Sunday in January after 24 years at First Baptist, and when I told my mom, she went off. And I said, but Mom, it s not about, you know, B.J., it s about me. It s about Darlene. It s about in here. It s hard to explain, but it was something that had to be done.

AD: Okay. What is his name?

GC: Byron Jesse Parks.

AD: Parks?

GC: Mmm-hmm.

AD: And he s the minister at Mount Nebo Baptist Church. Okay. Is it a part of, what is it called, National Baptist Convention?

GC: It was. I don t know if it still is now or not.

AD: What s the membership out there?

GC: The membership is around, now I m new there now, maybe 200 to 250, and active, I would say, of course, it s lower than that, but if I can give you an actual, I don t know.

AD: Have you had time to join any of the circles or any of the . . . ?

GC: Sunday School.

AD: Sunday School?

GC: Yeah, Sunday School is where I m supposed to be and that s something I knew years ago that it s where God wants me to be.

AD: Okay. Do you think you would make a good minister s wife?

GC: I don t know (laughter). I don t know. I don t know.

AD: You can tell me. My daddy was a minister.

GC: Oh, really.

AD: Oh, yeah. And his father before him. So, you can say anything you want. I won t let it get back to him.

GC: It s a challenge, but I know it s a blessing in it also. So, I m going to leave that in the hands of the Lord.

AD: Alright. That s all we can say. Now, back to the NAACP Appreciation Dinner. I think it was 1986. Does that sound about right?

GC: I don t remember that.

AD: You don t remember that?

GC: Was it the appreciation or the style show? The NAACP had the style show and they had an appreciation this past year, in February.

AD: Okay. What was . . . ?

GC: The 86. Is that what Miss Curry was a part of?

AD: Yeah.

GC: Okay. That was . . . Was that NAACP? Did they sponsor that?

AD: I don t know. You know, she might have events a little scattered. You see what I m saying.

GC: NAACP? Who had that that year? I ll tell you now that she is not from Richmond though. It would be interesting to talk to her husband s sister, Coakley. NAACP . . .

AD: Coakley?

GC: C-0-A-K-L-E-Y.

AD: A-K-L-E-Y. In Richmond? Is it a name that I can find in the directory?

GC: The phone number I can give to you. It is 623-4339, and you would be interested in talking with Callie.

AD: C-A-L-L-I-E?

GC: Uh-huh. And her husband, Edward. He is the president of the NAACP.

AD: Okay. Yeah, I would.

GC: And very active.

AD: Okay, there was some sort of dinner given in honor of black businesses in Richmond.

GC: Okay. I remember a program. I don t remember a dinner. I remember a program at First Baptist Church, and I believe that was sponsored by the NAACP. It was black businesses.

AD: Could you have been on the planning committee or as a part of the planning group?

GC: I was on the program as it was the Lord is my Light and my Salvation and it was during Black History Month, and it was portraying black . . . Miss Jane Pitman, famous black people. That s what that was. I don t think it was sponsored by the NAACP, but anyway, and then we had black businesses that they recognized, and a lot of that. That s what it was.

AD: Okay.

GC: And I portrayed Miss Jane Pitman.

AD: Oh, okay.

GC: Miss Curry, bless her heart, because I was dressed just like Miss Jane, and Miss Curry did not know who I was, and the church was packed.

AD: Okay.

GC: So, when I came out and I was bent way over just like Miss Jane, Miss Curry had a seat and

there were no more seats, she thought I was this real old lady. She sat up and gave me her seat, and I took it!

AD/

GC: (Laughter).

GC: I ll never forget that after it was over, she said, I couldn t believe that , but it was a portrayal of black historians, black famous people, and also recognizing businesses, and so yeah, that s what it was.

AD: So, it was just an appreciation program basically for . . .

GC: For . . .

AD: Black History Month.

GC: Yeah. Local and days gone by.

AD: When you were at Richmond Junior High, Miss Curry was there. Was she the librarian then or did she teach anything?

GC: She was the librarian there for me.

AD: Where all your teachers black at the older school, junior high?

GC: Everyone of them. Yes.

AD: How was . . . Do you remember the principal? What was the principal s name?

GC: Mr. Merrit. Mr. G.C. Merrit. He lived in Lancaster, Kentucky originally.

AD: Wait a minute, when they integrated and sent the high school kids out to Madison, wasn t he the principal at the high school?

