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INTERVIEWEE: Willis Murray

INTERVIEWER: Jose Araujo and Venezia Reynoso

TRANSCRIBER: Andrea Benitez

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INTERVIEW LENGTH: 00:44:44

Jose: For our taping, please spell your last name and state your full name. Tell us how old you are now, if you will.

Murray: My last name is Murray, M-U-R-R-A-Y; first name Willis, W-I-L-L-I-S. I am eighty-two years old.

Jose: Alright, my name is Jose and this is Venezia.

Venezia: Now, for the live audience, introduce yourself.

M: My name is Willis Murray. I am a retired educator, worked in Dade County public schools for thirty years, and retired in 1980 from the Dade County Public School System.

V: Describe where you were living and what you were doing at the outbreak of World War II.

M: [sighs] I was still in high school when World War II broke out. I was attending school at the now-- it's a senior high school again- Booker T. Washington Senior High School, 1200 NW Sixth Avenue. I was in the eleventh grade-- tenth or eleventh grade when World War II broke out in 1941.

A: Hitler rose to power in Germany the 1930s. What do you know of Europe at the time?

M: Well, what I knew of Europe at the time is what I knew in school. Then, we had to take a European history and American history and we learned more about the countries. I didn't really learn anything about the country that attacked us- and that was Japan-- the Japanese that attacked us at Pearl Harbor in 1941- until after it happened. Then I began to study about the European countries and about Japan after we went to war with them.

A: What was going on in your life and community when Pearl Harbor?

M: Well, in my life, I was-- as I said, I was still in high school. I lived in what is now called-- what is now called Overtown. My address was 212 NW Fourteenth Street- it's about two or three blocks down the street from where the new Booker T. Washington Senior High School is. I was-- the day that we were attacked by Pearl Harbor and was announced one Sunday afternoon, I was shining shoes at a barber shop on Miami Beach to make some extra money to go to school with. This is what I was doing at the time that we went to war after we were bombed by the Japanese in 1941.

V: What was your first reaction to World War II?

M: Being afraid, I was afraid. I didn't know enough about wars. I didn't know enough about what might happen to me. I knew that I was in high school, wanted to finish high school, and I didn't know how it would affect me and how it would affect my community where I lived at that time.

A: Why didn't you enlist?

M: At that time, I was too young to enlist. They didn't begin enlisting until after I became twenty-one, and at that time, when I became twenty-one, I was in-- I think I was in college then. At that time, you had to-- and I went to school in Tallahassee- Florida A&M

University. It was not Florida A&M University at that time, it was Florida A&M College at that time, became university later. And I was in college at the time of World War II.

V: What role in the war did you play?

M: I? I didn't play any, any, any, any role at all in the war because I was never a soldier. I was examined one time at Camp Blanding and Camp Blanding was an-- is a-- was a station-- Army Station here in Florida where you went to be examined, and because of an illness that I had, I was rejected from the service. I never did serve any time in the service. I remained in college.

V: Can you explain what was rationed at the time?

M: Oh, everything was rationed. All food-- at the time, everything was rationed at that time. Mostly gas and food, clothes, everything. The kind of clothes you can go and buy now at will and the kind of food you could go and buy at will, you couldn't buy that at the time of the war.

A: What was your reaction-- what was the reaction of-- to your family and friends during the war?

M: Well I was the old-- there were six of us, and I was the second oldest in the family. My older brother went to the service, I did not, and my siblings below me was much younger than I, they didn't go to the service-- they didn't go to the service at that time, during World War II, they went to later wars, but that, they didn't go because they were too young. They were still in elementary and junior high school. I'm the oldest-- I'm the second oldest of my siblings.

V: How did you keep your spirits up during your World War II and the segregation?

M: Well, it's-- if any of you picture Overtown, what we call Overtown now, from Fifth Street to Twenty-First Street, we lived between Fifth Street and Twenty First Street, between railroad track and railroad track. All of the necessities that we needed, grocery stores, any of the necessities that we needed, we had them in a smaller scale in the community where we lived. Our parents back then taught us how to maneuver, how to make it in a system that was segregated. We knew that we were supposed to stay in the community where we lived. We knew not to go out of that community, because if we went out of that community, we would be in trouble. We would be in trouble by the-- the police would pick you up. At times, they would use whips to beat you, and our parents taught us not to be caught especially in those communities after six o'clock in the afternoon. Also during World War II, those of us who were old enough to work and worked on Miami Beach, they had is what is called a 'police card'. I don't know if any of you remember-- old enough to remember what happened in the apartheid in Africa when the people there had to have cards to go in the community. We had to have a police card to go to Miami Beach. If you did not have a police card, you were subject to be picked up and put in jail. Now the way you got this police card, you would go over there to the police station, they would make a photo of you just like the driver's license and you had to keep that card with you at all times if you ever planned to Miami Beach or go to any of the other communities where you lived.

