

00:00:00

Leonard Edloe: He never moved. I reconnect with him years later. We got to talkin', you know, 'cause he's died since then.

Laura Browder: Did you know Ms. Austin, Margaret Austin? She was a teacher. She founded a theater group and she lived in Carver.

LE: No, I didn't

LB: Yeah. I worked with her on that play. She was an amazing older lady who had been sent by the State to go to Columbia University for grad school 'cause that's when they were not allowing African Americans into the...

LE: Well see they'd need to go to Howard. So everybody that hear that they say, "Well how much debt did you have when you finished?" You know, college. I said, "None."

LB: That's crazy.

LE: Yeah. "None."

LB: So check that out. Because I know I want to start barraging you with more questions, but I wanna make sure we get that recorded.

Woman 1: Here we go. It was on hold for some reason. I don't know what that means...

LB: I think that just means that that's what you do when you're transporting it so it doesn't get jostled around.

W1: Alright. Okay. We are good to go on this one.

LB: So Mr. Edloe, start from the beginning. Tell me something about how you grew up, and your family, please.

00:02:40

LE: Alright, well I'm the son of a pharmacist who was orphaned at twelve, lived in Stanton, and moved to DC. I will say—his father died from the Spanish flu—so that's why I have a real thing towards immunizations when I was practicing pharmacy. Actually he started off being an auto mechanic, he always loved telling the story of how he was working on a T-Model Ford, and the car fell off the rack, the only thing it did was crack one of his teeth. And so he decided he would become a professional. The story was, back then, if you were a graduate of the school of pharmacy at Howard University, back then, you would either have to open your own pharmacy, or go to work in the post office. So they had a lot of pharmacists workin' in the post office. But he came here to Richmond and he went to work at Williams' Professional Pharmacy. That was down on 3rd Street right across from Bliley's and they did tremendous business for years. Then he went over to Church Hill and became a partner with this guy at Harrington's Pharmacy. And he left the pharmacy named that for years because the pharmacy kept being sold. It was Eaton's Pharmacy. It was Harrington's Pharmacy. It was Harrington & Williams. And the wholesalers

would say, “Don’t change the name at all.” I finally changed it in 1974 when we opened the new East End medical building. My mother was the daughter of a tobacco farmer down in Lunenburg County. She had to go to Danville to go to school. Her prized thing about going to Danville to go to school—she got to meet Camilla Williams. They went to school together. Camilla would come... They used to have concerts and everything at, it was the Belgian building then, Barco-Stevens Hall now. And when Camilla came to sing I got to go backstage and meet this world famous opera singer.

In the third grade I decided I was gonna be a pharmacist. So I lived the pharmacy. I always had so much respect for my father, because, unlike people today who like to purchase a whole lot of depreciating assets first, he purchased the pharmacy first. Then he purchased a home. And the last thing he got was a car. I mean he just had to ride the bus to the pharmacy and back and back to his home. I learned a lot from both of them. My grandfather had a stroke before I was born. We’d go down to the farm and they were still growing tobacco, but I never got a chance to talk to him. And he’s the reason why I do so much about stroke. So, you know, my commitment as a healthcare professional stemmed from both of my grandfathers. One died from what is now a preventable disease—flu. Then the other one having something that we just have to work on our risk factors and life style—stroke.

LB: So it’s very personal for you it sounds like.

LE: Oh, very, very.

LB: I wanna talk about the pharmacy more. But I wanna get back into your childhood. Did you have siblings? Where did you go to school? What do you remember about your childhood?

LE: We started off at 707 West Morrison Street. And I always tell folk I was born at the old Richmond community hospital. That was sort of a prestige thing—to be born at Richmond Community Hospital. And I had an older sister. She actually started at the Elba School up on Marshall Street and then we moved over to Griffon Avenue in Barton Heights, and that’s when my younger brother was born. I went to Albert Norrell. That’s where I started. And then I went... It’s real funny... My sister is older than me and so I would do her homework and so then I got to school and I knew what they... So I got sort of labeled a trouble maker. So my parents switched me to [00:05:56 name unc.], the Catholic School. So I went there for three years and then I went back to public school, so I went to Graves. I was so advanced they skipped me. Then I left Graves and I went to Armstrong. So I graduated there.

LB: So you would’ve graduated sometime in the 60s?

LE: Yeah. 1964.

LB: Okay, okay.

LE: Yeah. That’s my connection sort of. When I got involved in Youth Council was when I went to Armstrong.

00:06:25 **LB:** So tell me about how that all evolved.

LE: How it evolved I don't know. But I had two good friends, Herman and Harold Cook. They were twins. They belonged. James [00:06:42 last name unc.], he belonged. Many people remember this thing about the sniper. They used to have this guy that was shootin' folk in the West End. DC wasn't the first one to have a sniper. And this guy Wally Persons was shot by the sniper and he's paralyzed. And then Tommy Williams, he was sort of the president, and he ended up owning Tommy's Record Shop. And he made some mistakes, so he's incarcerated now, I think still. But they just asked me to come and join. And my parents had always been very active in civil rights, not on the front line, but, as a child, my father would carry me with him to City Hall to pay the poll tax. So I was very aware of things that were going on in the city. It was just around the time where we had the people arrested at Thalhimers, at the sit-in, that we really became involved because then Mrs. Tinsley—she sort of headed up the youth part. Her husband was a dentist. They were all part of that, what do you call it, sort of Jackson Ward, Navy Hill and what not. It sort of bothers me when I ride through there now because I remember their house being right on the corner of 4th and Leigh Street. And then I went to church at 5th and Leigh Street. I remember Navy Hill School and Salvation Army and all that kind of stuff.

At first it wasn't a whole lot of activism. It was just sort of meetings. Then when the protest started, I mean, they really had us involved. I don't know who was first, whether Martin Luther King in Birmingham, bringing in children or young people, or whether it was somebody else. Because I don't know why they carried us to City Hall for the protest. But we walked to City Hall. I never will forget, as we came out, the police photographers were takin' our pictures. And I sorta looked straight in the camera like, "Yeah. It's ME." And then when we started trying to integrate the theaters—it was the Loews, and the State Theater—it meant so much to me because I had a uncle who was a pastor of an AME church. He was in West Virginia. And then he went to Pittsburgh. When he got to Pittsburgh I went to see him and I got to go to see a movie the time it came out, got to see the Pirates play. And, you know, we were always going to the Booker T. And we would always hear about the movie openin' at the Byrd and State. And the way they said it was like it was one place, but they were actually two different places because I never really got up to where Carytown is. So I didn't even know where the Byrd was, but I knew where the State was. And so we would go and stand in line and try to get a ticket and walk through the line and walk through the line. Then I'd even carry it to the extreme. Sometimes I didn't even have any money. But when we were goin' to Armstrong and living in Barton Heights, I'd have to catch the bus. And so I'd get off the bus downtown and go up to the window and ask the lady could I have a ticket, and she would tell me no. Sometime I wonder, if she said yes, I wouldn't even have had the money to pay for the ticket.

