



10-4-2015

Mills, Gloria Smalls

Bronx African American History Project
Fordham University

Follow this and additional works at: https://research.library.fordham.edu/baahp_oralhist

 Part of the [African American Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Mills, Gloria Smalls. 4 October 2015. Interview with the Bronx African American History Project. BAAHP Digital Archive at Fordham.

This Interview is brought to you for free and open access by the Bronx African American History Project at Fordham Research Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Oral Histories by an authorized administrator of Fordham Research Commons. For more information, please contact considine@fordham.edu, bkilee@fordham.edu.

No Date

Dr. Mark Naison: This is the 114th interview of the Bronx African American history project. We are here at Fordham Univeristy with Gloria Smalls Mills Life Time Educator who grew up in the Morrisinia and Hunts Point sections of the Bronx and the interviewers here will be Natasha Lightfoot and Mark Naison.

Gloria Smalls Mills: Correction, I don't know if mine was ever considered Hunts Point.

Natasha Lightfoot: It was strictly Morrisiania?

MN: It was Kelly, okay.

GSM: Kelly, and the end of Kelly that's why Hunts Point was more over the other side.

MN: Other side of town. Okay so you were in the North Side of West Chester which was always considered Morrisiania?

GSM: Yeah.

MN: Okay, thanks. When did your family first move to the Bronx, where did they move to the Bronx from?

GSM: Okay, I am not quite sure but my earliest recollection is that my grandparents originally were from Dawson street in the Bronx, and that's part of were my mother grew because my mother also graduated from James Monroe High school.

MN: Really.

GSM: In the 1930's.

MN: Interesting, so now where your grandparents from Antigua?

GSM: My grandparents are originally from Antigua and Saint <inaudible>.

MN: And do you know what year they first moved to Dawson Street?

GSM: I have no idea whatsoever because you know going back many years we didn't go into black history and family history, and family get together in terms of all of all that, so that's like pretty easy.

NL: You don't know their migration story of whether they came to Harlem or some else in New York and then ended up in the Bronx or if they started out directly going to the Bronx?

GSM: I have no idea but my grandmother goes back to the Jacobs and Richards from Antigua, and-----

NL: What did your grandmother do for a living, do you even know?

GSM: I have no idea, I have no idea what my grandfather did because both my grandparents on my mother side had being deceased since I was about 5, and so-----

MN: But your mother did graduate from high school?

GSM: From Monroe-----James Monroe high school.

NL: And do you have an estimate of what you know, what year?

GSM: What year?

NL: Yeah.

GSM: I will say around 1933, 1934 somewhere around there.

MN: And so-----

GSM: I have not seen her birth certificate, so I don't know exactly when she was born.

MN: Did your mother work before she got married, and start a family?

GSM: Not that I know of, I know her life long ambition was to graduate from college, and I could remember when I was about 8 or 9 years, all she showed me the papers where

she was going to go to college, but right about that time she was also very ill from the time that I was about 5 years old, so you know it is like if she went work, she is usually in the neighborhood place, you know just menial jobs.

MN: And now what was your father's background?

GSM: My father's background is from Charleston South Carolina, and I can recall going up the stairs that you know my peers always asking me where my father was from because they said he sounded more like a southern, but more like an African, and that was very interesting because at 16 years of age I went to Charleston, I could hear it as they used the term <inaudible>.

NL: I was asking to ask if they used the term <inaudible>

GSM: It was like-----I felt I was in another country. Now it is funny because when you grow with parents your ear becomes accustomed to their-----the way they talk.

MN: Did he speak very fast or it was-----?

GSM: Not really, it wasn't fast.

NL: But with the distinct accent.

GSM: That's right.

NL: Did you have families in the Sea Islands at all or was it just all like you know mainland South Carolina?

GSM: You what is very interesting because when I made that visit to Charleston we went to like what was like the outskirts of the country like, and there was a cousin of ours who my youngest brother who's quite a few years younger than me, he and his cousin would always go because he said come on lets go <inaudible> and his name was Harry, he

would always call <inaudible>. And then at one point he was always talking about on the weekend we are going Myrtle Beach, and its interesting to know and see now how Myrtle Beach has developed as opposed to that time, it probably was just a place where all the locals went. Now I finally believe that my father's family he is a cousin to Al Jackson my father, it seems like his mother who died when he was about 9 months was Al Jackson's mother assistant.

MN: Really, so Al Jackson of WWRL, and-----?

GSM: I don't even know Al Jackson that's what makes it interesting.

MN: Right, now how did your father and mother meet, and where did they meet?

GSM: My father met my mother in New York. It seems that his sister was instrumental in him coming here, and from what I can remember he came by boat, so-----

NL: From South Carolina.

MN: Now is his sister living in Harlem or the Bronx?

GSM: I am not quite sure, I am not quite sure. You know these all questions you said if you know that and what you do now, you would ask all of those questions but this an older sister, and you know keep in mind that my father just passed last year, and he was 90 years old. So you can sort of see you know how much gets lost along the way if you are used to-----.

MN: Where was your mother living when she met your father?

GSM: No idea, I have no idea of any of that, but I thing she met him I don't know through his sister or maybe around Dawson Street or something like that.

MN: Okay so she was living on Dawson Street when they met.

GSM: I believe, I think so, I am not sure.

MN: Now where was their-----the first apartment that they had together?

GSM: I have no idea, but I do recall that my very place, first place was 822 East 167th
Street, and that was-----

NL: So when you were born that's where went.

GSM: That was between Union <inaudible> and Prospect.

MN: 822

GSM: 822 East 167th street.

MN: Is it still there that building?

GSM: I don't know, but I know where my Kelly street building is not still there.

MN: Now was that building a 5 story walk up the 822?

GSM: It was about a 5, 6 story walk up.

MN: Right. Now what sort of work did your father do?

GSM: My father I don't believe graduated from High School because he usually at that
time when we were younger I remembered him taking us to Fox square <inaudible> and
it was somewhere around Jennings Street so that became apart of the bugs, and that's
were he worked, he was a laundry worker.

MN: He is a laundry worker?

GSM: He was a laundry worker.

MN: Okay, in the neighborhood so he-----

GSM: He would usually---it is very interesting everybody knew my father from riding his
bike to work.

MN: But he worked in the neighborhood?

GSM: In the neighborhood, it was you know maybe from there to Jennings Street, it was about a 10 block, 15 block walk.

NL: And when were you born?

GSM: January 3rd 1939.

MN: Were you the oldest?

GSM: No, no I have a brother Donald who was born in 1937, and a brother Howard who was born in 1948.

NL: Okay, so there were three of you.

GSM: So it was three of us, 116th street it was only Donald and I, I mean 167th street it was only Donald and I.

MN: And then how long did you stay at 167th street?

GSM: I don't think it was that long because from here we moved to in fact across the street my father's sister and her family lived right there.

NL: Okay, so you guys had family in the neighborhood?

GSM: Yeah, now I also remember my mother telling me that right at that time when I was born, her parents was living around the corner on Union Avenue because come to think of it, I meant to bring that picture. I have a picture of them on the roof, you know because the roof actually was the beach place for us.

MN: Right, somebody who actually grew up in Dawson Street told me that.

GSM: I had pictures; I had a picture of my grandmother sitting down.

MN: Do you remember the drifter's song up on the roof.

GSM: I wouldn't sing it for you.

MN: Now did your building have a fire escape?

GSM: Yes.

MN: And did your family use the fire escape or you did not have one in your apartment?

GSM: We had, I think all of those buildings had fire escapes in the back, and I believe we did have them, you know we didn't really use them.

MN: Now what is your recollection the sort of the socialiability in the street in 167th street?

NL: Did people know their neighbors?

GSM: Because of the fact that I must have left there very young about 5 years of age or so I couldn't say, but moving to 1116 Kelly street it is funny how I remember the addresses that was right at the corner of a 167th and that was a <inaudible> bordered by <inaudible> street and <inaudible> Airport.

MN: Now when you moved to that block, what was the ethnic composition was it mostly African American?

GSM: No, no and if you want really talk segregation it was an awful lot of segregation.

There was this gorgeous building across the street, whites only.

MN: And it was well known that this would-----

GSM: Whites only, and predominantly Jewish, okay.

MN: And the number of the building?

GSM: The building were I lived was 1116 Kelly Street, it is not across the street, I don't know the number, but listen to this it was the only apartment building on that side of the street because a few steps down from it believe it or not it was a Seltzer company.

MN: There was a factory or a warehouse?

GSM: Yeah, and then also other little minor businesses also on that street.

MN: Now that was on Kelly Street?

GSM: That was at the very end of Kelly Street, now this particular building was a gorgeous building.

MN: Was it an elevator building?

GSM: You know I believe so.

MN: Was it 6 stories'?

GSM: Yeah.

MN: Okay.

GSM: I believe it was an elevator building, and it is very interesting because of the----- although it was not an integrated building the people in that building did speak with the people on the block. While the-----I was very friendly with a family on the first floor, which was Jewish the son was always classmates with me in elementary school.

