

INTERVIEWEE: Nellie Mitchell

INTERVIEWER: Toriano Newton

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Newton: I'm Toriano Newton and I'm at my aunt's house in Carol City for-- and today's--
- and today's date is March 22, and I'm interviewing my grandmother Nellie Mitchell.

For historical purposes, can you spell your first and your last name?

Mitchell: N-E-L-L-I-E M-I-T-C-H-E-L-L.

N: Can you describe for me when were you-- when and where were you born and a bit
about your parent and your grandparents?

M: I was born in Miami, Florida December the twenty-sixth, 1929. My father's name was
Joseph Mitchell-- Joseph (Lavaradi?). My mother's name was (Carrie?) (Lavaradi?). We
had twelve sisters and brothers. We lived at 1268 Northwest Sixty-Eighth Street and we
lived there for many years.

N: What was it like growing up in Miami, and what-- what was your commu-- your
community like as a child?

M: As I grew up in Miami, it was just like it is now with the integration problem between
the black and the white, but it wasn't as bad as it is now.

N: Do you still have memories of segregation in Miami such as the wall and can you
explain it for me?

M: Yes, I do. I have a (premonition?) of the blacks and the white-- when we lived on Sixty-Eighth Terrace, there was a wall there separating the blacks from the whites, and we couldn't go on the white's side.

N: Can you recall anything about local or national effects to bring full Civil Rights to black Americans?

H: No.

M: Describe what you-- what you remember hearing about the 1968 riot in Liberty City.

H: The 1968 riot in Liberty City was very bad. They burned down stores that we were-- we would go to buy our goods from and (some houses?) they killed the white people that came through the negro's section and, uh, what I experienced was very bad.

N: What was the response in Miami to the assassinations in 1960?

M: The assassination of who?

N: Of President Kennedy or Bobby Kennedy or the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.?

M: Uh, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s was very bad. The people-- it was very, very hurtful to the blacks because he believed- Martin Luther King believed in-- he believed in being fr-- you know, free for the blacks to be able to do the same thing to whites. And he did it peacefully.

N: What do you remember-- do you remember going to Virginia Key Beach?

M: Yes, our family did go to Virginia Key Beach.

N: Did you go, like, for vacation purposes or-- or did you just go--?

M: We went for recreational purposes.

N: So, how did the influence--wait, how did the Civil Rights Movement influence your life or affect your life?

M: In many ways, because we couldn't try on shoes in the downtown area, we couldn't try on clothes. The whites could, but blacks couldn't try on clothes. They couldn't go into the cafeterias. Uh, in many, many ways. We couldn't even go into the hotels.

N: What do you know about the history, or the area of where Turner Tech stands now? Do you know anything about the area that--?

M: Well, I know it was growed-- it was wooded areas. It had growth-- it was growed up and wood-- it was very wooded and farm-- it was a farming area.

N: Um, was public transportation very different, or do you think that public transportation was very different from other places?

M: Yes it was, because the blacks had to sit to the back, and the whites could sit in the front seats of the buses.

N: So it was the same way like any other place like Alabama or Georgia?

M: Well, I don't know how it was in Alabama and Georgia, but I know here in Florida, no blacks could sit to the front of the bus. They had to go to the back of the bus.

N: And do you remember the--?

M: Yes.

N: What?

M: We were seated-- all seated in the back of the bus.

N: Do you remember the, um, the bus boycott in 1955? [1955]

M: No, I don't remember that.

N: Oh, was there-- what about the water fountains in Miami?

M: Uh, the same as the water fountains, the blacks couldn't drink from water fountains, neither use toilets. Even in the downtown area, the blacks were not allowed.

N: So, have you ever seen any signs that said, 'Black Only' or--?

M: Yes, they did have that in the stores, you know, 'White Only', you couldn't-- the blacks could not use the water fountains. Many, many things--

N: So--

M: -- that they couldn't do.

N: Restaurants were the same also?

M: Yes. Yes, the restaurants was only whites. Black people could not go in and be seated, you know, and be served in a restaurant either.

N: So you couldn't go into Burdines at the time and try on clothes--?

M: Right, you couldn't try on the shoes, you couldn't try on clothes- the blacks could not.

N: Can you tell me, do you remember what middle school or which high school you went to?

M: I went to Dorsey High School, and I went to the twelfth grade but I didn't graduate.

[laughs]

N: Do you remember where the school was located or is it still--?

M: Yes, it's still there: 1700 Northwest Seventy-First Street.

N: What--were any of you--did you know anyone, any of your family members who were involved in the Civil Rights Movement?

M: No.

N: Like, okay, back then, did you ever think that it will be any more different now? Like, have you ever thought about the future or would it be different in the future, back then?

Like during those times, did you ever think it would be different?

M: No. No, I really didn't.

N: So, you just [inaudible]. Do you think that- now- do you think that the future is different from the past?

M: Here, now? You mean now is--?

N: The present, I mean the present--

M: The present is different from the past?

N: --past.

M: Oh, yes, very much. Very much different. And we had people- black people- that allowed-- that made, you know, made it possible.

N: Do you know any others people-- like, not know but can you name some of the people that you think that made it possible?

M: Beside Martin Luther King?

N: Or any-- any--?

M: And Rosa Parks? That's two of the ones I really knew that made it possible for us to be able to, you know, do like the whites, the same thing, you know, be equal opportunities.[pauses] Somewhat, but it's still a lot of segregation around today.

N: Like, around that time, where there any, like, any bombings of racism?

M: I don't remember any bombings, but I remember-- I don't remember any bombings, but I do remember the race riots.

N: Like, uh, any threats that were made towards, you know, you don't--?

M: I don't remember. [pauses] It's almost fifteen minutes, right?

N: Okay.

M: [laughs]

N: Thank you for your time.

M: What I'm supposed to say?

N: [whispers] Thank you for your time.

M: Oh.

END OF INTERVIEW