A: Where were you when the Japanese surrendered and the war was over?

M: When the war was over, I was in college. I would come home-- I never will-- never will forget the night-- the day the Japanese surrendered. I was working at a hotel downtown as a bellhop. I would come home during the summer, we'd get to working

small jobs to get money to go back to college, and I was in college-- enrolled in college, but I was home-- I would come home during the summer and work-- and work in hotels and restaurants to make money to go back to college.

V: How did the war change your life?

M: Well, the war-- it didn't-- it didn't do very much to change my life as a person, but it did a lot to change the lives of so many people around me because some of the things that we- and I'm talking about an African-American, a black, or whatever we were called then- we were able to do some of the things that you wanted to do, not all of the things. But because you've been to war and because the war was over, you were able to do some of the things that you wanted to do. So, in some ways, it did make a small change in how we were treated as-- as-- as Negroes then- we were called 'Negros' then. We were called other names but in the paper, we were called 'Negros'.

A: How were the-- how do you remember when-- how the soldiers that were from the war were treated in the United States?

M: Oh, the African-American soldiers were treated awful. There were some fellas that came here and you will find out when you interview Garth Reeves, he was one to tell one of his stories. He came back here and came here on a vacation and then they had the train cars segregated then. Here was a soldier that had fought, that was over in Europe fighting, but when he made a trip back here and was getting ready to go back to the Army in Virginia, he had to ride in a segregated car. A number of the soldiers- the black soldiers- when they came back to the country, a number of them were denied the rights. They still had the 'White' signs up, the 'Black' signs up in bathrooms, there were certain stores that you could not-- could not go in, there were certain places you couldn't try on clothes.

There were so many things that was happening at the time, but one of the things that our parents somehow-- our parents conditioned us to live in the kind of society that we lived in, and I've been asked this question over and over by younger people and people much older than you: 'How in the world did we tolerate what we went through?' We tolerated it because we knew it was the wrong thing to do, but we did-- but we knew that if we did it any other way or tried it any other way, we would stay in trouble, so our parents taught us to do the things that you know-- they might not be the right thing, but you do the things that'll keep you out of trouble so that you will not get hurt, shot, or killed.

V: Did you have any regrets about that time in your life?

M: No, no. You know, I didn't have-- I don't have any regrets. I remember I talked to some students over at Booker T. Washington about three or four years ago and I told her about my life as a black student living in Overtown and the experience I had, how we lived and everything and one of the questions she asked me, she asked me, "Mr. Murray, you must have had a miserable life as a teenager." And I said to her, "No, I did not." And I did not have a miserable life. Although I lived in a segregated community, I knew what I could do and what I could not do, but the thing that I had, I had love. I had love from my mother, I had love from my parents, I had love from the school, I had love from my teachers, I had love-- there was love in the community and sometimes whether you realize it or not, sometimes you can take some things that are abusive to you if you being loved by someone. So, at the time that I went to school, we had a lot of love in the community, from my mother, father, and the teachers and the school and the community.

A: What haven't I asked about that you think young people today should know?

M: What you should know is that because of what's happening now, the experiences you're having- the good and the bad- you shouldn't take it for granted. You should live every moment of it, you should enjoy it, you should have fun because you're living the best time of your lives right now. School time whether you-- whether you realize it now, you'll realize it later on in life. I was talking to classmate of mine from college and I-- over the telephone yesterday and we were talking about the experiences we had in college, the best time of my life was when I was in high school and when I was in college. So, I want you to live every moment of the life that you are living now because you're living the best time of your life. There are some rules and regulations that you might feel like are hard and strenuous, but you must realize that the people- even if it's your family- they have lived through what you are living through now. They've experienced some of the things that you've experienced, so listen to them, listen to them and live a good, healthy life because you're living the best time of your life right now.

A: Thank you so much for sharing your (spirit?) with us.

M: Are there any other questions any of you in the audience would like to ask me? I've been in Dade County all of my life. I've been here eighty-one years. Yes?

U2: Have you ever been to Virginia Key Beach? Do you have any memories?