MN: Which was P.S. 99?

GSM: Yes, 99 and I will get into that, Stanley there were the <inaudible> and it is interesting because about Stanley's dream was always to be an oceanographer which was interesting because at that time you didn't about that, so Stanley was there and his sister

Doris, and what was also so interesting is Doris turned <inaudible> in high school when we were-----when I was about ready to graduate and tell me her mother was pregnant.

NL: Well.

GSM: So I mean it was just interesting the fact that she just turned <inaudible> telling it to me, she was embarrassed that this happened.

MN: Now what story did your family live in the building?

GSM: The building we lived in we were on the third floor.

MN: Right.

GSM: We were on the third floor that particular when we moved in was all so predominantly Jewish.

NL: But there were a few black families?

GSM: Very few, Jewish and Italians lived in that building, and as the blacks began to move into that building you know that's were you heard the term white flight. That's when they moved and right out to-----who's the great builder out on the Island.

MN: <Inaudible>

GSM: Many of them ran out to the <inaudible> building right on the side of the island.

MN: Right.

GSM: So there for we was touched with a lot of those people. The Italians that were in the building tend to be related because I remember on our floor, it was a family the San Taurus and her sister lived on the first floor, and another relative lived elsewhere in the building.

MN: Did you experience or perceive any hostility to the African American families who moved in to the block?

GSM: Not really, I mean you didn't really think about because while you didn't go out in the street and play with the others and what not because there were of African American families on the block in the upper buildings next door and so forth, somehow or the other you just didn't get together and play on the block. The big thing on the block was stick ball.

NL: So it was an unspoken segregation were white kids kept to themselves, the black kids kept to themselves.

GSM: That's right, that's right.

MN: So the kids really played in racially groups on the block?

GSM: I have never recalled seeing the white kids on the block playing, that's what was so interesting. I don't recall that many of them out on the block playing, you know it was a big thing for the adults to sit out front with their folding chairs, and what not.

NL: And watch the kids.

GSM: And just watch the kids whenever we played, but the big thing that we did and of course P.S 99 being a block away, and the school our big thing was always to go to the school and play hand ball.

MN: Right.

GSM: And stick ball in the school yard.

MN: Now did you play those sports, did you play stick ball and hand ball?

GSM: Yes, yes.

MN: Now was that unusual for a girl at that time?

GSM: Not really, I don't think we really thought about it.

MN: So there weren't this rigid gender lines on your block.

GSM: No, no there wasn't. I used to love to seat on the stoop to play jacks, but you know that's was it, but then too there was so much that I could do because my father <inaudible> to be in the house.

MN: Right, now did you play ring <inaudible> and things like that?

GSM: We used to play red light, green light that was one of them. Ringo livo I don't recall too much.

MN: Capture the flag?

GSM: No, no what was the other the one?

MN: Sullies or-----

GSM: There was sully, I am trying to remember how sully was played, I do remember the turn but the big thing, and the thing is our block being the last block at Kelly, you know it was a very good place to ride a bike.

MN: Or so it was a dead end street?

GSM: It was a dead end, it was opened on both sides with somehow the other being the last house on the block, and then at that time, lets face it back in the 1950's and the late 40's how many people had cars.

MN and NL: Right.

MN: So did you the experience this is a safe place top grow up?

GSM: Very safe, I never knew I was living in the south Bronx until when I already came about adult, really.

MN: It was-----were there any Puerto Rican families on the block?

GSM: Yes, they began to come into the block, and believe it or not that house across the street, allowed Puerto Ricans in.

MN: So they allowed Puerto Ricans, but not blacks?

GSM: Not blacks.

MN: Which was also happened in the Grand Concourse.

GSM: Yes.

MN: Light skinned Puerto Ricans were able to rent, where blacks were not, even if the blacks made more money.

GSM: That's right, definitely.

MN: Now how race conscious were your parents, were they ever-----did they ever-----
-did they talk about race?

MN: Believe it or not no.

MN: I believe it because-----

GSM: I don't think it was something that they spoke about much, I think, I felt it, in the summers when we would go to spend two weeks with my aunt and uncle, my mother's brother and his wife in Virginia. Riding the bus you felt it, using the bathrooms you felt it, going into a luncheonette is where you felt it. .

MN: But not in New York.

GSM: Definitely not there because I think the first place maybe that I was aware of it, was when it came to the boundary lines for schools, okay. P.S 99 somehow or the other allowed the President of Parents association and whoever else was talking in the school, their kids could go to Herman <inaudible> high school.

MN: Up there.

GSM: Which was over on <inaudible> I believe in the Bronx.

MN: Yeah, there is on off Boston Road, near Crotona Park.

GSM: That's right; I don't think was that far off, no I don't think that was far.

MN: Is that Herman Ritter is the one with that big tower?

GSM: I don't remember but that was junior high school 98?

MN: Right.

GSM: Okay, their children can go here the rest of the children either the males went to junior high school 40, and the girls went to junior high school 60.

MN: And where was junior high school 60?

GSM: 60 was 7th avenue.

MN: Between where and where?

GSM: On Dawson around that way right off the other side of Westchester.

MN: Okay, right.

GSM: Now junior high school 60 had quite an influx of girls coming from Hunts Point so at that particular time junior high school was I think the 60 was more heavily white than junior high school 40 because 40 tend to bring in the areas of the blacks in the Bronx.

MN: Right.

GSM: So you now and I got along fine there, it was no big thing I was always very political in junior high as well as in high school, I was the President of the Student Government when I graduated junior high school 60 as well as Morris high school, and when 60 decided to start a student government I ran for secretary and I won, so it wasn't that race was an issue.

MN: Right, now was sort of music were you exposed to growing up, what was played-----
-----did your parents you know listen to music in the house?

GSM: I could remember when I was very young before my parents got involved in the Pentecostal church that they really liked what was at <inaudible> a lot of <inaudible> and so forth and so on and you know you would go over my aunts house, and boy we could dance.

NL: Yeah.

GSM: We really did, it wasn't like everything that's going on now. I think music at that time was strictly was it Bi-bop, black folk music and-----

MN: Now describe to us this—before your mother had the illness what church did your family belong to or were they not that church going?

GSM: I believe my mother grew up in a <inaudible> church. There wasn't much that was said about that. I can recall at times we would go to Presbyterian.

MN: Did you ever go to Saint Augustine?

GSM: I am sorry Saint Augustine, that's the one were elder Hawkins was the minister, you know as a result of my godmother being of age being a member of the <inaudible>.

But I don't recall every Sunday getting up and going to church until you know the time which my mother got in <inaudible> when she came back and that was-----

NL: I have a question if you don't mind my asking. You know what illness did your mother suffer and for how long?

GSM: It was a life long of bad heart, bad heart it is-----I don't know what was the origin of it because she always talked about the fact that she was very healthy growing up, and her older son one day, you know the big thing when you are in the Bronx is that walked a lot as not like nowadays were kids get bus passes to go to school or people jumped on the bus that much to do everything. My mother used to walk to go everywhere; we walked to Alexander's down on Third Avenue on a 153rd street all the way from Kelly Street on 167th street.

MN: That's a long walk.

GSM: That's a very long walk.

NL: Very long walk.

MN: Did you ever go to Crotona Park as a kid?

GSM: Yes, yes.

NL: And you would walk there too?

GSM: We would there, yes.

MN: And what would you do in Crotona Park?

GSM: Just run around have a good time, sometimes a little picnic, and so forth, but I don't recall anything special, no big family type outings which is one of the things that I missed my family did not do.

MN: Right, now-----

GSM: Then too I think I was about 5 or 6 when my mother took ill.

MN: Now that illness----how did that illness manifest itself, and then how did it effect her religious convictions?

GSM: I think it manifested itself in the fact that all of a sudden one day she was coming home from the market, remember the big markets were always on a 165th street going from Interval all the way up to almost Southern Boulevard, okay that long stretch outdoor markets and so forth and so on, and she was coming home one day and she just suddenly couldn't move. The next thing I knew is that my mother was hospitalized for a year.

MN and NL: Wow!!!!

GSM: And I always wondered about this beautiful hospital, this beautiful place because I remembered it one time my father told us he was going to take us, we can't go inside, we got to stand outside, and my mother would wave to us, and <inaudible>

MN: Where was this?

GSM: I found out when I grew up later on it was Montefiore.

MN: She was in Montefiore for a year?

GSM: Montefiore for a year.

MN: What would the HMO'S do now?

NL: What?

MN: The HMO'S.

GSM: For a year, she was there.

MN: She was in Montefiore.

GSM: For a year, and seems like that was the start at that time, they didn't open heart surgery or anything like that so they was treating her. She sort of was paralyzed they couldn't find a reason why, and when it turned out that she had a bad heart, now you know, you really don't know, and you don't think to explore was this part of the medication they gave her that made the heart bad or so forth, and so on that was it.

NL: Well.

