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## Interview with Carolyn Kay Williams Alexander (FA 4)

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BIOGRAPHICAL DATA SHEET

Full Name (include maiden name) Carolyn Kay Williams Alexander

Address 2539 Bluegrass Drive

City Bowling Green

State Kentucky

Zip Code 42101

Phone Number (502)781-9301

Sex Female

Race Black

Birthdate 7/28/48

Place of Birth McAllen,  
Texas

Years of Education Six - Graduate degree (Master of Social Work)

Occupation Counselor, Special Services Program/Western Kentucky University

Parents' Names Will Earl and Nere Leona Ammons Williams

Siblings Names (in chronological order) Charles Ammons, Brenda Rowe, Willa Stewart,  
and JoAnn Matthews

Spouses' Name Livingston Alexander

Children's Names (in chronological order) Jason Eric Alexander and  
Erika Denise Alexander

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Interviewer's tape no.: 1 WKU FL, FL & OHA Accession no.:  
 Interviewer: Gina L. Kinchlow Address: 1225 College-B105  
 Interviewee: Carolyn Kay Williams Alexander 2539 Bluegrass Dr.  
 Address:

Date: October 4, 1984- Thursday

Place of interview: College Education Bldg., Western Ky. University

Other people present: None

Equipment used:

Reel-to-reel tape: Brand: Size reel: Tape Mil: Speed:

Cassette: Brand: Scotch AVX60 C-30 (C-60) C-90/C-120 (circle size)

Amount of tape used: (Side 1): all (Side 2): all

Brief description of interview context and tape contents:

talking with informant about "Juneteenth" celebrations as observed in McAllen, Texas where she grew up.

COUNTER	TRANSCRIPTION
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003

KINCHLOW: Fieldwork 578. Dr. Camilla Collins, Instructor. Project, "Juneteenth". Interview Number One, Tape Number One, Side Number One. Today is October 4, 1984, Thursday. I am at the College of Education Building on the Western Kentucky University campus in Bowling Green, Kentucky. My informant is Mrs. Kay Williams Alexander. My name is Gina Kinchlow.

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Okay. Let's start out by getting just some personal information from you. Okay? Just give me your. . . your name and your present address, city, county, and state.

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COUNTER	TRANSCRIPTION
014	<p>ALEXANDER: Okay. And you want my, uh, maiden name. How, I mean, how do you want this?</p> <p>K: Ah, give me your maiden name and your, your last name.</p> <p>A: Okay. My name is Carolyn Kay Williams Alexander. My present address is 2539 Bluegrass Drive, Bowling Green, Kentucky.</p> <p>K: Okay and your birthdate and your birthplace.</p> <p>A: Okay my birthdate is July the 28th, 1948 and I was born in McAllen, Texas which is in south Texas about 9 miles north of the Mexican border. So that's the southern tip of Texas.</p> <p>K: The southern tip of Texas?</p> <p>A: Un-huh. It's known as the valley. The Rio Grande Valley.</p> <p>K: [laughs] The Rio Grande Valley.</p> <p>A: Un-huh.</p> <p>K: Okay. Tell me a little bit about your parents.</p>
024	<p>A: Okay my parents are Will Earl Williams and my mother's name is Nere' Leona Ammons Williams. My parents are native Texans also. My mother was born in Wallis, Texas which is W-a-l-l-i-s. That's near, uh, Houston, Texas. To the west, southwest of Houston, And, well I said my father's a native Texan. He was born in Oklahoma but his parents moved back to his birth, well, moved back to Richards. Richards, Texas. Yes. Which is . . . [snaps finger and laughs] , you snap your finger and your already out of it. It's a really small country town and it's also west of, ah, but it's more to the north, it's kind of like northwest of Houston out near, ah, Prarie View. Out that way.</p>

FA4, F2

COUNTER	TRANSCRIPTION
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037

K: Okay, I've heard of Prarie View. I've heard of the college there.

A: Okay, yeah. Well, Prarie View A and M Univeristy is located in Prarie View Texas and my father's hometown, ah, up near Navasota, see, so all of those little towns, they're all in that proximity, in that area, about a hundred miles from Houston. But, ah, they, my father lived in Richards, Texas up until he was a young adult and then he moved down to, ah, he lived in other towns in Texas but he ended up eventually ended up in McAllen, Texas. His parents also had relocated to McAllen, Texas, and he comes from a pretty large family.

K: Okay so his parents were from Texas and then moved to Oklahoma?

A: Well, they say he was born up near Altus, Oklahoma and then they went back to, ah, Richards, Texas and that's where they lived and then, ah, when he was a young adult they moved down to McAllen, Texas and he was working down there.

050

[see Figure 1.1]

K: That's where he met your mother?

A: No. Ah, let me show you this. We have this album. This is a family album and it's my father's family tree. pulls out family album

K: Oh great! I didn't know you had this.

A: Yes, we have this and one of my aunt's did the narration on this and it includes all of the, you know, information about my father's family.

K: Right.

A: And all of their, you know, his brothers and sisters

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COUNTER

TRANSCRIPTION

and everything. And so. . . this is, ah, this was done in 1981.

[flips through pages]

K: Oh girl, the pictures!

A: This will give you. . . okay these are my grandparents.

These are my father's parents, Andy and Martha Williams.

Okay. And, let's see, all of this has been. . . see right here where it says they lived in Oklahoma and several Texas towns?

Well they went back to Richards and then they moved to

McAllen, Texas where they reared the remaining children.

And, see, my father was an adult but he still had younger brothers and sisters. [see Figure 1.2 and 1.3]

K: How much younger?

A: Well, let's see. . . there's a . . . they were little.

K: Okay so you're saying like he was in his twenties and he had brothers and sisters that were like school age.

A: School age. Yes. Un-huh. And, uh, because he and my mother, let me show you how they met. They met when he went up to Houston and, uh, okay, here they are. This is my father and that's my mother. Okay see they met in Houston in 1943. He was on vacation. [see Figure 1.4]

K: And he was in Houston vacationing and met your mother.

A: Un-huh. They met, uh, I think they had been pen pals because it says here they were acquainted with each other through a club in Houston, it was the Houston Informer, I think they were pen pals. And then they met, you know, while he was up there visiting and then when he returned back down to McAllen, they continued to write each other and in September they decided to get married and October the 3rd, uh, in

066

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COUNTER	TRANSCRIPTION
	<p>1943. That's when they got married, and uh. . .</p> <p>[see Figure 1.5]</p> <p>K: That's kind of romantic isn't it? [laughs]</p> <p>A: Yeah. Well my mother, uh, you know, had lived in Wallis all of her life and she attended schools in Wallis, and, uh, see, at the time, only went to the 11th grade. She said that was as far as they could go so that was the equivalent to graduating from high school. But, uh, she did not go to college, ah, because their, they'd had a. . . their house had burned that year. It had burned up a lot of clothing and stuff like that.</p> <p>K: They lost quite a bit?</p> <p>A: Yeah, they lost a whole lot and so she wasn't able to go to college and she went to Houston to work, you know, after that, and was working as a maid for, you know, several different people. And that was her occupation at the time. I think when they met she was working as a maid. And my mother also by this time, had had. . . well, this was quite, um, she was in her 20's, ah, let's see my mother was born in 1915 and my brother was born in 1941 so she was about 20. . . what would you say, about 26?</p> <p>K: Yeah. 26.</p>
098	<p>A: She was about 26 when she had my brother and she had my brother before she was married to my father, see, and my brother was about 2 years old, he was going on 2 years old when they got married. But, see, all that time she had worked, she had been working in Houston. So then after they got married, then that's when they moved, well, she moved down to McAllen</p>

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COUNTER	TRANSCRIPTION
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and they've lived in McAllen ever since.

K: That's great. So who put this book together?

A: Well, it was, kind of like a family project. My sister did all the, my sister Brenda, the oldest one, she did all the typing and ran off. . .

K: Who gathered the information? Who pulled it all together?

A: Well I think everybody contributed and then you just had, there was a committee and the committee was formed of family members.

K: I've never seen anything like that before. I haven't.

A: Okay and one year they gave these out at the family reunion in 1981. 'Cause every year my father's family has a family reunion on the 4th of July.

K: So it's a family tree album.

A: Un-huh. And the reason it's called Williams - Smith is because my grandmother, their mother has remarried and the second time she married her last name was Smith.

K: Are you going to let me look at this?

A: Yeah. I'm gonna let you look at it. That's why I brought it. This is why I brought it.

K: Well, I mean, am I going to be able to take it with me?

A: Yes, I'll let you take it with you.

K: I'll bring it back.

A: I know you will. [laughs]

K: Girl, that's nice.

A: I know you will. But, ah, you know, since there were so many people in the family, because see my father comes from a large family. There were nine children. And, uh, really I think there were nine living. Some of his, one of his sisters, Dolly, died when she was a child.

K: Childhood disease?

FAM.FL

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COUNTER

TRANSCRIPTION

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A: No, she stepped on a . . . she died of lockjaw I think is what they said. She stepped on a, a nail, and, uh, died as a result of that. From lockjaw. Tetanus, you know.

K: Yeah I noticed on that other page some of the names were marked through. I guess those are the ones that are deceased?

A: Where?

K: On the, uh, on one of the earlier pages where it listed like his family, his brothers and sisters.

A: He has one brother who's deceased. One of his younger brothers died. My uncle Dal. He died a couple of years ago. Let's see, where did you see that? It might've just been the way it was typed. Been on line. Okay. [finds page interviewer was referring to] No. Yeah, it's just the way it was typed. And, see, my Ethel. Okay, they're in numerical order too. Well, chronological order as to the . . . and my aunt Ethel, uh, we call her, aunt, her name is Ethelene but everybody calls her Aunt Ella. She's the oldest one and then it's my father, see, he's the oldest son and then after him there's Ira and then Hortense and then my unlc Garrett and then there was Dolly who was after uncle Garrett. Now she's the one that's deceased. And then there's my aunt Erma and then uncle D. Joe. [see Figure 1.3]

K: What's his first name?

A: Doris. [laughs]

K: [laughs] Excuse me. I'm not laughing at his name.