00:10:39 But it was a real experience. I wanna say—Zenoria, Herman, Harold, even though he died last year—we've stayed connected, all of these years. I was with Herman a few weeks ago. It just goes back to that involvement. I'm not saying we made a big difference. But it was a little difference. It was knowing what was going on, being aware of it. They used to have mass meetings at Fifth Street Baptist, which is right at the corner of 5th and Jackson Street, it's a modern building there now, and then we would go over sometimes to Third Bethel AME.

LB: Mhm.

LE: Third Bethel sort of worked better because the sanctuary was on the second floor. They had that big basement. They would do workshops and all there. I even stayed involved after I went to college because after the Voter Rights Act was passed, a lot of places in the West End, I'd just canvass every day getting people registered to vote. That's why it upsets me so when I look at the election scene in Richmond and how so few people vote. Because I know... My father ingrained that thing in me about the poll tax. \$1.57 was a whole lot of money back then. I talk to my wife and she talks about how her father had three kids and he was just makin' forty dollars a week. It was a whole lot. But he made that commitment that he was gonna be able to vote and his wife was gonna be able to vote. It was just a solid thing, saying, "This is what you have to do when you grow up." I'm so glad he did that and I'm so glad I was able to, those three years I was in high school, and then even when I came back, to be able to take part in it.

LB: What were those mass meetings like? Who was there?

LE: It was something, you know. To see I mean. That building, Fifth Street Baptist, isn't there anymore because it was probably the biggest sanctuary in Richmond. I mean a large first floor, a balcony all around. I can remember Rudolph... I don't if it was Rudolph or... Floyd McKesson. I'd sit there mesmerized by him. And then when I went to college, his daughter was there. So I got to meet his daughter. We never became friends or anything. But just to see this person... I don't remember Martin Luther King ever speaking at Fifth Street, but I remember in 1963 when they had the SCLC annual meeting here. It was at First African Baptist Church, which was just two blocks from my house. It was a real pleasure for me to get to see him then. From then on they had this program on WANT. They would tape his sermons. Martin Luther King's speeches and Tom Mitchell would narrate it, bring it on. So I would just listen to the speeches. In addition to being a pharmacist, twenty-one years ago I became a pastor, and so I use a whole lot of Martin Luther King's stuff because it still speaks to today.

LB: Absolutely.

LE: Yeah.

LB: Who else... who was around you when you were at the mass meetings? Was it college students, people from all walks of life?

00:14:37 **LE:** All walks of life. And the thing about it—even the churches got together. Because they would have choirs sing. The choir would be made up of people of all. Leigh Street, which was right up the street and you know a historical note... like Leontine Kelly who was the first African American bishop in the United Methodist Church. Her husband was the pastor of Leigh Street. So she was there, and the choir from Leigh Street, the choir from Fifth Street, the choir from Third Baptist, Ebenezer—all of them would join together in music. The place would be packed. It would be overflowing with all the people, like you said, from all walks of life. Ask me to recall a name though... you know... like... it's just so much. As a young person, being fourteen and fifteen years old, you sort of just get wowed, you know?

00:15:04 **LB:** Yeah. I interviewed John... Do you know John Dorman?

LE: No.

LB: He was a Armstrong graduate, '66. But he was in the movement when he was twelve because he was recruited by some Virginia Union students who were teaching him karate at the Y. Did you have a lot to do with the Virginia Union students?

LE: No, I didn't. Even though, you know, I didn't live far from Union.

LB: Yeah.

LE: And went on the campus a whole lot but never did connect with that group that was doing the protest. My connection was Mrs. Tinsley. Because she got arrested along with them, you know. That picture is still, you know... It's ingrained in my brain forever, with the policemen carrying her across Moore Street with the paddy wagon, you know.

LB: Yeah, it's an incredible picture.

LE: Yeah.

LB: Were there other students at Armstrong, besides the twins and Zenoria and you, who were political at that time?

LE: Well they were more political at school because it was about, you know, student government then, but... some, but not a whole lot. Especially at Armstrong. You had people, they were just dealing with the bare necessities...

LB: Yeah.

LE: ...of life. To even worry about, well, can I go in and eat at Thalhimers? I'm just worried about having food on the table. And it's not a putdown or anything. But when... it's just like... when you haven't been anywhere, when you haven't seen things, it doesn't make much of a difference. I remember going with my father down to Kenbridge to go to my mother's house, I mean, grandparent's house. And we stopped in Blackstone to get off the bus to get something to eat. And, you know, the black side is just a bar and you have to stand up. And you look through the window and you see all these tables with tablecloths and everything. When you know that happens, it has an impact.

00:18:10

Like, you know, they always talk about the buses first being integrated in Montgomery. And I realized even before it happened to me because I got to meet... I didn't get to meet Mrs. Morgan out of Gloucester, but I got to meet some of her family members because my uncle was a pastor of a church down that way. But I never will forget one day my mother, my sister, and I got on the Ginter Park bus and the bus was packed. And it was white man sitting on this seat up front. There were two seats empty. And my mother said, "Is it alright for the children to sit there?" And he said, "It's fine." The bus driver says, "Those children have to move." And the man said, "It's alright with me." And so the bus driver got off the bus and, you know, all the black people on the

bus, they wanted to get home. They said, “Bring the children back here, we’ll hold them.” My mother says, “No.” And so he got off the bus and stayed of the bus about ten minutes, I mean he was gonna call the police. And then he came back and got on the bus and said the law didn’t have time to come. And so the bus goes down the street. So you know? Both parents saying, “You’re just like everybody else. I know what the law says, but never let that limit who you are. And stand up for your rights.”

LB: I always feel like there’s this very rich civil rights history in Richmond that’s been forgotten.