MN: And then you know when did she start attending this Pentecostal church?

GSM: Not long after.

MN: After that she came home. Now where was this-----what was the name of the church, and where was-----

GSM: Apostrophe's church of Christ, it was on Seventh Avenue, almost near 167th street, right-----it almost looks like a store front but it had any, it was like a brownstone type building.

MN: Now how many people belong to the church?

GSM: To that particular church, it was an offshoot of Refuge Temple which is on a 124th street on 7TH Avenue which is a huge Pentecostal church with locations throughout the U.S throughout the world.

MN: So this was an offshoot, now who was the minister?

GSM: At that particular time, let's see Bishop <inaudible> Lawson was the overall person, and his son Nathaniel was the minister at that church at that time.

NL: And was this a predominantly black church?

GSM: Definitely, all black, all black.

NL: And most of the people from the area attended?

GSM: From the area-----

MN: What was the church service like and how did it-----?

GSM: Very long.

NL: Okay, so you would say like a whole of Sunday?

GSM: It is very interesting because every Sunday we were expected at 9:00 my brother and I to be in Sunday school, and we went to Sunday, and when Sunday school was over church service began about 11:30 so you sat through for the church service and that ended maybe about 2:00pm, so that was it, and it is interesting because my husband being Pentecostal----being Episcopalian, and I am not really a member of any church of this particular and different come up like questions on jeopardy about the bible, I could usually answer them, and he looks at me, I said why can't you answer you go to church every Sunday.

MN: Was there a lot of singing in the church?

GSM: A lot of singing, I became a member of the junior choir, and I can't carry a tune.

NL: Right but that was just the thing for girls to do to become a part of the choir.

GSM: We had a good choir girls and boys.

NL: Boys too?

GSM: And boys there were mixed.

NL: Okay.

MN: Now what about-----

GSM: And they tended to be a lot of your close friends because of the fact that for enjoyment maybe you went to their house, they came to your house, and so forth. You know the interaction in the neighborhood; you had to be careful as my parents said, and who you interacted with and so forth, and so on.

NL: I wanted to you know kind go off with that comment, now what kind of boundaries did your parents set for you like what could you do, what couldn't you do; what did you do for fun, and where were the limits?

GSM: The limits were you know maybe signs of <inaudible>.

NL: Right.

GSM: I mean I had so few limits I mean okay at times I could go to the movies, and so forth and so on, but that was usually friends, my---I .

NL: What movie theaters did you go to?

GSM: Up on Prospect Avenue, the low <inaudible> on Prospect Avenue, I think that was about the only movie that I ever went to.

MN: And this church discouraged dancing?

GSM: They discouraged dancing.

MN: Drinking?

GSM: And make up, no drinking, no socializing in terms of anything.

MN: No make up?

GSM: That's a new world. Yes.

MN: Now did people like speak out and testify in church get up?

GSM: Definitely, definitely. Anything that you hear about speaking in tongues or when the spirits hits-----

MN: Alright, okay.

GSM: I get up and dance.

MN: Did the spirit ever get in you?

GSM: I think when I got more to my late teens I kind of like joined the church. But when I graduated high school that was it, you know. But in terms of the church I really think that it was good for me because I-----my feelings to this is that what lacking the fear of God, and the fear of family, you know parents and what's right and what's wrong.

MN: Do you think that people who were in that church did better in school, and avoided in trouble?

GSM: Not necessarily because I think there are both sides to the fence. I came from a family that really believed education, and my mother was a brilliant woman, my father was a hard worker so you know those two combinations was very good, and when I came home from school, I had to-----the ritual was I had to take off my school clothes, and put on my plain clothes, and the next thing I had to do is seat down and do homework.

MN: And was your mother home?

GSM: Yes.

MN: So she-----

GSM: So she was home so I had to do homework, she would go over the work, and so forth, she would insist that it be done this way, there is no leeway in terms of anything, it had to be done right, or you do it over.

MN: Now did all of your siblings got to college?

GSM: Yes, the only thing is my oldest one went but not for long. My youngest one went as a means of my mother keeping him on the straight path because he was a devil.

MN: He was a devil?

GSM: He was brilliant in school when he finished with the work, he would disrupt the class, now interesting because he went to Herman Ritter. So he always did very well. In high school he went to DeWitt Clinton so it seems that the boundaries kind of changed a little but it might also be that we moved from that particular area. I would have to say growing up on Kelly Street was really one of my great experiences because the interaction with the people. The interaction with adults, the fact is when you hear people talk about-----you better not do anything wrong because your neighbors would tell.

NL: Right.

GSM: So therefore you got to know <inaudible> because they knew what my parents were about and my mother would listen to people. It wouldn't be don't tell me about my child or don't do this or don't that.

NL: It was the village raising the child.

GSM: That's right, and it wasn't that my parents while they didn't socialize with people, there was always a good morning, and how you are, and so forth and so on.

MN: Now what about P. S 99 what was that experience like for you?

GSM: It was a good experience, not that I am trying to blow my own horn, but I always was a very good student.

MN: Where you always in the one classes?

GSM: So in doing that, I think I always tended to be with the students who were also some of the very best. It was mixed, but I think, how can I put this now? I think when you asked me did you see a difference in terms of racism; I think if you got some of the very old teachers, you could sometimes see the difference.

MN: That they would-----they dealt with black kids a little different.

GSM: A little differently, I can remember going into first grade, and I was so hurt by this when the teacher gave us stuff to read, I said why can't read that, she said you can't, I said I can read, my mother taught me to read when I was 4 years old.

NL: You have to insist.

GSM: That's right, I said in fact I can read the New York Times, and she got very insulted, and told me I couldn't, and then she gave me the New York Times, and I read it to her, and I think in today's day and time if we found a kid like that, we would think what we could do and work with them, where they didn't do that. It was just okay, alright that's it.

MN: But one of the interesting issues is you know we interviewed a lot people who were like yourselves they were achievers. What happened to the African American kids who weren't achievers or in the 5 or 6 classes, where they sort of short changed, do you think?

GSM: I really think so, I definitely think so because those were usually the classes that were acting out, and I think they were only acting out because they worked for a change. I think I saw that in elementary school, I think I tend to see it in junior high school. You saw it but yet you didn't understand it until-----

NL: Because you weren't going through it.

GSM: You got to high school, and then you kind of saw something different, now the interesting thing that I found in terms of junior high and high school. The only reason I took French is because I found out that the French classes were the better classes of students. We were seldom taking Spanish. It is interesting that even that should have existed.

MN: Right, right. Now where there any teachers who were memorable to you who really stood out, you know for being particularly inspiring, warm, or nurturing?

GSM: I think when I was in 4th grade, I had a black teacher Miss. Nava she was good but yet you know I think she was limited in what she could do. The others who stood out, stood out because they were so strict, everybody knew about Miss <inaudible> Miss <inaudible> looked like George Washington.

MN: God.

GSM: Shaped like him would wear a <inaudible> with a skirt, you know half way down her legs and then there was one who was <inaudible> she was thin as a rail, but there was something about in that made the kids always pull jokes on her. You know like <inaudible> and that <inaudible> But she always had good classes so you know it just----
-----.

MN: Now did you involved in music or art or any extra-curricular sports or anything like that?

GSM: No, my big thing was the student government that took up the bulk of my time.

MN: And did you get into that in elementary school or junior high was the first?

GSM: I got into that as a junior high school and continued through high school with that, and I knew that took up-----that was just like an extra-curricular activity.

NL: And what made you want to do student government?

GSM: I don't know, I just did it on a whim from junior high school, and then it just became so interesting, it made me not be shy because I would always have to get up at the auditorium and make speeches, and the same thing in high school if you were running for office you always met a lot of people. So I always very sociable in terms of all of that. The wasn't the kids who would kill you because you were a good student every now and that.

MN: Right, there was none of that, there was no negativity.

GSM: There's was no boundary in terms of that which was really interesting, and the person who ran the student government was devoted that was Grace Levinson and so interesting because recently she just passed, and-----

MN: This was in junior high school 40?

GSM: No, this was at Morris High school it is so interesting because one of the things that she would do every year for the student government is do this great luncheon at her house. And her house was one of those gorgeous houses off of Riverside Drive around a 153rd street or so.

MN: I know those the buildings.

GSM: Those are some gorgeous buildings you know back a whole court yard, and you know, and she was a single woman, and that's what she always do.

MN: Now when did you discover boys, and boys discovered, or were you allow to
<inaudible>?

GSM: I said, I think you know you always kind of like the boys in the church, you know some of them were good, some weren't, and you know some of the biggest demons can be in the church. But in terms of discovering boys I think I was more interested in education than anything because my parents were always so strict, I get 16, if I bring a boy to the house, my father would sit down and quiz him, and it was so embarrassing that I didn't want to deal with it.

MN: Well what would you say?

GSM: Or what's your name, who are you, what are you doing, what are your plans after high school, and so forth, and so on. Even after high school if one came it was like are you working, what kind of work you do, how much do you make.

