

INTERVIEWEE: Alliestean Reese

INTERVIEWER: Gonzalo Garcia

DATE: March 26, 2002

TRANSCRIBER: Andrea Benitez

TRANSCRIBED: May 18, 2007

INTERVIEW LENGTH: 00:07:55

Reese: Good morning.

Garcia: My name is Gonzalo Garcia and I'm at Turner Tech High School on March 26, 2002. Can you please tell us your name and, um, spell it for record?

R: [pauses and then laughs] I don't tell people my name, my first name, I hate that name [laughs] you see I (couldn't even?) open my mouth. Ah! You guys really want me to that right? Okay, can I omit the first name? The Miss Reese will do?

G: Miss Reese will do.

R: Okay, Miss Reese, R-E-E-S-E.

G: Okay, thank you. Can you please describe when and where you were born?

R: Yes, I was born in a little part of Miami known as 'Overtown' on Eighth Street and Third Avenue, northwest. I was born at home.

G: Okay. Can you tell us a little about your parents and grandparents?

R: Unfortunately my grandparents were all dead before I was born, so I never knew them. My father was a longshoreman that played semi-pro baseball for awhile. My mother was a homemaker and raised four children.

G: What was it like growing up in where you did?

R: Oh, man. Growing up Overtown was fun. I remember everybody had their own little turf, but during special holidays, we all used to just block off the street and just have block parties.

G: What else do you remember about the days of segregation?

R: Well, let's see. I remember attending Douglas Elementary School, and it was an all-black school, everybody there were black--were black students. My first real encounter with prejudice came in high school-- middle school-- at Miami Edison Senior High.
[pauses] Not so much fun there.

G: Is there any haunting memories of discrimination or separation of races?

R: Off the top of my head? At Miami Edison Senior High School. I remember I organized what we called a 'sit-in' because we'd had it, we weren't going to take it anymore. So, we had our little rebellious sit-in where we got results, you know? Our demands were met and that's when things started changing around.

G: [whispers inaudibly and flips through papers] Here. What thoughts do you have about the changes that were made in the 1950s and 1960s?

R: Well, let's see now. I can't have too many thoughts because in the '50s, I was a baby.
[laughs] So I really can't say. Uh, my earliest memory in the '60s dates back to '68, and that was when Martin Luther King was assassinated. That's my earliest '60s memory.

G: Okay. Where did your family go swimming?

R: Virginia Key Beach over on Key Biscayne.

G: What do you remember about Virginia Key Beach?

R: During that time, basically, all you saw on Virginia Key Beach- that particular part- were blacks.

G: Do you ever attend to football games at Dixie Stadium?

R: At what stadium? [both speak at once]

G: Dorsey Park, uh...

R: Dorsey?

G: Uh-huh.

R: Yes. Yes, I even played a few games on Dorsey Park.

G: Okay. Did your family ever visit the Hampton House Hotel?

R: Yes. My parents used to go dancing at the Hampton House.

G: Do you remember anything about Cassius Clay/ Sonny Liston fight on Miami Beach?

R: I remember Cassius Clay. Um, he used to chase my god-sister and myself across Dixie Park, Overtown. [both laugh]

G: Were the buses integrated here after the Montgomery Bus Boycott in 1955?

R: I can't say because I never rode the bus. [laughs].

G: What do you recall hearing about the bombing of Carver Housing Project?

R: I don't have any recollection of that.

G: Were there any effects on civil rights in Miami associated with the wave of Cubans that came to Miami in the nineteen--early 1960s?

R: I can't--I don't have any recollection of the early sixties.

G: Okay, um, what history do you know about the area where Turner Tech now stands?

R: Very little. In fact, I don't know anything about this area until I started working in this area.

G: What do you remember about local or national efforts to bring full civil rights to blacks Americans?

R: Oh, I remember the NAACP organizing marches. I also remember some of the unions, the AFC-IOL [AFL-CIO], or whatever they called themselves these days, organizing marches and certain attempts during voting times, they would put certain issues on the ballots.

G: And (?) how did your school handle the effort to integrate?

R: After the-- the sit-in that we had, communication was open. We used to meet in the auditorium and, you know, voice our opinions. And we got a lot of results, good results.

G: Okay, that's about it. Thank you for, um--[both speak at once] answering the questions

R: You're quite welcome! And next time, pick s--

END OF INTERVIEW