GC: He was assistant at the high school. You see, the year that I left Richmond Junior High, it was maybe a couple of years, maybe three years after I left Richmond Junior High when Richmond was closed down, but they had already integrated years before me.

AD: High school?

GC: Yeah, yeah. So, I was just kind of in the . . . Yeah. It was already . . .

AD: Okay. So, you aren t a part of this Richmond Alumni?

GC: No, not at all.

AD: That s just for those who attended there when it was a black high school?

GC: A black elementary and high school, when it went. . .

AD: When they consolidated the whole way.

GC: Yeah, at one time. Yeah, at one time.

AD: Okay, so those are those people. Oh, I see. I see.

GC: Even graduating from the 8th grade, I wasn t in the category to attend, so I had to go all the way and it wasn t there.

AD: Okay. Did you have sports programs when you were in junior high?

GC: I remember the science club.

AD: Do you remember who led this?

GC: Mr. John Freeman.

AD: John Freeman? I think I just inter. . . I did. . . I just interviewed him the other day.

GC: Did you? He was fantastic. Mr. Freeman took a lot of time with the students, with the kids as far as sports were concerned. The best and the better sports, we ll have to say girls too, that are around in Richmond right now, are birthed from Mr. Freeman.

AD: So, he had the science club?

GC: He had the science club, basketball. He was basketball coach. Football coach? I know basketball coach, but he was instrumental in a lot of lives. In a lot of lives. Yeah.

AD: Okay. What else do you remember? Miss Curry.

GC: Miss Curry, Mr. Freeman, Miss Peace, Miss Eleanor Warn.

AD: Is that Aretha Peace?

GC: Aretha Peace, she s dead. She s passed. Mr. Butler was my favorite teacher. He taught me in the third grade and fourth grade and then in the sixth grade (laughter). But at that time, the third and fourth grade were together. Okay, so he was my teacher in the third grade, so, when I passed to the fourth grade, he happened to be the fourth grade teacher.

AD: Okay.

GC: So, fifth grade was Miss Peace and so when it came back to sixth grade, he had moved up because Mr. Andrew Miller had retired, so Mr. Butler was teaching sixth grade so he is everywhere again. So, he was my favorite teacher.

AD: Okay.

GC: He spent a lot of time every morning when we went to Mr. Butler's class, and I think he was a minister at one time, and he was from Paris, Kentucky, and you would have to stand up. At first, I thought everybody was saying their name, when I was in the third, and you'd stand up and I noticed everybody was saying something and sitting back down.

AD: Right.

GC: So, it got to me, I stood up and said, "My name is Gloria Darlene Clark" and sat down. Well, they were saying a scripture verse and I didn't know what they were saying because it was so fast. Most of them were saying things like, "Jesus was . . ." and you couldn't hear.

AD: Okay.

GC: So, I learned soon after that when you get up first thing in the morning, you know, after the class comes together, each person, when he calls roll call, you go through and you stand up and say a scripture verse and that is saying that you're here.

AD: What was his first name? Do you know?

GC: William. William Butler. I believe it was William Butler.

AD: Of course, that was in the days that you could do that in a public school.

GC: Right. We also did writing third, fourth, and sixth grade. We wrote our ABCs in upper case, lower case, wrote to 100, and also wrote our names five times every day we entered that class. That was our very first. Handwriting was very important to Mr. Butler. Every class, every student that ever came under Mr. Butler, after the scripture verses, you were going to do your writing every morning.

AD: So, they had to be learned a certain way, the letters?

GC: Yes, every day. Yeah, every day. Yeah, every day.

AD: So, was he older then? Anybody would be older, you know.

GC: Mr. Butler may have been about . . . Miss Curry would know a lot better than I, but I don't know.

AD: It sounds like an old style way of teaching.

(End of side 1)

(Beginning of side 2)

AD: Let s see. Okay, Callie Coakley. Okay, you ve given me possibilities. . . The Coakley s, Callie and Edward Coakley. He is now president of the NAACP. Okay. And, let s see, some other new groups. Oh, you talked about the science club in school. Did you belong to any organizations during elementary, junior, and high school outside of school?

GC: Outside of school? Uh, I did Girl Scouts.

AD: Oh, there was. Was it a black troop?

GC: Yeah, yeah. And my mom worked with it.

AD: Did she?

GC: She sure did.

AD: Okay.

GC: She worked with the Girl Scouts, and the choir at church and Sunday School.

AD: Okay. You did sing in the choir?

GC: Yeah.

AD: Are you musical?

GC: No.

AD: Oh (laughter).

GC: (laughter) I think I am but nobody else does.

AD: Okay. Now, let me ask you another question, because I m not going to let you get away from me without telling me about your grandmother. How I can contact your grandmother and what I need to say to her to make her want to do this thing with me?

GC: Okay. You tell her, first you say, Hello, Mama Leah Everyone calls her Mama Leah?.

AD: Mama Leah?

GC: Mmm-hmm.

AD: Okay. Okay.

GC: I live with her now and I stay with her right now. She lives, a matter of fact, across the street from First Baptist Church, on the corner of Francis. There at the apartments. Okay, she lives in the very first apartment that goes around. The street, there is Hill Street and then the apartment. She is in the first apartment.

AD: Okay. What is your telephone number?

GC: 623-8585.

AD: 8585?

CG: Uh-huh.

AD: And it s Mrs. Lillian . . . ?

GC: Walker, uh-huh. She will also . . .

(Pause)

AD: So, Miss Lillian Walker is you grandmother. She does respond to Mama Leah, so if I call this number and ask, Mama Leah, what you doing . . . ?

GC: Yeah, if you say Mama Leah, she will start talking to you like she s known you for years. And if you say Mrs. Walker, I don t know if she will talk to you much at all. But, just tell her that Darlene, her granddaughter.

AD: She calls you Darlene?

GC: Darlene, yeah. Yeah, my family calls me Darlene because my mom s name is Gloria, too. So, at home, I m Darlene and at work and real close friends, I prefer to be called Darlene.

AD: Okay. So, I ll just say that I asked Darlene if I could call and I need to know if she would do an interview with me. Okay, she won t have any problems. I want to know, see, you can go back so far. I mean you can tell me about, you know, your parents, and your momma, what your momma did, and your father, and you could tell me a little bit of something about her, you know. But, she can tell me all about her and your momma s father and everything back.

GC: Mmm-hmm. Yeah.

AD: You know, tell me even when they first came to Madison County. If she, she might know that.

GC: I know her mother died when she was . . . I know momma wasn't real old. She didn't remember her mom at all. I think her mother died during childbirth of one of the younger children, but mom was maybe 4 or 5.

AD: Okay. You call her Momma.

GC: Yeah. I call her momma and my mother Mom, but my grandmother, like I said, between 1 and maybe before I started school, I was mostly with my granny. She spoiled me a lot and kept me from getting my hair combed a lot, because I was tenderheaded. She was kind of a savior for me. (Laughter).

AD: She didn't force you. She didn't force you to . . .

GC: No. Momma. . Momma spoiled me. Yeah, Momma spoiled me. And she still spoils me if I would let her. She, she, yeah. But, with my mom, of course, there was six of us, you know, and yeah. So, my granny even now, and I'm almost 40 years old, well close to it, and if I don't watch her, my clothes are washed and folded up, and I can do my own clothes, and I'm not being nasty and I'm not being mean, but I say Momma, please, let me wash my own clothes. I hide my clothes to keep Momma from washing them.

AD: From washing them.

GC: Yes!

AD: Cause she'll come in and wash them.

GC: Momma will, and for years, she would clean up my room. And I tell Momma, you messin up my whole system. But, that's the way she is. She's a giving person. Anything she can do for you, she'll do it. And there is no boundaries. But, it's not fair, you know.

AD: Right, she should be resting.

GC: Oh, forget that.

AD: She is very active.

GC: As far as whatever, you know. . .

AD: For the family.

GC: Yeah, yeah.

AD: That's interesting.

GC: Yeah, yeah. She is. She s an interesting person. You ll find out she s interesting.

AD: I do want to talk to her. Are you still a member of the NAACP?

GC: Yeah.

AD: Do you go to meetings?

GC: No. (laughter) There is a meeting that is coming up this Thursday.

AD: Are you going?

GC: See, my problem is . . . I need to, but my problem is school, and then work when I leave school. See, the meetings are at 6:30 or 7 o clock, but I m just getting in the groove of working at 7 o clock.

AD: In your business.

GC: Yeah. So, that s kind of a problem.

AD: Have there been any . . . During the 60s and 70s, were there any real racial conflict situations in Richmond?

GC: I don t . . . Well, racial. I don t even if it was racial or not, but I remember the first year that I attended Madison High School, I can t remember exactly what happened, but I remember that all the blacks walked out but about 20, if 20 stayed.

AD: Left school.

GC: Yeah, we walked out. We had a walk out from Madison High School.

AD: How long did you stay out?

GC: A day.

AD: Do you remember what year that?

GC: It had to have been around 69 or 70. My freshman year. I want to say it was my freshman year at Madison High School, because I remember one guy had just got back in school from being suspended, and was walking out, and the principal said, where you going, so-and-so. He said, with the rest of them. He said, why. He said, cause the rest of them are going. He had no idea where he was going.

AD: Do they have a record of that?

GC: I doubt it but you could try. Well, there were meetings. I remember meetings. I remember all the parents getting together and I believe it was at St. Paul AME Church and having a meeting and I remember Frank Parks was our leader, Randy Black, and it was somebody else, but I do remember . . . I can't remember exactly what it was, but I do remember the principal at that time was Mr. Brock, John Brock. He is superintendent of something recently.

AD: Yes.

GC: Okay. He used to be principal at . . . now, it's my high school.

AD: Okay.

GC: And, whatever the ruckus was, we all ended up in the auditorium and he told us to get back to our rooms and we all sat there. Whatever it was . . . it may have been racial. . . I can't recall. He said . . .

AD: Mmm-hmm. You just have the memory of blacks, all black kids?

GC: It was all black kids that walked out, yeah.

AD: Okay.

GC: He said now I want you all to go back to your rooms right now and he clapped his hands like, Go , and we all sat there, and he couldn't control it. I mean, he couldn't make us go. Then, they started hollering. . . I remember we walking out, going off the hill, my mom like to have a stroke, and we had a meeting that night. I believe it was that night at St. Paul Church, and the next day, I know we went to school the next day. I think we did.

AD: Okay. I can figure out. Because if you had a meeting at St. Paul, somebody recorded it somewhere. It might be in the newspaper or something.

GC: Yeah.

AD: Because if it was enough to send out to take the black kids out of class, it was enough for somebody to record it somewhere.

GC: And it should be in probably an old paper. Yeah, but it was interesting.

AD: Like, no overt violence that you can remember? There was no conflict in Richmond?

GC: Oh, no, there was no fighting. Not to my, you know, not to my knowledge.

AD: If it happened in Richmond, I think Richmond is small enough that if there had been, you would know about it.

GC: And it would have stood out. Now, I remember hearing my grandmother and my mom and different ones talk about Mrs. - she s another one that would be good to talk with - Mrs. Beatrice Huguely.

AD: Is it Beatrice?

GC: B. Huguely.

AD: Yeah. That s for Beatrice?

GC: Uh-huh.

AD: Okay.

GC: That was in . . . I don t know if they went to jail or something for taking a racial stand in Richmond years ago. She was a former teacher also.

AD: At Richmond School?

GC: Uh-huh, before my time. Yeah.

AD: Really? Okay.

GC: Beatrice Huguely and I know she lives on East Main Street, and the phone number would be under Alma. Sister Coakley would know her number.

AD: Oh, alright. I ll try to find her.

GC: But, there was a . . . I remember hearing something about her and there were newspaper clippings and all about her taking a stand.

AD: Civil rights activities.

GC: Yes, ma am. Definitely. Definitely.

AD: Okay, alright. I ll look into it.

GC: I don t remember.

AD: I ll get a line on her and the Coakley s and talk to Mama Leah and see if she ll talk to me. Okay. When, when, if I set up an appointment with your grandmother, do you want to be there?

GC: Fine. Yeah, no problem. I can.

AD: Okay.

GC: I maybe just for a few minutes just to break the ice, but once Momma is comfortable with you, you don't even ask questions, she'll just talk.

AD: Okay. We'll do it. We'll do it. Okay. Whenever I find out, whenever I talk to her and everything, and get something arranged, and she might say something to you but I'll go ahead and I'll call you tell you what's going on, how much, and how far I've gotten regarding to the interviews with her, Coakley's and Hugueley.

GC: Yeah, yeah. Yeah.