M: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah, yeah. Let me give you some experiences we had on Virginia Key Beach. Virginia Key Beach at the time when they gave us a beach. When I was a youngster, we as black people had no place to swim and what I've never been able to understand, we were able to go to beaches in Broward County, but we couldn't go to the beaches in Miami. So what they did, Virginia Key Beach, that was before they built the causeway. They used to ferry us over there. They used to have a boat that would pick you

us at the dock and carry you to Virginia Key Beach. Virginia Key Beach at one time when they eventually built the bridge, the bridge across to carry to Key Biscayne, that was the only place that we could at that time go to a beach and swim in the water.

A: What was your reaction to the whole situation about the segregated beaches?

M: I was not a swimmer. I-- I'm angrier now about things that happened back then and things that are happening now than I was then at that time. I guess I didn't realize what was happening to us at that time because segregation at that time was a part of my living. I was taught by my parents and taught by my teachers and taught that this is where you are, you must live it and try to enjoy it. And I just enjoyed it, didn't realize that I was mistreated as much as I realize it now. It irritates me now more about (?) things in terms of segregation now than it did as a teenager, as a youngster, and as it did during World War II.

U3: How did your school handle the effort in integrate-- integration? What do you remember about the early days of integration?

M: The early days of integration, I was teaching over at-- I was working over at Douglas Elementary School and Douglas- those of you ever lived Overtown- Douglas is on Twelfth-- Thirteenth Street there by the railroad tracks. I was working there. They closed the schools in Dade County for three days and the reason why they closed the school, they wanted to inte-- they were-- they had the decree from the courts that they had to integrate the schools. So, what they did, they did-- they did another dirty trick to black kids and black schools. They took all of the good black teachers and took the black teachers and had transferred them to schools that served predominantly white students. They took the teachers of the other-- other nationality who didn't get along, who couldn't

teach and sent them to the schools in the black community. So, even then after it was an order by the court to integrate the school, they were not fair with integrating school because they took the black teach-- the best black teachers and sent the best black teachers to the white schools so called-- at that time at the white school. And I had been brainwashed so long that for some reason or not, that I was inferior because I was black, because I went to a black school. And at the time that I went to Booker T. Washington Senior High School, we never got new books, we always got books from at that time, the predominantly white schools were Miami High Senior High School and Edison Senior High School. We got the used books from those schools. Those of us that played football at Booker T. and Dorsey, we got the used uniforms from the white schools, we never had anything new because of segregation. So, all of these things was happening to us, and I was not bitter or angry because I think of the love that I was receiving from the people that I dealt with. But as I grew older and realized what was happening to me and what happened to me in life, then this is when I got angry and bitter and mad. And I often say to people, I did not-- and they used to say that the teachers that we had in the black schools were not good teachers. Those of us sixty to seventy to eighty years older- and I use myself as an example- I was beyond my Master's Degree before I was taught by anything other than a black teacher. At Booker T. Washington Senior High School, I was taught by nothing but black teachers. I went to Florida A&M University in 1944 and I was taught by nothing but black teachers. So, when someone say to me or when someone say to those of you who are sitting in this room who are not-- who are black or whatever nationality you might be, don't ever let anybody tell you because of who you are and where you came from, that you can't do it. Don't you let anybody do that to you. Don't

let your parents do it to you, don't let your teachers do it to you, don't let nobody, and don't let anybody ever tell you that you are nobody. Nobody-- don't let nobody tell you that. And I know somewhere along the way, maybe not you because of the school that you're in now, but I bet you somewhere from first grade to where you are now, you have heard-- you have heard some teachers say- not to you but to other kids, "You are nobody, you will never be anybody." Don't let anybody, and if you ever hear anybody say that about any child or anybody you deal with, you go and tell that person, "Don't believe that, because you can be somebody and you are somebody." Yes?

U4: Although the segregation level is not as high as it was when you were a child, do you see some similarities in school systems now as--?

M: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

U4: --and if so, (?)?

M: Look at the administrators. Look at the administrators in the school system now. Administrators are the people that make decisions, okay? You look at the people who are making the decisions in the school system. There ain't very much difference in the people who making the decisions in the school system now than during the time that I went to school. They're just a little more sophisticated with it, but there isn't very much difference in the people- and when I say the people who are making these decisions are the people that [pauses] still making the decisions now, and I'm gonna leave it at that, I hope you understand what I'm saying. Yes, in the back?

U5: What do think life would be if there was no segregation and what changes do you think will occur if-- I mean, what changes do you think will happen--? [school bell rings]

M: You know, I still-- I still do a lot of things-- [beeping]

[all laugh]

A: Whenever you're ready, sir.

