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Brown, Rosemary

Bronx African American History Project
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Interviewers: Brian Purnell and Dr. Mark Naison

Interviewee : Rosemary Brown

April 21, 2005

Dr. Mark Naison (MN): This is an interview for the Bronx African American History Project. We're here at Fordham University on April 20, 2005 with Rosemary Brown who grew up in the Morrisania section as a political activist involved in the Civil Rights Movement in the Bronx and also for many years worked in the City's Department of Employment. Let's start out a little bit with your family life. When did you family move to the Bronx?

Rosemary Brown (RB): We moved to the Bronx in 1940.

MN: And, what prompted the move? Was there a discussion in your house about why they moved to the Bronx?

RB: Well, we were a large family. At the time, there were eight of us, Joe made nine. And, my father just wanted us to grow up in an environment that he felt was safer in which his children could have a better advantage. And, at the time the Bronx was the place for African American families.

MN: So, upwardly mobile African American families looked to the Bronx as a place to find schools, better apartments, and safer conditions.

RB: Yes.

MN: Did your family know people who had moved to the Bronx first?

RB: Yes, we did but there was a family across the street from us, I think the names were the Walkers, and my mother had kept in touch with them and my brother, my older brother. And, I think my brother took one look and thought - - well he was older, he was the oldest one, my brother Richie - - let's get out of here and see what we can do.

MN: Was Harlem at that time getting very crowded?

RB: Yeah, it was crowded and not only that we were such a large family it was hard to find decent housing. Really, my father worked in Grand Central Station, didn't make a whole lot of money.

MN: What sort of work did he do?

RB: He was a chef.

MN: And, did your mother work?

RB: No. Didn't work. She had a lot of babies.

MN: How big of an apartment did you get when you moved to the Bronx?

RB: Not very big. Three bedrooms, yes.

MN: And, was this on 168th?

RB: 1319 Prospect Avenue at the corner of 168th Street.

MN: So, it was three bedrooms. What were the sleeping arrangements in the family?

RB: Three to a bed.

MN: Three to a bed?

RB: Yeah, well, there were three girls, so we slept together. There was some pull-out cots in the living room and I think my oldest brother had a bedroom to himself and my mom and my dad.

MN: What was the block like and the neighborhood like when you moved there?

RB: What I remember most about Prospect Avenue, believe it or not, were the trees. We had beautiful trees.

Brian Purnell (BP): Really?

RB: Yes.

BP: My mother lived at 1412 Prospect and she said the same thing.

RB: Yes. That's the most vivid in my mind was the trees.

MN: It was a tree-lined block.

RB: Tree-lined block. They were just beautiful. And people took care of them with no problem. I don't even know where those trees disappeared.

MN: Somebody said it was a hurricane that might have done it.

RB: I don't - - I think when the Bronx started to collapse as it did I think the trees just collapsed along with it.

MN: Now, what grade were you in when the family moved?

RB: I was just out of sixth grade going into seventh.

MN: What school did you go to when you moved to the Bronx?

RB: PS 40 on Prospect Avenue

MN: Ok, you mean the Junior High School.

RB: Junior High School 40.

MN: Right, and what was that school like when you first went there?

RB: I was disappointed because we moved just as I had graduated, and at the time if you were a bright student you could do two years in one, rapid advance.

MN: SP, right.

RB: SP, so I was going to SP in Harlem but when I got to PS 40 they would not put me in SP. I did the 7th grade, which was fine. I was very surprised because living in Harlem I went to an all black school and I had never gone to school where there were such few black children at this school, very few.

MN: So this was a predominantly white school?

RB: Predominantly white school.

MN: And, were you in the one class?

RB: Yes I was.

MN: What percentage of the students in your class were African American?

RB: Maybe three percent. There weren't very many. Not very many at all.

MN: What was the ethnic background of the white students at your school?

RB: They were Jewish.

MN: What were the kind of relationships, was it a friendly environment? Was it hostile?

Was it neither?

RB: I think it was just - - I don't remember any tensions - - I think it was okay.

MN: What about the black you lived on? Was that also racially mixed?

RB: It was when we moved in, but within a year it was not.

MN: So you're building had white families when you moved in?

RB: Yes.

MN: And within a year?

RB: Within a year, there were no white families.

MN: Were there any teachers at the Junior High School 40 that made a big impression on you?

RB: No. I don't remember.

MN: Were you involved in the music program at the school?

RB: Yes I was.

MN: What was that experience like?

RB: Well, I was a singer and I was picked quite often. There was another young lady, I think she went on to sing professionally, Barbara Shirley, when she was a soprano and I was an alto. So, we were often called on to perform in concerts and it was wonderful experience. We had a great glee club.

MN: And did the glee club travel to other schools?

RB: No, we didn't. Just for Parent's Night and things like that.

MN: Now, your brother Joe said that you had a relative who was a very famous musician, J.C. Higgenbothen.

RB: Yes. JC Higgenbothen. Also, don't forget Irene Higgenbothen. She who wrote Good Morning Heartache, in my mother's apartment on Prospect Avenue.

MN: They were there quite a bit?

RB: Yes, she wrote that song in my mother's apartment on Prospect Avenue.

MN: Good morning heartache.

RB: Good morning heartache that's right.

MN: Now, was there a piano in the apartment?

RB: No, Irene was such a musician that what she was writing at the time were the words.

MN: So she wrote the words to that song - - now, where did they live, the Higgenbothen?

RB: JC lived in Harlem. Irene did too. They lived on St. Nicholas Avenue, somewhere in the vicinity.

MN: And, so they visited quite often?

RB: Yes. JC was my mother's baby brother.

MN: So, your mother's maiden name was Higgenbothen?

RB: Higginbothen. Yes.

MN: And they were from --

RB: Social Circle, Georgia.

MN: Social Circle, Georgia. What part of the state is it?

RB: It's forty miles outside of Atlanta.

MN: And, what was the economic basis of that town?

RB: Social Circle was and still is a very country town, very small, not much industry there. I think they do some trucking. Yes.

MN: Now, did your family own land there?

RB: No. Not as far as I know and my mother was third generation Social Circle.

MN: What level of education did your mother go to?

RB: My mother went to, I imagine, seventh or eighth grade.

MN: And what about your father?

RB: My father went to Morris Brown College for a year. Very bright man, very bright.

MN: You have obviously this whole musical experience in your household. What about politics, reading, where's there a lot of discussion?

RB: Yes, my dad and my grandmother, my maternal grandmother lived with us and, my dad and my grandmother were at opposite ends of the spectrum. My father was a fierce Garvyite.

MN: Really?

RB: Absolutely. And, my grandmother was fundamental Christian and never the twin shall be. [Laughs]

MN: Now, what church did you grandmother attend?

RB: I don't remember her attending church. [Laughs] But she knew the Bible and she would quote it.

MN: That's interesting. Did your father go to meetings or was it more his philosophy?

RB: That was his philosophy and he tried to instill it in us. He died early, a young man. And, he horrified to know that all of his children had visited the South. He did not want us to go there, to the South.

BP: Why not?

RB: Experiences that he'd had in the South. My father was a Gullah. My father's a Gullah. I'm a Gullah.

MN: From South Carolina.

RB: South Carolina. I'm a daughter of the dust. He lived right - - I've been to his home - - a very small, you know, backwater town. But he was fierce about things he had seen and experienced, because they were born - - my mother and father both born - - in 1800's, late 1800's. Their experiences were not integration. Absolutely no integration.

MN: Were they there - - Did they see, you know, things about lynchings and violence and this is things they saw first hand?

RB: Yes. My mother and my father both.

MN: What are some of the stories that they told that made an imprint in your memory?

RB: My mother talked about a relative, whose name I don't know, who was being chased by the Klan. And the only thing he could do was jump down a well, and he jumped down a well and drowned.

MN: Wow.

RB: And that made an impression on me and I thought - -

MN: And that was in Social Circle?

RB: Yes. Social Circle was in the heart of the Ku Klux area. Violent. It's good now. They went through their own Civil Rights struggle.

MN: Right. So, your mom remembers it as a violent place?

RB: She remembers that incident. She loved Social Circle. She went back, she went back to visit once.

MN: Did your family own land down there?

RB: No, I don't think so, not my grandparents. My great grandparents did. Yes.

MN: Now, what about your father's stories. What were some of the things that he told?

RB: I don't know much about my father's family even though I've met them and I visited my father's home. I think they were a little financially more secure because when I went to visit in 1960 in Pineland, South Carolina, they had a nice farm, a productive farm and a few animals.

MN: Do you think your political activism to some degree stemmed from your father's influence or just being exposed to --?

RB: I just think that it was the times that I grew up in. The time and the place that I grew up in, particularly after I moved out from Prospect Avenue and moved over into the Soundview area.

MN: Did you or siblings attend church in Morrisania?

RB: Absolutely.

MN: And, which church was that?

RB: I was in the first confirmation class at Saint Augustine's with Edgar Hawkins. We were Rev's kids -- We were called Rev's kids.

MN: Oh, okay. Rev's kids. So his first confirmation class was in 1940.

RB: Yes. 1941.

MN: How did you find the church?

RB: A woman -- when I said my parents knew someone, I'd ask because I used to like to go to church, and I asked -- someone, this Walker girl, I think her name was Rosemary took me down to Saint Augustine -- and I liked it. And I found that one of my classmates from PS 40 was there, and I immediately got involved and join a choir and did other things. So I grew up in Saint Augustine's. That was home.

MN: What was Reverend Hawkins like? Here you are, you're an eleven, twelve year old
--

RB: Reverend Hawkins. He was -- its almost hard to describe him -- this man of the cloth was like friend of the family. He was just so involved with people in trouble and people in need. I remember when my dad died -- and this is kind of getting off a little -- my brother was overseas during WWII. And, we wanted him to come home, and they wouldn't let him come home, but I remember Edward Hawkins coming to my house and talking to my mother -- you know trying to offer her some comfort and contact and this and that, just things like that -- he was great.

MN: What was the atmosphere at the church to be a young person there? What were some of the activities?

RB: We did everything. They had roller-skating in the basement of the church -- roller-skating I remember that very well -- and, there were just activities. We could go down there and cook. We had clubs. The little building next door to it was not there. It was not open when I was a child, it opened up later on. We had an active choir that put on plays by Gilbert and Sullivan. We just did -- that was the place to be. When we went out of school, we went to Saint--

MN: You went to Saint -- so, that was your after-school and evening center. Was there any emphasis on African American history or culture in the church?

RB: No, not that I remember.

MN: Any political issues that were raised, or was it more social?

RB: Probably more social and if there were I think I was probably too young to be aware of them.

BP: What are some of your memories of a typical Sunday service?

RB: I remember being in a junior choir. Up over the altar there was - - there was, I haven't been there in years - - a balcony and we would sit up in the front of over the balcony. We had to sit very still because we were facing the congregation. And if we were sitting in the audience, in the congregation on Sundays, I remember Reverend Hawkins kind of correcting some of the boys - - you know when they get out of line - - he had no problem speaking from the pulpit [Laughter].

MN: Now, what was the shopping and just the street life like in that neighborhood when you moved there?

RB: Let's see. Several things I remember. Prospect Avenue had five and dime, and three movies or two movies or where ever and it had an ice cream parlor. Now, I do remember that I felt - - I guess one of my earliest memories as we were blocked in as African Americans - - we did not venture over into the area which is now known as Southern Boulevard, Intervale Avenue, where they all the markets with the good food.

MN: Now, down the hill.

RB: Down the hill. Down that Intervale Avenue hill.

MN: Right, so at that point in early forty's, you felt like that was not a place you were welcome.

RB: We were not welcome. We were chased.

MN: You were chased by other kids?

RB: Yes. We were chased by the white kids if we went over to that area. So, we just learned not to go in that area.

MN: Now, was that the same - - was that a different ethnic composition than up the hill? Was it more Irish? Or, it was just the same.

RB: Over from - - We were - - the African Americans lived between, I think, Boston Road and maybe Stedmans Avenue I think. And after that it became an all Jewish neighborhood. I'm almost sure.

MN: Down the hill.

RB: Down the hill. Yes.

MN: So when did that change? At what period did it become possible for African American kids to go down the hill?

RB: I imagine in the late 40's.

MN: So, it took almost ten years before that - - Were there other areas that you were aware you weren't welcome and where were those?

RB: Bathgate Avenue. The South Bronx. We were Morrisianians. I don't what the section below Prospect Avenue station was called. I don't know - -Melrose - -

MN: Some people call it Hunts Point, Melrose, Mothaven, those were the Irish sections which later became Puerto Rican and those were not places you would have gone.

RB: Right, No. But, we went on Third Avenue, 149th Street to Hurns and so forth.

MN: Right, so you shopped at the Hub.

RB: Yes.

MN: Now, we've spoken - - one of the people we've interviewed is Jessie Davidson - - Did you know him when you were growing up?

RB: I didn't know him.

MN: His family helped found the NAACP and again in Morrisiana, but he mentioned later that there was some NAACP demonstrations in the fifties to try to open up the stores in the Hub to African American employees. Did you ever try to get jobs in the Hub?

RB: No. No.

MN: What about - - did you ever shop at Fordham Road or that was considered off limits?

RB: There wasn't very much on Fordham Road at the time. I don't even believe - - I don't remember Alexander's being on Fordham Road when I was there, but we went to an ice cream parlor on Kingsbridge Road. It was a famous ice cream parlor. I don't remember the name of it.

MN: Not Jan's

RB: Yes.

MN: Because we had a Jan's in Brooklyn also, right.

RB: Yes.

MN: What about places like Orchard Beach and Pelham Bay Park? Did you go there in the summers?

RB: We went to Pelham Bay. That was a big treat to go over to - - we had to go all the way over Hunts Point, get the number six train or something. It was along walk, but once a year my parents would take us to Orchard Beach - - I mean into Pelham Bay. Orchard Beach, I went to after I was grown not as a child.

MN: Now, What about Crotona Park? Did you go to Crotona Park?

RB: Yes. Yes. Up by the lake. And I lived on Crotona Avenue after I got married. That was in the fifties. We went to Crotona Park and actually we there on the day - - what was it called, VJ day? The day when the war was over.

MN: Right. What about the Crotona Park pool?

RB: Yes. That was fine.

MN: What about the Botanical Gardens and the zoo?

RB: We went to the zoo. And I remember we walked to the zoo from Prospect Avenue, but I'd never been to the Botanical Gardens.

BP: Could you describe what the scene on Crotona Park was like on VJ day?

RB: I was with my first boyfriend so I mean it was fine with me. It was mobbed. People were just throwing papers out of the window

BP: It was blacks, whites, everybody in the neighborhood?

RB: Everybody was together, yes. The north end of Crotona Park, the Irish used to play Botchy ball - -

MN: Oh the Italians?

RB: Botchy ball at the north end. We were down by the lake.

MN: Now, did you family have a radio?

RB: Yes.

MN: Were listening to Joe Louis's fights part of the family tradition?

RB: Of course, yes.

MN: And, what was it like to listen to a Joe Louis fight?

RB: Wonderful. I seemed to remember - - I was living in Harlem at the time when he fought Max Schmeling.

MN: Max Schmeling 1938.

RB: OK, yes because the kids were walking through the street at night with a great big piece of cardboard, and they put a child on it and said, "Take a look at Max Schmeling, take a look at Max Schmeling," as they walked up and down the street. I remember that.

MN: Right. Right. You had mentioned - - you ended up going to Walton High School - - did you have guidance counselors at Junior High School 40 who you sat down and discussed high school with? How was a high school choice made?

RB: Two things. I wanted to go to Morris High School and my mother didn't want me to go to Morris High School.

BP: Why not?

RB: I was a wild child and she just thought I'd be better off enrolled in Walton.

MN: Okay. What did it mean to be a wild child in the middle of the forties?

RB: I wasn't really wild. I had a little boyfriend. My older sister didn't have a boyfriend.

So this made me the wild child.

MN: Did you go to parties?

RB: We had parties and we went out in groups. I never went out on a single date with this guy, but I was a wild child my parents thought. I would get in trouble.

MN: So, they wanted you to go to an all girls school?

RB: Yes.

MN: So you ended up going to Walton, which what was that like?

RB: The worst experience of my life. I still have nightmares.

MN: Wow. What made it that terrible?

RB: That was the most racist atmosphere I had ever been in, in my life. Walton High School, at that time, we had to take an entrance exam. The same exam you took to get into Hunter High School you had to take into Walton High School. Again, we were - - when I went I think there were twelve African Americans in the freshman class.

MN: Twelve African Americans in the freshman class. Were most of them from Morrisania?

RB: I think all.

MN: All.

RB: And, we kind of bonded together. The problem wasn't so much with the teachers it was with the other students. Those who did not want us there made it obvious that they did not want us there. And I got suspended from school twice for getting into trouble.

MN: Now, where would this tension manifest itself? Would it be in line-up before school, cafeteria, gym, or in the actual classes.

RB: Just kind of in general. If you tried to join a particular club, there would all kinds of reasons why you couldn't join this club. I did not like the Walton experience.

MN: Is there any particular people that stand out for saying things to you?

RB: There was a male teacher, I don't remember his name, but I had a little job - - they had little jobs to get you little points. I was a monitor in the cafeteria. This is still very painful to think about it, and my job was to see that people when they emptied their food, they'd lined up the tray neatly. So, one girl came and she threw the tray, and I asked her to come back and put the tray there. And, she said "Well, don't tell me what to do. I have someone in my kitchen that looks just like you." And I have to be honest, I hit her. I slugged her good, and as I slugged her, a male teacher hit me. And, it was quite a scene and I got suspended and she didn't. She denied that she had said this, and I mean, after a big lecture from the principal which I didn't approve of, my mother came back, my gentle mother, and I said well this a chance for you to let me transfer to Morris. Get me out of here, but I stayed and I graduated. I was an average student. I just kind of lost interest I don't know, I didn't like it.

MN: Wow. Was this relatively early in your career at Walton when this particular incident happened?

RB: I think I was a sophomore.

BP: Where is Walton in relation to where you grew up?

RB: Walton is on Jerome Avenue and Kingsbridge.

BP: So how did you get there?

RB: We took the bus to Fordham Road and then we took a trolley.

BP: What was the commute like going into that other section of the Bronx?

RB: No problem.

MN: So the problems were at the school?

RB: Were at the school. Yes.

MN: And, was there also less overt stuff than that like cold-shouldering?

RB: I think in giving awards. There were several people who felt they should have gotten a special award and they were just kind of passed over. I often take out my yearbook and look at it, just look and see where we were, and we were just there. I mean it changed by the time I got ready to graduate - - no not even that, maybe in the fifties.

MN: Now did you plan to go to college when you were in high school?

RB: Not then. I went later on.

MN: Was this something that was - - How many of your brothers and sisters ended up going to college?

RB: One, two, three.

MN: Out of eight.

RB: Three out of eight. Yes.

MN: A lot of you were good students.

RB: Yes. I think most of us. Yes

MN: So was this a factor, an example, of African American students not being encouraged in that era?