A: Oh no! That's why I said, "Doris." When he, uh, graduated from high school he quit using the name Doris because to him that was . . . ah . . . I don't know where my grandmother got that name from but, you know, that was a female name.

K: Sure. There were men at that time named Shirley. And, uh, Marilyn

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COUNTER	TRANSCRIPTION
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( Marilyn White ) was telling me Tuesday about an uncle of hers whose name was, ah, oh he had a very feminine name. Beverly.

A: Well anyway, he did not like it and so everybody had called him Doris anyway but once he graduated from high school and he was getting ready to go to college, he started to call himself D. Joe and so, ah, that's what we started callin' him and now we just call him D. Joe.

K: He dropped that Doris.

A: Yes. He dropped it. And my uncle Dal, well see you know that's. . . instead of, it's like Darryl, but it's Dal. D-a-l. I'm not jokin'.

D-a-l-. Dal. But it was, you know, supposed to have been Darryl. But, you know how people. . .

K: The way "we" pronounce it. So. . .

A: Yeah. The way "we" pronounce it. So. . .

K: Dal Ladd.

A: Un-huh. And he was the . . . ah, now this is, this is, out of order 'cause like D. Joe is the baby and Dal was before him. But I think, I don't know. . . but anyway, I know D. Joe is the baby. [referring to Figure 1.3]

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K: Okay now these names up here, Mayola. She's the. . . oldest?

A: Okay. This is my, my, okay this is my . . . underneath it would have the name of the primary person up here. Okay? This is my grandfather's birthdate, where he was born, his father's name, his mother's name. uh, his brothers. The ones who are now living, well, his brothers period. They're both still, they're both living. And his sisters see, so these are his two sisters. Well three sisters 'cause it would start up here at the top. Okay and then down here his spouse. Her. . .

K: Her birthdate.

A: No, the date of marriage. That would be their date of marriage. And

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COUNTER

TRANSCRIPTION

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where. And then their children. "Cause see like over here for, okay like for my father, okay, this is his birthdate. Where? Altus, Oklahoma. His father, mother, brothers, see he has three brothers and then his sisters and then his spouse's name their date of marriage, where, and then their children. See, it starts here. [See Figure 1.3]

K: Tell me about your mother's name.

A: Nere'?

K: Nere'. That's, that's different.

A: Uh. She was named by an uncle of hers and, uh it was the name of, I believe, someone that he had known. And, uh. . .

K: That's pretty but I've never heard that before. Nere' Leona.

A: Un-huh. But she was named by her uncle Ben. She was telling me about it. My mother likes to keep albums and she's kept pictures, you know, and things like that and now she's, you know, giving us all the pictures of us that, you know, when we were little and uh, she's doing a separate album, for all of us.

K: That's good. She's the family historian.

A: Yeah, she's a historian. But, you know, like with her family they have family reunions every two years. They don't have a family reunion every year. My father's family, my mother's family, um, has not been as close, you know, in terms of doing things like that like my father's family. But they started that recently, well, several years ago. But unfortunately I was only able to go to one family reunion and that was before we moved to Kentucky. On my mother's side and we met out at my grandmother's. See her mother is still living. Both of my father's grand. . . both of my father's parents are now deceased. But my mother's mother is still living and she's in her 90's now. And she has a sister who's still living also. She won't tell her age but I believe my grandmother, um, I

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COUNTER	TRANSCRIPTION
	<p>was looking at a picture we had, okay, ten years ago she was 84, so she's about 94. She should be about 94. Either she was to turn 94 this year because her birthday has already passed. Her birthday, I think, is in February.</p> <p>K: And this is your mother's aunt? Your great-aunt?</p> <p>A: Yeah, my great-aunt is older than my grandmother I believe. See. So she's got to be older than grandmother but she won't tell anyone her age. And her name is Aunt Evvie. [laughs] And both live, they still live in Wallis. They both still live alone. Ah, My grandmother's health has not been real great. In recent years. And her sister has someone who comes in and spends the night with her. But neither one of them really want to live with the family.</p> <p>K: They like that independence.</p> <p>A: They like that independence, but my grandmother, one of the things that's concerning us is that, ah, she's starting to have blackouts so there might be some, she may have to go and live with someone even though she may not want to. During the wintertime she usually comes over and lives with one of her daughters, but, you know, her main concern is getting back to her own house and getting her mail, and everything, so they go out there frequently.</p> <p>K: Sure because that's home to her and that's comfortable for her, see.</p> <p>A: So it's, ah, you know, that's one of the, ah, stresses now, you know, with, ah, having parents who are living for a real long time. But we always go to see her. I get to see my grandmother at least once a year and my children, you know, living over here in Kentucky, and not being able to see their grandparents as often as we would like, you know, every time we go over we always go over and see my grandmother. So I didn't see her when we were over in July, but when we go back at</p>

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COUNTER	TRANSCRIPTION
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Christmas time, then, see, I'll get to see her then.

K: Good. So this is good that they know her.

A: Oh yeah. And they call her, they say she's the "other grandmother." That's how they . . . that's our "other grandmother." But they know, that, you know, this is not grandma. They call each one of their grandmothers grandma, but this is the "other grandmother." So that's neat. So it's like really four generations, in, uh, 1-2-3-4, yeah, we've got pictures, you know, with all of us on it, you know, with my mother. 'Cause I have a daughter, and my grandmother, ah, yeah, so it's like four generations.

K: That's special. That's really special.

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A: Yeah, it is. I'm really proud of that. Because when I grew up in McAllen, well see my grandmother, she lived right next door to us, my father's mother. And, uh, we really, you know, she had, we had the opportunity of living right next door to our grandmother and having that kind of relationship with a grandparent. And my mother's mother living away, we would only see her when we would go up there during the summer-time on vacation. And so I didn't really. . .

K: Once a year?

A: Un-huh. Yeah and I didn't really get a chance to really be as close to my other grandmother until I was an adult and living in Houston when I then had the opportunity to go out and see her and she would come over to Houston and things like that. But, you know, when you're a child, having that relationship it's really great.

FA 4. F2

K: It is. I can remember my grandmothers, well both my grandmothers are still living, and I can remember childhood relationships I had with them, and it's special. It's something that children. . . when you can have your grandparents living you ought to take advantage of it.

COUNTER

TRANSCRIPTION

A; Because my cousins that lived in Houston, it was just the opposite, you know, like they had a chance to see my grandmother moreso, a lot of them, on my mother's side, they were a lot closer to her. And with us, being on my father's side, we were a lot closer to that grandmother than my cousins who lived in Houston. So, it kind of evened out, but still, you know, we called her "Muddy" [laughs] I don't know, we couldn't say Mother, you know, we were little, so we called her "Muddy", I mean M-u-d-d-y. And she didn't look like mud, you know. [laughs] But we called her "Muddy" and we called my grandfather papa. That was my father's father.

K: And they both are deceased now?

A: Un-huh. My grandfather died. . . oh, let's see. . . he died when I was an adolescent and uh he had been, he had been sick for a long time. He'd had his leg aputated, one of his legs had been amputated because he had diabetes. And, let's see, it doesn't say when he died, but I know, okay, yeah, he, no ,no, no, yeah, he died in 1962. He was 69. He was 69 when he died, and a . . .

K: They were still living in McAllen at the time of his death?

A: Un-huh.

K: Well tell me about your brothers and your sisters. How many you've got and . . .

A: Well, I've got one brother. His name is Charles and he was born in 1941. He's going to be 43 this year and he lives in Houston, Texas now. My oldest brother, well, my only brother, we, we all had a real special relationship with him, with him being the oldest brother and everything and I think, well he admits it to this day, we, we kind of spoiled him. [laughs] We did. [phone rings] Oh wait a minute, let's see. I told them I didn't want to take any calls. Want

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COUNTER

TRANSCRIPTION

to cut that off? [turned recorder off for phone call]

Let's see. You want to start from the beginning? I have four sisters. My brother is the oldest.

K: And he's the only male?

A: Right.

K: Okay. Now. Go ahead with your sisters.

A: And, ah, my oldest sister's name is Brenda. Brenda Joyce. And I always called her Brenda and when we got older I started calling her B.J. But mostly, Brenda. Okay, she was born in November. Her birthday's November the 7th which is one day after my father's birthday. His birthday's November the 6th. Okay? And then my next sister, her name is Willa Earlene. Okay. Since there were no other, well, with my mother and father since there were no sons born to them okay, Willa was really named after my father. See, Willa, her name, Willa is a derivative of Will and Earlene is a derivative of Earl.

K: Nice. That's nice.

A: And, uh, okay, Brenda was born in 1944, Willa was born in 1947. [pause]

I believe, I have to check this and make sure. She was, yeah, and I was born July 28th, 1948. And then my younger sister Joann was born December, 1949. Willa may have been, I think Willa was born in 1946. I take that back. Because there's about a two-year gap, almost a two-year gap, because Joann and I are the only ones born, you know, really close together and so we were all pretty close as a sisters and brothers. We had, I would say, a pretty good relationship growing up. We didn't do a lot of fighting or, you know, hostile type relationship. We had a good relation, we had good relationships. Yeah, close. And, you know, we'd watch out for each other. My mother worked off and on, you know, when we were, after we were school age. And when she was working, you know, we would all have our chores, you know, things that we have

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COUNTER

TRANSCRIPTION

to do when we got home from school. Growing up, my father worked at McAllen State Bank during the day. He was the head janitor. Well, he was the only janitor they had at the bank for a number of years. He had started working at the bank when it first opened, so he was one of the older employees there. And, uh, what he did was, he worked at the bank during the day, alright then, after he got off work from that job, then that's when he cleaned up the other buildings on the side. Alright and what we would do, one of the things that I can remember doing is, for, I don't know, from I know when I was about six to seven years, maybe, you know, not all the time, but I know when I was in about the fourth grade or fifth grade, we would go to work with my father.

K: [laughing] I use to do that too.

A: We would go and help him to clean up. See and my grandmother also cleaned up buildings and so, he would come home every day, pick us up, and we would go back to work with him and we could clean up.

