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INTERVIEWEE: Oliver Baker

INTERVIEWER: Unknown

TRANSCRIBER: Andrea Benitez

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INTERVIEW LENGTH: 00:06:50

U: Um, first I'm going to ask you to describe when and where you were born and a bit about your parents and grandparents.

Baker: I was born August the 21st, 1933. My father named Cory Baker and my mother name Annie Baker. I was born in Lakeland, Florida and I came to Miami when I was six years old and I've been here ever since.

U: What was it like growing up where you did and could you describe what your community was like when you were a child?

B: Well, mostly when I was a child, we had the 'Colored' water fountains and restrooms and you had to ride in the back of the bus and when the bus-- they went on strike and that's when they hired the first black bus drivers.

U: And what neighborhood did you live in? Was it a segregated neighborhood? Like, were whites allowed to walk through your neighborhood?

B: When I came to Miami, we stayed Overtown and then we moved to Liberty City and there was a wall between the white and the blacks.

Unknown2: What schools did you attend?

B: Dorsey-- Liberty City Elementary and I finished with Dorsey High School.

U2: What were some of the places you went as a teenager?

B: Went? I've been to several places because I went up to North Florida where they had the-- the whites sit to the bottom of the theater and the Coloreds sit up top of the-- in the same theater.

U2: Is there a haunting memory of discrimination or separation of the races?

B: I know when I was living in Liberty City, we crossed the wall to play and a guy shot at us there. So you stayed on one side of the wall. That was between the white and the black.

U2: What thoughts do you have about the changes that were made in the 1950s and 1960s?

B: Well, everything seemed to be getting better. And we make more advances at this time.

U1: Okay. Did you ever go to Virginia Key Beach and what was your experiences there?

B: Well at that time, the whites-- blacks went to Virginia Key and we had to catch a bus over there until they make the causeway.

U1: Did you have, like, any experiences, like, bad ones in segregation?

B: Well, we couldn't go to the beach-- it's white and black beach and so we didn't have a beach so we-- they gave us a beach over there and we had to catch a boat and go over to Virginia Key-- uh, the beach.

U2: What do you remember about the 1968 riots in Liberty City?

B: Well, it was pretty rough because after McDuffie got killed, they was burning things all over and a lot of chaos during that time.

U2: What was the response to Martin Luther King's murder in 1968?

B: Well, everybody was upset about it and things calmed down after a period of time.

U2: And what about Bobby Kennedy?

B: That was very upsetting, too because Kennedy-- after-- John Kennedy got killed first and then when he start try to run for president, he was killed, too and that was pretty upsetting, too.

U2: I'd like to thank you for coming out and speaking about your experiences growing up in Miami.

B: Thank you. Pleasure is mine.

[video cuts off]

U1: Do you remember being a part of any organizations that fought for blacks during the segregation time or anything like that?

B: No, I never was a part of it.

U1: And how did you participate in helping the blacks, like, fight for segregation or something?

B: Got me again. [laughs]

U1: Were there something in your family strongly believed in?

B: Yes, uh-huh. They--

U1: Then, like, why was it such a strong thing that (your family believed in)?

B: Well at that time, we was treated wrong and so everybody-- I messed up again.

[laughs] Give me something else.

U1: Okay. What history do you know about the area where Turner Tech is now? Like, this area, what history do you know of it?

B: Well, when we moved to Liberty City, Allapattah was a part of different sections of town and they moved the boundaries from-- they moved Allapattah south and now we live in Model City in Allapattah and in (Sweetwater?) across from us, it was a graveyard there and they took the-- build a school there. They dug up the graveyard and moved the bones out to (Brownsville?).

U1: Is there anything else that you would like to share?

B: Well, in my church, I'm in the choir and we do a lot of dancing and I also sing in the choir. In high school, I played drums in the band. And one time we went to North Florida to a band clinic and we went to-- stopped at a restaurant to get some food and they said blacks couldn't come in the front, we had to go to the back of the door to get something to eat.

U1: Thank you.

[video cuts off]

U1: Do you have any memories of downtown or like any experiences of downtown, anything like that?

B: I remember downtown, the blacks sit to the lunch counters and when we bought clothes or shoes, we couldn't try them on in the store. Once they bought them, that was it.

U1: And did blacks protest against that?

B: They did. It was a big-- and eventually, they allowed them to sit to the counter.

U1: And were you a part of that?

B: [laughs] No. I was a teenager at the time, so I wasn't.

U1: Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW