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INTERVIEWEE: Jacqueline Lewis

INTERVIEWER: Tabitha Rodriguez, Antonio Nunez, Alexandria (Hern?), Crystal (Brown?), and Tavaris (Debar?)

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(Hern?): My name is Alexandria (Hern?).

(Brown?): Crystal (Brown?)

(Debar?): And (Tavaris Debar?)

H: We are here today filming at William H. Turner Tech in the media center February 16, 2006 about Ms.--

Lewis: Jacqueline Lewis

H: --Ms. Jacqueline Lewis. Describe when and where you were born and a bit about your parents and grandparents.

L: I was born in Miami, Florida, actually South Miami, not far from the University of Miami on August 14, 1947. My parents were Mr. and Mrs. Jasper Lewis. I grew up in a two-parent home. My grandparents were Willy and (Gussie?), Campbell who were the founding members of the Church of God in Christ in Miami, Florida. My grandmother was actually the second black woman to own a car in Miami.

H: What kind of car she owned?

L: A Buick.

D: What was it like growing up in Miami, Florida? And describe your community when you were a child.

L: I grew up originally in South Miami. I went to first and second grade at J.R.E. Lee, then we moved to Opa-locka where I attended Bunche Park Elementary School and North Dade Junior Senior High School and they were all predominantly black schools. I had a pl-- you know, a very pleasant childhood- normal, active.

D: Describe some of your earliest memories of your life in Miami.

L: My earlier memories are those of attending church quite often. I was not-- did not experience a lot of segregation that I new of except that my experiences and activities were in the black community- in the black church, and then black schools.

B: Do you believe church was a strong base for the community?

L: It was the strongest base for the community. Our lives and concepts and beliefs and philosophies were built on Christian standards.

D: Being that Miami was on of that states that was also segregated, do you remember any days of segregation?

L: I remember seeing it on television and reading about it, but to experience it was only with education, going to the segregated schools.

D: What are some of the memories that you seen on television about segregation?

L: Blacks not being able to attend public places, they had segregated bathrooms, segregated water fountains, segregated beaches. We went to Virginia Key Beach and whites went to other beaches, we had our own private beaches.

H: Do you remember going to Virginia Key Beach? Where did your family go swimming?

L: We went to Virginia Key Beach often. Every summer, we had our picnics-- back-to-school picnics. We had after-school activities there, summer activities. It was like the highlight of the summer to go to Virginia Key Beach.

D: How did you feel about Virginia Key Beach? Do you think it was a demoralization?

L: No, it was a lot of fun. We had train rides, danced out in the open. It was a lot of fun; it was a family outing, family time.

D: So, you never really basically thought about any of the white beaches?

L: No, didn't have to. Virginia Key was our beach.

D: Do you remember any civil rights movements or anything that happened in the city of Miami?

L: Probably the most recent memory would have been when McDuffie was killed on the motorbike and he was acquitted by an all-white jury which caused the riot in Miami where lives were lost and property was damaged. That probably was the most demoralizing experience that we had.

B: When did this event happen? And describe the--

L: Pardon me?

B: When did this event happen? And describe--

L: I don't remember the exact year, it was in the early-'80s. I had just moved back from Atlanta. I moved from Miami and I went to Atlanta, at that time they called it the 'Black Mecca' of the South, so I lived there for awhile and then I came back to Miami and this

was one of the first things that happened after I came back, so I believe it was the early-'80s. It caused a lot of anger among blacks when he was not judged by a jury of his peers.

H: What do you recall hearing about the bombing of the Carver Housing Project in 1961?

L: I don't remember hearing about that.

H: So, like, growing up, you were, like, mostly with the black people? You was just-- your parents kept you inside, like sheltered?

L: Yeah, I was very sheltered. I led a very sheltered life and we lived in Opa-locka and we didn't travel much from Opa-locka to Liberty City, only for church and going to the beach and that kind of thing. So, it's not like we were commuting constantly to Liberty City and Overtown. Overtown-- we went to Overtown for church.

D: Did your parents ever speak of any of their experiences with segregation or felt harm by white people?

L: My father spoke of it, especially of an incident when he was in Gainesville, Florida and he was called a 'boy' by a white police officer and he got out of the car and beat the police officer down because he told him, "I'll show you how to treat a boy." So, that was one of the more demoralizing stories that I've been told.

D: Did this, like, alter their behavior in any what that they-- did this make them bitter or were they just really carefree about the whole situation?

L: No, they were not carefree but at that time, it was a fact of life.

D: So, basically then, it had--

L: It was more of an acceptance kind of thing. My parents were not [school bell rings] liberated and aggressive.

H: So the church by your family, is it still owned by you guys?

L: My grandparents are deceased now, but my family still attends that church.

H: What do you do in the church? What is your job to take part in it?

L: I'm not as active as I used to be. [laughs] You know, when I was growing up, most of my evenings- school nights- were spent in church. While my friends went to dances and parties, I was at church, and I think a lot of that kind of gave me a real fulfilling. But I go sometimes, not often.

D: You mentioned earlier that you went to Georgia. Were the, um, situations in Georgia different from the situations in Miami, Florida?

L: Blacks in Georgia were more progressive and aggressive and more in control than Miami. Mostly professional people moved to Atlanta at that time.

B: Is there anything else you would like to share with us?

L: Not really.

B: Thank you.

H: Thank you.

L: You're welcome.

END OF INTERVIEW