RB: I think in that era we got married young. So, I think that was it. The idea was to finish high school and get married.

MN: And, was the idea that a husband would support you if you got married?

RB: I don't think so. [Laughs] I think we all needed to work. I'm not sure.

MN: Now, were you dating regularly throughout high school?

RB: I had one steady boyfriend.

MN: And, was this the person you married?

RB: Yes.

MN: Where did you meet him?

RB: He lived on Mimon Place.

MN: Okay, and what was his name?

RB: Richard Brown.

MN: And what school did he go to?

RB: Richard, he went to Clinton.

MN: Which was right near there.

RB: Right and he'd save me a seat on the subway.

MN: He did he also go to Junior High School 40?

RB: No he did not.

MN: So how did you meet him for the first time?

RB: Just friends. We had mutual friends.

MN: And how old were you when you got married?

RB: Twenty.

MN: OK and you got an apartment together?

RB: Yes. On Crotona Avenue.

MN: On Crotona Avenue. And, what sort of work did he do?

RB: He was a tailor initially. He worked for Bond's Clothing Store, but then he made a career out of working at the post office, to a manager at the post office.

MN: So he was at the post office and when did you end up going into civil service?

RB: Actually, after my children were a good size. I went in, in about 1968. I did other things before then.

MN: So, what sort of work did you do before then?

RB: I was a secretary. I was a secretary at the same church I was talking about. First, I was home with my children, and then I went to work at the church as a full time secretary.

MN: At St. Augustine's

RB: No, at Soundview Presbyterian Church.

MN: Now, how many children did you have?

RB: Three.

MN: Three children. And, how old were you when you had your first child?

RB: Twenty-two.

MN: So you were a homemaker for quite some time.

RB: Yes.

MN: Now, talking about the neighborhood. So, you moved into Crotona Park, what was the exact address? Was it East, Crotona Park East?

RB: No, Crotona Avenue. I don't remember the address.

MN: Was this south of Crotona Park or north?

RB: South. It was a private house. Yes, we lived in a basement apartment.

MN: What was going on in Morrisania at that time, this must have been the fifties?

RB: In the 1950's

MN: Was the neighborhood still stable and safe?

RB: The neighborhood was stable and safe - - let's see - - I think so, but that was when -
- I think that was in the 1950's - - no it was the 60's when they started to burn down.

MN: Yes that was the 60's.

RB: The 1950's I think was fine.

MN: Now, when did you move to Soundview?

RB: In 1954.

MN: Did you move into public housing?

RB: Yes.

MN: In which development?

RB: Soundview.

MN: How did you get into public housing?

RB: By applying and waiting for about two years.

MN: Now, was public housing seen as a good thing in those days?

RB: Absolutely. It was an upward move.

MN: Now, was this a middle-income development?

RB: No. It was a low-income.

MN: And, how tall were the buildings?

RB: Six stories.

MN: OK so these weren't real high rises. They were six story buildings.

RB: Yes.

MN: And what was the ethnic composition of the families who moved in there?

RB: Very well integrated. You name it. We had everyone from Jewish, Irish, Italian - -
That was a good experience.

MN: How big was the apartment you got?

RB: I had two bedrooms.

MN: And did families look out for each other and help each other?

RB: Yes. It was wonderful. My children were very small at the time we moved in. I had two children then. And it was wonderful. It was just - - that's where I met a lot of my life-long friends, right there in the Soundview houses, people I'm still friends with.

MN: When did you join Soundview Presbyterian Church?

RB: In 1954 when I moved. I just transferred my membership from St. Augustine over to there.

MN: Right so, did you still go back to St. Augustine's at all?

RB: To baptize my children.

MN: So, did Reverend Hawkins encourage you to affiliate with that church? Did he know the minister?

RB: Yes he did. They were very good friends.

BP: What was the minister's name?

RB: Bob Davidson. He was a white minister. Very political. Very active in the Civil Rights.

MN: When you met Reverend Davidson, were you aware of his political activism or was that something that came later?

RB: Well, we kind of noticed it in the beginning because he had done something that I'd never seen before is that he came to the door, he knocked on the door of housing projects

and invited African Americans to join his church, which was a mostly white church. This was a white neighborhood.

MN: And the surrounding neighborhood was mostly private houses?

RB: There was one development there - - I can't remember the name of it - - right across the street from Soundview houses. Its still there - - I'm thinking Carroll Gardens, which was an all white enclave.

MN: So he went out of his way to recruit African American families for his church?

RB: Yes.

MN: Did the church become a social center the way St. Augustine's did with clubs?

RB: Same kinds of situation.

MN: When did you become aware of the Civil Rights Movement going on in the south?

And, how did it affect you?

RB: Well, it was before 1963 because I went to the march in Washington.

MN: You went to the march in Washington?

RB: Sure did.

MN: And did you go on buses from the Bronx?

RB: Went on a bus from Soundview church.

MN: And where did the bus leave from?

RB: Right in front of the church.

MN: So, you got a whole bus of people from Soundview.

RB: Two buses.

MN: Do you have any flyers from that?

RB: I don't have anything. [Laughs]

BP: Well you have your memories.

RB: I have nothing; I have my memories.

MN: These were integrated groups that went down?

RB: Yes.

MN: Two buses from Soundview.

RB: I'm going to try to get a picture of - - well a person I'm going to talk about later was an assistant pastor named Dave Singleton and I've spoken to him recently - - and his picture in the March on Washington was in the Ladies Home Journal and he was so proud of that. So, I'm going to ask him for a copy.

MN: Because I'd love to see pictures with Bronx on it if you've got pictures of people coming from the Bronx.

RB: Yes, I think it said he was holding up a banner, I think.

MN: Before that time, were you aware of the Montgomery Bus Boycott and Martin Luther King?

RB: Yes.

MN: Did your family have a television when you were in - -?

RB: Yes.

MN: So, you were watching - - was this mostly something that you heard about in church or saw it on television or a combination?

RB: Well, it's interesting. I thought Martin Luther King was - - I just thought he was a little too moderate for me. I liked the Black Panther Party.

MN: This is fascinating because we interviewed somebody yesterday from the neighborhood. She didn't feel Martin Luther King. She didn't feel nonviolence. It didn't fit with somebody who grew up in the streets of New York.

RB: Yes, that's the way I felt.

MN: But, the black panthers obviously came a little later, so the southern Civil Rights Movement in nonviolence didn't really - -

RB: Well, I had met some from SNCC, they came - - I said Soundview church was so involved that they came - - I think I got a little more interested in what was going on at the time. It was kind of remote. I felt a little far removed from that until we started paying attention to things that were happening.

BP: Things that were happening in your area or in the South as well?

RB: In the South.

MN: What about the schools in Soundview? Were you happy with your children's experiences there?

RB: Yes. They did well. The schools - - after the housing projects opened, the schools were integrated. The only integrated housing in the Soundview area before 1951 was little houses called Plaza Point Houses. They're still there, but there were some blacks owning homes over there but I'm not sure.

MN: So the schools were pretty decent and they were integrated?

RB: Yes.

MN: Now, when - - let's move ahead to sort of the CORE in the Bronx. When did the Civil Rights Movement come to the Bronx and say let's look at what's going on here?

RB: Actually - - and I'm talking about the White Castle situation - - the actual, the beginning of that started ten years earlier with Bronxdale houses. Bronxdale houses is right across the street from the White Castle on Bruckner Boulevard, directly across the street. And there were a CORE group of people that noticed when they went in that there were no - - this was in the 50's- - African American waiters, waitresses, people waiting, and they spoke to the manager, and he said, "I'm sorry, I'm not hiring any blacks."

BP: Who were those people?

RB: I can give you the names.

MN: Were Bronxdale houses similar to Soundview houses in the social composition, they were also these were integrated developments?

RB: Yes.

MN: And these were African American families who were asking - - they spoke to the manager, and he said I'm just - -

RB: "I'm not hiring." A lot of the people in the Bronxdale houses were veterans who lived in the Quanset houses that used to be - - I think were on Bruckner Boulevard if I remember, and then when the housing part was built then they moved there.

MN: Was your husband a veteran?

RB: No, he was not.

MN: So these were a little older?

RB: Yes.

MN: And so they weren't able to do this. They tried this in the fifties.

RB: Yes. Well, what they did was a pretty good word about the boycott. You don't have to eat there, and the lure to get people in was all the little coupons in the paper where you got ten hamburgers for a dollar, so people came from all over. I haven't had a White Castle hamburger since 1952-53.

MN: Now, was this word spread at Soundview Presbyterian Church?

RB: Not until the actual boycott. Yes.

MN: But there was this informal, word-of-mouth

RB: Yes, it went on for years.

BP: Can you speak a little bit more about the people - - it wasn't an organized group, it was just something that was a bit spontaneous - - I don't want to say spontaneous - - but, people just came together from their own community and initiated this boycott?

RB: Right. Unfortunately, two of the people who were very actively involved are deceased. One was my sister-in-law, her name was Alice Orange, and then there a gentleman named Milbred Simmons who was a classical singer, and then there's Ralph Redmen who I'm waiting for a phone call from. They were involved in it earlier

MN: OK let me go back because of something Joseph told me. Were you married at the Hunts Point Palace?

RB: My sister was.

MN: One of your sisters married somebody who was white, and they had a big wedding at the Hunts Point Palace. Could you describe that because I guess in those days' interracial marriages were not that common.

RB: His parents declared him dead at the time.

MN: Was he Jewish?

RB: Yes and he became a judge.

MN: What was his name?

RB: Herbert Adlerberg.

MN: Herbert Adlerberg. Your family and his friends threw a big wedding at Hunts Palace. Yes, and what year was this?

RB: 1951.

MN: And, how many people came to this wedding?

RB: Maybe about one hundred and fifty to two hundred people.

MN: And where did they meet?

RB: At Brooklyn College.

MN: OK so they were both in college.

RB: Yes.

MN: And was he from the Bronx also?

RB: No, he was from Brooklyn.

MN: Do you remember - - was there a band at the wedding?

RB: There was a band. A local band.

MN: Now was this the same sister who was involved in the informal boycott?

RB: No. That was my sister-in-law.

MN: That was your sister-in-law. OK. So when did CORE start in the Bronx?

BP: I'm sorry, I want to ask her more about the boycott. How effective was it?

RB: You mean the informal one?

BP: Right. The one that started just through word-of-mouth.

RB: I think that mostly centered it were the people living in the Bronxdale houses. I don't know, because my brother lived there and his wife I knew about it. So I just didn't participate, but people continued to come over. I mean they would - - the problem was at the time they waiters would wait on you but you waited because you could sit outside at table when they would bring the food to your car or to your table, and it was obvious that they would just take they're time.

MN: So, there was a sense that African Americans were served differently and with less courtesy and less respect.

BP: And, in the early 1950s, how would you describe the scene around this White Castle? Was it a place to hang out; was it a place to be in the neighborhood?

RB: No. It was just there. It's always been there.

MN: Were there other examples of recreational spaces that seemed either closed or hostile to blacks in that period in the fifties? Where you had that comparable sense of not being welcome or was White Castle unusual?

RB: I think White Castle was unusual and maybe Alexander Department Store in the Hub there was some hostilities there, but those two kind of stand out.

MN: So let's move ahead to the early sixties. When did an actual Civil Rights group start at Soundview Presbyterian?

RB: I'd work full time in the daytime and every morning I would come in - -

MN: This is at Soundview Presbyterian as a secretary?

RB: Yes. And every morning I would come in and my desk and the kitchen would be moved. And I would say "Well, who was here last night? You know, it was obvious that there was some movement going on. So, one day, one evening, my husband and I said come on let's walk back over to the church and see what's going on, and we went in and there was a fairly large group of men and women meeting in the kitchen with one of our church elders. Chet Henderson was his name. And I said, "What's going on?" And he said, "Well this is the Bronx CORE."

MN: Do you remember what year this was?

RB: It had to be 1963. This is the Bronx CORE and this is strategic planning because they're getting ready to pose demonstrations at the White Castles in the Bronx. You know, and I said, "You know if you're going to use the church facility we better get some clearance on this from the pastor." - - who was white and the assistant pastor was white - - and the pastor was in California and I called him.

BP: This is still Bob Davidson?

RB: No. This is now Bruce Calkins, and I called him and he came back immediately and presented it to the congregation openly. "Is it all right for them to be here?" And, we were still an integrated church at the time. Some said yes, the majority said yes, and some said no

MN: Was the group who was meeting at night integrated also or was it mostly blacks?

RB: Yes, there were one or two whites. I remember Yafford Conner. We called him Chess

MN: Now, how old was he at that time?

RB: He was a young man. He was about twenty-two, twenty-three.

MN: Was he a college kid?

RB: No, he was then making up his mind to be an actor. I had known him since he was about fifteen.

MN: Did you know his parents?

RB: Yes. I knew his mother. His mother was an opera singer.

MN: So he comes from an entertainment background.

RB: Yes.

MN: And what was her name?

RB: I don't remember.

MN: But she was in Soundview houses?

RB: They lived in Classen Point

MN: Oh, they lived in Classen Point. And, she was an opera singer. Now, were they from Africa or the South or the Caribbean.

RB: I can only go by his bio, I don't know.

BP: The gentlemen - - what was his name - - Chet Henderson. Was he white or black?

RB: He's black.

BP: And did he hold a position of influence or leadership in the church?

RB: Well, we have what we call elders and he was an elder in the church. So, he had access to the key.

MN: Right, and where did he live?

RB: I believe he lived in Bronxdale. I believe he lived in Bronxdale because - -

MN: And, that's the other side of the Bruckner?

RB: The other side of Bruckner. Either the Bronxdale or Rosedale Gardens. I can't remember.

MN: How many people were in the church at that time were members?

RB: Four to five hundred.

MN: OK, so it was a significantly large church. What was Yaphet Kato like as a personality at that time?

RB: He was a nice young man. I felt sorry for him when he was a teenager. I remember him coming to my house and telling me, "Mrs. Brown, I'm going to be an actor. I don't care what anybody says." The kids used to tease him. He was a great big guy. You know, big and bulky, and I wished him luck. I said, "We'd be very proud to know you." But, he was a very nice young man. He would come when we were having plays in the church. We would call him to give us technical assistance on how to do this and how to do that. He was always good.

MN: So the church agreed to have CORE meet at the church?

RB: Yes.

BP: The minority that disagreed - - was there any debate about the meeting? Did they ever express why they disagreed?

RB: We had an integrated church at the time and as the neighborhood was changing the majority of those members were getting ready to leave anyhow, and they just did not want to get involved in anything that political.

MN: So you were starting to see the white families move out at that time?

RB: Yes.

MN: Where did people move to and what did they say if anything?

RB: It was interesting because the ones that moved lived in the projects because they were relatively poor. I don't remember when Co-Op City opened, but that's when the majority of the white families in the neighborhood went to Co-Op City.

BP: Had did this affect the church? I imagine it was still a mixed church. You worshipped side-by-side with people very Sunday and then was it just that one week that they'd be gone?

RB: It was an incident I think - -

[END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE ONE; BEGIN TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO]

MN: Since 1965, spring of 65.

RB: Well, Bruce Calkins went. He went to the march. He was so enthused about it

MN: This was your minister?

RB: My minister. A lot of the congregation did not like it at all, and that's when the majority left. A lot of black families left too. They did not think that we needed to go that far, you know, and there were those of us who were rooting him on.

MN: So there was a division among the black families about how political the church should be?

RB: Yes.

MN: Now, did you - - describe the atmosphere of the White Castle meetings and demonstrations.

RB: I can only speak - - I can speak a personal on Bruckner Boulevard. What I know of what happened at the - - the atmosphere on Bruckner Boulevard was not so hostile, not as out there because of the number of African Americans in the community. The ones who - - what do you call them, the neo-nazis, I'm sure they were - - they were there. They had their chains, and they had their ropes, and they had their signs but there wasn't a whole lot of movement until one night when all the violence came.

BP: So, the National Renaissance Party, the White Supremacist Party, did stage a counter-demonstration at the Bruckner Boulevard - -

RB: Yes. Yes. It was not - - I mean after you heard what happened on Boston Road and Allerton Avenue - - It was nothing like that. It was loud. But there was a very large contingent of integrated people who were just kind of marching around with signs.

MN: So, the demonstrations were integrated at the White Castle there, and were you on the picket lines?

RB: Yes.

MN: And what was the spirit? Describe what it was like to be on the picket lines.

RB: That one - - we were angry. We were really angry - - I think we were angry by the presence of these other folks standing there with chains and stuff like - - you're not going to use those chains here.

MN: And, were these people from the neighborhood or were they outsiders?

RB: I have no idea.

MN: But, you didn't recognize them.

RB: No.

BP: What did they look like? Were they dressed in any particular manner or uniform?

RB: No. They were young. I remember that and mostly male, but nothing - - what bothered me were those chains. You know, how dare you come in this day and age with chains.

MN: Now, did you ever see anyone you recognized in a counter-demonstration - - somebody from let's say from the Soundview houses or somebody you saw shopping or these were all people who you never saw before among the white counter demonstrators? Was there anybody from Soundview there that you recognized that was against your demonstration?

RB: No.

BP: What were some of the slogans - - I have a few questions about both the atmosphere but also about Bronx CORE in general - - but what were some of the slogans that you remember saying or what did people write on the placards that you used?

RB: I remember - - it seems to me I remember, "I am a man." I don't know, yes, I think that was White Castle and "Treat Us with Dignity." They were nice mild slogans.

BP: Did you attend Bronx CORE meetings regularly during the demonstration?

RB: Not regularly. I went three or four times and just sat in and listened.

BP: Did they discuss CORE's philosophy of nonviolence? Was there every any discussion or education on kind of CORE being the conversation on quality like their principals and demonstration and activism?

RB: I think the Bronx - - this particular branch - - was a little more pro-active than the national organization. I think James Farmer was the president at the time - - what was the other fellow's name - -

MN: Not Bayard Rustin?

RB: No not Bayard Rustin. Herb Calendar, you asked me about him. He was there.

MN: He was at some of you meetings?

RB: Yes.

MN: Now, how would describe Herb Calendar? Was he a young person?

RB: I don't remember Herb Calendar at all. I remember him being there.

MN: Were these demonstrations before or after the March on Washington?

BP: Before.

RB: Before.

MN: Could you describe again what you meant by saying Bronx CORE being pro-active? You started to say how they might have been different - -

RB: I think James Farmer was saying we can handle this in a quieter manner. We can negotiate; we can do this, but let's not have any real demonstrations and so forth. The Bronx branch with Calender, Yafford, and a large number of young people - - large number of teenagers - - said no, it's time to move on this.

MN: Now, you mentioned anger. Was the anger partly because this had been an issue and nothing had been done and so there was sense of enough is enough? Let's make this happen finally?

RB: Yes and not only that it was how dare you. You don't live here. How dare you come - -

MN: So there was anger on the outsiders and their Southern racists' tactics.

RB: Yes.

BP: Did they - - at Allerton and Boston Road there was use of Confederate flags and Ku Klux Klan hoods and crosses - - did they do the same thing at Bruckner?

RB: No, just the chains. I remember the chains.

BP: Do you remember what they were saying to the protestors, to the CORE protestors?

RB: Using the 'N' word, you know and like - - just hostile.

BP: But it never escalated into physical confrontation.

RB: Not. I don't think so. I don't think so. Most of that happened on Boston Road

BP: And what did the people at Bruckner remember hearing about what was happening on Boston Road and Allerton Avenue?

RB: I heard it directly from the assistant minister, Dave Singleton was his name.

MN: Was he white?

RB: White.

MN: His name was Dave Singleton.

BP: He was the assistant to Bruce Hawkins.

RB: And Dave Singleton had an experience that lasted well beyond that demonstration because he stood out. Six feet four, big blonde fellow, huge. And, they were out to kill him. They intended to kill him. When he would show up at the demonstrations, people would have lines and lines just walking around. And these counter-demonstrations on Boston Road would stand on the side with their chains and their ropes and they would tell Dave, "We're going to kill you." So, they started a campaign of following him, no matter he went. You know cars, at his home, at the church there was always a car parked with people. They wouldn't do anything. They just parked there.

MN: So they went down to Soundview.

RB: Yes. They followed him. They followed him. And he had to run for his life because when the violence broke out - - one night of real violence up at Boston Road - - he got hit in the head with a bottle. It was interesting that I didn't hear of anyone else getting hit in the head with a bottle, so they were definitely - - you know, you're not

supposed to be on that side. You're supposed to be on our side - - and he and Bruce Caulkins went ever night, everyday and every night to the demonstrations.

MN: This is at Boston Road too?

RB: At Boston Road and after that - - many of us including myself - - advised David to back off - -you know, we are going to kill you.

BP: What was David like? Did you know him well?

RB: Yes.

BP: Can you talk a little about your memories of him?

RB: Yes. I'm still in touch with Dave Singleton. He works with Native Americans in California.

MN: We should try to do a phone interview with him.

RB: He's a wonderful person. David was a real person. He didn't seem to see color.

MN: Was he married?

RB: He got married after.

MN: He wasn't married at that time.

RB: No. He was not married at that time

MN: How old would you say he was?

RB: He was young, maybe late twenties. Maybe late twenties.

MN: So, they came actually, these people, at a car outside his house?

RB: A car outside his house, they would follow him, he got phone calls, and they would tell him "You need to back off or we're going to kill you."

BP: Did you get the sense that these people who were harassing Dave were the same people out on the lines outside of Bruckner or were they just kind of local young men from around the Allerton Avenue area?

RB: We were never sure because two things were happening at the same time - - I'm going to get in trouble for saying this - - but there was a candy store across the street from Soundview Church and that was obviously a drug den and they went after them, so he went after them like you can't do this in front of the church.

MN: You mean Dave Singleton?

RB: Dave Singleton. And so we were never sure, but it was that they were so obviously after him when he was up on the - - so we kind of tied it in.

MN: Right. Now what about the police, what role did they play in all of this? And did you feel that they were on the other side?

RB: You know, it's funny I don't even remember police being there. I'm sure they were but I don't remember them being there.

MN: Right. So they weren't a big factor in the discussions.

RB: No.

MN: What was the ultimate outcome of the White Castle demonstration?

BP: Before you ask that, I'm just curious: Do you have any memories of when the police uncovered the neo-Nazi arms and that group that was going to try to insight violence with a cache of arms on the White Castle line?

RB: No.

BP: Because that's what happened in the - - I'll show you after the interview - - in the newspaper articles - - they uncovered this Nazi group who was going to attempt to insight violence through explosives and guns at the Allerton site but they were stopped before anything.

MN: Wow.

RB: Yes there were threats, but not so much at Bruckner Blvd because Allerton was an all white neighborhood and also was Boston Rd so there was a lot more hostility there than there was at Bruckner Blvd.

BP: It was predominately Italian American in that area.

RB: Yes.

BP: So Dr. Naison's question about the outcome, do you remember?

MN: Did White Castle change its hiring policies as a result of this?

RB: Yes.

MN: And you could see it at the Bruckner restaurant?

RB: Not immediately. It was interesting - - [Laughs] - - there wasn't anybody who wanted to work there. It's kind of embarrassing. Eventually it came around, but in the beginning the young ladies said they didn't want to.

MN: Did you ever get yourself to eat at White Castle since that?

RB: Never had one since that. [Laughter]

BP: Probably why you look so good for your age.

RB: [Laughs] Right. Actually, I stopped eating meat around that same time.

MN: Did you after this experience move onto other political actions in the Bronx?

RB: I'm sure I did, I was always into something - - let me think.

MN: You had mentioned the Black Panthers.

RB: I liked the - - I think the Black Panthers got a raw deal because they were the first ones to do the breakfast program and make sure that each child had a school book and I kind of liked their philosophy. I think had they been on the east coast I may have become a member of the Black Panthers but they were out in California.

BP: But you didn't stick around with Bronx CORE after the White Castle incident?

RB: They disappeared; I think they were there just for that particular event.

MN: Right so this was kind of like a one-shot thing in that community.

RB: Yes. I remember at the time - - and I don't know what the relationship was - - but Ossie Davis and Rudy Dean came to the church.

MN: To your church?

RB: To our church at the same time to speak about what was going on. And I don't know if there's a connection - - I think there was a connection between the White Castle and it was just a whole civil rights era.

MN: What was it like to be in the bus going to the March on Washington?

RB: That was wonderful.

MN: What was that feeling like?

RB: It was wonderful. What a hot day that was. [Laughs] It was wonderful. And I was pretty close to the platform. I had gotten lost from everybody so I just started moving towards the platform and I was pretty close.

MN: What was your feeling then about where America was going?

RB: I just thought that we were just going to kind of melt together. It was such - - I'd never seen anything before or since like that. It was just like this is the way it's supposed to be. It was wonderful, everybody looked out for each other and I tell you, I was really lost. Somebody showed me how to get back to my bus.

MN: OK so you're living in Soundview, how long did you live in Soundview?

RB: We moved there when it opened in 1954 and then I moved - - after I had my third child - - I moved to James Monroe, which was right next to Soundview Church. I stayed in that neighborhood - -

MN: For how long?

RB: Until 1980.

MN: Right and then you moved to Tracy Towers or was there somewhere in between?

RB: In between.

MN: And where was that?