NL: Your father was thorough.

GSM: I mean he was very invasive, he was invasive I am telling you. So it was like the rope was very short.

MN: Now where you aware of sort of the Rhythm and Blues, and Rock n' Roll, and Do-Wop stuff starting in the 50's or what's that something that wasn't that important to you?

GSM: I was aware of it, but it wasn't important because I couldn't participate the way I would want to. I mean I knew about the 845 club because you know if I ever was walking on Prospect Avenue, you see its there, never visited.

MN: What was you reputation at 845, you know when you were growing up, did people talk about it or not really.

GSM: I don't really know you know you just knew that it was quite a place.

MN: Right. And what about the Latin Music clubs was that something you were aware of?

GSM: I don't think it was that important at that.

MN: And it was Hunts point palace?

GSM: Hunts point palace definitely because Hunts Point Palace was only the music but a lot of social activities, weddings went on there. So that also is why you knew Hunts Point palace.

MN: Now when-----

NL: I was wondering so then did you meet your husband much later?

GSM: No, I met him in Morris High school.

MN and NL: You met in Morris.

GSM: He was in Morris high school, but he was always a joker, he wasn't that interested in his education or anything like that. So he just went to school because he had to go to school.

NL: Right, now how did you pair up giving that you are on different sides of the field?

GSM: Well first of all I remember one time because I was a very good math student, he asked me would I help him with his math, so I said sure, I says but you are going to have house for me to do it because I can't stay that late after school if it is not student government, so I asked my mom if he can come to the house so of course she said sure. My mother was willing for any student who wants any peer who wanted to come to the house goes this way. She had good control, she knew we had <inaudible> so of course he

was such a gentlemen when he came to the house, my mother just thought that he was adorable. She didn't know that this is a guy who is working bands on weekends, sometimes now where-----

[END OF INTERVIEW WITH GLORIA SMALLS, ENTERS JIM PRUITT]

MN: Hello we are joined by Jim Pruitt who was a friend of-----and classmate at Morris High school class of 56'.

GSM: No trying to hide my age.

MN: Tell us about Morris High School were you ended as class president, what was that experience like <inaudible>?

GSM: That's different than class president, that's a whole story.

MN: What was that experience like for you been at Morris in the early mid 50's?

GSM: I think it was really great because it is one of the things I have always told parents, and I have told students as they look for high schools in this day of the time. You could be in the worst high school as long as you are in your best program, you would get a first class education, and at that point I didn't know Morris' reputation was not great because I truly felt that I didn't lack for getting a very good education the camaraderie among everyone it wasn't about Hispanics here, blacks here, whites there. We were all very friendly but you knew that if you were in a top class, you would get a top class education; I took a while in Morris High school, that's how I learned English. I could not understand noun, pronoun, and adverb and so forth until I took Latin. So and I remembered my Latin teacher was this woman but when she spoke Latin her mouth would quiver <inaudible> I mean you-----

Jim Pruitt (JP): Was that Ms. Vrable?

GSM: No, that was Ms. Horn, and it was really great, in fact even my adviser turned out to, I ran into her when I went into education Ms. Lee she was also my typing teacher in Morris, so that's how I learned to type in Morris, I mean I got such a well round education from Morris high school.

NL: And when you were-----I don't know if you wanted to go, but I was wondering when you were leaving Morris what is it you know, was it encouraged to apply to college or where you kind of funneled into another career path?

GSM: You know I think I learnt a lot by keeping my eyes and ears open and watching what the top kids always did because although my mother always talked about going to college it wasn't that she knew how should go about doing it, my father definitely didn't know. So it would be in a class with students who said I am going here, I am going to this school, and at that particular time I used to say to my mom, I think I want to go to NYU, how much it, it was over \$25 dollars a credit, we can't afford that, so I then found out the city colleges was free, the top city college was CCNY, and that's were a lot of classmates were going so of course, I wanted to-----

NL: Go to CCNY.

GSM: Go to CCNY. That's were I ended up, and I did get in for free as a result of my class rep.

MN: Now were there any teachers other than your Latin teachers who were really memorable, you know made a big impression on you?

GSM: My math teacher Mr. Green and in fact he is the year book. He was such a good math and so bubbly and full of life, he made you want to learn. Like I was telling James about one experience in class, everybody had to read at some point or the other, or does something come up to the board, you couldn't just seat back and be a quite listener. This one day he calls on me to read this passage in a book, and all of a sudden I break out laughing as I am reading. He said Gloria what is tickling you, I said <inaudible> that was another student in class, and he had to burst out laughing behind that, I mean the whole the class because Saul was behind me, tickling me. There Saul, Saul was going to be a dentist, <inaudible> I mean it was a just class were in today's day and time if you did something like that, the teachers would get annoyed but he took it and went with it you know, it was a jumping off point to get back into the person etc.

MN: Now you also mentioned that you were in a marching band-----

GSM: Yes -----

[END OF SIDE A, TAPE 1]

[BEGINNING OF SIDE B, TAPE 1]

MN: Really.

GSM: Yeah, so what he would do is we would, we would be like majorettes while the band is playing.

MN: Now the band was both boys and girls?

GSM: Boys and girls.

MN: And the majorettes were all girls?

GSM: Well usually all girls. And just about two weeks before Columbus Day practice would start. We would line up around Forest houses and around Morris high school, and we would have so much fun during the practice, so the final trial run we go all up and down Union Avenue, people on the streets would stop to watch us, it was really good.

MN: Did the guys whistle at you and you know?

GSM: I don't know, I don't think it was all about that, everybody just wanted to see performances. I don't think it is like today's day and time with the cat calls and the whistling and everything, I think it was just, I think kids nowadays miss just the fun that we had.

NL: I wanted to ask another question, I don't know if you wanted to ask more about Mark, did you? I wanted to know about you know your family moving from Kelly street to Forest houses, do you when exactly?

GSM: Yes, the year forest houses opened we were one of the first families because-----

MN: Which was 1956?

GSM: That probably yeah.

NL: So the year you graduated from school?

GSM: Probably the year before I graduated, but before I graduated I was living in forest housing because what happened my mother's heart was such that she couldn't walk up the stairs. So she got her doctor to indicate that she needed an elevated builder, and that was how.

MN: Now this was considered a step up for working class family <inaudible>?

GSM: No, no, no Forest house was a low income project. It wasn't about that, I don't think we were any better off socially than when we lived on Kelly Street. I think Kelly Street had a better group of people than forest houses.

MN: So Forest was-----

GSM: Low income housing project.

MN: Were most of the families in there two parent families or was a rough group, what was your perception of this?

GSM: You know I really don't know, I couldn't talk address that issue because we didn't stay there that long when parents saved their money and bought their house.

MN: So you were only there for how long?

GSM: I would a year or two, only about a year or two because I remember part of my time in City College I was still living in Forest houses.

MN: Now when did you meet your first husband was that during high school or after high school?

GSM: No, after high school, after high school I happened to be hanging out with one of the guys from the church and he went to see his sister in Harlem, and my first husband happened to have been his sister's brother-in-law so that was it.

MN: Now was he a different kind of guy than most-----?

GSM: He was totally different, totally different, party time, he was also educated, he graduated from high school. Was supposed to go on and play basketball was a very good basketball player. But that ended up hanging on the streets with his buddies there Harlem.

NL: So he was originally born and raised in Harlem?

GSM: And it is funny because his background is that his mother is partially Indian which tribe or so I don't know, his mother from Virginia, his father is from Virginia, and he graduated, I don't even remember which high school it was. But in any event that didn't work out too well.

MN: How long were you married?

GSM: I was probably married long enough to have a child, my oldest son is a result of that marriage, I don't think-----I think I separated from him longer than I was married to him.

MN: Now were you living in Harlem with him or the Bronx?

GSM: No, the Bronx we came and lived back in the upper Bronx.

MN: Up in the upper Bronx.

GSM: The upper Bronx on <inaudible> that is what they would call it in the your days. I heard it was----I think when I had separated from him how I ran into my present husband is he forever has 50 million jobs, and one of his jobs he was driving a cab, and I happened to get into his cab. That's how I ran into him.

MN: Now did you ever date him when he was Morris?

GSM: NO, no the closest we ever got was when he came into my house, and I was tutoring him in math.

MN: Okay. And he was a musician?

GSM: Musician, one of the many things he did.

MN: Was there an active musical program at Morris?

GSM: Very much so was it <inaudible>?

JP: Right, I think we had a band, I think we had an orchestra, and then I think we had a jazz band.

MN: Right, where there a lot of like talent shows or show cases were at the school when you were there?

GSM: Yeah, there was-----they had those but I think were you more aware of what Richie could do in terms of band because you hung in some of the clubs?