LE: Well, it has been. We were talkin’ about that. I was treasurer at a black history museum. I got to meet one of John Mitchell’s descendants. He doesn’t live here. And he was just saying, you know, it’s a lot of things we just wanna suppress, you know to keep things quiet. I have a whole lot of books. I could fill up your office with mine. But it’s certain books that I just pick up and read from cover to cover. Like *Days of Grace* by Arthur Ashe, you know. Because I know what he went through. And then the other one was *Race Man* talkin’ about John Mitchell. I mean I read that cover to cover. You can go to the Library of Virginia right now and pick up every paper, because he would carry it through the governor’s mansion. I mean that’s just how bold he was. It’s like that story doesn’t really wanna... Nobody wants to tell that story here in Richmond. Or Gordon Hancock at Moore Street Baptist Church with the double duty dollar...

LB: I don’t know that story.

00:22:05

LE: He was not only pastor of Moore Street Baptist Church, he taught at Virginia Union University. I finally found out why he was never really accepted by John Marcus Ellison, who was the first black president of Virginia Union, ‘cause he didn’t finish his PhD, you know. But anyway. But Hancock had this idea that when you spend a dollar... #1: It should be for something that you need. And #2: It should be spent with someone of your race. Double duty. In other words—make it work twice. It came out of what Mitchell and Maggie Walker and all tried to do. What sort of happened is, even though there was segregation, you could still go to various places and spend your money. And I think he saw what was happening and he knew what would happen. Because when you look at, especially, retail in Richmond, I mean, there are no blacks there. Pharmacy just happened to be considered retail. I was the first African American to serve as chairman of the Retail Merchants. Nobody served after me. I was the first one to get the Distinguished Retailer of the Year Award. And nobody else has gotten it after me, even though I think Mr. Waller should get it with Waller Jeweler, but... you know. And I’d feel real happy if that happened. But the dollar just... doesn’t circulate. I try to equate things, even health, Biblically. And I always tell people if your blood only circulated in your body once, it would die. And that’s why our community sometime looks so dead, because the dollar comes in and it comes right back out.

LB: I think it was Mr. Waller who said to me once that after segregation ended, all the black businesses started to die...

LE: Started to die. Uh huh.

LB: ...in the Carver neighborhood.

LE: Mhm. Yep. You look at the hotels—Egleston, Slaughters, Harris—all closed up. All we have, basically, are restaurants and hairdressers. Even the beauty supply companies, you know [00:22:42 unc. store names]—both of those are gone. And with the pharmacies it's the same thing. What amazed me—I never knew who it was and nobody ever told me the story, but it was a black pharmacist back in the 1900s who had three different pharmacies. That was my inspiration for opening up all of the pharmacies that I had, because if somebody could do it in 1900, I felt like somebody could do it in 1980.

LB: Why do you think we've forgotten so much? I look at the Southern Negro Youth Congress being founded in Richmond in the 30s, the successful tobacco strikes for the black female tobacco workers, you know, W. E. B. Du Bois, and all kinds of people coming here. Right? And yet we've forgotten everything. Why do you think that is?

LE: We don't tell the story. And because very little has been written, as my professor tells me, Dr. Katie Cannon, "If it's not written... it didn't happen." I try to encourage people all the time to sit down and tell the story. And, just like you're recording me, record it. So it can be passed down. Because it's so much richness that has been lost. I try to teach my daughter, and we have a hard time gettin' to my nieces and nephews, to let them know what's goin' on. Even the young people in my church, they have a hard time understanding and comprehending what has happened. I look at what I've even learned in the last two years... because I went back, I got my fourth degree... and just to read books that I never knew existed. Right now I'm reading a book on the theology of Martin Luther King. It talks about the people who influenced him the most. Mordecai Wyatt Johnson was the first black president of Howard University and got all of the schools accredited because none were accredited before he got there. I sit on the Board of Business at the College of Pharmacy there. And I said, "Well how many of our students coming here really know the story of Mordecai Johnson or of Chauncey Cooper, who was the first African American to be dean of the pharmacy school." I was real fortunate. I got the award named after him for my work in pharmacy. It was a bunch of deans that were there when I gave my presentation I told 'em I said, "You realize you're a dean today because Chauncey Cooper did such a great job." That's what really bothers me, because all of these people who contributed so much... it was about their greatness. I mean, because, they were looked at: "You're nothing. You can't do anything." But in spite of that they overcame and did all of these great things.

00:26:27

Going back to my last degree... and I did it on a rural black church... I was able to go over. I found a book written by a guy in Atlanta in 1947, but then he started talking about the work of Dr. Ellison. And I go into the archives at Virginia Union and find work that Dr. Ellison did in the 1920s for Virginia Tech. And it just, you know... but nobody talks about it. Nobody acknowledges it. And so all of these great stories just die. Occasionally somebody goes back and writes a good book and talks about it. But nobody knows. Nobody knows that. I always say. I always tell other pharmacists, "If we don't tell our story. Nobody else is gonna tell our story." And I tell young people and the old people at our church, "If we don't tell our story nobody is gonna tell it. It'll all be lost." Like I said, when Zenoria said, "Come." I said yes because I'm in the pouring-out stage of my life, you know. A whole lot has been poured in. And I wanna pour it out because I don't want any of it to go to the grave.

LB: No. Again I have a million questions, but one that you've just inspired is—I'll be working with my students this fall on creating an exhibition about early civil rights in Richmond, before 1960. Of course there are figures that everyone knows like John Mitchell and Maggie Walker. Who do you think it is super important to include?

LE: Well I think Gordon Hancock should be.

LB: Okay, good.

LE: Yeah. I think John Marcus Ellison should... off the top of my head, you know, because those are fresh. But there are people, you know... Neverett Eggleston. He opened up that hotel before the civil rights movement. Eggleston and Slaughter's—all black entertainers before the civil rights movement, they stayed in those hotels. You know, Oliver Hill.

LB: Yeah.

LE: Spottswood Robinson.

W1: Zenoria can't get up the stairs.

LB: Oh gosh.

W1: So we're gonna set up in the classroom downstairs.

LB: Okay.

LE: Okay.

LB: Sounds good.

W1: Already unlocked a classroom for us, so we'll just meet you down there.

LB: I can't believe that we are still not ADA compliant in this building.

W1: I know! I was surprised.

LB: Yeah, not in a good way.

W1: Yeah.

[Group relocates.]

00:29:03

LE: See I'm sort of handicapped too. I was in an accident in '12. [Recording skips] In fact I was worried about you getting in because I had a key card, you know for Virginia Union Presbyterian we gotta have a key card to get in.

00:29:11

Zenoria Abdus-Salaam: A key card to get in! Oh wow. Oh my.

LB: No, you can get in. But I'm sorry. I hadn't even thought about the elevator problem.

ZAS: And then I was like, "Okay." Because we ended up at the parking lot down at the bottom and I was like, "Okay... no... we can't do this because I am not doing these steps." And then when I got here and she said, "three flights"? She said, "She's up there on the third floor." I was like, "What?!"

LB: No, we should've thought of this classroom from the beginning.

ZAS: I said, "Nooo... Laura's gonna have to pay me today."

LB: Absolutely.

ZAS: You been doin' good?

LE: Hey, I'm just, you know, enjoying life.

ZAS: Hey, that's what it's about.

LE: Enjoying life.

ZAS: And you work hard.

LE: Yeah, well you know. Got all this in the brain, I'm trying to pour it out now.

ZAS: This is the time. You know? This is the time.

LB: I know. I feel so fortunate to have both of you here pouring it out.

ZAS: I hope he can pour some out of me because I don't remember. I can never. Leonard's mind is like... Wow. You just remember so many things. Sometimes when you drop notes I'm like, "Oh, I remember that!" You know? "This is what happened," you know?

LE: Well I guess I gotta get it out there.

00:30:47 **ZAS:** Yeah. I talked with a friend of mine and I was telling her about the young people at the masjid and how they have this really great history and yet they don't have anybody puttin' all of that down because actually that masjid is the first one in Virginia.

LE: And you know, when you go back just like the renaming of J.E.B Stuart School.

ZAS: Right.

LE: When they got to the top three names there was nobody local... with the students. So that just shows, they're not being taught. You know?

ZAS: Absolutely.

LE: They're not being taught.

ZAS: Absolutely.

LE: You know you talk about another name, George Peterson.

ZAS: George Peterson, yes.

LE: The first black principal of a high school in Richmond.

ZAS: The best was our principal.

LB: I do a lot of work with the Armstrong students and we did a big oral history about Armstrong Highschool that we turned into a play and everyone talked about George Peterson. Big time.

ZAS: You can't talk about Armstrong without talking about George Peterson.

LE: And then you know...

ZAS: I was trying to remember the Russian teacher's name. You remember?

LE: No, I don't.

ZAS: You don't remember him?

LE: No.

ZAS: Tall, very fair, gray-haired man and he taught Russian at Armstrong.

LB: That's amazing. I had no idea that they offered Russian.

00:32:16 **ZAS:** Yeah. And I just remembered that the other day and I said, "Oh well let's see if Leonard remembers that?"

LE: No. I just remember the French and the Spanish.

00:32:25 **ZAS:** Okay, yeah. I remember Ms. Taylor. Ms. Taylor was my French [teacher]. She was so awesome.

LE: And Mr. Crawford.

ZAS: Mr. Crawford. Yeah. Tennis player. Yeah.

LE: Yeah. And then, you know, another person, Pickard, with the Virginia... what is it... Virginia Teachers Association.

ZAS: Uh huh.

LE: Because see they had a whole black teachers association.

LB: Was there a separate union for the teachers?

LE: Yeah, separate. Yeah. Uh huh.

ZAS: Yeah.

LE: Mhm. They did it all.

ZAS: Everything was separate.

LE: In fact they recognized the group last year when the Virginia Education Association met. Because they had a special thing at the museum for them. But a lot of people... Most people never think about it but like A. D. Price...

ZAS: Okay.

LE: He was...

ZAS: O. P.

LE: O. P. Chiles.

ZAS: That's right.

LE: 'Cause O. P. Chiles, his funeral home, was in the middle of where Belvidere Street is now. And I go with my daddy to the pharmacy, and we lived on Marshall Street. And so we get off the bus on Leigh Street.

00:33:39

ZAS: Right.

LE: And we'd walk over there and go to the funeral home...

ZAS: That's right. That's right.

LE: ... and talk to O. P. Chiles. I'm just a little boy, you know, standing there, you know.

ZAS: O. P. Chiles was a great business. My mother used to... I think she might've mentioned him to you. Because he was one of those who tried to organize the business men. He wanted them to purchase some type... He said, "I don't care what we manufacture. Let's just get..." My mother worked for him. So she said, "Let's just." He said, "Let's get something so we can manufacture something." You know? And they all had, what he considered, enough money to do it.

LB: Back in the 50s? Or earlier?

LE: Earlier.

ZAS: That had to be earlier 'cause my mom was sayin' she was like in her twenties.

LB: Wow.

ZAS: So it was after Mommy came out of high school.

LE: You had to provide for your own.

ZAS: Yes.

LE: And so, it was everything. When I sit back and read about, you know, the emporium. We always talk about the bank, but we never talk about the emporium.

ZAS: Never talk about the emporium.

LE: ... that Maggie Walker had. The businesses on Broad Street.

ZAS: On Broad Street. Yeah.

LE: It was the same thing all over town. You'd have somebody, if they was in our community, somebody would do it.

ZAS: That's right.

LE: I can't tell you how many pharmacies we had.

00:35:04

ZAS: Okay? Everywhere.

LE: They had a pharmacy next to the firemen's station. I was reading about the fire station the black firemen started. But it was a black pharmacy there. It was North Avenue Pharmacy.

ZAS: Right?

LE: It was my father. It was Robinson's Drug Store.

ZAS: Robinson's Drug Store.

LE: William's Pharmacy. You know, we had...

ZAS: Running every community.

LE: Everything we did we had our own. Even the theaters.

ZAS: That's right. Every side of town had a theater.

LE: Yeah.

ZAS: Yeah. So it was like Robinson, Hippodrome. Then you had Booker T. and Walker. And what was in Fulton?

LE: Lenart. [00:35:50 unc. the Fulton theater could be the Lennox Theater, or the Star Theater, or... just a wild guess... they're combining the two names as Lenn-ar considering the Lennox Theater was the replacement for the Star]

ZAS: Lenart Movie in Fulton. My husband lived in Fulton.

LE: That's probably what I'd call one of the lost jewels in Richmond—Fulton. That was a contained community that had everything.

ZAS: Yes it did.

LE: I mean churches, businesses...

ZAS: Fulton was amazing.

LE: What RHAA did to them... it was criminal.

ZAS: Took over down there and destroyed a community like they did... I mean that was worse than what they did with 95.

00:36:24

LE: Really. 95 really affected, like I told you, affected my family. 'Cause my grandmother was the last one to sell for 95.

LE: They cut the houses in...

ZAS: 'Cause she was like, "No. Move the highway around me." And they were like, "No you gotta move. So we'll just use some eminent domain." When they said that my mother was like, "Okay, well, let's give them a price."

LE: But did you read the story in the Times Dispatch about that? How twice they voted and they voted to turn it down. And then the General Assembly established the Richmond Petersburg Turnpike Authority...

ZAS: ...to go around.

LE: Yeah. Because the citizens in Richmond and Henrico...

ZAS: Weren't goin' for it.

LE: ...didn't want it.

ZAS: Nobody wanted 95.

LE: But it took the heart out of that community and even with the bridges it didn't make...

ZAS: I mean it really destroyed New Town.

Man 1: And they didn't even take down to jail.

ZAS: Sure did. Remember, the jail was down...

LE: Nobody knew the jail was there...

ZAS: That's right.

LE: And then all the sudden they started buildin' this highway. And they left it standin' a long time.

ZAS: A long time. I don't know why.

LE: It looked like a jail out of the 17th century.

ZAS: It was funny.

LE: It was just something to see that.

ZAS: It was.

LE: Because it was hidden and it wasn't that far from the Capital, MCV, anything.

00:37:59 **LB:** Yeah. Wasn't that up along Belvidere?

LE: No.

ZAS: It was right near the Civil War Museum and all that.

LB: Oh, okay.

LE: No, it was there right off of Broad.

00:38:10

M1: You are right. Right off of Broad.

LB: Wow.

ZAS: Right off of Broad Street.

M1: You could see the viaduct. The viaduct was right across Marshall Street there.

ZAS: The viaduct was on Marshall Street.

LE: But I never knew where the jail was until they started building the highway.

ZAS: Okay. Alright.

LE: Yeah. Of course I knew where Belvidere is...

ZAS: Yeah. So you never knew the jail was in 6th Street Marketplace either?

LE: Oh yeah, I knew about that one.

ZAS: You knew about that one.

LE: Yeah.

ZAS: 'Cause that was the one... oh you didn't know that?

LB: No. Tell me.

LE: That was the lockup.

ZAS: That was the lockup.

LE: But then you know...

ZAS: But that's where they took people when they were doing the civil rights movement, to the 6th Street Marketplace.

LE: Yeah. Before they built Belvidere Street, the police station was there where Belvidere on Marshall Street. And the lockup was there.

ZAS: Yes.

00:38:53

M1: Yeah.

LE: They used to have these things they could actually stretch people out on and roll them into the lockup.

ZAS: Yeah sure.

LE: And my mother would always say, “If you don’t behave you gonna end up like that.”

LB: So when you were stretched out and locked up, were they just like stacking people up? What happened?

LE: I don’t know what happened...

ZAS: That is where they took them in.

LB: Wow.

LE: Talk about trauma. That’s something.

LB: Yeah.

LE: That’s something, trauma.

ZAS: It’s no wonder anybody has a good mentality when you come through things like that. But we just, I guess, you know, protection from the Almighty. We were a protected people.

LE: And then we were loved.

ZAS: Yes. We were protected people. And very much loved. I mean not just loved by your mother and your father, but everybody in your community, all your friends. We dearly loved each other. Those of us who are still here still feel that way about each other. We’re still that way about our friends. That was just life. You know. It was a wonderful thing when we were coming up, even with the trauma.

LE: When you talk about people... a lot of real great preachers like Robert Taylor...

ZAS: Ooh, Robert Taylor.

LE: ...and all these guys that were just around for years and could walk into the city manager’s office and they would listen.

ZAS: And they heard. Yes.

00:40:44

LE: They would listen.

ZAS: Reverend Taylor commanded. He had a presence about him. His voice always sounded like it was booming to me. I had known him since I was a little girl. I went to school at Carver

with Leonard. And his mother, Ms. Taylor, taught at Carver when I was there. He always seemed like a really huge bigger than life person to me when I was a little one. And then as I grew I began to understand his stature because Reverend Taylor influence worldwide. It wasn't just here in Richmond. I remember when Bishop Tutu's daughters came. Do you remember that?

LE: I don't remember that.

ZAS: Okay. They came to Fourth Baptist.

LE: Okay.

ZAS: As a matter of fact, Mpho, she was the older daughter, Mpho Tutu... she came... the Cox girl... Zenoria... What's her name?

M1: Can't think of her name right off hand.

ZAS: The Cox, she was an attorney and she worked with... Randall. Randall...

LB: Robinson?

ZAS: Robinson.

LE: Oh, okay. Alright.

ZAS: She was the attorney for Randall Robinson's organization. And she helped him to, part time, 'cause she was also one of the persons who helped Reverend Taylor bring in Mpho and all. They were talking about the struggle of apartheid in South Africa and how it related to us and how we should have hands across the globe helping each other.

LE: And when you mentioned Randall...

ZAS: Yeah.

LE: That brings me back to Max.

ZAS: Okay.

LE: You don't know how many men he was a father too.

ZAS: Oh yeah.

LE: I got a good friend down in Louisville, Kentucky. Every time we talk he just talks about Maxie and how Maxie made sure when he went to college that he went to Kentucky State to be with John McLendon. You remember E. J.?

ZAS: E. J., yes.

00:43:11

LE: E. J., he's still in Louisville, still in Kentucky, but like he said that man was a father to him because he didn't have a father. He's not the only one. A lot of guys, you know. Maxie made a difference in his life.

ZAS: Yes, he did. Maxie was the kind of coach that... he wasn't just there for the sport. He taught these guys how to live, how to survive in the kind of the world that they were getting ready to go into. Some of them I think he really recognized because Spencer Rozier said to me... and every Rozier except Spencer went to Maggie Walker... Maxie went to Spencer and told him that he wanted him to come to Armstrong. He talked to him about his life in New Town and how things were going to impact him as a college student and then he told him, he said, "You're good enough now that you're goin' pro." He said, "And when you do, these things are going to be impacting you." I was surprised. I never knew that. But as an adult, Spencer and I were talking about New Town, because we're both from New Town, and he said, "You don't remember how I went to Armstrong?" I said, "Ugh."

