

**Interview Subject: Bea Hines, Miami Herald columnist, former domestic on Miami Beach**

**Date Recorded: 7-7-12**

**Location: MDPL office, Art Deco Welcome Center**

**Date of Birth: 2-12-38**

Bea Hines was the first black columnist at the Miami Herald. But before she was hired as a file clerk at the Herald in 1966, she worked as a domestic on Miami Beach, the only job open to black women without a college education in those days.

Bea tells about doing "household work" in the late 50's and early 60's. She knew many women of her generation and her mother's generation who did this work because it was all that was open to black women without a degree in nursing, teaching, or social work.

She started working in a private home on Miami Beach as the maid, cook, and nanny in 1962. During that time the woman of the house had a baby, her third child, whom she didn't want. Bea took care of him.

Bea says she didn't know people could be so cruel until she started doing domestic work. She was constantly being told by her employer that maids were a "dime a dozen," and this was before the Cuban influx. If you were lucky, she says, you got with a family who was kind. She wasn't so lucky.

She describes what it was like to have to leave your own children all day with a babysitter while you went to raise white people's children.

The family went to Europe one summer and didn't pay to retain her. Instead she was expected to find other work to fill in until they returned.

She tried to find other work but it was hard to find time off during the week for interviews.

Bea describes various racist remarks and myths that were passed down from parent to child, which hurt her feelings when she heard them from children she was raising.

She tells how she never had a paid vacation, the family never paid into social security for her, and she never had a raise in the 3 years she worked for the family.

She finally got a job as a file clerk at *The Miami Herald* and the family tried to talk her out of leaving without offering her a raise, claiming that she would only be making \$2 more per week after taxes than she was making with them.

Bea relates to the feature film *The Help* and how it paralleled her experience raising and loving the white children in her care and forming emotional attachments that made her reluctant to leave them. But she knew she could advance at The Herald and would never be able to advance as a maid.

She mentions Cherry Turner, 90, who worked for a white family down the street which was very nice to her and made donations to her church.

"It was very tough to keep your self esteem and your dignity....I learned that no matter what anybody says to you, you have to know within yourself that you are somebody....Not everybody who calls you brother is brother or sister."

She tells the story of how her mother plotted to escape from an abusive husband, Bea's father, with the assistance of an older black women. Bea was 6. They left Clewiston, FL and stayed with relatives until her mother could find work in Miami and send for them.

Bea talks about growing up in the segregated south and reminisces about watching the March on Washington on television while working as a maid. On the 25th anniversary of the march, she covered it in D.C. for *The Miami Herald*.