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K: (jokingly) Did you ever clean any doctor's offices?

A: Uh, no, but we cleaned lawyer's offices and we cleaned insurance, mainly lawyers and there were, ah oil and gas building that we cleaned and, you know, all the people who worked there, they worked for an oil company and a shoe store. And we always had, we have an, my father had an account at the shoe store also, so we always had good shoes. I'm not jokin'. Hey. We always had Buster Browns [laughs]. And, I mean, you know, and five kids, back in the '40's and the '50's, . . .

FA4 F2

K: Right. That wasn't an easy task.

A: That was not an easy thing to do and Montgomery Wards and Sears. You know, we didn't know, when I was growing up, I didn't



COUNTER

TRANSCRIPTION

know what it was to go to the store really to buy anything other than shoes. Now we would go to the Puryears and it was a family-owned store also, and, uh, but we would go there and get our shoes. So we always had good shoes. And this is where he worked. And he had an account there. Now don't ask me whether it was paid up or not. [laughs] But that's one thing that I can remember, you know. And, uh, in terms of, my father was very enterprising also. At that time in the '50's, okay, when blacks could not stay in the motels in Texas, and in McAllen, there's a . . . truck drivers *used* to come down delivering goods, also people would come down bringing the salesmen. Chauffers? Okay? And, uh, the school teachers who lived in McAllen 'cause at the time, well up until about, okay, I started school in 1954. So up until about 1956, before they integrated the schools in Texas, like I say when black people came down then they didn't have anywhere to stay. My parents built an apartment and they rented it out to people who were passing through. And, uh, there were black cafes and uh, you know, people could go and eat at the cafes if you ate in the "Jim Crow" section, you know, so, ah, in terms of hotels and stuff like that, that was not available. So they would come and stay at our apartment and so that was a business. That was added income. So, we did that and my father had his janitorial service because you know, he even had a sign and everything. And, ah, so, like I say, he was very enterprising.

FAM. F2

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K: Sounds very businesslike.

A: Yeah.

K: Now did your mom work too?

A: Well, see, like I say, she worked off and on, as a maid, until

COUNTER

TRANSCRIPTION

the '60's and then she worked in a nursing home as a cook. And she worked there for several years and then her legs gave her problems. She has, my mother has arthritis and so eventually she had to stop doing that kind of work because her feet and her legs and everything. But they still have the apartment and now it's rented out to a couple, well to a family. But back then, you know, it was just for people passing through. It was a three-bedroom, ah, well it was two bedrooms or if you had the living room, well it was two bedrooms a living room a bath and a kitchen. And then later on they changed the living room area into another bedroom, so it was like three bedrooms.

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END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

K: Fieldwork 578. Dr. Camilla Collins, Instructor. Project, 'Juneteenth'. Interview number one, tape number one, side number two. Today is October 4th, 1984, Thursday. I am at the College of Education Building on the Western Kentucky University campus in Bowling Green, Kentucky. My informant is Mrs. Kay Williams Alexander. My name is Gina Kinchlow. Okay. I'm sorry. I ran out of tape. Alright now, we're talking about household chores.

003

012

A: Well we would all have a week to wash dishes. And I remember my father had, he was a good carpenter, and he made a box and we would stand on this box. I was washing dishes from age five.

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[laughs] And when I look back, you know, my kids now, my boy is ten, and he barely knows how to load the dishwasher. And when I was

COUNTER

TRANSCRIPTION

five years old we were already washing dishes.

K: Yeah. Standing over a sink washing dishes.

019  
A: Yes and I hate to wash dishes to this day. But, [laughs], we each had a week to wash. Like if you washed dishes that week then somebody else took the dishes off the table. Then on Saturday mornings, now that was the "biggie" because that was the day when you had to totally clean the house and do the yard. We had to do all of that before we could go to the movies on Saturdays. And, plus, you remember, during the week we were going to work with my dad.

After work. And see my mother didn't go with us to clean up. It was just the kids, see. She stayed at home after that. She'd go and do her work. My brother had the opportunity to participate in sports and he was always playing baseball, mainly baseball and football. So like during the summertime when he was involved with baseball, practice and all like that, we would still go and do the work at the offices and then on Saturdays we would do our regular chores, like the ironing, cleaning up the bathroom, dusting, mopping. And we could not, well at first we didn't have a t.v. We were the last I know we were the last black family probably of kids growing up at that time in our neighborhood to get a t.v. And so we would go down sometimes to a friend's house who lived in the neighborhood to watch t.v. There were, I remember, two families, the Pleasants and the Fields, they had television and we would go down and watch cartoons with their kids. But we couldn't do that until we had finished our own chores. Then finally our parents were able to get a television for us. But I do remember that. We couldn't go to watch cartoons or anything until we had done our work and this was every Saturday. We were active in church activities so if you had choir rehearsal and Starlight Band which was like a bible study

FAM, F2

COUNTER

TRANSCRIPTION

group, that's what that was. On Sundays we went to church all day. My kids complain about being in church for two hours and I tell them, " Look, we went to Sunday School, Daddy was a deacon, Mama was on the usher board, we went to church, Sunday School, 11:00 service, B.T.U. and then night service." This was every Sunday. In the meantime, Sunday afternoons if you had homework you did your homework on Sunday afternoon see.

K: Squeeze that in somewhere in between your different services and things. You must have been Baptist.

052

A: Yes. I still am a Baptist. But that was what your weekly routine was. Now I know a lot of other kids that did'nt go to church as much as we did, but, like I say, my father was a deacon in the church so we were quite active in church. We sang in the choir. I wanted to join church when I was five years old but I did'nt want to be baptized. I was afraid of the water. Death; y afraid of the water. laughs So I did'nt really join church until I was about eight years old. After that I was secretary for some of the organizations and things like that. We were all really active in church work. We did things together. Our parents took us places. They took us on trips. We had a vacation every year. I can remember a lot of other kids, fewer kids in the family, but their parents did'nt travel that much. We would go up to Wallis every summer, we would go to Houston. We would love going to Houston because then we'd get, well, we would go into the neighborhoods where our cousins lived and what was so fascinating about that was; okay, you have to remember I grew up in a town where there were less than a hundred blacks. When we would get to Houston, for years, I did not know that anything existed outside of Third

FA 4, F2

COUNTER

TRANSCRIPTION

Ward and Sunnyside because ~~those~~ were black neighborhoods. We went to Third Ward, we went to Sunnyside, and over in North Houston. We never really went downtown or anything. When we went to Houston we didn't go places like to the zoo and places like that. We would go to Emancipation Park which is in Third Ward, go to the "Y", but the idea of being around so many black people! This was just very overwhelming to us to see, to be in neighborhoods where you just saw black people all the time. Because in our neighborhood it was a mixed neighborhood. It was Mexican-American and black. That was just, we would get to Houston and go, "AAAAAAAAAHHHHHHH!!!" You know.

[laughing] Consequently, that had a real positive impact on us because we knew that in other places there were black people. A whole lot of black people. We really liked that. It's really odd but some of the black kids who grew up with us were never able to make that transition. And I do believe it's because of the fact that they did not have that much exposure.

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K: You mean to being around other blacks?

A: Yes. Yes.

K: It makes a difference?

A: Yes! They were not able to make the transition so they are still down there in the valley. Some of them have gone away and lived briefly in cities but they have come back.

K: Not comfortable.

A: Not comfortable.

K: Not comfortable with being around that many other blacks.

A: Right. Right.

K: Well thank God you all went to Houston.

A: I'm serious. I'm serious. I am serious. I am very serious.

FA4, F2

COUNTER

TRANSCRIPTION

And they have become more accustomed to the Mexican-American culture. Even though they're black and they do, they are, they do things, they are still, they're not that comfortable being around a large number of Blacks.

K: That's kind of sad.

A: It is sad. They have always kind of wondered how we could do it, and I just know it's from that. They never went anywhere. My parents were involved with the NAACP. There were not that many black organizations that families could get involved with that were totally black. So the church was very important, the NAACP and the Masonic Lodge. In terms of totally black organizations, that's the extent of it.

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K: Did you go to a big church or was it small?

A: It all depends on what you call big. The church was, it was the only black church, for years the only black church in McAllen. Bethel Baptist Church. And would you believe, we, you know how Baptists are, black Baptists, we split. The church split. We wanted to get rid of one of the ministers, the pastor refused to leave.

K: That's very typical of black Baptist churches! [laughs]

A: This happened when I was a teenager and I want you to know that my parents were part of, of the faction that left. We formed another church, . . .

K: What did you call it, the New Bethel Baptist Church?

A: No. I was the one who thought of the name.

K: Kay your'e kidding.

A: I kid you not. It's called, we were supposed to have a meeting. They had a meeting and asked for names. The name that I suggested was the name that was chosen. It's called New Hope. [laughs] New Hope

FA 4, F2

COUNTER	TRANSCRIPTION
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Baptist.

K: And this was a church made up of people who split from Bethel Baptist?

A: Yes. And we used to meet in our den, of our home until we raised some money. Then we raised the money and there was a small building over, not even in our neighborhood, probably about a mile from our immediate neighborhood. Most of the black people lived in one neighborhood that was spread over about five or six blocks. And, at the most, I'm talking about maybe six families, something like that.

K: That was the bulk of the. . .?

A: Church. Our congregation had not been small so you had ten or fifteen people at one church and maybe that same number over at New Hope.

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K: So your whole family was actively involved in church?

A: Un-huh. They rented the building, well they purchased it. They purchased the building on the land and everything. It's a small building. It's been renovated and everything and now they even, since it's down to so few people, I mean like maybe about six or seven people and most of the people who are in the church, like my parents, my aunt, there're not that many people in the church but they carry on actively. They had the pastor's 25th anniversary recently, or something like that recently, the other year, because I sent a donation home for that. They actively raise money and have their fundraisers. They have a pastor who's in his 80's, doesn't even live in McAllen, who drives down every weekend. Well I think they have church maybe twice a month. Morning service. On the other Sundays they just have Sunday school. They still carry on. Now

FA-1, F2

COUNTER

TRANSCRIPTION

there have been other people who have moved into McAllen who are professional in the sense that they moved in with other companies like Sears and others. They either go to church in McAllen, or some don't go to church in McAllen. Some of them go to church in Edinburgh which is about ten miles from McAllen. It has a larger black population,

K: So right now, today, McAllen only has two black churches?

A: It's doing good to have two black churches too. I mean that both of them have survived this long with so few people.

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K: Can you ever remember a time when maybe you didn't want to be involved in church? Or maybe one of your sisters or brother didn't?

A: No. Well, it was the socialization too. You could go to the programs over at the other churches in the afternoons. Hey, that's where you'd see your boyfriends and stuff. Never had a boyfriend when I was in McAllen. Never had a boyfriend who lived in McAllen. It was always long distance.

K: Well I imagine it was slim pickin's there.

A: Very. I mean there was only one other guy who was the same age that I was who ended up staying in school all the way through high school. He dated Mexican-American girls, but I wouldn't have gone with him anyway. We were just friends. I wasn't interested in him but it's just that, then it was real unique. You don't hear about things that so much anymore in terms of isolation. I can remember when my sisters were in high school getting ready to go to the proms and everything. They would have to go with somebody who lived, who was from out-of-town. It's always a big problem to get a date to go to the school functions particularly after the schools integrated. When I was in second grade, let me show you this,

FA4, F2



COUNTER	TRANSCRIPTION
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[shows me a newspaper clipping, see Figure 1.7]

Look at this to show you I'm not lying. Look at this. The only two second graders.

K: This is a picture of you and Johnny Aiken. Going to school for their second year.

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A: And this was our school right over here. [points to school in background of Figure 1.7] That's the school I went to for two years.

K: Okay the building in the background is your school.

A: And the name of the street I grew up on is called Booker T. and the name of that school was Booker T. Washington School. When I completed the second grade, that was the year that they integrated the schools. Alright, they integrated the schools, they took this building and took it accross town and added it on to a school that was all white and turned it into the library. We started going to the school Sam Houston Ele mentary which was right down the street from us. It was about three blocks.

K: So they just took this entire school and moved it?

A: Yes. Moved it. Just came in and moved it.

K: And made it the corner of the Sam Houston school.

A: No, they took it accross town. Sam Houston was all Mexican-American at the time. We integrated it. It was integrated with blacks and Mexican-Americans. Mexican-American is also a minority but then they were not considered a minority.

K: Really?

A: Well, they were a minority but they did'nt really. . .

K: They were a minority in number?

A: Well, moreso in name because they were a majority in number. See down there in south Texas it's predominantly Mexican-American,

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COUNTER	TRANSCRIPTION
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but it's just that at the time, back in the '50's, they were not in power. They didn't have any political clout.

K: So the majority of the people, the kids, were Mexican-American?

A: At Sam Houston.

K: And then you and this little guy here went to Sam Houston?

[referring to the boy in Figure 1.7]

A: Yes and my sisters. My sister Brenda was in the higher elementary grades. It went up to 6th grade. There were three kids whose parents chose not to send them to Sam Houston the first year. They went to Lincoln Elementary which was a white school, predominantly white. They had some Mexican-Americans going there but not too many. It was in a part of town that was basically white. They went over to that school for one year but they had racial problems. Kids taunted them and stuff like that. So they transferred them back over to Sam Houston which was in the neighborhood.

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K: Wonder why the parents would want to send them to Lincoln in the first place?

A: They didn't want them to go to school with the Mexicans. These were black parents. That's what I'm saying, it was still. . .

K: So really you grew up in a town with three different races. Mexican-American, white and blacks?

A: Right.

K: And the blacks were actually, as far as in number, were the. . .

A: The minority. And the Mexican-Americans are a minority race also but in numbers they were a majority.

K: They outnumbered the whites?

A: Just about, yeah. But they didn't have any political power. At the time the whites had all the political clout. But now things have

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COUNTER

TRANSCRIPTION

really changed. When I was going to school, Mexican-American kids being able to speak English was a plus for me already. See I was at an advantage because I could speak English. Mexican-American kids into school at that time who could not speak English were at a bigger disadvantage because English was the only language you could speak. They did not care about you being bilingual. That was not accepted. You could not speak Spanish. They had rules like you could not speak Spanish, you weren't supposed to speak Spanish, you know, but I'm just saying that's how . . .

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K: While you were at school, they couldn't speak Spanish?

A: Could'nt speak Spanish and there was'nt anything about bilingual education. Everything was, you learn to speak English. So that's why I say that at that time, I was at, we had an advantage in that part, in that sense, because we could already speak English. It was always the only black in the class and that went on. My sister, see, when she started school she never ever went to a black school. Joann. When Jodie started school she went straight into first grade at Sam Houston. She's always gone to an integrated school. Then, at the time when they integrated my brother went into the high school. Even though we went to school together, our social lives were totally seperate.

K: Can you remember like any differences you could tell from having gone to Booker T. Washington and then the following year going to Sam Houston? Could you tell any difference in the schools?

A: The classes were bigger. In terms of the teaching, I had, my teacher was just as good at Booker T. I had a very good teacher. Her name was, well, at the time she wasn't married, her name was Miss Black. Very good teacher. I have seen her since becoming an adult.

FA 4, F2

COUNTER

TRANSCRIPTION

The man Mr. Goodé who was the principal, when he left he went on to another small town in Texas, Refudia, which is outside of Victoria, Texas which had a larger black population and he was the principal there. Now he is in an administration position in Corpus Christi, Texas which is a city of about 125,000 or more. It may be more than that because Corpus has grown. Those schools still had predominantly black schools when they integrated. In Houston, you still had schools that were, still predominantly black, I mean like all black, when I say predominantly I'm talking about all black up until the '60's and even now you have what they call, they just call them one race schools.

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K: Well, I imagine it was a lot more difficult in Houston to bring about that integration. Whereas it was just a few blacks in McAllen to deal with. And you could'nt really tell a difference in the quality of education or anything?

A: No because I had very good teachers. I was already reading when I went into the first grade and we had, I do miss as far as black culture, we did'nt hardly get anything after that about black culture.

K: Did they talk more about Mexican-American culture?

A: No it was just all culture in general. Just history. When I had Texas history when I was in junior high school I can remember them covering the "Juneteenth" but it was like a paragraph or so. It was mentioned but it was'nt anything that was discussed to any great length. I'll put it like that. It was up to our parents to pass on the culture.

K: Because it was'nt there in the school?

A: Right. It wasn't there in the schools. And you know like reading about famous black people, and I remember reading about Booker T.

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COUNTER

TRANSCRIPTION

Washington. I has read all those books when I was in the second grade. The autobiographies and stuff like that. Now I had already read all that. Having it taught in school the way I knew they were teaching it in the black schools. So we didn't get all that. Like W.E.B. DuBois and all those were names that I didn't know anything about those authors and poets and people until I was a lot older.

K: It was'nt talked about in the school system?

A: No. You hear me? No. N-o. No. But my mother liked to read and she always belonged to book clubs. She would get books by Frank Yerby and then when I was in junior high school I worked in the library and that was where I was always interested in reading. That was one of my hobbies. The librarian, she knew that I was really interested in reading and everything, her name was Miss Brooden. She would always tell me about different books by black authors.

K: Well what did your parents think about your education? Was it important to them?

A: Yes. It was very important. Very important to both my parents. They wanted, it was like always expected that I would go to college. It was expected that all of us, if we wanted to would go to college. My oldest sister, well, my brother, he did not graduate from high school with a diploma. He left school when he was in the eleventh grade. He and my father had some relationship problems when he was about 17 so he left home and he went to Houston and lived with one of my uncles, one of my mother's brothers. He went back to school and then when he was a senior he went into the air force. He got his G.E.D. through the air force. My sister Brenda graduated from high school and went to PanAmerican over in Edinburgh. She went over there for two years and then she left school and moved to Houston.

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FA 4, F 2

COUNTER

TRANSCRIPTION

Willa graduated from high school, the one that is next to me. Willa did not want to go to college. And now I guess you would either say, the way they term her now, she probably would have been described as being maybe a slow learner. She graduated from high school and then decided she wanted to go to beauty school so she went to Houston. She moved up to Houston where Brenda, she and Brenda went up to Houston. Brenda completed two years of college. When Brenda was going to Pan-American, I was in high school then. I was about, I must have been fourteen or so when she graduated from high school. She would take us over to PanAmerican campus with her and different stuff like that. But I was always the one expected to go to college.

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K: Why?

A: Well, probably because I made better grades than anyone else.

It was like, "Well Kay's going to college." Jodie, my youngest sister, she didn't want to go to college either. She just wanted to get out of McAllen. The night she graduated from high school, everybody else was out there partying and everything. My sister was, we were getting ready to go to Houston, she moved to Houston and I went up there for a vacation. See I was already in college when Jodie graduated, so, in essence, I was the last one to leave home.

K: Even though you were not the youngest?

FA4 F2  
A: Even though I was not the youngest, I was the last one to leave home because I was going to Pan American which was not my first choice of colleges. There are always overtones and I do feel that had I been going to a predominantly black school, probably my high school experience would have been different, than what it was. Although I had a very good education, I was involved in a lot of activities, my social life, socialization, it was the "pits".

COUNTER

TRANSCRIPTION

And that's when I learned that you have to have some balance in your life. It was always a constant struggle to get dates for different things. Then, plus, since I had been exposed to college, I knew a little bit about what college was about, my uncles had gone to college. My father's younger brothers that I was mentioning? They had all gone to college. My father had helped them to get loans and financial assistance to go to college. So that they could go to college. So that they could become teachers and doctors. All three of his younger brothers graduated from college. We went up to Houston. They graduated from Texas Southern University. One of uncles went on to become a dentist, the one who's deceased now. But it was just that college was always in our, education was always important. My mother would tell me, she would tell all of us, "I don't want you to have to do what I'm doing." I can remember one time one of the houses where I used to hate going to work with my mother and cleaning up people's houses. We would go and I remember once when I was in high school that was when she had gone back to working as a maid part-time. I would drive her over to the places, my mother cannot drive, she never did get her driver's license, so I would drive her over to the places where she would be going to work. I remember one lady she used to work for. It was *this* old lady. She . . . the woman was racist. I'll put it like this. She would say anything to me like, "Well what do you want to do when you get out of high school?" And I said I was going to college. I never will forget one time that woman said, "Well why do you want to go to college?" And what did she say that for? When my mama got through with her! [laughs] I'm serious because it was still like . . .

