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INTERVIEWEE: Rita Gunder

INTERVIEWER: Hernandez

TRANSCRIBER: Andrea Benitez

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INTERVIEW LENGTH: 00:46:48

Unknown: -- Hernandez and we're at William H. Turner Technical Arts High School and I'm inside the library. Your name is?

Gunder: Rita Gunder.

H: Rita Gunder. Hi, Ms. Rita Gunder. Could you start by saying what was your childhood like?

G: Oh, I love to talk about my childhood mainly because I—Georgia. I love Georgia. And as a young child, I (came?) up on a small (plot?) out in a rural area (?). (I lived in a?) rural place called H-U-F-F-E-R, Huffer, Georgia. It's a little place out six miles from the-- [audio cuts off] --(on Sikes?), what they call (?), if I'm not mistaken. And I'm the oldest of-- [school bell rings] --the oldest of ten children. And that was an exciting time of my life because I've always loved my hometown. And it was segregated. The blacks went to a school- it was a church where we had go in, it was a church on Sundays in this time that they had at the church but we went to school Monday through Friday in this small church. All six grades or seven classes was with that one teacher.

H: How were your parents involved with your childhood experiences?

G: My life. I can't-- I had (?) parent (?). They were sharecroppers, hard working people. It was ten of us and as I said, I was-- I'm the oldest of ten. And I love remembering my hometown. I love going back there even today because my parent was so wonderful, they left a legend for us. That legend is we love each other, even now. People think we were (good?) little girls and boys because that's how they were raised. They worked very hard, they worked very hard. They was sharecroppers, they worked in the field and you may not know what those pine trees-- you ever go to Georgia, see a pine tree, there's a special gum that-- something that come from the tree that he had to work in that area and it was very hard work but he did it because he wanted us to go on and have a better life to lead.

H: How was schooling for you?

G: It was exciting mainly because we in this (good little?) school, first of all, we all went to-- it was like a family friendly place that we went to school and in the later, later years because (it was the only place we had for people?) to study. Though they were not educated- I think mom went to sixth grade and daddy went to fifth grade. But we had to do our homework, we had to do this and they were right there with us. I'm talking about a family of ten because two adults in the family. We had to get our homework with no discussion and it was instilled in me being the oldest child-- (me to be the oldest?) because (I could use my name, Rita?) but I had (a pet name?). (?). I had to be the best because I had sisters and brothers (who wanna follow me?) and they had it instilled in me that if I did well, my sisters and brothers would do well and I believed that, and I did the best that I could (with what I had?). (?) the books, I didn't know there was that way until later, later years and when I was reading, I'll never forget, it was Harriet Tubman or someone, a book I happened to find and-- maybe it was a book about Indians. I was

reading this book in a page was missing. That kind of bothered me. But nothing was said, nobody said nothing about it. And that was my elementary year. Now for me to go to high school, that was a big thing because the high school I had to go to was six miles away, maybe more than that. So I had to-- my parent had to pay board for me to-- room and board for me (to live there with other members?). You want to know how much it was? [school bell rings] A dollar (a week?) for me to live in somebody's house with them. I had my own room for the very first time. I was sleeping in the bed alone living with the families or friends that, you know, had room for us. Young people coming (and going to?) high school.

H: Were you ever married and did you ever have kids?

G: Yes. In fact, I married my high school sweetheart. We started dating-- hmm, ooh wow-- in 19-- we got married in '53, so we started dating in my junior high-- I must have been in tenth grade, we started dating. And that was a joy. I have a picture I want to show you. And we've only been married fifty-one years. We dated through high school-- we dated, remember, through high school and we (were right there?) and I love to think of back over the years because that's one rule I broke with my daddy. He told me, "Don't date those city boys." They had a thing about the country girl dating the city boys. And guess who I married? A city boy.