LE: And Maxie didn't drive. But yet still.

ZAS: How'd he get all over town?

LE: Yet still. If we were doin' somethin' wrong Maxie would show up. And so it doesn't happen a second time, you know what.

ZAS: That's right. Maxie was always up here. Yeah.

LE: He'd ride the bus. He'd ride the bus all over town.

ZAS: Sure did.

LB: Wow. And just get everywhere?

LE: Uh huh. Yeah. And so we always lookin' over our shoulder.

ZAS: You didn't know when he was gonna show up.

LE: "When is coach gonna show up?"

ZAS: The guys were always talkin' about him... "You know coach came up. We were at the party up in the... when Coach at the door. What?! Where'd he come from?"

LE: I mean he coached football, basketball, and baseball.

LB: He got around.

ZAS: Yes.

LB: And Randall, was he your generation?

LE: No he's older.

LB: He's a little older right?

LE: Older than Maxie. His youngest daughter Jean went to school with us.

LB: Ah. Okay. Okay.

ZAS: Sevilla [00:46:24 unc. name spelling] Who's Sevilla?

LE: No that's...

ZAS: Robinson. Sevilla.

LE: Yeah but she lived on 33rd. That's a different family.

ZAS: Okay.

LE: Yeah.

ZAS: Okay. 'Cause I remember Sevilla Robinson, I guess.

LE: It was Max Jr., Randall, and Jean.

ZAS: Yeah. Jean.

LB: And Randall got involved in the anti-apartheid movement pretty early on didn't he.

ZAS: Yeah. He was a youngster. He was out of college.

LE: And then you know Maxie Jr. was the first...

LB: ...broadcaster.

ZAS: Yeah. He was broadcasting, yeah.

LE: Yes. See those are the kinda people as role models and how they would mold people into what they were. It was so unselfish. The person a lot of people now are payin' attention to is Dr. Felix Brown.

ZAS: Okay.

00:47:16

LE: Felix Jackson Brown. He had a medical practice on Church Hill, but for years he served as secretary of the board at Virginia Union. That impressed Frank Royal so much that when Frank

Royal came here, he was chairman of the board for Virginia Union for years. But you see it's that thing of discipline. This man is practicing medicine at a time where it's very difficult. He's making house calls. He didn't have time really to do anything, but he took the time to go over and serve on that board. I don't think Frank was here ten years before he was on the board. And then he became chairman of the board for years.

LB: It sounds like a powerful community.

LE: It was. And that's the thing... somebody told me, said, "It's just like a bottle of perfume," he said, "what has happened. You took the cap off of it and everything is gone in there." Because everybody lived in the same community within walking distance of the pharmacy. You had Ethel Furman, I mean, and I filled prescriptions for Ethel Furman and had no idea she was an architect and designed all those buildings.

ZAS: Okay. How 'bout I sat in her classes and we didn't know. She taught Home Ec for a minute. I was like, "Architect? Where did that come from?"

LE: And you know, like Bernard Harris, you know Gene's, right up the street, Dr. Dillard, And Dr. Clark—he left early. He went to Smithfield. He was down on M Street. But all these people lived right there in the community.

LB: And I've even heard about Admiral Gravely coming back to Fulton and walking around in his dress whites and still being a part of that community.

ZAS: Yeah, he did. Yeah. Admiral Gravely... one thing I always appreciated about him... A lot of folk will leave home and they'll tell you they're from somewhere else. But he'll go, "Okay. I live right in Fulton. That's my home." He went back there on any number of occasions. He went to the school so that the children... He said he wanted them to see that there was somewhere they could go. That was important. You know how it's important to know... I just never understood... I was at Carver. And I was like, "My children live in Gilpin Court, but they have no idea where the name Gilpin came from."

LE: But what you said about... sayin' too many of the children didn't do that. I mean, I look at Dr. I. A. Jackson, he started. And then his two sons, I. A. Jackson Jr. and Reginald Jackson, took over the practice. But the only grandchild that stayed here is Richard. So, you know, they've gone.

ZAS: I didn't know they were all gone.

LE: Oh yeah.

00:50:43

M1: Oh, yeah.

LE: Isaiah, you know, he's conductin' all...

ZAS: Well I knew Isaiah went away 'cause he went to Russia.

LE: Yeah.

LB: That's pretty far away.

LE: You know, like the Terry's. Mr. Terry was in charge of the Manhattan Cab. His son was the math teacher over at Armstrong. Well they had a son and he left.

ZAS: That and Manhattan just...

LE: It just... It just...

ZAS: We didn't even... Did we use other cabs?

LE: No, you couldn't.

ZAS: You couldn't go in other cabs—that and you didn't get in it because you were afraid for your life.

LE: That and you didn't get in yellow either.

ZAS: You didn't get in yellow and you didn't get in red tops.

LE: Right, all you had were Manhattans.

ZAS: You had a Manhattan cab. Or you had a Jacqueline.

LE: Right.

M1: That and they wouldn't even come if they could.

ZAS: They didn't even come. That's right. They didn't even come. That's the truth. They didn't come to our neighborhood. Living around in there... see, we used to walk. You know? Through all of there going to the pool or you know over to the tennis courts and things. We would go that way and Manhattan right there on Brook Road... you just... it was just something to be really proud of. You know, that brother owned that and we never thought... and you know what made me remember this is Charles Ellis. You remember him?

LE: Yeah. Okay.

ZAS: He said to me, he said, "You know what happens Z?" I said, "What?" He said, "None of our generation, and the generation that followed, picked up on having businesses in our own community." He said, "We let that go." And he said, "That caused a real deterioration." He really was feeling that, you know. I thought about that; I didn't have to go out of New Town for a thing, unless I wanted to. I could get clothes there because there were tailors and seamstresses and they were in my community. We had stores already in the community... pool hall, barber

00:52:29

shop, beauty parlor, everything in your community. You didn't have to go anywhere. The only thing we really went outside our communities for was to socialize with the other communities.

LE: We talk about Arthur Ashe so much, but we forget the playing fields for baseball and the swimming pool. There's not even a marker there to note that.

ZAS: They don't even know that swimming pool.