K: Like you weren't supposed to . . .

A: Like I was'nt supposed to go to college. But she said that to

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COUNTER

TRANSCRIPTION

the wrong person because she said that to my mama. You know, things were sometimes more subtle. They were'nt always, you know. Like I said, a lot of experiences I did'nt really run into any overt type, ah, racism, but it was always subtle. Like when I was in high school one of the things when I was getting ready to graduate, I was in the National Honor Society, all of that. I did not get a scholarship. I graduated in the top 25 of the class. Did not get a scholarship. Not even a hundred dollars scholarship.

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END OF SIDE TWO

END OF TAPE ONE

FAM F2



Interviewer's tape no.: 1

WKU FL, FL & OHA Accession no.:

Interviewer:

Address:

Gina L. Kinchlow

1225 College Street-B105

Interviewee:

Address:

Carolyn Kay Williams Alexander, 2539 Bluegrass Drive, Bowling Green, Ky.  
Date:

October 4, 1984 - Thursday.

Place of interview:

College Education Building, Western Kentucky University

Other people present:

none

Equipment used:

Reel-to-reel tape: Brand: Size reel: Tape Mil: Speed:

Cassette: Brand: C-30/C-60/C-90/C-120 (circle size)

Scotch AVX60

Amount of tape used: (Side 1): (Side 2):

all

all

Brief description of interview context and tape contents:

talking with informant about "Juneteenth" celebrations as observed  
in McAllen, Texas where she was born and raised.

COUNTER	TRANSCRIPTION
<p>003</p> <p>009-013</p> <p>FA4 F2</p>	<p>KINCHLOW: Fieldwork 578, Dr. Camilla Collins, Instructor, Project "Juneteenth". Interview number one, tape number two, side number one. Today is October 4, 1984, Thursday. I am at the College of Education Building on the Western Kentucky University campus in Bowling Green, Kentucky. My informant is Mrs. Kay Williams Alexander. My name is Gina Kinchlow. Okay. Let's talk some more about school.</p> <p>ALEXANDER: School? Well, okay, like when I was in high school that was one of the things. I was ready to get out of high school and this is why I say you . . . a high school in a small town that didn't have a very large black population. You, you, you, ah, you</p>

COUNTER

TRANSCRIPTION

always felt like a step behind, you know, you a step behind everybody else. And, uh, that was one thing that really, you know, that's when I began to become more conscious of racial attitudes. You know, 'cause I have to admit I had a pretty sheltered, ah, you know when we were growing up we were pretty sheltered from things. We didn't have a lot of negative racial experiences but I did have some.

K: Some.

A: And, uh, one of them that I really feel, you know I felt, I was very angry about this because I did not get a scholarship. And I remember going in and talking with the counselor at the time about the schools that I wanted to go to. Alright, you know when you're a junior and you start that's when you take all the tests. You know, I took the SAT, and the PSAT and all that stuff. And then I was on the list for, ah, scholarships for black students. You know it was not the national merit but it's the other one. Okay like if you're not a national merit finalist it's the one national achievement I think or something like that.

K: Yeah. Yeah.

028

A: Alright I was on that list and the schools that I wanted to go to. I wanted to go to Howard University, I wanted to go to the University of Houston and I wanted to go to North Texas State University in Denton. I did not send any information at all to Pan-American College at the time because I was not planning on going to college there. Alright I went in you know when the scores came back and everything and I started getting, I was just deluged with applications and information about universities from all over the United States. Alright, I went in and I talked with the counselor and I was telling her that I wanted to go to Howard University,

FA 4, F2

COUNTER

TRANSCRIPTION

and I wanted her to, you know, help, you know, me with the procedures, you know the application and stuff like that and find out about financial aid 'cause then you had to apply all the financial aid came from, you know, through the schools. Alright, well my counselor did'nt do "diddly squat". She wanted me to go to Texas Women's University which was also in Denton but it was a woman's school, a women's university. At the time it was totally women. And I told her I did not want to go to Texas Women's because it was all, it was an all girl's school.

K: Right.

A: And then I told her, that to me it's as bad as bein' down here in McAllen.

K: [laughs]

A: Do you know that she got very p\_\_\_\_\_, angry with me because of that and she said, and I quote, you'll do it on your own then. That counselor never gave me anymore information about the schools or, you know, like ah, reviewing the, you know, my applications or anything.

K: Yeah.

049  
A: And so what happened was, and you know I did'nt get any, you know, she was the one who had to make the final recommendation regarding the, the, the scholarships they were giving out.

K: Right.

A: I did'nt get one. All my friends got scholarships you know some who were minorities you know Mexican American students? I did'nt get one.

K: That was her doings.

A: I believe. But she told me that to my face. You will do it on your own. And, 'cause I told, I said, "I want to go to the University

FAH, F2

COUNTER

TRANSCRIPTION

of Houston if I can't go to Howard. I really want to go to the University of Houston.

K: Un-huh.

A: She told me, "Well Carolyn," 'cause see they did'nt call me Kay. At home I was called Kay but at school there was another girl whose name was Kay and she was, that was the only name that she had, so to cut down on confusion . . .

K: They called you . . .

A; They called me Carolyn.

K: Carolyn.

A: " Well Carolyn, you will do it on your own." And that lady did'nt do anything you know in regards to giving me counseling about, ah, and see the additional scholarship either you know the other one with the national achievement you had to have like a matching scholarship. So you know when I left high school I was full of anger.

K: I imagine.

A: And the only thing that I got and I got that on my own, was a hundred fifty dollar tuition scholarship to North Texas. But, then I found out that, ah, I was'nt going to qualify. Then, it was harder to get grants. I was not going to qualify for a grant because I was the only dependant you know then at home.

K: That your parents had.

A: And my father's income, believe it or not, at that time was more than what the, you know, was more than what, well we were right over the guide, you know, we were right over the ammount. The guidelines. So I could'nt get any grants and we did not know anything about the loans at that time, you know, that you could get. Loans, the loans that he had gotten for his brothers, had been like personal loans

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FAM, F2

COUNTER	TRANSCRIPTION
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through the bank, see, and so he'd always gotten loans for them through the bank. And, uh, so , I ended up going to PanAmerican for two years and hated every minute of it.

K: Oh.

A: [laughs]

K: So PanAmerican was where you could get the financial aid?

A: No I paid, my father paid my tuition. The first year he paid my tuition, well, I lived at home, see, see I didn't even live on campus. I lived at home and I commuted with, ah, I was in a car pool. This girl she had a car and it was a bunch. But it was just, to me, going to PanAmerican was almost like an extension of high school because so many people from the valley went to school there. It was still the same situation in terms of socialization. The only black students who were there were basketball players. So if you weren't dating someone who was on the basketball team, well you just weren't dating anybody hardly at all.

K: [laughs]

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A: I mean it wasn't, again, you know, the numbers. It wasn't anybody to really, you know, choose from, and uh, so I went to school there for two years. The whole time I didn't qualify for work study. See, again, 'cause of father's income. And at the time I don't even think my father was making \$10,000 a year. But, you know, I didn't qualify for that so I just stayed at home, well lived at home, commuted and then my, ssssss after I had been to school over there for a semester, [chuckles] another amazing story, I lucked up on a job a job at a small company that manufactured farm implements. And it was through the wife of one of the persons whose family owned the company, excuse me, and I had met her when I was a junior in high school. My sister and I, that was when they, well, they intg-

FA4, F2

COUNTER

TRANSCRIPTION

grated the swimming pool when I was 17 years old. And Jodie and I went out to the swimming pool to take swimming lessons. And we use to walk from our house to the swimming pool which was about a mile and a half. And she use to, um, see us walking to the pool so she started picking us up and giving us a ride out there. And then we struck up a friendship and I guess you would classify her as probably then being a pretty liberal, liberal person.

K: Yeah. She was white?

A: Yes. She was white. In her 30's, you know, and her kids were like four and five years old, six and seven and eight years old. But I wanted to learn how to swim, see.

K: Sure. Sure.

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A: Because before that we could'nt go to the swimming pool. The only time I had been to the swimming pool was on a special occasion, ah, in junior high, so like I had'nt been to a pool in McAllen like in over two years. I had gone once in junior high and that was because the P.E. teacher had to get special permission for the black students to go to a swim party. The softball team and I got out of choir. Now I know this may sound, I tell you, hostile or whatever, but when I was in choir, I had been in the choir in junior high up until the ninth grade and I got out when I was in the ninth grade because the choir director would not go, you know, would not ask permission. The choir was going to have a swim party, swim parties were real big down there. I mean, you know, it's tropical, hot as "all get out", so the swim parties were real big. Yeah the choir was having a swim party and I went up to her after class, you know, when she made the announcement I told her that I was'nt going to be able to go. And she said, "Well why?", and I said, "Well, well,

FA 4, F2

COUNTER

TRANSCRIPTION

you know then we did'nt say black, I said Negroes could'nt go to the swimming pool. Honey, and it was like, well that's your problem. And she was a minority herself. She was Mexican-American too. You know, and I got so "hacked off" I'm not jokin', it was, yeah, it was in the eighth grade because my ninth grade year I was'nt even in the choir. I got "hacked off" at her because of the fact that, you know, she would'nt even, you know, would'nt even inquire and it was, it was up to, it was, it would have been her responsibility to find out about it. Since it was a group, you know, since it was a group outing.

K: And she was the adult representative of the group.

A: She was our choir teacher.

K: Yeah. So you quit the choir. [laughs]

A: I quit the choir behind that. Sure did. As a form of protest. And I never, I never sang again in the choir when I was in high school see.

K: She was the director . . .

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A: But then when we told, well that's what I'm saying see, when we told our P.E. teacher about it, you know, when they said that the softball team was gonna have a swim party. When we told her about it she said, "What?" And she got something done about it. So we were able to go. But like I say, then it was about, ah, you know, almost three years later before they actually integrated the pool. And the same had happened with the movies. Ah, they had two theaters in town. Now the movie had, well, at one time the movies had been integrated but they said, you know, this is rumor that some blacks had, had gotten into a fight or something there at the, you know, inside the theater. And they had, that particualr management

FAM, FR

COUNTER

TRANSCRIPTION

then barred blacks from going to movies there. But we could still go to the Queens. See one was called the Palace and one was called the Queen. So when I was growing up you know, little eight, nine, ten, eleven like that, we went to the Queen. But the Queen was, you know, went out of business. So that was a gap in the number of years and I was in, I guess, late elementary, I guess about the 6th or 7th grade and then they opened, you know, one of the parents went down and talked with the manager, you know, and was saying, "Look. It's been years since our kids were able to go to the movie here in McAllen." Now what we'd have to do is, if we wanted to see a movie we would have to go to Edinburgh or Far or Michen. And these towns were like five and seven miles away. And we would go over there and go to the movies. But as far as, and when I was little like 5 and 6 and 7, well see well, as long as they had the school they would show movies at the school on Friday nights. You know they would get, ah, I remember one, what was it called? "Pinky" or something like that? One of those movies it was an old one. But I remember we would go to, we would go and see movies at the school. But see you know this is how, you know, this is how this is this is how it was. But all of those things you know led up to when I was in college I was more than ready to leave the valley. Now in terms of leaving, now my father he wasn't too happy about my decision to leave because I was already in college, I was working part-time at the, ah, um, the company, it was called Reynolds and I was working 20 hours a week so I was full-time, part-time. I had credit union benefits, I didn't have insurance benefits but I didn't need that but I did have credit union benefits. And so what I did was, I used, ah, used the credit union you know like I just got, well the first year my father paid my tuition but my sophomore years I was totally independent in regards to paying my college tuition.

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FA4 . F2



COUNTER

TRANSCRIPTION

I paid my own tuition and bought books and saved money. And see during the summertime, that summer I worked full-time and I saved all my money. And, uh, in my preparation to leave home to transfer. And since then Howard University was out of my reach, you know, financially, I decided to go as far away from McAllen as I could. My parents were not excited about my wanting to go to the University of Houston. They didn't want me to go to Houston because, well, in the meantime when my older sister moved to Houston she was there I guess about a year and then she got pregnant. She wasn't married, and uh, so that was a big, uh, concern. My, my parents' concerns were, but they'd never hear this. [laughs] But my parents' concerns were, you know, that I would get pregnant. You know, that's a, that was a big deal. You know getting pregnant, not being married, for my mother, you know, this brought back memories of her own experiences. And so that was a constant, you know, we got preached at all the time about you know, "I don't want you to get . . . ," well, then my sister got pregnant so you know, that was a big blow to my parents. So my father's way of coping with that was since I was the last one to leave, and they had all these expectations for me also, and since I was going to college and succeeding at this point, you know, he didn't want me to leave. You know, he said, "Well why? Why do you want to leave? You got the car." You know because like I was the only one at home, you know, he had use of the bank, uh, car and everything, so, you know, "Well why do you want to leave home? You got the car, ah, you know, you can do what you want to do." But, you know, while I was living at home I still had a curfew. I mean I was going on 20 years old. I was still coming in at 12:00.

K: No social life really.

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FA 4, F2

COUNTER

TRANSCRIPTION

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A; No social life whatsoever. I mean, I mean, I might've, I was datin' a guy who was, well, let's see, my freshman year in college I was datin' a guy who was still in high school. He was from out-of-state. He was mature, but, you know, he was about a year younger than I was. But he was going to a military academy down there. And so, I was dating him, but, I mean, in terms of, well, I had dated a guy who had been on the basketball team. I'll put it like that. We had dated while I was a senior, my last semester. But we broke up during the summer, see. So when I got to college I still wasn't dating anybody and by then nobody would date me because of the fact that I had already, you know, it was like this. You [laughs] if you dated someone, and you broke up with someone, and sine it was a small \_\_\_\_\_, nobody was gonna date you,

K: [laughs] If you dated one person and broke up with that person, no one else would ask you out for a date?

A: Right. I mean, see, I'm telling you, the only guys that were on campus . . . there were some basketball players and there were two other guys who were black. And the other one, I dated him occasionally, you know, we were friends too, but, you know, I'm talking about somebody in terms of having a boyfriend. Becuase the basketball players, you know, they were very "cliquish", put it like that. But I mean . . .

K: Still are.

A: Yeah, I know. But it was like, you know, it was the, either you were in the "in crowd" or you were in the "out crowd". And I was in the "out crowd" because, one, they were all from the city. They were all from Houston. They already thought that the girls in the valley were slow. You know, we did'nt know what was what. And, a, but I'm serious. I dated one guy who was a basketball player and we, we dated. We dated for almost six months but then we broke up and I

FAM, F2

COUNTER	TRANSCRIPTION
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never dated another athlete down there. And, uh, so like I say, since there was 'nt anybody else there, there was only one other guy on campus that, you know, we was friends, I was friends with. Well, we went out but it was a group. You know, I never dated him just exclusively. And, so, I was just "fed up" with that kind of social life. I mean I was academically I was doing alright. That was 'nt the problem.

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K: But now while you were down there you were sending in papers to other school still trying to go to the University of Houston?

A: Un-huh. Yeah. And so what happened was, I went over to the bank and talked with one of the lawyers there who handled financial aid in terms of the, you know, bank loans. And, ah, I had gotten all these papers from North Texas State, and, ah, so my entire sophomore year I was planning to leave. And nobody thought I was going to leave.

K: They did 'nt think you'd do it.

A: Hey. They did 'nt think I was going to do it. But I did it.

K: Now where is North Texas State?

A: In Denton, Texas. It's about, hmmm, 40 miles west of Dall and ah, there's Texas Women's University there, and then North Texas. And Texas Women's University's on the north side of town and North Texas State is on the south side of town. And uh, TWU had a social work program. Now my major, ultimately, well I was a Sociology major in undergrad school. Now TWU had an undergraduate sociology work program but I just did not want to go to that school.

FA 4. F2

K: You did 'nt want to go to an all women's school.

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A: No. And they had turned, it was coed then, but it was still predominantly an all women's school. And I just did not want to go

COUNTER

TRANSCRIPTION

there. And, uh, so I went, well, let's see, I guess I was in Denton maybe a year and then I think that's when it became, you know, coed. But at the time, still, it was all women. And, uh, but at North Texas, I mean, you know, it was more of what I expected. Now I had not, I didn't do any pre-placement visits or anything. Ah, there was a woman who was living in McAllen at the time who was black who had a niece who was going to North Texas State. And her niece was a Delta. But she was also a sociology major, see. And she, ah, got in touch with her niece and asked her to send me, you know, information about the school. And so she sent me additional information you know like I went through admissions and all like that but you know she sent me information, wrote me letters, and told me, you know, what was what on campus and everything. And, uh, so when I went to North Texas, you know, I just had this big steamer trunk and everything. All my stuff. Rode the bus up there. But I want you to know that when I applied for that loan, and now it's equivalent to what is the GSL, okay, the first year, ah, I didn't even get maximum amount because I had saved \$600.00. So that I only got a \$900.00 loan. See. But the off\_\_\_, one of the men, the lawyer at the bank, he was the one who had. . .

K: He WAS able to work it out for you?

A: Yeah. He was able to give me the, you know, important information. My mother kept saying, "Well I know all these white kids go to college, and, uh, you know, how do they go to college?" You know, and, you know my daddy was working right there at the bank but my daddy had never asked. My daddy had never asked. So.

K: And that made all the difference.

A: That made all the difference and see it was like when my sister

FA 4 FR

COUNTER

TRANSCRIPTION

Brenda had wanted to go to college? She had wanted to go to Prarie View. But my parents didn't want her to go to Prarie View. So see my parents still had these, you know, kind of controlling ideas about what constituted a good education and then at the time there was so much talk about how inferior, you know, supposedly inferior, you know, getting an education at an all black school was. And that was the big, you know, that was a big, big deal then. And what, with school just still being newly integrated and some schools just still had not been integrated, everybody was thinking that, you know, if you wanted to get a quality education, you went to a white school. See? But I wanted to go to Howard University because to me that was the epitome of a black university. And, like I say, and it was, at that time, you know, with being a sociology major, you know with all the changes that were occurring and everything. And I was planning on going into social work. I knew from the time when I was 15 that I wanted to be a social worker. And so that what I was planning on. I knew that I'd have to go to grad school. I knew this when I graduated from high school you know, so, it was just like, you know, just taking one step at a time but, the main thing was getting out of the valley, because I mean, it was just totally the "pits" for me, personally, And, uh . . .

K: You left.

A: That's what I say. I went as far away as I could without going out of state so I didn't have to pay out of state tuition. [laughs] Really. It takes you 12 hours in the, it takes you all night long on the bus to get from McAllen to Dallas. Then you have to change buses in Dallas and go to Denton. But, and, when I went up there, and I knew I wouldn't be coming home until Christmas. And when I got up

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FAM, F2

COUNTER

TRANSCRIPTION

there I was homesick for awhile, you know, ah, but I made friends really fast. And people thought that I was a freshman because, you know, I was a new face on campus and everything. And they, at the time, the Deltas had just started a chapter. Okay. At North Texas State the Deltas, ah, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority was the first black sorority on campus and, uh, I was just impressed with their friendliness and, uh, everything, you know, the manner. And I knew about sororities because my uncles had been in fraternities when they were in college. Well, my uncles were Alphas. You know. But, you know, I knew about fraternities and sororities. I mean, that was out of the question while I was down there because all the sororities down there were white sororities. And I knew enough that, you know, I knew enough that, well, my awareness was that I wanted to be involved *with*, with things that were of my own race. And I was like starved for, for . . .

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K: Blackness.