JP: No, no I was just aware of him as being a star performer in within-----in whatever performances they gave at the school. I didn't know him outside, but you know you were in the music department had two teachers that stood out in mind Herb Klein, and Herb Miller. And Mr. Klein I think one of the people spoke about was instrumental in getting some of the more talented students professional gigs, and Herb Miller was a composer. He had written several songs throughout the military, and they had being published, and he knew how to help students who wanted to go to that end of the industry. And they----- you only had to think what music was to graduate in that class, but they were such interesting people that people wanted to do more.

MN: Now what was it like to go to City College, was it more of a transition academically or you were well prepared?

GSM: I should have been well prepared but I wasn't only because high school was such a breeze for me with as busy as was with the student government I could still ace my exams, do my work, it just-----you know it just came easy. So that when I got into City College I thought I could do the same thing, and that was my <inaudible> I definitely was not prepared for what college was about, I was never thought that this is what you must

do, you know the way they try to prepare to students nowadays. I was never taught, never prepared, didn't know anything at all. Didn't know that when you register this is the way you do, this is what you look up in books. This is if you are going to pursue this course of study, this is the outline, you go to the department, you know I learnt everything by hook or crook.

MN: Now did you know you wanted to be a teacher when you were at City?

GSM: No, I wanted to be a Pediatrician.

MN: Okay, you still wanted to be a pediatrician.

GSM: Yes, I wanted to pediatrician so you know that was my goal but there were a lot of things I just wasn't aware of, and my family was not aware of because first of all, all of public education we walked to our school so there never was any expense in terms of that, but for me to go to college, I had to-----the easiest thing for me to do is take the bus down Boston Road to 149 on 3rd Avenue, and then take the cross town bus. That involved the fare everyday, and let me tell you my father was cheap. It wasn't as much that you can say he couldn't afford it, but he couldn't understand why you needed that money, and that was the hard thing because at that particular time it wasn't work study. And <inaudible> you ran into college, you got your-----your tuition was free, the only thing you had to pay was the student activities fee, and buy your books which maybe was \$5.00 dollars a piece of that time.

MN: And the biggest expense was car fare?

GSM: And also not just car fare but if you came to 8:00 in the morning class, after class was over you wanted to go to the snack bar and get something to eat. So even giving me money to buy food was another-----.

MN: Now did you work when you were in high school?

GSM: Never worked, never worked.

NL: You never worked up until the point were you started school-----.

GSM: I don't many us worked, if we did, maybe on the weekends some of them worked hamburger joint or something like that, but most of us didn't work, we didn't have to work, it was that it was a requirement or that you needed to be were the family was born.

NL: Right.

MN: Now when you were in last years on Morris were any guys on your block getting hooked on heroin was that something you were aware off was that starting to happen?

GSM: That's was something I was aware off from when I lived on Kelly street because I was very good friends with a particular family down the block, and my parents somehow didn't quite like them. Just like my parents could look at people and tell, I don't want you with them, and she stopped me from going to this particular girl's house, and low and behold, it hit the newspapers a few weeks later that there was a big heroin bust at that house.

MN: And this is in the 50's or the late 40's?

GSM: Let's see where was I at that time?

JP: Early 50's.

GSM: Early 50's very early 50's so you know that was my first association in terms of---
-----.

MN: But did you see guys like getting strung out was that you know walking the streets
is that something you ever saw?

GSM: Yeah, I think if you walked along Prospect Avenue especially as you walk passed
street going towards-----

MN: And Prospect down Westchester?

GSM: You could sort of see the junkies.

JP: From a 163rd street down.

GSM: Yeah, you didn't feel uncomfortable walking those streets during the day normally
because of what could possibly happen but-----

MN: So were these young guys that were strung out?

GSM: Not my age young, but more older teens, and early 20's.

MN: Early 20's.

GSM: Lets say this.

MN: What about at Morris was something was drugs ever visible?

GSM: I don't ever recall but I do recall hearing about our senior boat ride.

JP: That was an exception.

MN: What happened on your senior boat ride?

JP: Our senior boat ride was-----we went to <inaudible> and they I guess they charged
our <inaudible> and first of all it was the most fabulous trip in high school. The boat left
from 42nd street and the band got on 42nd street and they played off the river to 125th

street that was up here, and they students left the boat at a 125th street and then we rode up the river to <inaudible> and you know you went on the top deck, there was very little supervision, and the air was blowing and nobody could tell what was going, and people were smoking whatever. And the second back, I think people were playing cards, and there was just a wonderful outdoor experience, and we got to <inaudible> we got off the boat and then went up to the top of the mountain, and then the boat continued up the river, and then the boat met us on the way back.

GSM: But then I think how we realized this is because we heard the scuttle boat that certain were drunk, I think the big thing at that time is that they used <inaudible> alcohol, I know they added something else or the other.

JP: Was getting drunk.

MN: Now there other thing is did you have any friends who became pregnant when you were in high school or junior high was that something were you aware of at all?

GSM: Definitely not in junior high, and like I said, I think it was the type of kids that we grew with mostly, that I think you probably feared your parents more and I think my mother had me believe that you will get pregnant if guys just looked at you too hard. I mean we were naïve there wasn't that much experimentation and everything else that you do now.

JP: Right.

GSM: We were so naïve that we could be such good friends in terms of all the guys and everything, and it was a matter that the guy had to have you it was just was good clean fun.

MN: I wanted to-----

NL: Okay, so I am taking over from Dr. Naison. Now you were talking a little bit just now about your experiences with teen pregnancy, and you know not really seeing anybody kind of going by the way side. I wanted to ask you about your experiences just coming out of high school were many African American women what were they kind of being told was the best career path for them?

GSM: Well let me just divert a little bit to the teen pregnancy part?

NL: Okay.

GSM: I really think that was something that you would like kept in the <inaudible> about, but you did see that was there was a person in here that did get pregnant, in fact one of the girls that either went to high school or junior high with me I think attempted to have an abortion, and died. So you see these you know faces here and there you begin to see some of the adverse results in terms of things like that, but it wasn't, I don't think sex was rampant the way it is now among the schools.

NL: So you-----men and women of your generation were generally sheltered in that sides?

JP: It probably went on, but it wasn't on but it wasn't known. If there was a girl who was free, people couldn't talk positively about that person so either you associated them, even though they may have been seeking around behind, you know-----

NL: I see.

JP: It was under-----it was not something that people admired or-----

GSM: You know I am sure if you trace the evolution of teen pregnancy, you go back 50 years of <inaudible> totally different than what is happening now.

JP: Now they have day care centers in the school so-----.

GSM: That's right, that's right.

NL: What it rare then kind of going back to the question I was asking was it rare for most black women to end up in college or was it something that you knew most black women were doing?

GSM: No, very rare for them to end up in college, and I think the most thing is because we were pushed in that direction. I tended to go towards that direction only because of the students I was with, and seeing where they were going, and what was happening. It wasn't that I was being pushed by family definitely not.

NL: And not in school either?

GSM: And definitely not in school either.

NL: Okay.

GSM: I think one of the educators who I became, who I eventually met up with later on was my adviser Mildred Lee, and you know she would talk to me about college, afterwards I asked questions, but there wasn't a whole lot of time for advisement.

JP: But if you listen to the-----reading the year book, you know just at random these are the males and females. The ambition secretary, mechanical engineer, dental assistant, stenographer, secretary, housewife, craftsman, dancing, secretary, so the girls were kind of handed towards traditional female vocations, you know, clerical, they weren't going to be the boss, but they were going to be like the office assistant, and maybe some nurses,

which was at that there were very few male nurses so they might have chosen traditional female.

GSM: But also keep in tune with the fact that at that time positions now that require college education, that time only required a high school. You came out and worked for an insurance company that was strictly high school before. Banks, high school, you didn't have to have college degrees to do that kind of work, you know as the years go on there, I was like the physicians and that's it.

NL: Right, and so in city college when you were still trying to become a pediatrician what kind of courses did you take?

GSM: I did biology, geology, you know it went through the plan of what you had to take the biology the chemistry, you know as most people are aware, you could become a physician with limited courses in the sciences because it is when you get into med school that you really got to into those heavy activities.

NL: So what changed your course of action then?

GSM: Well that's when I met my first husband.

NL: Okay.

GSM: So of course that made me do a complete 360 because my parents hear I am in college, and I started college very young, so here I am in college and I had to still be home by 3 o'clock in fact my class ended at 2:00pm, I had to be home by 3 so I still did not have any leeway. So of course I think after a while my thing and the fact that I could barely get by when <inaudible> I decided I was going to go to college at night and work

during the day. So it was a combination of now wanting to socialize more and wanting to work and have money of my own.

NL: Right and that kind of opened up your social circle.

GSM: And that kind of changed everything, I won't say it changed it so much but the positive because I think became more aware what was going on in life at this particular point.

NL: And what was going on in the Bronx at that particular point you know when you became kind of more socially aware?

GSM: I don't think it was what was going in the Bronx; I think it was more of what was going on with me.

NL: Well sure, what was going with you was going on in the Bronx, so-----

GSM: I met my first husband in Harlem.

NL: Okay.