[audience laughs]

G: But this city boy took good care of me- when I say take good care of me, he didn't-- (wasn't girls and boys just didn't fondle eachother?) no way, right? That's a-- that was a no-no. But he respected my dad and my mom (?). (Yes?) we dated. He came out to see me once a week. He had to leave my- had to be gone nine o'clock, not on the way out the

door. But (there was plenty of years?) (?). Now, when I was (over town?) in school- in high school- away from mom and dad's house we did-- we went to movies, we did things together--

[audience laughs]

G: --and (he has been with me?) all the time from-- you wouldn't believe it. I have been with this fella since I was fifteen-- I think I was fifteen years old, that we've been together. I was trying to get him to come but he didn't. He always tell everybody he was sending (?), we've been together that long. I have my high school-- I don't think I brought my diploma with me but (it was back then?).

H: How did great men like Martin Luther King influence or motivate your community?

G: Other men? I can't think right this minute of another person, a well-educated person. (You won't believe?) my grandparent- men in my family was a great influence upon me. I have seven sisters and three brothers. We looked up to the elderly persons in our community. Educated and uneducated because we believed in having wisdom and a person of that age, they were not educated but they were men of wisdom. They protected our community and that left a great impact on us because a lot of girls were not really blessed with a father (?) all the time. But my dad's father was in our life, my mom's father was in our life and they really helped our parent to teach us (morals?) and we believed what they taught us. You might not believe, it was my mom's dad taught us really how to pray because grand-- (excuse me?), (I'm gonna?) call him grandpa (Will White?). Grandpa would teach us when we were around and he always loved us with such affection. We were so important. You wouldn't believe about twenty grand[children] at that time. Everybody (he would?) touch. He (knew?) all of us. And I

was sixth child-- oldest child and that's what I remember about him. My dad's father, he was the one took me to church for me to really remember what it really meant to have that father because my dad was a young man, he didn't go to church as much. But grandpa (Norman?), he took us-- all his grandchildren, about-- at that time, about twelve of us more or less, and he's the one taught us-- you may have heard of the Lord's prayer and teaching about the commandments of the Bible. And when he taught us the first one, I remember and learned, "Honor your father and your mother, that your days be long upon the land the Lord thy God (giveth thee?)." That's my scripture for that time because I did believe in honoring elders and that's because my grandfather- grandpa (Norman?)- he's the one taught us when I was very young, like six years old or younger. That left an impact on my life.

H: Could you name some of the struggles or experiences that you and your family went through during that time?

G: My dad did a good job of protecting us from the pain of those issues. I don't really recall having direct impact from it because when I was young-- and like I-- he was there. One experience that we had, I remember, and I-- that really made me want to be a-- go on to school and make them proud of us was we were sharecroppers. And it must have been right about that time, I was in sixth grade- I remember this well- and the parent, they-- we did what's called a security guard but I could almost feel there was some men coming occasionally to check on us (at the school?). And we were living in this area in Huffer and the farm that the people in the-- the children at school went to, there was (Grantham?) across the (Peterson?), about five different plantations out there, right? And one thing that meant so much to me when they-- out of nowhere-- I don't remember, but I

remember them coming- (one or two truck?)- to pick us up -the black kids- to take us to the field to work it about twelve or one o'clock and my dad stood up and said, "You coming for somebody to work, but not my children. My children are going to school." And he was like the icon or the leader in the community. "My children going to school and if you need anybody to work, you come get me." That made me make sure that I finished school (with?) my sisters and brothers (?). That meant so much to me. And with those thoughts in mind-- do you have other questions first? I can talk about Huffer.

H: Um, the struggles that you and your family probably went through at that time.

G: Because of (daddy sharpening- you know?)- his belief in our-- and in the education of others around there, we all went on-- the majority-- about-- with all the family out there, roughly sixty children and believe it or not, one teacher had a classroom of ones that (were school age?), they (wasn't there?) all at the same time. We went on to school, a lot of us-- we, in spite of the time and the hardship. We didn't walk but six miles or more (?) to school. Never missed school, never was late to school- that was a no-no. You had to come to school. Used book, torn book whatever we had, we come with pride because if I do good, my family will do good.

H: Have you ever heard of the Hampton House?

G: Yes. That's the first nightclub I went to [laughs] (?)

[audience laughs]

Teacher: [whispers] Let me just clear (?). She's still in Georgia and you guys need to get her-- you need to get the years and when she came to Miami and kind of then switch it.

[indistinct chatter]

G: You want to go back to Georgia, now?

[audience laughs]

G: I live in the country (right on out there?), Huffer. Now the high school-- now what you-- we're going to-- when I-- this is fun, I have to tell it to the young ladies. When I graduated from highschool, that was a big celebration. Elementary, now- graduated from sixth grade to the seventh grade, right? And that was a big thing. The first time I had a chance to dance, that was fun. And they didn't do our-- what we consider 'our' kind of dance, but we did the waltz. But it was important to us because our parents were there and we were having fun time. And that's when my parent really, really felt like I was a college graduate, that I was president of the United States. They were so proud of me and I have never disappointed them intentionally. Now--

T: [whispers] What year was it that you were-- [inaudible]

H: Did you attend college?

G: Huh?

H: Did you attend college?

G: Me? I didn't go to college. I didn't graduate college, I did attend.

H: When did you graduate from high school?

G: In '53.

H: Fifty-three?

G: I (wanna make sure?) '52 or '53. Fifty-two? Yeah, I'm not sure. I meant to pack my diploma and I forgot that. (?)

H: You mentioned a certain teacher that inspired you in your life. His name was Jose Williams?

G: Oh, Jose Williams. Now that was high school.

H: Yeah.

G: Okay. He was-- he was later in my life because he was the one that really helped me understand there was something different about how we were (to look at life?) now at that time. And I mentioned his name mainly because I remember the movement and he was one of the people in it. But I had others: my principle's (brother?)-- I mean-- his name was Mr. Rogers. I don't remember Mr. Rogers' name. He was my principle at that time-- and I know it was very chaotic for the blacks and a lot of them did lose their jobs. And even with that, they encouraged us, "You're going to school, won't be no problem." And I know we had a-- some conflict was going on, but the most amazing thing about that period in time, all of the people in that community- Douglas, Georgia where I was raised up- we didn't have no direct (conflict?). I noticed job (changing?), some people got better jobs- paying jobs. And the education-wise, I saw less used book and started seeing new books. That was encouraging to me. And-- oh, the one that was really big for me because I don't remember it, this must have been in-- when I was in about tenth grade, I don't recall exactly. When our team would go off to games and what have you, we didn't caravan, we just were able to get a bus. That was exciting to us.

H: What year did you move to Florida and why?

G: Huh?

H: What year did you move to Florida and why?

G: Oh. I had gotten married and you know, when I got married in '53, I think it was, the dates are not good right now, I may have give you the dates-- the right dates later. Well, we got married May 17, 19-- I've been married fifty-one years so ya'll figure it out.  
[laughs] And we got married and my husband came to Florida. I'm getting dates all



wrong but my husband came to Florida and everywhere the husband went, the wife went, no discussions. So that's why I got to Florida. The day he got here, our first day, he went out to get a job. That was a hard time. The first day on the job, he fell and broke his hip. That brought me to Florida. So I now have my dates almost right because that's the year I had my first baby in '54. Got married and I didn't know what it was-- and then I was nineteen, about twenty and twenty-one years old with a new baby and a new city- a big city. Coming from the country to a small town to this-- that was rough for us, but rewarding (?) been together since then.

[whispers]

G: Oh, the riot! Oh, I'll never forget. Oh my God. I forgot that part. We-- you coming on down, come on, so I don't forget. I have to write everything down.

H: What part of Miami did you live in?

G: Overtown-- you've heard of downtown Overtown? That's where I lived. Thirteenth Street and Fifth Avenue. Northwest Thirteenth Street and Fifth Avenue. (Guess?) where I lived. In what we called a rooming house that had a room. We lived in that one room, because that's where he was when he got hurt, had to be in the hospital, so I came from Georgia.

H: When you were down here, what was your occupation?

G: I didn't work at that time. I had a young baby when I came to Miami. Now but that was very hard for me to make that change because notice I said my parent was sharecropper, we had a big farmhouse when we lived on the plantation. My mother-in-law had her own home, beautiful (place?)- olive-- like yellowish canary look, beautiful. (You'll?) see the yellow one. She had a beautiful home right by the railroad track. I think

I have a little picture of it of-- from (my album?). It was so beautiful, it was a beautiful place. And then to come to Miami, Florida to one room. If it had not been our love relationships, I think I would have left and went back the same night.

[audience laughs]

G: I mean, my baby was only a month old-- six weeks, (I mean it was?) six weeks old. But we made it.

H: Going back to that teacher Jose Williams, did he ever tell you about any stories he had with Martin Luther King?

G: No. (Undoubtedly?) No he didn't talk to us directly-- to me, I didn't hear it because I had to work now. When I was in school-- he may have had a chance to talk to a classmate or the school, but I had to work to go to school so I might have missed a lot of the speech.

I also feel that-- because I can remember how he was a very strong person (speeches?).

He was very-- he was really involved in this movement. But I'll never forget, I asked the principle at that time, "What is the Civil Rights Movement?" I didn't get a (valid?)

answer at that time but I realized that was the early parts of it and it was like, I guess, hush-hush for awhile. But Mr. Williams was the out-spoken person then. He was the one that he would trying to get the word out and let us know there have to be changes-- had to be changes. And he-- I didn't-- what do you mean changes? What changes? Because once you get used to a certain little something, you don't notice-- or I didn't notice what was to be changed. But the follow-- I don't remem-- I don't want to say exactly what, but I do remember the (?) hush-hush. To talk, they would go together because adults didn't talk everything out in front of young people back then. They did not. If they had a problem, they did not talk to children until they buffered out-- cleaned out all the stuff that we

weren't supposed to know, then they would bring it to us. Now, after--not too many years-- I don't remember the year again, but I did have a cousin out there in the plantation had a cross burned in his yard. That happened-- he was (?) (because of the?) Mr. (Henderson's?) face on the cross-- on the cross's farm. (He was living?) on that farm. And a cross was burned in his yard somewhere along the way and I don't have the dates with me. Now let's go back to Miami. (I didn't-- wanted to put that in there so you'll put it.?) It did happen. That happened. Now you were asking me about Jose again. Because I was just coming out of high school, I think that I missed really the impact of what Mr. William was really trying to do. And a year or two after that, I think he went on to another school because that was my last year of school and that's (what was?) really going on.

H: When you were-- when you were here down in Miami, did you attend rallies, any-- no?

G: No. I didn't go to no rallies. I did go to Greater Bethel AME Church when Martin Luther King and those were there. I had a cousin more into politics than I was. I wasn't a politician but she insist and I was very happy. I did go to Greater Bethel AME Church and I did hear them speak and I only can remember her telling me it was Martin Luther King. I don't remember Jose Williams here at that time but I'm sure he was. But Dr. (?) I don't remember (?).

T: Was it Dr. Gibson?

G: All of them.

T: The Gibson's family from Florida.

G: Yes. It was a lot of (?)-- I mean a little. It was-- if you've ever been to Greater Bethel (Ms. Warner?), it's one of the historical churches here. And I was sitting near the back so you can imagine what it must have been like. I didn't really, really see them, but I was there. I couldn't be up front because whatever reason, you know. So, we were with people of different races.

H: When you were in Georgia or even here down in Miami, did your parents ever get involved in any altercations with KKK?

G: There's nothing else I could-- I was never told about anything. (?) there to protect us from a lot of things, but I didn't know anything about the KKK back home. Not at all. This was after I left.

H: Did you have any white friends?

G: Oh, yes. We lived on a plantation. Of course, the whites lived down there and we lived over here, but we had our kind-of friendliness because they were sharecroppers, too. The fun part about that, I laugh about it now because we had to do something what we call (put up?) tobacco. I don't know if you ever been to the farm, had the tobacco barn, and you had to work. They worked on one end and we worked-- black-- whites on one end, blacks on the other end. I don't know why but we did it. And I laugh about that sometimes today. We never ate the same table at the same-- we ate from the same table but never at the same time. It happened, it really happened. But that was the way of life and we didn't know there was a (difference?), I didn't. I mean, I have some sisters-- I wish I could have talked to some of them and got a different picture because they are younger than I am, they probably would have a different picture. But that was the way of

life. We ate the same food they did, but we had to eat over there and they ate over here, wherever, you know.