A: Blackness and the culture and everything. And I, I, I, I still went through some changes because at the time. you know, the slogan was, " Say it loud. . . "

K: " I'm black and I'm proud."

A: And what you were supposed to reply was, "I'm black and I'm proud." And the first time a guy came up to me on campus and did the black power thing, he said, "Say it loud." And I said, "Say what?" And he said, "What are you, an' oreo?" And I said, "What are you talkin' about?"

FAH 1F2

K: You didn't know.

A: I didn't know, you know, I was serious and you know when

COUNTER

TRANSCRIPTION

he saw that I did'nt. . . because I mean you know we had, you would go around people would go around the campus going like this. [gives the black power sign - a clenched fist.] I mean I was in college, I started college in '66. Okay this was '68. This was at the height of it.

K: The height of the Civil Rights Movement. Really.

A: I mean, and Martin Luther King had just been assassinated, uh, and my gran\_\_, my step-grandfather died the same day that Martin Luther King was assassinated. And so, you know. there were two things paramount. I never will forget that. April. But that was, you know, I'm serious, you know, and so for a couple of weeks I was real defensive because you know this guy, he was a real radical. "There goes an oreo, man. She don't know what's happening." You know, so I had to explain to people, you know, where McAllen was. A lot of people up in north Texas and that north Texas area, uh, they had never heard of McAllen and at that time, you know, McAllen was, ah, population, the population was about 35, about 35 37,000 people. It was as big as Denton and Denton was about 32, you know. And they had a little square downtown and everything. And even the layout of the town and everything was different 'cause, okay, in north Texas it snows up there. It's cold, South Texas in the winter time you can walk around with sweaters and light coats on so that was still a big change for me, you know, in the climate. You know, the trees change colors. I'd never seen . . . it stays green the whole year 'round. It's like in Florida. You know, the first time I saw snow it was like raindrops. Ant it, it rained snow. That's what

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FA 4 F2

COUNTER

TRANSCRIPTION

it did. It got cold enough in McAllen but it was like raindrops. See, so it never hit the, and this once was once. And I was in college when that happened. But we did have hurricanes, see. We had hurricanes all the time. And you know the winds and the rains from the hurricane even if the hurricane does'nt hit we still would get the you know the backlash of it. So that was what my experience was and then you get up here and you know people wore snow boots, heavy coats. I had bought a heavy coat and all this kind of stuff but that was the thing, you know. That's when I started getting into jazz you know. I started really getting into the blackness. But the only thing about it now, at North Texas State, even at that time, it had the largest black population, or the second largest black population at a predominantly white school in Texas. At the time, see. And, uh, what students had just begun to live in the dormitory. I think like the year before, the year before I moved, okay the year before I transferred.

407

K: The black students or all the students?

A: Well, the black students had used, they used to live over in what was in the black part of town. Or, you know, they rented rooms and stuff like that. But the black population up there had really grown like in leaps and bounds like, like one guy he'd gone there, uh, he was there two years before I was there and he was telling me that when he was a freshman he had'nt even lived on campus. He lived off campus and he'd lived in the black community. And then see and that next year they opened up the dorms to the black students. So which would have been my, yeah, uh, which would have been like my sophomore year I think it was. Something like that. So see they were still going through, you know, the integration changes up there also. But like, there were no black instructors. I never had

FA 4, F2



COUNTER	TRANSCRIPTION
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a black instructor from 2nd grade until I was in graduate school.

K: Is that right? Let me think. I can't remeber. I don't think I had any until I came to college. Came to Western. So college life really changed you?

A: Oh yes. I jumped in like a fish and started swimming. [laughs]

K: [laughs] And enjoyed it.

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A: I enjoyd it. I really, oh yes, I mean if you had been me when I was a freshman, a sophomore, I mean my sophomore year was, all I did was, I took all my classes in the morning, uh, times and in the afternoons I went to work. And I mean the only thing that I thought about was, and like that spring semester? The only thing I thought about was that I would not be goin' back. I had become so hostile and bitter and I just wanted to get out. And it was just really, you know, I was in a depressed state. And it was because I did not like livin' down there because, ah, you know, I'd go up to Houston and visit, you know, every summer when I would get my one weeks vacation. You know and I'd go up and visit my sisters and you know they had an apartment and they were all living together then, and everything. And Jodie was employed. And, uh, you know, Brenda was a, working. Willa was working as a beautician. You know she'd graduated from, ah, beauty school. My brother had served his time in the air force and he'd come out and he'd gotten married. He was living in Houston. So, you know, . . . K: You'd go and visit with them.

457

A: Yeah, un-huh. and so, huh?

K: I was going to ask you how long were you at this college in Denton?

A: Two years.

K: Two years?

FA 4, F2

COUNTER

TRANSCRIPTION

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A: Yes. See I graduated with a B.A., I did not plan to teach.

END OF SIDE ONE

003

KINCHLOW: Fieldwork 578, Dr. Camilla Collins, Instructor, Project-  
"Juneteenth". Interview number one, tape number two, side number two.  
Today is October 4, 1984, Thursday. I am at the College of Education  
Building on the Western Kentucky University campus in Bowling Green,  
Kentucky. My informant is Mrs. Kay Williams Alexander. My name is Gina  
Kinchlow

010  
015

Okay, uh, let's talk about what it was like coming home after you  
had been away from home and pledged a sorority and become a part of the  
blackness and the, you know the whole new movement of black people which  
I can remember well too. And then coming back to McAllen just to visit  
or whatever. What was it like?

020

A: It's hard, I'd go home. I remember I went home the very first time  
after I'd been away, you know to see my parents. I didn't really care  
that much for seeing people that I had grown up with. Old friends.  
Particularly those who had been, ah, white, Mexican-American. I have  
one friend that I see occasionally when I go home. It's, uh, her name  
is Esther Tijerina and we had been friends since junior high. She's  
about the only person that I stayed in contact with, you know, to find  
out you know how people were. But in terms of seeing people? I remember  
I went home once for the ten year, ah, you know, my ten year high school . . .

K: Yeah, class reunion.

FAH, FR

A: Class reunion. And I went out to the high school and some of the  
people whom I had graduated with were now teaching at the school. Esther  
was, she was teaching at the school and I think now she's an assistant

COUNTER

TRANSCRIPTION

principal. But at the time she was a math, a math teacher. Uh, a few of my old instructors were still there, you know they are now, you know . . .

K: Old!

A: When I say old, well, yell, older. I still see about every year. It's really hard. I just don't feel that much of a connection.

041

K: With your hometown.

A: With my hometown other than I like to go home though. I have to go home evry year and touch base. But when I'm down there more than three or four days, I'm ready to leave. You know I go home, we go to Mexico, I see my parents, my aunt who lives next door, but I don't really see many people that I went to school with. And they're there. All I need to do is call them if I want to. But I, @, I don't. They're more . . . I don't know maybe it's somethin' that's a part of the past that, ah, that . . .

K: You can't really handle right now or that you would rather not deal with?

A: Ah \_\_\_\_\_ I just . . . , I'm just not, I don't feel anything for them and that's the, you know, people are always asking my parents about me. I'm serious. My parents, when, well my parents keep in touch with me quite a bit, you know? Through letters and everything. But everytime I go home there's always somebody, uh, who my father has just seen that I went to school with, you know, who wants, they're asking how am I. Ah, when I went home for that ten year reunion I saw a few of my friends but like I, I did'nt go to the dance or anything. Ah, my husband had not gone down with me. I had gone down. I had taken Jason with me. And, ah, I went to the football game and I saw a couple of people but we just did'nt

FA 4, F 2

COUNTER

TRANSCRIPTION

062

seem to have that much in common anymore.

K: I can, I can believe that.

A: And, you know, I guess that was probably the main thing. I just don't feel I have that much in common with a lot of them.

K: When you left to go to school in north Texas, did you realize then that it would . . . that you were getting ready to cross over into a whole new lifestyle?

A: Yeah, I did and I was ready for it. Like I say, and you know, like I say because then it was still hard, it was hard for them to really understand, you know, what it's like to be black. You know.

K: And the changes.

A: Yeah. Because I could identify, I could identify with my friends who were Mexican-American and the struggles they were going through and stuff. But some of the other things in terms of female and male relationships as I got older. Like, when I was in college ah, the thing that really bothered me a lot then too was the fact that a lot of the black guys who were coming down were not wanting to date the black girls too. They were wanting to date girls who were white and the Mexican-Americans. And so they were rejecting the black, the black women that were there. And most of all of them ended up dating a black, I mean uh, you know they may have dated a black girl for a little while but eventually ended up dating a Mexican-American or a white girl and, ah, even marrying the Mexican-American girls. I have a cousin who's married to a Mexican-American girl. I have cousins, my cousins who are down there now who are younger. I mean, 20. They, I've got cousins who have never even dated a black girl.

MA 4, F2

K: So the black population in McAllen is still quite small?

COUNTER	TRANSCRIPTION
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A: Yeah. That's what I'm saying. Yeah. I have a cousin right now . . .

K: And the interracial dating and interracial marrying. . .

A: Oh it's, it's accepted. It's more accepted down there.

K: Even at that time?

A: Yeah. And this was in the late '60's. It was most accepted. And, you know, and so, ah, yes.

K: What about, ah, oh what about your other sisters and brother? What did you lose? The changes that you made going to college away from home. Were you still able to keep that relationship going with them?

091

A: Oh yeah. My, my sister, my oldest sister. They were all very supportive of me going to college. Ah, because, you know, they would send me money when I was broke. Ah, my sister would get me clothes because she knew particularly my oldest sister in terms of having had some college experience herself, you know, ah. Social activities. And I didn't ball. I had a job when I was in college. Even after I transferred to North Texas, I didn't work the first semester but I did work after that. But I remember one time you know needing some money I mean like \$50.00 you know, and I just called my sister and she got \$50.00 together for me. And that was something I didn't even ask my parents for, you know. And the clothes, you know, like they would give me clothes, presents, I mean expensive things.

K: So they were very supportive of you.