GSM: And just became entwined in terms of all that, and seeing there was a difference other than just going home everyday, and going to school everyday, this way I was like hanging and socializing.

NL: Where did you hang out?

GSM: In Harlem.

NL: You must have hung out in Harlem.

GSM: In Harlem a lot-----

NL: Okay.

GSM: But of course that is in the last real world because my parents were really going to get on me that was when I decided no that I was going to get married, and that was it I did complete 360 and decided I wanted to marry him.

NL: And so you didn't finish at City College?

GSM: At that particular time.

NL: Okay.

GSM: You know I got married and later had a child, and the marriage I could see right from the beginning wasn't going to work, and that was when I decided to back to school at night.

NL: Okay, and when you went back to school at night, what did you take up in terms of your course, where you still trying to decide-----?

GSM: There were still basic courses sociology, and-----

NL: But not the sciences anymore, not the pediatrician type?

GSM: No, I think I still took another biology course at night, but it was like the easier courses, so sociology that was a requirement. The English that was a requirement, and the other thing that is going at night you are in the classes more adult people like I believe Roy <inaudible> was in a few of my classes and you know you begin to see a lot more in terms of blacks involvement in education at night I found more so than in the day because the blacks that were there were there because they wanted to be there, and they wanted to have a voice in terms of how things were been done.

NL: And do you think you might have had some what of a racial awakening at that point, what-----when you started going to school with more blacks in the night courses?

GSM: I think I got quite a racial----- a white thing when I went to City College because you began to see that the day time was heavily <inaudible> as opposed to night been heavily black, and if I remember correctly most of the students are night were paying, but of course they didn't have the average, I was still was able to get a free education because I just <inaudible> night. So it did seem like there was some racial inequality and that <inaudible>.

NL: About the fact that blacks were paying, okay. So that is something that takes-----
--.

GSM: I mean it took me a few more years but I eventually graduated from City College.

GSM: Along way, I went to work <inaudible> before I went into education.

NL: Okay.

GSM: And that was a necessity to keep a roof over my son's head. .

NL: Now I wanted to ask you about where you were living because you mentioned that in your senior year of high school your parents purchased a house in the Wakefield section of the Bronx?

GSM: I am trying to-----no, it wasn't the senior year of high school, I think if I remember-----you what if I remember correctly I think it was a couple of years after.

NL: After, okay.

NL: So while you were in City College

GSM: A couple years because I was at City College when they did that.

NL: Okay. So what was kind of you know your awareness of the change, and the-----
what did you think was kind of the major differences between living in you know the
Morrisania section versus the Wakefield section of the Bronx?

GSM: The big thing that I noticed and I think it was what prompted my move to Jersey
even many years later is that no matter where you lived in the Bronx, it seems that while
blacks might not want to say what the better neighborhoods are more integrated or not
solidly black, it is a fact. And also the thing that I noticed that bothered most about the
Bronx which the only place I lived before I went to Jersey is that if you took a
neighborhood that was integrated of predominantly white as blacks moved in the whites
left. It was not that you could co-exist and still have a good neighborhood they
<inaudible>.

NL: I see.

GSM: And that bothered me, and I think the other thing that bothered is bothered me
when I went looking for an apartment, okay. At that particular time, my parents were
living in the North-East Bronx I took Gunhill Road and Paulding Ave and walked from
Gunhill and Paulding up to 233rd street.

NL: That is a walk.

GSM: Which was heavily white, and I could not find an apartment.

JP: Italian.

GSM: It is always we don't have anything.

NL: And this was what year would estimate with this early 60's?

GSM: Had to be about 59 or between 59 and 61, between 59 and 61.

JP: The area was like Italians who would emigrated to the Bronx, and they still had great barbers, they still-----you know a lot of those houses had little were they grew their own, grapes.

GSM: Well <inaudible> you know were Evander Childs High School is?

NL: Yes, on Gunhill.

GSM: When I was in junior high as part of the student government there was a junior high school up there in the Bronx not far from Evander because I had to get off the subway at White Plains Road, and we would have counsel meetings. Every junior high had a rep, and I was always the rep. You had counsel meetings once a month at different junior high schools throughout the Bronx. As I walked down Gunhill road across from Evander high school there was a house were this person had was it cows, or pigs, and chickens.

JP: Yeah there were small farms up there.

GSM: That's right.

NL: And this is 50's, the early 50's.

JP: Yeah.

GSM: Across, across <inaudible> that's right.

NL: Okay so you felt like-----

GSM: The thing is you see all of these evolution were the mass building of <inaudible> enter the Bronx was around between 58 and 60. And at that particular time they targeted certain buildings to blacks, and that's how the blacks started moving up there. And as

blacks moved and bought brand new homes up there, whites started selling their
<inaudible> and fled.

NL: And they would go to Westchester in Long Island.

GSM: Home state New York.

NL: Right.

GSM: That's when Nyack got involved, Nyack in New City I think that's around the time
that they got involved.

JP: Developers bought some of those small farms and put up small houses, you know
<inaudible> it would be like two families, they could buy, and that's where the blacks
began to have a place to move, it was brand new because some of them had the money
from the G. I bill.

NL: I see so did you find that there were racial tensions in the neighborhood then?

GSM: No there was, nobody ever-----there was never tension, it just was an unwritten
thing, I know the block where my parents bought a house.

NL: Which was which block?

GSM: Eastchester road.

NL: Between where and where?

GSM: Between Bert and Given.

NL: Okay.

GSM: Now that particular block there was about 18 to 22 family homes there.

NL: Okay.

GSM: There were built around 57, 58, and trust me my parents bought this house maybe after it had only been up 2 or 3 years, and very blacks were on that block. But as blacks bought houses and more came in on that block, the whites sold.

NL: Right, did your parents stay in that house for year?

GSM: Yeah, that was the house until my mom died, and last until my father died.

NL: Okay.

GSM: And I see that block now very pretty.

NL: And I wanted to ask you about that because that after 65' many people from you know the British Caribbean found themselves up you know emigrating to parts of the Bronx around Eastchester Road and further up.

GSM: This area became very Jamaican.

NL: Very Jamaican you found other <inaudible> but definitely many Jamaicans. So there were African Americans coming up from other parts of the Bronx and moving there too, what was the interaction like between the new immigrants from the Caribbean and the long time African American residents in the Bronx?

GSM: I found that they did not socialize.

NL: They didn't?

GSM: No, I found that Caribbean folks at-----it is a funny thing because in between my marriages so we figured 60's to early 70's, one of the fellows that I met at school was from Jamaica and when we found out we lived in similar neighborhood we-----you know we spoke and so forth and so on, and I eventually met his sister we became friends etc.

But he would only date white girls. So it is interesting because one of the things that I asked him is he had these pretty green eyes etc.

NL: So this was a light skinned Jamaican family?

GSM: Yes, about my complexion.

NL: Okay.

GSM: But in any event I would always question him about the particular girl that he was dating, and I said how does her family accept you? And his reply to me was well they don't see me as an American black, I am a foreigner. So you can see even the perception among people of the same ethnicity. But just the different backgrounds how they perceive themselves. So that was an awakening for me.

NL: Right.

GSM: To know that he considered himself better than an American born black.

NL: Right, and it was kind of shaped by the white people's perception of differences between American-----

GSM: According to him.

NL: Right, according to him, very interesting and so now I wanted you know get into a little bit more about how you ended up in education. You worked in IBM for 10 years what were you doing at IBM?

GSM: Well when I first started out because at that time I still haven't finished college I was doing administrative work, and interesting to say in the early let see when did I go with them at that time IBM had very few blacks working for them.

NL: Right, and where were their offices located?

GSM: They tend to be all over. They were headquartered down at 590 Madison Avenue.

They still had offices in Westchester, IBM was over throughout the country.

NL: But you worked in the Manhattan offices?

GSM: But the first location that I worked for them was on Church Street in Manhattan.

NL: Okay so you used to commute from all the way up there in the Eastchester road section of Church Street?

GSM: Yes, on the subway.

NL: On the subway.

GSM: Subway, but at that particular time my husband and I were separated, I had this child that I had to <inaudible> etc. And I won't begin to tell you what it was like for me getting a job at that time that's when segregation hits you smack in the face even though I think this was right before the time of Martin Luther King death, right?

NL: So we talking the mid 60's?

GSM: Mid 60's.

NL: Mid early to mid 60's.

GSM: You know that's when it really smacked you in the face because you knew that you were educated well enough to work in an office, but yet you were been segregated to <inaudible> to typing test and you took typing in high school. And you were told your skills should have been at least 60 words for a minute. Where my skills were maybe 50 etc. But the fact that when it came to psychological part of the exams and the knowledgeable part of the exams I always did so well on them, it made him give me a second look.

NL: I see.

GSM: That's when I realized that IBM had to hire blacks, I think it was coming up were you know come on now we need to blacks to show-----

NL: The civil rights legislation had been passed already, so they had to be mindful of that.