AD: Alright, anything else you need to, you want to say about black Richmond. All of these are things that are supposed to go into the Black History Program, not Black History Program, Oral History Program. All the tapes will be the same as primary sources. If somebody wants to do an investigation of Richmond and its black community, they can pull out a tape just like you pull out a newspaper.

GC: Okay.

AD: So, I'm collecting all kinds of ... as disparate a look at Richmond as I can.

GC: That's beautiful.

AD: I started out with the very old. Then, I said, we'll know if you saw it if you only do the very old, you're leaving out some other things, too.

GC: That's right.

AD: So, then, I backed up and get your age group, and your momma, and you know.

GC: That's beautiful. I like that. That's never been done that I know of.

AD: There is nothing I could find this way with this much information. Because the written record is a little bit different from what actually happened.

GC: Uh, Madison County Berea College, Jackie Burnside, I don't know if you know her, but she is a professor at Berea College and she was writing a book on Berea College. Jackie Burnside.

AD: At Berea?

GC: Uh-huh. At Berea College. She is a professor. I have her number with me.

AD: What was her book on?

GC: It was on black history at Berea College or the history of Berea College, and she collected a lot of information, interesting information.

AD: Okay. That is Madison County. So, I could jam with her. Okay. Do you know the name of, it s right on . . .

GC: The tip of your tongue?

AD: Lucy Munday?

GC: Yeah. I know Miss Lucy. She works at the registrar office and she is the announcer. She does the welcoming announcements at First Baptist Church.

AD: Does she?

GC: Uh-huh. Yeah.

AD: Is she an elderly lady?

GC: Maybe in age, but not in, I mean, she is . . .

AD: Very active.

GC: She is very active, yeah. Yeah. Leora Franklin is . . .

AD: Leora Brooks Franklin.

GC: Well, yeah. She s active. Yeah, very active.

AD: Ah, there is a Chenault here.

GC: Pauline?

AD: No. Emma F. Chenault or Elizabeth Chenault?

GC: Elizabeth Ford Chenault.

AD: Is that your age group?

GC: No, she s old. She s my aunt Nia s, if that s Elizabeth Ford Chenault.

AD: Well, Frank?

GC: Frank, yeah. That s her. She s active.

AD: Is she? Okay. Is it Ford?

GC: Yes, Elizabeth Ford Chenault.

AD: I got to keep these people, all of them separated. There are some family names that go on through ages in the black community. Ballard is one.

GC: Yeah.

AD: Huguey. I see that name quite a bit.

GC: Uh-huh quite a bit.

AD: Chenault.

GC: Hmm-hmm. What about Ballew?

AD: Ballew? Uh-huh.

GC: Oh, Sam Miller. The Miller s.

AD: Okay, I ve heard. Who d I talk to the other night who mentioned Sam Miller as somebody I need to talk to with regard to what he remembers.

GC: He is an owner of a funeral home. He owns Miller Seafood Shop. He has a son that owns his own business, a barber shop. He has a . . Howard Miller, also I believe is a part owner in the seafood shop, which I mean, buying fish, and they. . . yeah.

AD: So, I need to talk to Mr. Sam now.

GC: Yeah, Mr. Sam and his wife, Miss Dee also.

AD: What s her name?

GC: Dee, but that s not her real name.

AD: Plus Mrs. Miller.

GC: Yeah. Yeah, because she runs the business and he is a supervisor at U.K. and, yeah, that s a pretty rich family.

AD: Okay. Alright.

GC: That s cousin Liz, that s Liz Ford s brother.

AD: Oh, wait.

GC: Liz Ford Chenault.

AD: Brother is Sam Miller.

GC: Yeah.

AD: Oh. (Laughter)

GC: And they live next door to each other.

AD: Oh. Okay. This seems to me if I could ever pin it down, it seems to me that most black people migrated into Madison, into the Richmond area, at about the same time and it looks to be like maybe five or six lines and from that point on, you just establish . . .

GC: Mmm-hmm.

AD: Of course, you know, I might be wrong, but every. . . you know, when I talk to you, now, you know, I find out you call her Aunt Liz.

GC: Mmm-hmm.

AD: You see, then, I find out your mother s maiden name is Ballard.

GC: I don t know, it s interesting. I guess it s just interesting because I call her Aunt Liz and I call her brother, which is her brother, who should be my cousin really, I call him Mr. Sam. But, I was close to her.

AD: Okay. Were there divisions in the black community? Those who had money, those who didn t?