A: Yeah. And like if I wanted to go down to Houston. I can remember a couple of times I'd pay my way down there and I would fly back. Cause it was cheaper to fly than it was, well it was as cheap to fly as it was to ride the bus. And you could always get a ride.

FA4 F2

COUNTER

TRANSCRIPTION

But no we've, we've maintained that relationship even now.

And so it was never, uh, you know, any ill wishes on their part.

It was always we help each other out.

K: And they had no problems understanding you after you left home?

A: Un-huh. Some of their friends would say, "Kay acts different." But, uh, they and they that I was younger because like Jodie was living in Houston at the time and sister is physically bigger than I am too. I'm the smallest one physicaly in the family and so everybody always thought Jodie was older. But Jodie's always had friends who were 3 or 4 years older than she was. You know mature in that sense. 'Cause some of the women that she ran around with were older . . .

K: Than you. [laughs]

A: [laughs] But even with them, there was still no problem with, I would say the guys, ah, some of the guys that they knew would say, "Well she acts different." You know they would say that about me that I acted different. But never said it that I was snotty or uppity or anything like that. It was just that . . .

K: That you seemed different. That you had changed. Grown up maybe.

A: Yeah. And when Jodie, you know what Jodie would say? "She goes to college." You know, stuff like that, I'm serious, you know, they would say things like that. "Well Kay, Kay goes to college." They would tell everybody. So that was ah, a sense of pride, you know that one of us was going to college and my sister, you know, I had talked with her about going to college. But she's, she's a licensed vocational nurse and ah, she went to a vocational school at the hospital. You know it was hospital-based. I mean it's right

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FA 4 , F 2

COUNTER

TRANSCRIPTION

there at the medical center in Houston where they do all the open heart surgery and watch transplants and stuff like that. So, you know, even though she does not have a college education, per se, I mean, she is just as educated.

K: Sure. Has just as good a job.

135

A: Gets paid. Hey. And hey, a very hefty paycheck. I mean, you know, and she would say, 'cause I would say to her, "Jodie, why don't you go back to school? Why don't you become an RN?" She said, "If I wanted to do it I'd do it."

K: That's good enough.

A: You know and this was when I was in college, you know and I was always, you know pressin' my older sister has tried to go back to college but has not really been able to, ah, finish, or, you know, be successful in it because of the fact that she is a single parent now. She's divorced. She has two sons and it has been a struggle, you know but she did try to go back and work full-time and go to school but she just couldn't, could not handle it because of the financial situation. So you know, it's that respect, you know, I, I, feel for her because I feel like some of her dreams. She hasn't been able to fulfill her dreams. But, ah, no, they've always felt comfortable about it.

K: They were always very proud and happy for you?

A: Un-huh. They all came to my graduation when I graduated from college. Even my grandmother came. My father's mother. She was still living then. She came. And one of my uncles and his wife, they came. And then, well when I got my Masters in social work, well, only my immediate family came, but my brother came to that one. See he had'nt been able to come before and he came to that one.

FA 4. F2

COUNTER

TRANSCRIPTION

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K: And you all maintain that closeness day?

A: Yeah.

K: Okay we've got about, let's see, we've got about ten minutes left on the tape so we won't talk about "Juneteenth" today, but let's just kind of summarize what we've talked about today. Okay, we've talked about your parents and your brothers, your brother and your four sisters. That you're a very close-knit family.

You've told me about your parent's occupations and things you all had to do at home.

A: Yes, our home life and, ah, I didn't talk a lot about, you know, leisure activities, ah for a family, but, like I mentioned, we did take vacations. Ah, when I was about 12 years old, ah, most of our vacations were centered around going to visit relatives who lived in other places. But like when I was about 12 years old we went out to Denver, Colorado. Yes. And my grandmother even went with us then. My grandfather, uh, this might've been. . . I was gonna say it might've been I think it was right after my . . . it was in the '60's so it must have been right after my grandfather died because I don't recall, he was not living, I don't believe he was living when we went out there. My first grandfather 'cause see my grandmother remarried. But the one that lived next door to us, we went out to Denver, we went out to Colorado Springs. My mother had a about a 3rd cousin who lived in Denver. I had never met her before and we went out there. We went up through Amarillo, Texas which is in the "Panhandle." My father's youngest sister was then living there with her children and husband. He was in the air force at the time. So we went up through that way when we came back through New Mexico and we came back through Luboc, Texas. My mother had another cousin

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there, you know, well, who was a principal of a high school, you know, the black high school there so you know we traveled all around. We went to, ah, different places in Texas but like my father had been up to Dallas and Fort Worth but I had never been to Dallas until I went up there to go to college. So Houston was as far north or central. But I'd been to Galveston. We'd been all around in, in different parts of Texas. Now I'd never been out into the west Texas, ah, to El Paso. I'd been to neighboring border towns; Laredo. I was involved with girl scouts. My mother was girl scout leader. So, you know, these kinds of trips. My sister had been involved with girl scouts. They had gone to girl scout camp which was up near San Antonio. We'd gone to San Antonio again. Not to visit relatives but one of the teachers who had lived in McAllen in the early '50's had moved, you know, after the schools were integrated, had moved back to San Antonio which was her hometown. And we would go up to visit. So, like I say we traveled. Our parents exposed us.

K: And that was your biggest form of leisure outside the home?

A: Because my father took a vacation every year.

K: Yeah. I don't blame him. [laughs] With 5 children you need to take a vacation.

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A: Yeah but you know that was financially, that was hard, and you had to be going, you know like we never knew what it was go eat in restaurants then. You know we always, we would leave like at midnight or about 2:00 in the morning and then drive. But with my parents' contacts, you know we knew people at just about everywhere. We knew people in Victoria, Texas which is a town which is about a hundred twenty miles from Houston. We knew people in Corpus Christi because my father was a member of the Masonic Lodge.

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TRANSCRIPTION

And so he would be going to these meetings that would be in different places, you know, in Texas, you know, they have a regional and then they would have their state meetings and then, ah, other meetings. And they made friends. My parents . . .

K: They had a network of friends.

A: We had a network. Do you hear me? Prarie View, every year we had people coming down from Prarie View, ah, ah, for a long time. And I even eneded up havivg a friend who was, a male friend who was from Jamaica when I was. Yes. And he said he did'nt have a sister. If he had had a sister he wanted someone who was like me. So he, quote, adopted me as his little sister and he was more like a mentor also in terms of college because he was like in his 20's. But he use to write to me, very brotherly letters. When I graduated from, ah, high school, ah, you know, he sent me a graduation present. When I graduated from college, so you know what my graduation trip, my graduation present was from him and his wife? A trip to New York. He was living in New York at the time. Teaching at a college in Verdonia, New York and when I graduated from, from North Texas. . .

K: They . . . now let me understand you now. [laughs] They paid for you to come . . .

A: To visit them in New York and they were living up near Buffalo. And I went up there and spent a week with them. And when I came back it was time for me to go to graduate school. All expense trip. And they, yeah, and you know when I lost touch with him? When I got married. When I got married and well, uh, they did'nt come to the wedding but they sent us a check, you know, they sent us a check. But then after that, then I never have heard from Charles since then. His name is Charles White.

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K: Wonder why you never heard from him? Well I won't ask that.

A: Well, I don't know, you know, after that, well, but, he had been just like a brother, that ~~was~~ it. A brother. Yeah. And his wife came. They even came down to our house in McAllen. They came to visit me. See she was from Texas and once when they came through Texas to visit her mother, they came to Denton and visited me at the, ah, at the college. And see then I didn't see them anymore until after I graduated. 'Cause see that was my junior year? Yeah. And that very next year I graduated and then I went up there and they took me to Niagara Falls. I mean, I was just like, hey, I was just like. His wife's name was Lovey. And now they are somewhere in the United States and I have not seen now I've seen her since I got married because she had come down to Beaumont, Texas to visit her sister. But I have, we have lost touch. Lovey was the last person that I saw. 'Cause I went over, I drove over from Houston to Beaumont to visit with her.

K: And you don't know where they are now?

A: I don't know where they are now. They had last, they were last living in Washington, D.C. He use to work for the World Bank.

K: Smart man.

A: Yeah, he was in economics.

K: That's fascinating. You have got a very fascinating life. I'll just say that.

A: People would come from Prarie View every year. They would come down there to tour the orchards, see. 'Cause in south Texas the citrus orchards are big, you know, orange juice and stuff that's a big business. And they would bring the agriculture students down from

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Prarie View and they would come down and tour all these orchards. And they would come and stay. At the time, they would come and stay with people in the community. And he was one of the ones, oh, there were students from Nigeria.

K: Over here studying our agriculture. Well that's makes sense.

A: And they would come down, you know, see they could'nt go to Mexico if they did'nt have their passports. And so that, ah, when Charles came down that time he had'nt brought his passport so see. he did'nt, he did'nt go to Mexico he just stayed at the house and talked with us and evrything. And we became pen pals.

K: You all continued to write each other?

A: And he, yeah, he encouraged me to, you know, about going to college.

K: Go to school and that kind of thing.

A: But I was a teenager when I met him.

K: When you first started writing and everything.

A: And that followed on, we maintained, I was like up until I was like, I was 24 'cause I was 24 when I got married. So I'd known him for about 10, about 10 years.

K: So we've pretty much got you covered all the way up through your Masters, your Masters degree?

A; Yeah, un-huh.

K: Okay, so next when we talk, I'll, we'll start talking about the "Juneteenth" itself.

A" Okay. Recollections of the "Juneteenth". But look at this, I want to show you this. [shows picture - see Figure 1.9]

K: Alright. Where are you? [laughs]

A: Look.

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K: Let me see. [points to last child on 2nd row, left]

A: Yep, that's me.

K: The littlest one in the class, right here on the end.

A: This is my sister Willa [next to the right of Kay]

and this is my oldest sister Brenda. [back row, 6th from left]

K: Okay this was at the Booker T. Washington, all black school.

This was the entire school.

A: Everybody here is black. Yeah, no this is, uh, 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th grade I think. 'Cause I think 7th, 8th and 9th, they were in the other room. And the high school students were in the other room.

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END OF TAPE TWO, SIDE TWO.

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