M: You ready? I still do a lot of things with schools, working with Ms. Ramona Frischman- Dr. Frischman- and as I was talking to the young man here who's related to me, he told me today is that of all the schools and all of the kids I work with now, this school I enjoy coming to more than any other school in Dade County. You are some wonderful kids, beautiful, beautiful. I hope that you continue in life as well as-- I hope you continue to do as well in life as you are doing now, because you are doing a very good job. The-- your instructors are doing a very good job with you and you're doing a very good job with what you're getting from them. Yes, sir?

U6: When there was segregation, like, back in the day, did they ever-- did they ever, like,-- were there, like, any people that were against, like, any kids in the school that segregated that were against segre-- integration and wanted the segregation back?

M: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. They--

U6: Did you want that?

M: Did I want that?

U6: Yeah. Like, was it (?)--

M: No, I'm not going to-- I'm not going to--I think that integration, if it's used correctly, everybody will benefit. Just like you as a group here at this school, how well you all get along? If everybody would get along--I know there's some differences, I know there's some differences you have, your little arguments, but on the surface, you appear to get along well regardless of what nationality, what group, you get along-- you appear to get

along well. You get along, I think, as well in this school as any school I know of in Dade County, so you need to be blessed and thanked for that. Yes?

U7: Is--

U8: Wait.

U9: Wait, wait, wait, the bell is gonna ring again. Like a minute.

A: We're just gonna take a short intermission, sir.

M: Okay.

U1: Should we stop?

A: No, go ahead.

M: What are all those IDs?

U9: These?

M: Yeah.

U9: These are our school IDs, we can't get in without them.

M: All of them?

U9: Yeah, those are different years and if you go to night school, you gotta have different I.D. cards.

U10: From freshman to your junior year.

M: Okay.

[indistinct chatter]

M: Yes, sir. Who is that in the back there? That's-- young lady.

U11: You spoke about when times of integration, how angry-- angry you were about, like, how they were treating the black schools, did you partake in any riots like the riot in 1968 in Liberty City?

M: No. No. No. [laughs] I didn't-- I didn't-- [laughs]. I didn't take any part of it. I didn't live Overtown then. After I got-- after I-- that was after I came back from college when they had the riots and I lived out there in Miami Lakes and I lived-- I didn't live Overtown. I-- the only thing-- the one thing if I say anything to have anything-- that had anything-- integration that I regret that I didn't participate in was Dr. King's march on Washington. I regret I did not go to that and I will always dislike and hate myself for not going because it was one of the most remarkable speeches that has ever been made anywhere in the world- that speech that he made in Washington. And I could've gone just like I went to other marches, just like I went to other demonstrations, but I did not go to that and I regret that. Yes?

U12: Can you tell-- can you tell about your experience going through, like, a march or demonstrations?

M: The last march or demonstration I went to was about-- about four years ago. Do you remember-- I don't know if you remember this, but when Representative Senator Kendrick Meek had that demonstration dealing with classroom size, and we all went to Tallahassee? I went to that demonstration. We rode all night, we left right over there from that union over there next to the 167th Street. We rode all night and the demonstration was held on the state capital, and we rode all night and had a demonstration all day, got back on the bus, came back. The paper said it was about ten thousand- it was more than ten thousand people there. It was thirty or forty thousand people there. That's the last demonstration I participated in. Yes, sir?

U13: Um, like, did you witness or happen to have any personal experiences with, like, racism, like--

M: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

U13: Do you want to explain?

M: Yeah. At Florida A&M University-- Florida A&M University-- Florida A&M College, you wouldn't believe it, but I didn't weigh but 155 pounds. I ran track. And this time, our bus broke down so we had to use the commercial bus to take us to Tuskegee, Alabama to run on a track meet. We had to sit on the back- when I say 'we' the track team, girls and-- it was only the boys team that time. We had to sit on the back of the bus, and I imagine you've seen pictures of it where they had the black curtain drawn across the back of the bus where the blacks used to have to sit. See, we had to always sit in the back of the bus. They had this drawn curtain. We sat behind that curtain until we got ready to get off for a rest stop. When we got off the bus, the way you would get off the bus, all of the white people would get off the bus first. The bus driver would come and draw the curtain back so that you could get off the bus. Now, when they made the rest stops, they had no place for us to go to the bathroom. We had to go to the bathrooms in the woods. They went to a regular bathroom. When we got ready to get back on the bus, they would get back on the bus first, then we would get on-- back on-- we would get on the bus, we sat in the back, and they drew the curtain. This was-- if there was any one thing that happened in my life that I regret, that I-- that made me angry and every time I think about it, I get angry of the kind of segregation that I went through. I also one afternoon, I must have been around fifteen, sixteen years old. I saw the Klan- the Ku Klux Klan and I was watching a program last night where they're coming back again. The Klan marched down Third Avenue-- I don't know how many of you remember-- know where St. Agnes Church is, St. Agnes church on Third Avenue and on Eighteenth