T: [whispers] --memories of Overtown. What it was like, the clubs, the names of places she--

G: Oh, (Overtown now?)?

T: Yes.

G: I remember the Mary Elizabeth Hotel- if I'm not mistaken is the name of it- I went there. I could dance. [all laugh]

T: What was the name?

G: The Mary Elizabeth.

T: Mary Elizabeth Hotel.

G: Yes, I think that was the name of it. And Clyde Killens, you know, the-- you might have heard about him, he was one of the-- hmm, I call them dap guys, I don't know what you all call it now. He was the person that ran this nightclub and very respected. I've never seen him drunk, but in his club you always had this (?) walking around. Everybody knew Clyde. That I remember about that (night thing?). (Maybe I said?) Mary Elizabeth. (It was?) Mary Elizabeth. There was another place that was very popular. At that time, we didn't-- black area- Third Avenue and Second Avenue. It was Northwest Second Avenue where we were. Like I said, I had never really, really been in a nightclub. The Mary Elizabeth was exciting. That was for the, you know, (?). And the other place-- the first time I went to this place, it was such a tiny little place but you wouldn't believe we were all there, nobody, no one fighting or trying to hurt each other. We were like a family, (?) down here in Miami. And I'm thinking of the (Morton?) Theater, I think it's

now it's another theater that still on Second Avenue. They made that like a, what it is, sightseeing place or something.

T: Lyric?

G: Yes. Lyric! That's the one. Lyric. That's the (place?) I'm talking about. We all went-- I think back in the '50s when I was first coming down-- I was first in Florida, we did have three- two theatres or three. That's where we went- blacks. (Martin?), (Morton?) Theater, one on Thirteenth Street, there was one on Tenth Avenue, and there was another on Second Avenue. I forgot (?) but those were where we would-- where we went- blacks.

H: Um, where did--

G: Oh, but-- oh, let me go back to--!

T: Did she move from Overtown to where, that type of thing.

G: But I must share this with you. This nightclub we went to (?)--

T: The Mary Elizabeth?

G: Yeah, the Elizabeth. We had the opportunity to meet a lot of celebrities there. When they finished their work over there on the beach or wherever they had to work, they would show up to the nightclub. And we had a chance to see a lot of celebrities over there. And before we know it-- not only black, whites and other races would be there. Did you ever go there, ma'am? It was (the fun days there?).

[audience laughs]

H: Did you ever move from Overtown?

G: Oh, yes.

H: And where did you go?

G: I'm on Twelfth Avenue and Fifty-First Street, Miami. Now I'm here at home. [laughs]

H: Were you ever involved in a protest? If so--

G: No. Never involved in that, directly. Just that incident and I don't remember exactly where it is-- was that we were coming-- what was the name of this restaurant that we used to go to eat red lobster? Oh, Red Lobster, I think was out there on Thirty-Sixth Street. And we going all the way back home, got right to the corner of Thirty-Sixth Street, Twelfth Avenue and that's when we-- I knew it was a riot going on. There was a fair-skinned- notice I didn't say 'white' - I don't know, it's just a fair-skinned couple going east and we were going east but we turned on Twelfth Avenue and out of no where somebody threw a bottle (in their window?). I thought I was (?). I had never-- it didn't have no impact on me until that moment. And I didn't know what had happened already in the community because believe it or not, I'm not very much of a politician person, whatever you call it. I wait for my husband to listen to the news and let me know what's happening. That's sad but I'm telling the truth. [laughs]

H: Did you attend church? What was it like?

G: Going to church here? Home?

H: Here in Miami.

G: We went to church. That was no debate.

H: How was it like, (?)?

G: Oh, heavenly, because I did not really-- I was-- let me say this, I've always been in the church all my life. My mother-in-law told us that when we were leaving home-- you know, my husband and I were getting ready to come from Georgia, I had the baby, he come get a-- to get a job-- he came down here to get his job. When he got the job, then he sent for the family. But he didn't get a chance to send for us. My mother-in-law

reemphasized, “Whatever you do, first thing you do, join a church.” I joined Greater Bethel AME Church. Coming from a small little church to this great big church, it was more than enough for me. I just couldn’t see (?). But I’ve always-- my family, all of us are members of this church. I’ve been on the same (pulpit?) in the church in Miami. I am a minister. I don’t tell it all the time but I think it’s the right time now. I am a minister in my church.

H: How many children do you have again?

G: I (don’t have but?) eight children.

H: Three?

G: Eight.

H: Oh, eight?

G: Eight children.

H: Wow.

G: Nineteen grandchildren, and six great grand- seven great grand[children]. All of them have to go to church. They don’t have to go with grandmama Rita- that’s who I am in the family, I’m grandmama Rita. They-- I tried to give them some family traditions just like we had, but now that I know being (in the?) member of a church is not a tradition, that is your roadmap. And they all, even the little baby did it, you gotta go to church, you must be born again, you must go to the Bible study, must go to Sunday school. They began-- they are beginning to love it because that’s what grandmama Rita and granddaddy (?) do. You didn’t ask me my husband’s name. His name is Donald Gunder.

[all laugh]

G: My husband.



T: -- in Brownsville.

H: Let's go back to the Hampton House. Could you describe how it was for you and, like, (what you went through?)

G: It was-- we always went dancing (then?) from high school. But coming to Miami, it was a big thing because it took me awhile to learn that we were so (leveraged?) as people. Now today, I'm reading the material and things about different places. I've seen a lot of famous people. That are going to this place nightclub, back then we called it. It just felt like you were in (crowded?) and everybody felt like family. I have never heard a fight-- argument or fight and we were in there like this- you know, close, close, close. And Flip Wilson and all of them were there at times-- at intervals. I'm trying to think of some of their names. Um, I didn't see B.B. King. It was a woman singer.

T: Koko Taylor? Um-- Bessie Smith?

G: Well, anyway, it was a lot of them. I can't remember those names! She's much younger than I am. [laughs] But I couldn't go nightclubbing that often, (but one time?).

H: How was the media involved with segregation or integration in those times?

G: That's when I really realized that this was a media thing. And to me, I was never a person into politics too much. I was one of those people, believe it or not, I pray for them. I never liked to be around where the riot was going on. I -- I have never been to one. I wish you had gotten my sister. She-- I don't think she missed any of them.

[audience chuckles]

G: I'm not a political person in that way- following all of these things. I want to know just enough how to pray for them and that's what I have done. I have really prayed for the politicians. I don't know their name, but I remember Father Gibson, that traumatic

moment with him. And others, I can't remember their name, but I had to learn to be a (?), I just couldn't get out there in the crowd. I never-- I have never gone to a-- they had a walk, (that wasn't me?).

T: [whispers] Were her own children (at the school?) during integration and segregation?

H: Um, your own children, were they in the school system, was it integrated or was it segregated?

G: Who, my children?

H: The school system, was it integrated or was it--?

G: It started-- my oldest, he started Overtown over on Fifth Street.

T: Fredrick Douglas?

G: No, it was another-- Fifth Street elementary?

T: Oh, Phillis Wheatley?

G: Phil-- uh.

Unknown: Dunbar?

T: Buena Vista?

G: Mm-mm. This was on Northwest Second Avenue, somewhere like-- you know where St. Agnes Church is? It's Catholic. (Father?) I can't remember because-- it is back over in there. Not-- see, Dunbar is further up the street, right?

Unknown2: Are you talking about St. Mary's?

G: Huh?

U2: St. Mary's?

H: St. Mary's?

G: Mm-hmm. That Catholic-- it's a Catholic school right there--

U2: On Fifth Street?

G: Francis Xavier.

T: Francis Xavier.

G: There you are. [laughs] St. Francis Xavier, I think that's where they went to elementary-- [school bell rings] --I mean, they went for kindergarten, you know, whatever. We sent them-- the first three went there for their first experience in school. But then when they went to elementary school, um, what's the name of the school I said? It was a school-- public school because by this time, I had two kids and I couldn't afford that. So I put them in public school over there-- I think it was Fifth Street but I'm not sure.

T: Okay.

G: What else?

T: Was that an all-black school at that time?

G: Oh definitely. Oh man, all-black. All-black.

[audience laughs]

G: I had no other choice. I really-- I personally, I guess maybe because from the country, we didn't have this comfortable seat to sit on, we had to sit on the benches, you know? And here my kids had a desk and they were able to sit there and learn. It was exciting for them. And I was at that time becoming involved in (?) and (what have you?) but I didn't know that they were going to school with people with-- I remember (sort-of?) the name when somebody (call them out or write?) about that. I that my kids didn't (?). Something else I wanted to tell that was so important--

H: Any friends or family members were killed by the KKK or--?

G: Not to my knowledge.

T: [whispers] Last five minutes so you want to ask her things that she wants to tell us.

G: I had something else-- oh! An exciting thing I want to share. My ten brothers and sisters, including myself- I'm a licensed (?) because that-- I've always enjoyed working taking care of the sick. Because home-- when the person was sick, guess who had to fan them? We didn't have a fan, we didn't have an air conditioner. But we-- the younger-- the oldest kids in the family-- oh, you know about that? We fanned and took care of the elders, (especially if they were special to?) us. The eldest person in the family in that area, everybody respected them and loved them. Well, when I came to Florida and had to get a job-- like I said my husband got hurt, da, da, da, da, da. I was working in these people's house, I didn't like doing it. But that day-- this particular day, like wham! Like I was slapped in the face. I come to her house to work, guess what she wants me to do. Wash the windows. I said, "I don't wash my own windows." Out of there. Went home, told Donald, "You sending me to school and I'm going."-- no, "I'm going to school and you're gonna send me." Not you, my husband. [all laugh] And that's how I-- I did take some classes for R.N. but by this time, I had all of this children and it was hard for me to go back to school. But I have sisters that are-- my youngest-- one of the youngest sisters down here, she teach on Miami Beach, I forgot the name of the school. Oh my. I have a brother that is a schoolteacher. Two brothers that-- I (faintly?) remember my oldest brother, he was (?). You wouldn't believe, he was out there in the country, "I'm gonna be a truck driver." That's what he become- a truck driver. He felt that he could (?) because he achieved something dad and mom are proud of. (?) other brother, he went up north and got a good job. And my next oldest sister to me, she become-- you ever heard of heart

pace makers? She worked with Cordis and she excelled in that. She was there for years at the Cordis company. (Back there I have brothers who teach?). These country folks, now, (back out yonder?). Joe, Irene, (Marver?), they were all college graduates. Seemed like a couple more but I-- and I didn't graduate college, but I did (take a trade?). My parents thought I was (coordinator?) in the state of Florida of the company (?). I have been doing that since '63. I still work [school bell rings] two days a week.

T: This has to be the last question.

H: What did you think about-- what did you think about the death of Martin Luther King?

G: Oh, that was the most traumatic day. It's like, every time I remember that-- I was getting on the jitney on Thirteenth Street and Fifth Avenue Overtown and seemed like the whole city went quiet. I get chills when I think about it now. We were on the jitney. And even then, they didn't want to talk about it but it came on the air on radio on the jitney that he had gotten killed. That was very bad. Now that's when it really hit me what our-- my family and others was really trying to do to help us have a better life. It was sad. And I had a chance to call the farmhouse where my mom worked. That's one thing-- she was more into it at that time than I was and I don't think she really recovered from it because she must have felt that we weren't going to get the opportunities that they had fought so hard for. I've never liked politics. (On that?) seems like I'm trying-- (I want to believe that even now?), I'm trying to get into politics because I can see a lot of good. Yeah. I want my grand[children] to. Yeah. But I want them to tell me about it, I don't want to experience (?).

T: Thank you so much.

G: Thank you.

[audience claps]

T: Really great job. And you have because destiny, I think, is very political.

G: --love her grandmama Rita talk about the old days.

T: Yes. She's (?) achieved that. You kids I'm going to allow to go to lunch--

**END OF INTERVIEW**