GC: As far as Richmond is concerned, I won t say so much Richmond is as there is with blacks, the division of (bell rings) getting something, working hard, (loud speaker comes on) I think our biggest problem, our biggest problem is us. We are our biggest problem. We are, in a lot of areas, we can t work together.

AD: Okay.

GC: In a lot of areas, we can t. And, I think that s sad.

AD: So, you re saying the biggest problem is not being able to. . .

GC: Economic. . . Economic is some of the problem, but the biggest problem is if we would pull

together, you know, stand together, we would get farther. Instead of me, a salon for example, when I started my salon, there was one other black salon in Richmond, and that is Rosie's Beauty Salon. Then, she and I had the first two for years. One thing that Rose and I decided was that we were going to be friends because people will keep you apart so much with she does this, and she does that, and she says that you don't . . . You know, I don't know if I'm explaining it, and then the other hairdressers that have come through the years, it's like it's competition. And I'm not in competition, I'm just in the same business. I find that we can't, that the majority can't be friends, because we are . . . Now, Rosie and I are fine, and there is another salon that we're fine, but it's, and I'm pulling against you. I just want to make a living and enjoy it. But I think if we could work together, we would be a stronger people.

AD: So, do you think that's in all the areas of business?.

GC: In the area that I have dealt with.

AD: As a business owner?

GC: Right, exactly.

AD: That there is a competition that keeps you from coming together to maybe do something greater than . . .

GC: Of doing something great together.

AD: for the community.

GC: Exactly. It's not a big you and little me, and it doesn't have to be like that. Why can't it just be us together.

AD: So, you know, I asked you a long time ago if you knew how much your momma did not have, and you said that you were taught that you don't go out and ask people for things.

GC: That's right.

AD: If somebody gave you something, though, that's a different thing.

GC: Yeah. We were given clothes, you know, and different things.

AD: You could accept that and not feel bad or anything? Okay.

GC: No, I don't have a problem with that. No, I was glad to get it.

AD: You wouldn't go out and ask for it?

GC: That never entered our minds to go out and ask. No. That never. It just didn't.

AD: It is something she taught you?

GC: Of going out and asking?

AD: Yeah. Is it pride in there? Why would it never cross your mind?

GC: Because we never needed to. We never had to. You know, like I said, earlier the basic things were provided. I mean, and who would I ask. No, that never. No.

AD: Did you ever feel strange? Did you know where, the clothes that had been given, did you know where they were coming from?

GC: Yes.

AD: Did that make you feel bad or strange?

GC: No, and to this day, to this day, I buy second hand clothes. They call me a pack rat, as a matter of fact. I buy second hand. Now this skirt is. Because I got it over here at . . . oh, what's the store, over on Alexandria in this little shopping center, it's an outlet.

AD: Yes.

GC: I got it at that outlet. This and this. You go to the walk-in closet right down here on the corner, say, do you all know Gloria Clark that works at James Lane Allen, they'll tell you I'm in there two to three times every week.

AD: Really?

GC: No, it doesn't bother me. But to this day, I can't tell you the last time I bought something brand new.

AD: But see, that has a lot to do with your size now, too.

GC: No.

AD: If you were a different size, you might have to . . .

GC: Well, if I had to. But, I don't know.

AD: You know, I mean, there are stores that would have second-hand larger sizes for me too.

GC: New things don't excite me. New things don't excite me. I mean, they don't excite me,

because I've had the best and the rest.

AD: Okay.

GC: And I know that.

AD: Okay. Do you think that all comes from the morals from your mom, the values that your mom . . .

GC: Appreciate what you got, yeah.

AD: She said appreciate what you got.

GC: Yeah, you've got to appreciate what you've got and to see mom go out and work. You know, to see her do that, and what angers me today is to see kids sit back and do nothing and expect the world and you break your neck and try to hand it to them on a silver platter. That angers me.

AD: Okay.

GC: It angers me to see a parent say I can't do nothing with my child. My mom told us I brought you into the world and I can take you out, and we believed that.

AD: Did she spank?