GSM: How I got my job was through I believe the Urban League it is how I first got the idea, and-----

NL: In the Urban League how did people get jobs? What was the process?

GSM: I think I saw an ad in the paper or someone told me about, I was did a lot question, and talking to people and everything. I don't remember exactly. But to make a long story short what happened was that I filled out an application they agreed to hire me for an administrative position, and the day I was supposed to report for work, they told me that they couldn't put me on payroll yet the reason being, they were not able to check out a few of the addresses I listed on my application and that's one of the things I have always told youngsters nowadays if you have a history of doing a lot of moving which I did in my early-----in the early days of my marriage if you find an address stick to that address. And that's something interesting you never told. It seems that one of the addresses I was off by a block, and what the person told me is look you have done very well in terms of we know you have a young child because of the fact of one of the people we interviewed we went to the block were your parents have a home. It is a very middle class neighborhood, very good block. The people spoke well of your parents they didn't

know that you must live in the neighborhood because your seen wheeling the baby carriage back and forth to their house.

NL: So they did a serious background check on you?

JP: Subjective.

NL: That's very interesting, okay.

GSM: So this-----

NL: And were many blacks in the Bronx? Did they have jobs in the city or was it you know, did you find commuting and stuff when you were on the trains-----?

GSM: I would say the train has always been a black thing.

NL: Really.

GSM: A minority thing, you know of course in the 60's okay people went and got cars and even driving into the cities has always been a problem, but blacks I don't think were are big car people until the mid late 60's, or so but you had to be riding the trains and buses.

JP: If you worked in Manhattan the bus and train was the easiest way, it was timely, it was fast, and cheap.

GSM: It's like today if you lived in that area of the Bronx you are not going to be driving into Manhattan, there's no where to park.

NL: What is-----how did you move up in the ranks of IBM over there the course of your time there because you said you worked there for 10 years, right?

GSM: Having a mouth because if you sat back, nothing would ever happen, and I'll never forget, I went to the branch manager and I says you I see guys you have me coming in

training them. I could run circles around them, I know this job better than any of them. There are able to move up in terms of positions, but yet I am still seating here. What is the problem-----IBM is always very conscious of law suits by that I said this to the manager on Thursday. He says let me check into it, et me get back to you by Monday I had something like 4 or 5 interviews set up.

NL: I see.

GSM: So it was also being able to do a job, job, I was the first black female <inaudible> typewriter sales person but that didn't happen so I didn't move even into that, the reason I left IBM is because afterwards I became the coordinator-----accounts receivable coordinator, and part of my territory was Puerto Rico. I had to go to the Puerto Rico office every so often just to check what they were doing, you know how were they managing getting the money in so forth, even though IBM is a computer place, a lot at that time was still being done by hand. So at that particular time I would always have to get somebody to take care of my son because he was in school.

NL: I was going to ask you about child care.

GSM: And afterwards I felt regardless of the salary and everything my child was very important to me, making sure that he became the young black male that-----

NL: You wanted him to be.

GSM: You had to spend to more time with him, and then also he would always say I am off from school today, do you have to go to work, so that's how I <inaudible> mostly because of that.

NL: I see, and where did he go to school while you were working at IBM, how did you decide on what school to put him to?

GSM: He always went to public school, I never considered private schools, I always felt that the public schools would get a very good just had to pick and choose then.

NL: I see.

GSM: And at that particular time, I don't think-----I think I tended to try a little bit of the schools with that-----if that was my idea, so that's when I went to Jamie Towers, I knew that the junior-----that the elementary school right near there was a very good one at the time.

NL: And you are talking about P.S 138?

GSM: 138.

NL: Okay.

GSM: And you know you back to the end of the 60's and 70's that was an excellent school.

NL: Right, right.

GSM: I mean that's were <inaudible> was born?

JP: You were in Morrisville.

NL: And how did you even end in Jamie Towers becoming you know what is <inaudible>?

GSM: It was <inaudible> I was living up in the north-east Bronx and every place that I lived, I try to make sure that the next place was one place better, and some how the other I just kind of learned. I think IBM taught me a lot, one of the things that I learned is you

needed to own, in order to move up, and that's when I decided to look, and heard about them. City was going to open, but I didn't kind of want that-----then I heard about Jamie Towers, I looked into that.

NL: Why didn't want CO-OP city?

GSM: At that time I don't think it was available, but it was going to be too big, I didn't think, I wanted to buy into that large, large concept.

JP: And they ended up zoning all the blacks into one section.

NL: Exactly, section 5.

JP: <inaudible>

NL: That's been known to be the black section of Co-op city.

GSM: But Jamie Towers when it first open was really nice mix of people, in fact <inaudible> moved in there from the time.

NL: Yeah <inaudible>

GSM: She is still there, and that how I met her.

NL: I know Jamie lived <inaudible> there <inaudible> so in terms of the racial breakdown so that was, it kind of kept there the balance lets say.

GSM: And I thought it felt it was also a very safe place in terms of me being a single parent, you know with the child and everything.

NL: And how did you live at Jamie Towers?

GSM: Lets see I ate pork in Jersey in 1973 so maybe about 5, 6 years no a year.

NL: And that neighborhood of the Bronx now how was that different from the Eastchester section what was castle hill like at the time when you moved there?

GSM: Castle hill was bounded by the projects on one end but they never seem to come---
--it is not like nowadays where projects will spill all over into every part of the
neighborhood they kept their boundaries, if I remember correctly. So it wasn't a problem
there weren't many private houses down by the <inaudible> like all those private houses
that circle those were-----there <inaudible> first went out.

NL: Jamie Towers was there by itself.

GSM: So it was a very quite spy, it was there-----.

NL: Where there whites in the neighborhood were the private houses existed before, you
said there weren't many immediately in the area.

GSM: Soundview which was the country club you weren't allowed there, forget it so you
never went all the way back to Soundview the portion were Jamie is there was no other
housing, all that private housing sprung up afterwards if I can remember correctly. So
most of the kids in Jamie tended to play among the kids in <inaudible> we did it white,
black, Hispanic, no matter what they are, so they tend to have their own little circle with
friends.

NL: I see.

GSM: In fact one of my son's <inaudible>

NL: Was he in some what you came up with Jamie? Okay. So then you moved to New
Jersey, now this was the time when you decided to do a career switch as well, how did
you end up in education, you know coming to, coming out of IBM.

GSM: Listen I am trying to remember when I started the board. I started the board and
did clear after I moved to Jersey.

NL: Okay.

GSM: But New York was all I ever knew so there never was a question about not teaching in New York.

NL: I see, and when you taught in New York what was your first teaching job?

GSM: At what's the school we right on Caldwell behind Morris?

JP: 146.

GSM: Yes, that was my first school.

JP: P.S 146?

GSM: P.S 146.

NL: And what grade did you teach?

JP: Harriet was the assistant principal there?

GSM: No, not at that time Ms. <inaudible>

JP: Okay, from Harriet you there were all-----

GSM: Okay.

NL: So what grade were teaching at 146?

GSM: Grade 4.

NL: 4TH grade, okay and what was your experience like you are teaching now I am assuming in the mid to late 70's, what were the students like that were 146?

GSM: 146 always had a tough group of kids, they always had a tough group a lot came out of the projects, a lot came from Boston Road. It was always a tough group, but you know what I am a very strict disciplinarian so I had never a problem with kids in the classroom.

NL: Really.

JP: These were the kids from Forest house, and Boston road.

GSM: I think I enjoyed it because that's the days when you had to do lesson plans and you always had to figure out how you wake up with your face-----, and I had kids who couldn't learn to read, so I would put words on book. Today's day and time they might not like the words I put on the door, but I said oh I bet you if I put this up I put this up, you see <inaudible> the kids would go ohhh, this is, what's the matter?, I says you could read that? And then afterwards I erase the first letter I say pronounce this for me, they could then do it.

NL: Right.

GSM: I mean you used a lot of unconventional stuff, and it works.

NL: And what changes have you seen in the neighborhood having gone to so many different place in the Bronx, and then coming back as a teacher to old neighborhood to teach. What was that like for you?

GSM: I think what I saw still was the lack of parent participation, before the neighborhood [inaudible] the parents participated because I found in high school, it didn't really matter if parents didn't participate in high school anyway. But in lower grades I found out parents were not as involved with their kids' education as they needed to be based on the neighborhood. It was a more middle-----.

[END OF TAPE 1 SIDE B]

[BEGINNING OF TAPE 2 SIDE A]

NL: Alright, now we are starting the second tape, and so I started off with the question of the last tape, of the last, you know couple seconds ago about parent involvement, and you are noticing that neighborhoods that were poor just did not seem to lack parent involvement. You know what was your sense of how-----you know, and educated perspective on the changes in the Bronx, so I was saying you noticed that-----

GSM: I think even going back to that time.

NL: Which time are we talking about now?