RB: I kind of left home, went out on my own and I moved to Brooklyn for five minutes and then moved back to the Bronx.

MN: When did you start working for the city?

RB: In 1969.

MN: When you took that job was there much sort of racial politics or racial tension in your particular area of work?

RB: Yes. The reason that I got that job is that I think that at that time they had to hire more African Americans working in the civil services union and I came in at the time.

MN: Was it a hostile atmosphere, a friendly atmosphere - -

RB: Oh yes friendly atmosphere. It was good. I worked on 149th St in the Bronx.

MN: Was there ever a point where the Soundview houses or the James Monroe houses began to deteriorate?

RB: Yes. With the influx of drugs and I think that drugs came in, in the early 60's into the projects and then the trouble started.

MN: Was there any correlation between the drugs and the Vietnam War or was this before that?

RB: I think it was before Vietnam.

MN: You're talking about heroin?

RB: Heroin. Suddenly it was all over the neighborhood.

MN: Even in Soundview?

RB: Soundview.

MN: Is this about the same time as the White Castle protest?

RB: Yes - - maybe a little beyond that, a little after.

MN: So it got hit pretty hard.

RB: Yes.

MN: Did it make it feel unsafe to live there?

RB: I never felt unsafe. In that whole area - - I just never felt unsafe.

MN: Were any people in your family still living in Morrisania on Morris Avenue?

RB: My mother was the last one to leave there. She left there in I think 1967/68 when the house burned down - - the apartment burned down.

MN: Did you go back when the apartment burned to see what was going on?

RB: I went and looked at it.

MN: What did that make you feel like?

RB: Very sad. That was my growing up home.

MN: Did you ever go back just to see the neighborhood after that?

RB: I went back maybe 20 years ago and then I went back last year after that wonderful piece came out. I took a walking tour of my own and got lost in it.

MN: And you saw the new housing going on?

RB: Yes. It was very strange. It was like going into a brand new place.

MN: Now, in looking back at all of this, what things leap out at you in terms of your Bronx experience? Anything that you didn't touch on that you want to say?

RB: Concerning the civil rights or just in general?

MN: Or in general?

RB: I think that growing up in the Bronx was the best move my parents could have made. We didn't have very much in terms of money, we had even less in terms of space and atmosphere when we were living in Harlem - - we lived in really depressed area.

MN: What block did you live on in Harlem?

RB: We lived on 127th St between - - right near the Apollo Theater.

MN: Right behind it - -

RB: Yes behind it, 7th and 8th I think. And it really wasn't great I think - - we got to - - it was good, we got some advantages.

MN: So it was a good place to grow up - -

RB: I thought so.

MN: - - and in general for you and your siblings - -

RB: Nice atmosphere. Good atmosphere. I think I'm the only one still left in the Bronx.

BP: One last question that I thought of - - well, two. The first is when you went to see that your families house had burned down, did you notice that the trees were gone?

RB: Yes, the trees were beginning - - they were gone.

BP: And I just was curious, was there ever any talk amongst the White Castle demonstrators of a retaliation of some sort against the counter demonstrators?

RB: Sure. There were those that were just kind of standing there waiting. But if you swing one chain, you're in trouble.

BP: Who were those people?

RB: I think that the neighborhood in general, like I said there were a lot of young people there. There was Bronxdale was there. The people from the bill houses - - we call them bill houses - - they're classic bill houses - - they were there, but I mean we weren't going to go to start it, but I think had there - - there would have been a lot of activity.

BP: Were those people on the periphery on the picket line, were they members of maybe your church or were they just local residents?

RB: Some members of the church, young people - - we took our youth CORE there.

BP: Were they on the picket line or were they on the side?

RB: They were on the picket line.

MN: Now when you say your youth CORE what was that?

RB: We had - - Dave Singleton - - we had a large, actually the largest Sunday school in the city at the time. We had 600 young kids in our church and we had lots of teenagers who like I earlier said - - St. Augustine was down [Inaudible] and so when we were involved in things, we took them to Washington DC, they were involved and they were expected to, well, not expected to - -

MN: Did you have a cadet core and marching band and all of that?

RB: Yes. Mr. Robert - - what was his name - - Lorraine Basseley and Robert Agey - -

MN: Was this like a drum and bugle core?

RB: Yes.

MN: And where did they perform?

RB: In the parades, I think that the African American parade was in existence then.

MN: So they went to Harlem to do that. Were they good?

RB: I guess.

MN: What color were their uniforms?

RB: Oh I don't remember. I think they wore brown believe it or not, I know that the leaders did. They looked like army people.

MN: That was big in those days in the 50's and early 60's.

RB: Yes we did. I think that gentlemen, that Mr. Robert, I think his name was Agey, he's diseased, he's the one responsible for getting us the buses to go to Washington DC.

BP: I know that you said a lot of young people gravitated towards the demonstration.

What were the young people like in the neighborhood? I know you said you felt safe and very much at home, but did you notice young teenagers in any particular way around the neighborhood?

RB: They were very sheltered. They didn't venture very far out from the neighborhood and when they did, they went as a group.

MN: Did you have gangs in the Soundview houses?

RB: No.

MN: And you didn't have kids - - back in my day they called them "Jitterbugs" who tried to look a little thuggish back in 50's styles.

RB: Maybe when I was living on Prospect Avenue.

MN: There were some tough kids living on Prospect Avenue when you were growing up or not that much?

RB: Yes. The drugs had - - just before I had moved - - the drugs had started to come.

MN: And this was in the 50's?

RB: In the 50's.

MN: You had heroin coming in, in the 50's in Morrisania.

RB: Yes. So many of them are dead.

MN: So you knew people who died of drug overdoses?

RB: Yes.

MN: And this from Morrisania?

RB: Yes.

MN: Who were these individuals?

RB: Some of them were my friends.

MN: These were guys?

RB: Guys, and a couple of girls, yes.

MN: Who were part of your cohort? That you used to socialize with?

RB: Yes. Outside of the church I guess as I was getting married or as I got married, I feel like I was in my late teens, that's when the drugs just kind of zoomed in on the neighborhood.

MN: Wow. It really took a toll?

RB: Yes.

MN: And this is like the middle 50's. Were any of the people from St. Augustine's caught in the drugs or was it more - -

RB: I don't think so.

MN: Was there a class element? Were people involved in the drugs were the kids who were not in the One classes or the Two classes?

RB: No. They just got caught up in the wrong stuff. The drugs were there and they were available.

MN: OK Brian? Thank you very much.

[END INTERVIEW]