GC: Sure, if we needed it. The worst part was not to make us. I got out of a lot. Was that we would never tell on each other. But, Mom had a remedy for it. She would whip us all. (Laughter) Then, my older sister, Sidonia, would say Momma, I didn't do it, but I'll take the blame, and I've seen Sidonia take the blame a whole lot of times for things I did and I know I did. I think what broke me was that me and Sidonia was into it bad, I mean, bad. Momma's at work at one of her jobs, and Sheila or Tony called Mom on the job and told her we was fighting, and you don't do that. You don't call on her job. When she got home, I was lying out of it, and I was wrong, and I knew I was wrong, but I thought I had the upper hand. I said, No, I didn't. Un-huh, Mom, no I didn't. My sister, Sheila taped it and I didn't know it and I got the beating of my life.

AD: She actually had it on tape.

GC: (laughter) Yeah. And I thought I had my momma convinced. Un-huh momma, I didn't start it. It was Sidonia. It wasn't me. But, Sheila pushed the button on the tape recorder.

AD: What were you doing while it was playing? Were you getting ready for this beating?

GC: Just ready to die. I was just ready to literally lay down and die.

AD: When the boys got of a certain age, then boys like to hang out. What was your momma s position on that?

GC: Tony. Butch didn t, because like I said earlier, he is not mental, he s emotionally. Tony, Tony could go places but Tony didn t hang out. I guess by being the youngest and being raised around the girls in between, Tony didn t. He wanted to, but he didn t. He couldn t. We couldn t.

AD: When you were teenagers?

GC: The best times I had in the streets were the times I snuck out and went.

AD: Did you have a good time or were you always scared?

GC: Looking over my shoulder and knowing that she was going to find out sooner or later, and she did. Now, I think the fun part of it was seeing if I could get by with it, but you don t get by with anything in this life. No, my mom was very, very, very strict. I used to think and I d look at child abuse now and all they consider child abuse. I said my momma would still be serving time if that was the case, because you got to correct it. It didn t hurt us. We were corrected. It angers me just to see how parents say I can t do nothing. You wait until I get you home.

AD: When did she move from the switch or the strap to punishment?

GC: Oh, we never had punishment.

AD: As long as you re at home.

GC: When you under my roof, you go by my rules. Oh no, I remember my last, I won t say whipping, but I remember the last time my mom put her hands on me, she smacked me and Paula was a baby, which was Sidonia s daughter. Paula is 21 now. I got spanked for correcting Paula.

AD: She was a baby?

GC: She was about 1. Paula was getting on my nerves, something she was doing, but it was wrong, but I did it because I was mad. Mom smacked me. I was about 16 or 17.

AD: You were correcting her but you were . . .?

GC: I was doing it because she was irritating. Whatever Paula was doing, she was wrong, but I was irritated anyway and I just took it out on Paula, and I remember my mom smacked me. That was the last time that I remember.

AD: What was your response to that slap?

GC: Shock and I just looked at her. I was one that wouldn't cry, you know. I would look at you. I wouldn't cry. And when she did whip us, earlier than that, I'll whip you until you do. Oh, boy, and Sheila would see Mom coming. Sheila would take off running. Opael would just start screaming and crying before she even caught her. Sidonia would fall down on her knees and start praying.

AD: Okay. Okay.

GC: But she corrected them. I didn't play.

AD: She was a strict disciplinarian.

GC: She was very strict. My mom never hugged us children.

AD: When she would come home?

GC: Mom showed her love in the things she did, you know. And it's strange, because now I need a touch. Isn't that strange, but I need a touch and I find children need that and I think that's another thing with the kids and myself is that it is something I miss, you know.

AD: Okay.

GC: I don't know if I'm really feeding them or feeding myself, but it's a blessing whenever it is. No, she never touched. Kissed? Mom wasn't an affectionate person, but her mother wasn't an affectionate person to her because her mother's mother wasn't there because she died, you know?

AD: Okay.

GC: Just following the . . . My grandmother's mother died when she was young, okay?

AD: Your grandmother would do these things but never just . . . ?

GC: No, she won't hug me. No, no, no. She'll wash my clothes. She'll clean my room, that's I love you. She'll cook something that she knows I'll like, that's I love you. That's the love.

AD: Alright.

GC: If you told them right now, mom give me a hug; get away from here. But, love didn't always come with . . . You know, it's a show me kind of thing for us, I guess, and show me by doing actions.

AD: Alright. I can't think of anything more to ask. I would like to ask you if I think of something else, I'm going to contact your grandmother and if I can I might give you a call.

GC: Okay. Feel free to. Feel free to. I appreciate you and I ve really enjoyed you.

AD: Oh, thank you.