Street, Third Avenue and Eighteenth Street. We lived on Seventeenth Street and Third Avenue and one afternoon about 5:30, six o'clock, just about dusk dark, we looked down the street and we saw the Klan. Back then, they would parade in the black community with the white sheets on, on the hood and the running board of the cars. And our mother always-- our parents always taught us that if the Klan came through, to come in the house. We back then had lamps, we didn't have electric lights, we had the oil lamps. They would put out the oil lamps, pull the curtains down and we would all get down on the floor. And we were taught that just like you were taught a drill in school. Our parents taught us that. So, what our parents did for us back then, they prepared us for things that they thought was gonna happen or might happen and they did not want us to get in trouble about it. So, we had some-- we didn't have any educated parents, but we had parents with a lot of wit and parents who had a lot of love and taught us how to survive in the segregated community that we lived in.

A: What do you remember about local or national efforts to bring full civil rights back to black Americans?

M: What did I-- what was that question again?

A: Alright. What do you remember about local or national efforts to bring full civil rights back to black Af-- Americans?

M: In this community?

A: Yes, sir.

M: Oh. There were some people and there's still some people who are still-- I don't know how many of you all-- (I don't want you to know her?), she runs a funeral home (in Overtown?) Ms. Range. She has always been in the forefronts-- in the forefront for civil

rights in this community. The two people that I know who are still living who-- who has been fighting for equal rights for all people in this community was Garth Reeves, the person that I really want you all to interview, but last time he was supposed to come, he became ill, but I'm get him over here. He's a person who-- who was at that time-- he was one of the first members to help to integrate Virginia Key. He was also one of the first pioneers when the blacks could not play golf at the-- it was Country Club of Miami there on-- down on Eleventh Street. He was one of the first to go out on the golf course so that we could play-- so that black people could play golf. So, there have been-- there's still some people who are alive today who really has been very instrumental in trying to do something about segregation in Dade County and Miami.

V: Okay, could you tell us something about your mom and dad? What did they do?

M: My mother-- my mother never worked out of the house. She was not an educated person. My father was not an educated person. My mother used to-- I used to go on the beach- Miami Beach- and pick up laundry for my mother to do in the house. She would-- I would pick up the laundry on Monday and Tuesday, I knew that was my job after I left school, catch the jitney, go to Miami Beach, pick up the clothes, bring it for her to wash and iron them and I would deliver them on Saturday and Sunday. My father worked in construction. My father-- and back then, the most predominate-- the dominant person in your family then was the mother. Your father was there, but he was there mostly as a provider- when I say 'provider', he was the one that had one or two jobs making the money, bringing the money for your mother to run-- for your mother to run the house. So, all of my experiences-- I had very little experiences with my father. All of my

experiences I had with my mother because she was-- all of my siblings. My mother was the one that ran the house. Yes, sir?

U14: With the Klan, in the constitution it also says that you-- you have the right to freedom of speech, but do you think that they exceeding the limits (so far)?

M: Yes, they are.

U14: And (?) ask because you said that they bringing-- they bringing the Klans back.

What do you think about this (??)?

M: What do I think about it?

U14: Yeah.

M: Well, the-- the-- the-- the thing about it now is we will not be- when I say 'we' as a group of people- will not be the only group that they will be affected by the Klan now. There'll be other groups that will be affected by the Klan. Back then, the blacks or whatever we were called then were the ones that was affected by the Klan, but there are other groups now that would be affected by the Klan. Yes?

U15: You know how you mentioned that your younger siblings went to other wars, um, or fights? What were those wars?

M: The Vietnam War, [pauses] what was the other war? The Vietnam War. That was the only crisis we had that we called a 'war'. Yes?

U15: And do you remember anything that they told you about it? [inaudible]

M: No, because my family moved to New York my first year in college, so I didn't grow up with my siblings like most of you will do, you know, with your siblings. They moved to New York. I did not move to New York, I stayed here. I went to college in Tallahassee, I would come back to Miami, find some place to stay, and work. So, I didn't

really have that kind of experience with my younger siblings in terms of talking about the war because they went when I was-- because they were young-- see, this war was after I finished college.