GSM: Going back to when I first started education in 1973, I think even at that time blacks were discriminated as educators because a particular school when I went to 146 the principal said, we will be okay, we will have a position for you, but when I spoke to him or otherwise went and saw him and he saw I was black, we are not, we don't have anything available. But it turned out that somehow the head of the district got rid of him or something, and a black person who came right away he was glad to have me.

NL: Right.

GSM: So it seems that blacks tend to stir more towards the neighborhood they fell comfortable in, which are the black neighborhoods.

NL: Black educators, okay.

GSM: Black educators or I never had a problem even when like it came to work in Harlem because I felt if I didn't help my folks who would because you know I just felt confident in myself as an educator, and knowing that I could do something to help, and who else will? Most others tend to be afraid to work in black neighborhoods.

NL: Most other educators that are not black, right.

GSM: Tend to be afraid to go in the highway ended going into Harlem was the fact that I had <inaudible>, but now how are ended up going to Harlem was the fact that I had <inaudible> you know when they do the whole senior <inaudible> and when I went down to the hiring core, it happened so that junior high school 13 had a spot.

NL: And where was 13?

GSM: Madison 106th street, and that's how I ended up in Harlem, and after that I really didn't mind to be in Harlem. It was an easy place to drive to, and it was easy parking.

NL: So did you ever go back to your old neighborhood in the Bronx after you started working in Harlem, and living in New Jersey?

GSM: No, somehow the other I went from elementary school, and as my son got older, and I had remarried, and I had my daughter, somehow the other you tends to want to move along as your kids get older, it is what I felt, and I knew I had a good feel for math and therefore, you know one way to really do well with math was through high school, or even elementary. I felt to do good with math also junior than elementary, although you know they definitely could use male teachers, but in elementary you teach all the subject, the areas were I wanted mostly to teach them math.

NL: So you teaching math, and you started teaching in high school. What high school did you teach in?

GSM: Let me see my first high school, I did junior high schools then when I went over to high school believe it or not, my first high school I was working as a guidance counselor so it is interesting because I tend to do the math mostly in the junior high's which had 9th graders. So 9th grade of course is the first year of high school and we <inaudible> so at

some point I decided I wanted to be an administrator, and that's why when I was in junior high 13, I started taking my supervision admin courses, and did my internship, but then afterwards you realize that you become to distant from the kids when you become an administrator, and I always knew that my family was the kids so therefore I chose to deal with guidance.

NL: Right, and what did you see in terms of the students that you were dealing with as a guidance counselor in the 70's and 80's. What were the type of students that-----you know what did they think they were going through?

GSM: The big thing that I found was that the junior high school students were much too advanced for their ages-----

NL: Socially, you mean?

GSM: Socially, promiscuously and so forth, and so on.

NL: I see.

GSM: That this is where I started coming up with a large number of pregnancies was really in the junior high school, and it was no big thing, and as the rules change among the board of education, students were allowed to remain in school, although they were pregnant. They no longer relegated to the school for pregnant teens. They can remain exactly where they were as long as they could with proper medical documentation.

NL: Right.

GSM: They could be in school until the day they have the kid.

NL: Right, and this is when you were teaching in the high schools as well. Well being a guidance counselor-----

GSM: In junior high school.

NL: In junior high school, right. And what example did you feel like that set for the other kids?

GSM: I don't think really mattered because it was like at this particular point, I don't think that kids thought of it as being black mark to be pregnant or be in school, it no longer was a problem. I mentored a student who eventually left junior high pregnant, but you know I was so close to her in junior high school working with her to get her skills up and you know even if the other kids in the class did not want to learn, she would come to me during her lunch hour for tutoring and everything, and somehow the other she went through high school pregnant, and she was afraid to tell me. It was one of the other kids who told me when we came back from summer break, and sent out word for her to come and see me. And she was one of the kids that went to the school for pregnant teens and then after she had the kid in January, three weeks later she was back in her regular high school.

NL: Right, which was the high school you were working at?

GSM: No, that was another high school. She was back at her high school, I continued to mentor and so forth when she graduated from high school, I went to her high school graduation. I had worked with her going to college, she went to college upstate, she took the baby with-----the little girl with her, and the little girl was taking off while she was in college by one of her fresh year families, you know the <inaudible>.

NL: Right.

GSM: The family that she used to go to for the fresh year <inaudible> for a child, and when she came out of high school we worked on colleges. This was the college that was right up here by the fresh year family, when she finished that college she said to me I think I want to be a paralegal. I told her you could go to college for 4 years and be a paralegal, let's look at law schools, she went to law school, she is a top lawyer now, a top lawyer.

NL: So that's a great story did you see many success stories like that or that was the exception?

GSM: No, that was the exception.

NL: I see, and this was for high school kids throughout the city.

GSM: I mean it is such a struggle for them nowadays when they have a child, they don't have you know they might have a parent who helps them but somehow you have to <inaudible> this was a girl who was very independent, she didn't feel that she had to be with that baby's father in order to succeed. The baby's father soon became-----he is no longer part of her life, she kind of-----most kids nowadays feel they kind of hang on to them , she didn't like that, she felt she needed to work, and do what she needed to do to support her child.

NL: So we talked about the experience of young women in you know in high school, and junior high school during the 70s and 80s, what was your take on young black, Latino men, what were they going through?

GSM: I don't think that they were giving the push that they needed because when I go back even now into that neighborhood of junior high school 13 I see a lot of the students I

had back in the 70's as bums on the street even now I see them as bums on the street. I really do-----it is not one of the kids that I had-----he was in one of those movies back in the 70's he played one of the little boys, and it seems that I always ask about him what is he doing now, nobody knows, he is no longer in movies, I have no idea what has happened to him, it seems that a child that was gifted should have been pushed and moved along.

NL: And he wasn't. And so I wanted to ask you about kind of any you know return trips that you might have made to the Bronx over that time. You know what was your feeling about what was going on in the Bronx during the 70's and 80's when you were living in Jersey did you ever had reason to go back?

GSM: Yeah I had reason to go back because I have a brother who lives on Prospect Avenue <inaudible> and I just wanted to see what Kelly Street even was like. The buildings are no longer there, it is just one big empty lot, and I can't see that these buildings that were torn down because these were strong solid buildings so I had no idea what has happened there. I am still-----

NL: So you didn't-----so there was a gap kind of, you back to the Bronx now but you didn't during the time where you still working as an educator?

GSM: Not till the Morris high school area which you might pass through driving a car but you know you don't really see anything.

NL: So you did you go anywhere in the Bronx at the time then or you were, you kind of didn't have any ties to the Bronx by that point when you were you know working in Harlem, and living in New Jersey?

GSM: No I would go through the Bronx lets put it like that, I would consistently be in the upper north east section of The Bronx because my parents lived there. I would - -

NL: And what changes did you see - -

GSM: - - I would come to visit my parents, if there was something at my parents' church, which at this time we would go to Washington Avenue and 165th Street, everything is almost like a ghost town. There always seemed to be so little happening in The Bronx. You didn't have that sanctity of the neighborhood where kids and everybody was playing together, you didn't have the large tenements. So much was torn down and they'd build up little two family housing, you didn't have the huge tenements that I think we had.

NL: That you think created community?

GSM: Absolutely.

NL: So what's your take now on the neighborhood, now that you go back to - -

GSM: I think the kids are missing a whole lot.

NL: Yeah.

GSM: I really do, I don't think they understand what it's like to be part of the community. The other thing that I see, is that if you are going to have fun, you have to be a part of a gang.

NL: And there weren't many gangs at all when you were growing up?

GSM: If there were, it was kept maybe on the down low because I think our parents would have killed us first.

NL: I see.

GSM: They thought we were a part of something that shouldn't have been. So it's really, I think you become very disenchanting when you look at what has happened now.

NL: And from where your parents lived in The Bronx, in the upper east section, did you see any changes there over the last 25-30 years, what were your thoughts on that?

GSM: Yes, definitely because I think the project that's a little farther away from them, Edenwall Houses, has become a real war zone. People are afraid around there certain times of the night. I feel that certain areas up there are just not safe anymore.

NL: So generally, the projects in most neighborhoods of The Bronx have made it, have made these neighborhoods less, you know, of a - -

GSM: I don't know if we should say that the projects have, I think I'd more so like to say the people have.

NL: the people, okay.

GSM: The people not being part of the neighborhood, the requirement that every parent has to work and they're not home to manage their kids. I don't know, I think the family has fallen apart and that's what it is. A single parent family, or whatever it is, you know?

NL: Well, I don't know if you would like to make any other comments on your experience, during the times that you lived in The Bronx, any last words that you wanted to give - -

GSM: I think that if I think about it and there's anything else, I'll mail or write to you whatever I have to say or do in order to add to this.

NL: But for now, you would say that your experience was good?

GSM: I think so, I might not have always like my experience because I was always sheltered, but I think on the whole, I think I have had a lot more to see and to enjoy than most kids growing up nowadays.

NL: Well thank you so much, it was a really enjoyable interview, you had a great story.

Alright, take care.

GSM: Okay thank you.

[END OF INTERVIEW]