LE: Because everybody from everywhere, if you were gonna swim you had to go there and Stretch Gardner who was the basketball coach at Maggie Walker, he lived two doors from me. He taught me how to swim at the swimming pool.

LB: Where was the swimming pool?

LE: Where the post office is now, all that complex was a swimming pool...

LB: The post office near Union?

ZAS: Yes.

LB: That was the swimming pool?

LE: You had the swimming pool, you had four tennis courts, you had the house where Mr. Ashe lived then, and then you had three or four baseball diamonds.

ZAS: That's right, the baseball diamonds.

LE: All of that was in one place.

ZAS: Was that all something that Arthur Ashe did? Did he put that all together or was that all there?

LE: No. The city put it together. Because they had a swimming pool at Byrd Park that was all white. And then you had... the city did it. The city provided it. But, you know, Mr. Ashe was the caretaker.

LB: Oh, okay.

LE: You know, for the entire park. He ran it with an iron fist.

00:54:47 **M1:** Yeah, he did.

LB: So this is Arthur Ashe's father then running it?

ZAS: Yes.

LB: Okay. I've never heard that story before.

ZAS: Wow.

LE: He could play so well because he had the courts there. Because they were always...

ZAS: And then I remember you said they were talking about him playing at Batt... I said, "How did he get to do that at Battery Hill? 'Cause we couldn't..."

LE: No, no. My family... Dr. Gordon, he was the black ear, nose, and throat specialist. And L. D. Smith, the business manager at Virginia Union, and [00:55:28 unc. name Proph Goodman?] who directed choir. When we moved into that neighborhood they shut Battery Park down.

ZAS: Yes, they did.

LE: They shut it down. There were only two places in Richmond that blacks could play tennis.

ZAS: That's right.

LE: And that was at the Brook Field and then Thom Henderson, he was the president of Virginia Union, he had a tennis court going...

ZAS: ...built right down the street from my house...

LE: ...a clay court built up there.

ZAS: I used to walk across it to go to school. Remember he had the red clay?

LE: Yeah.

ZAS: That was so nice, and the kids, the college kids, used to leave their tennis balls when they couldn't find them. And we would come and find them and they would be our baseballs.

LE: [00:56:15 unc. If you had that you had "cigar player tennis."] It was funny how, you know, I had this connection with Union, but yet still when it came to the civil rights part—I didn't. Because I would go over there all the time and it was amazing. I was a National Science Foundation scholar and I went to Bennett during the summer. All of that was going on in Greensborough but it was like they wouldn't let us go over there.

ZAS: Right.

LE: And I loved to play table tennis. And so I would go over to Union and I would walk in. I had my own ping pong balls. But I never... you know. It's just weird. I guess it's good because I would've probably got too involved if...

ZAS: Maybe you wouldn't have left. You would've hung around here.

LE: Well you know.

ZAS: You know then your daddy, he'd...

LE: My dad he told me when I got ready to pharmacy school... I'd tell him all these places I wanted to go. He said, "You got two choices." I said, "What's that?" He said, "Howard or Virginia Union." I said, "That was one choice." But I ended up going to Union. That's where I got my first... that's where I got my Master's of Divinity over there in 1999. So I ended up...

LB: No escape. Right?

ZAS: So your dad is smiling.

LE: Yeah. I went to his school, went to Howard, first.

ZAS: Yeah. Howard University. I went to Howard and it was really funny 'cause Ms. Pleasants, another person who should be touted, Grace Pleasant.

LE: Oh yeah. Grace Pleasant.

ZAS: The best counselor in the world. I had no idea what to do to go to college. Nobody in my family had ever been. She said, "Are you going to college?" And I said, "Yes ma'am." She said, "Well Zenoria, when are you going to send in an application?" I said, "Application? I thought you just go." She was like, "No. You have to apply. You have to go there and see if it's someplace you like." I was like, "Ms. Pleasant, my mother has no car. We have no money for application fees. Nothing." She was like, "Okay. So here's what I'm going to do." And she brought people to Armstrong High School to talk to me about college.

LE: Because I'd never heard of Franklin and Marshall.

ZAS: Okay.

LE: But she got students from Armstrong into Franklin and Marshall.

LB: Really?

ZAS: Ms. Pleasant was no joke. Ms. Pleasant.

LB: And that's a super fancy school. I've been there to give a talk.

ZAS: Yeah.

LB: And it's like, "Wow."

ZAS: Ms. Pleasant would get you in spots—wooh.

00:59:04

LE: And she was very concerned about me because, you know, I'd made up my mind I wanted to be a pharmacist. She said, "But Leonard, you need to have a liberal arts education." I said, "I know what I want to do." And so I finally got a liberal arts education when I went back and got what they call a Master of Theology, 'cause I had to read all of the...

ZAS: Had to do it anyway.

LE: So I got the liberal arts at 69 years old. But I'm glad I wouldn't 'cause it probably would've messed me up as a young person. Because I viewed it with a different lens.

ZAS: I went to South Carolina to live. I'd been teaching in Philly and I wanted to leave Philadelphia. I really was thinking of coming back home but I was married and he went to South Carolina. He saw this restaurant in South Carolina. He went in this place called PoFolks and he's like, "You know what? We gonna move to South Carolina." I'm like, "Uh, we just bought a house." He's like, "We movin' to South Carolina." He said, "And you know what?" He said, "They are the nicest people there. It is so nice." He said, "I went to this restaurant." He said, "The food was awesome." He said, "You know what they said when I walked out?" I said, "What did they say?" He said, "Y'all come back now ya hear?" Moved me to South Carolina. And I'm gonna tell you—it was a great thing for me and my children in terms of their education, the people that they became involved with. And the things that I had to do to help them navigate I had learned here... how to navigate certain things that they were still dealing with in Anderson, South Carolina. It was a very different kind of life for them.

But I just... you know... Richmond... I wanted to come back here. And so it wasn't really that happy going there at first, but it became a happy place. But when I was there I met this man who became my mentor, who is still my mentor. His name was Dr. Cosby [unc. name spelling]. And I'm sitting in his office and I'm telling a young lady who had come in to curse her counselor out... and I'm telling her about Ms. Pleasants. I'm saying, "This is the most wonderful..." I said, "Baby, if I had not had Ms. Pleasant—you would have never met me." I was telling her the value of having a good counselor. Her boss says to me, "Where are you from?" And I said, "Richmond, Virginia." He said, "I know her." I said, "You know who?" He said, "Grace Pleasants." I said, "Are you serious?" He said, "Grace Pleasants, Bill Cosby, I, and my wife, graduated together from Amherst campus, U of Mass." He said, "That's where they got their doctorates and they got them together." And I was like, "You really knew her." He was like, "Yeah." I'm like, "I'm all the way in South Carolina. And Ms. Pleasants is known down here."