U16: Do you remember anything about the Dust Bowl?

M: Oh, yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. The Dust Bowl is a-- well, it's a field over on First Avenue and Seventeenth Street. It was the only place where black schools had to play football. And the biggest game of the year was a game between Booker T.

Washington and Northwestern- at that time, it was Dorsey. That game was held on Thanksgiving Day. It was the-- it was the largest game in the black community. It was a social event because everybody in the community either went to one of the two schools, because these were- at that time- was the two only-- no, we had Carver down in the Grove, but Booker T. Washington and Dorsey Senior High Schools were the main schools in the community and these games-- and when other schools came here to play, this is where they played and the reason why they called a 'Dust Bowl', it had no grass. They played in dust, they played in sand. They had a little grass, but it was called the 'Dust Bowl' because whenever anybody played or ran you'll see nothing but dust. Yes?

U17: Excuse me, are you married? Do you have kids?

M: I have-- I've been married twice. So, I have two kids-- two kids, four grandchildren. I have one grand-- I have one granddaughter who went to Florida A&M University, she is a freshman. She told her mother that that's where she wanted to go, I had nothing to do with it. And when her mother told me she was going up there to make the band, I told her mother she would never-- never make that band as a freshman. She proved to me that I was wrong. So, I say to you, you know, I just didn't-- I didn't believe that she was strong

enough-- has enough strength to make that band as a freshman, but she did and there's another group that's called- I don't know if you ever seen that group- it's a group called 'Mahogany' that gives shows when they recruit. It's a group where they perform with dancing and a lot of other things. She say she's gonna try out for that so, of all of my grandchildren, she's the only one-- this is the only one of my grandchildren that I hope and pray that will finish college.

U17: What was the response to Martin Luther King's murder in 1968 here in Miami?

M: Oh, god. Riots, and riots all over the country. It was a deep response to it. People were angry. Black people were angry because they were killing the people that we thought were trying to do something for us. President Kennedy, they killed his brother, Bob Kennedy, and then Martin Luther King and we felt like-- and I was a part of that. I mean, I cried. I cried because I had a feeling of hopelessness when everybody-- it just looked like everybody that was trying to do something for a group of people, they were being killed in America, so, it was-- it was just riots all over the country. People were angry.

U18: Did you always want to go into teaching and how and when did you get into it?

M: Well, my father used to do a little tailoring. When I went to college, I went to college on an athletic scholarship- I didn't have any money to go to school, so I went there on an athletic scholarship- and I majored in tailoring. But then before I left, I'd realized that I did not have enough skills to make a living, so I stayed around one summer and took some courses in education and came back here in 1950 and began teaching and I enjoyed- - I enjoy teaching. I only stayed in the classroom ten years. The other twenty years-- I

don't know if you all saw the story and it was in the paper yesterday and the day before where the police were going around picking up kids for truancy?

Audience: Mm-hmm.

M: The time that I was in the school system, the other twenty years, they had people like me and they called us 'visiting teachers'. So, what we did, we had one or two or three schools. For example, if I had this school- I'm just gonna use this school because it's a-- I'm here. The attendance officer would give me names of students who didn't come to school. Then it's my job to go to their homes, find they parents. If I saw them in the street, I would pick them up or had the police to pick them up and take them to the court and the parents had to come to get them. So, when I saw that on TV yesterday, I say they're going back to doing what they used to do long time ago. So, this is what I did for twenty years. I worked with kids and families with problems. Problems of-- kids that had medical needs, I would take them to Bascom Eye Clinic and get the eye examination. Kids that need clothing, and back then, if you were on what they called 'reduce' and 'free lunch', we had to go and investigate you, they don't do that anymore. So, these are some of the cont-- these are some of the things that I did the other twenty years when I was in the school system and I retired in 1980.

U19: Describe what you remember hearing about the 1968 riots in Liberty City.

M: Describe-- You know to watch TV- I never did go over there- but to watch TV and see how the community that you used to live in, the community that you were part of just burning, burning, burning. They were only burning in the community where we lived- where black people lived. Never any time-- because what the police did was protect the communities where other people lived and they just let us burn up the community that we

lived in. So, it was horrible, it was just horrible to see the community where we lived, the community that we loved just burn down.

U1: Thank you so much for sharing your experiences with us.

M: I've enjoyed it and thanks for having me. Anytime.

[audience claps]

END OF INTERVIEW