01:03:52

LE: But that's the way it was with people in Richmond. People knew folk. I was in Atlanta gettin' an award and the guy said to me, "It is so nice to finally meet you. It's real good to know one of the incorporators of this organization." I said, "I know I have a whole lot of gray hair, but I'm not him." And I mean... It was my father. But, you know, pharmacists

ZAS: Put that in print.

LE: I always tell people: "We had the smallest pharmacy in America."

ZAS: Okay, okay.

LE: In the summertime it was burnin' up. In the winter it was freezing. I don't know where the heat system was to it. But, you know, people knew him... That's the first thing my dean told me. He said, "Just because your father graduated here doesn't mean that you automatically graduate."

ZAS: You gotta work.

LE: That's so wild. You can just go home. It's just so many people... and then people before them that we have no idea... It's just like Sarah Jones, you know. I'd only heard the name in passing, but only recently did Bon Secours You can have all these black positions here all these years and never see anything about her.

ZAS: Right.

LE: Never see anything about her. It reminds me of Dr. [01:05:24 unc. name Dylan? Dylans? Dillard's?]. He was an anesthesiologist. In one of his final speeches to the medical society he said, "We have such a great history. We gotta talk about," but he said, "but never lose your hospital over the organization." And we lost the hospital.

ZAS: We lost the hospital.

LB: Was he one of the physicians involved who had been at St. Philip's and was involved in creating Richmond Community Hospital?

LE: No. See... Richmond Community... That article they had in the paper—that was messed up.

LB: Okay.

LE: Because those were the members of the medical staff when we built the new hospital. The hospital goes back to Jackson Ward. The one on Brook Road where I was born, twenty-five bed one, that was the second location. And then the one there is the third location. And Style won't correct it, and the Times Dispatch won't correct it. Nobody wants to correct the story.

LB: So how did the Richmond Community get started in the first place then?

LE: Well, because there was no hospital.

01:06:39

LB: Right, so the first one was started by the twelve black physicians, right? Or no?

LE: I've forgotten how many exactly.

LB: Yeah.

LE: But it was... like I said it was down in Jackson Ward. I'll go back because I have it somewhere. I just have so much stuff. But, you see, back then there was a lot of body snatching

going on at St. Philip's. I'm not even sure exactly when St. Philip's was founded because in a lot of instances we were relegated to the basements of the hospitals. Just like... 'cause I have gone to retreat an African American in the basement, to see somebody. I remember at MCV... They had one black principal in Chesterfield, Cicero Cooke. He got sick and went to MCV. And my daddy went down there to see him. And they had him in the hall. They didn't even have him in a room. My daddy went up to see somebody, you know, "This man's a principal. Nobody deserves to be in the hall. But he's a principal of a school." Next thing you know, they had gotten him in a room and everything.

LB: I just interviewed a doctor who had started at MCV in 1980. He said then, even though it wasn't a written policy, they still had one building for the black patients and another building for the white patients.

ZAS: Yeah. That's why they have east and west wings.

LB: Yeah. That was crazy late.

ZAS: You could see your whole neighborhood, anybody who was sick. When you went to the hospital it was like, "Okay. Guess who else was in here?!" So how did that happen? You know?

LE: Friday and Saturday nights were the worst. I had asthma so a lot of times I ended up down there. I was on the board of the health system at Virginia Union. And Chippenham Hospital children's emergency room and Dr. Gretchen asked me to speak and like I said, "I'm so glad to have this because no children should ever have to see what I saw—people that were stabbed, cut and all, you know." And emerging from seeing that on a Friday and Saturday night...

LB: Yeah. That's horrible.

LE: It's worse than horrible. Judy Collins could probably tell you a whole lot about that, because she decided that she would work at St. Philip's. Do you know Judy Collins?

LB: No.

LE: She's a nurse practitioner and she tore up down there for years. Her husband is Joe Teefey. He used to run Medicaid for the State of Virginia.

LB: Okay.

01:09:48

LE: But Judith will tell you a whole lot about St. Philip's and their nursing school. That's why we have so many LPN's, because of St. Philip's. They had a separate black nursing school before they merged it into the school of nursing.

LB: Yeah. I interviewed Myra Smith once, who runs Leadership Metro Richmond, and her mom had gotten her nursing degree at St. Philip's and worked there.

ZAS: I had a cousin who did it, Shirley. Shirley... what's her name... she got hers there too. She passed ten years ago.

LE: And see that's the thing about the pharmacy, like I told you, they paid me to go. Then when I came back in 1970 they had only had two blacks graduate from the pharmacy school in the history: William Cooper, his son is married to Adele Johnson who's at the museum, and Archie Baskerville, the cardiologist. They were the only two that had graduated up until 1970 at the pharmacy school.

LB: So is Archie Baskerville Viola Baskerville's...

LE: Uh huh.

LB: Okay, so and Viola is Josine Osborne's sister, right?

LE: Right.

LB: Yes. Okay. Lots of relationships.

LE: That's a whole story there that he could tell you about going to school. You know Bill, Bill Cooper, died a few years back. It was real funny, I was speaking at something at this community college and the chancellor, whoever that was, he had gone to dental school and he knew Bill. And he wanted to know about him. That's another one of those stories. He had worked for years for other people and then he got an opportunity to buy a pharmacy in the west end, [01:11:49 unc. Marymount? Maymont?] Pharmacy, and one year after he bought it they came through with the downtown expressway and he lost everything.

ZAS: Everything.

LB: That's a terrible story.

ZAS: Those were the stories we lived. That happened to the best of 'em. You just look at 2nd Street and you think about the things that were destroyed on 2nd Street. There were businesses there that had thrived for decades and then, you know, somebody just decides, "Well we need to do this in Jackson Ward." And so when all of that happened, it was 95, and it just shut everything down. I mean, it really destroyed a whole community life.

01:12:39

LE: And you gotta wonder—was that would cause people to start leaving because when you look at the bank... You know, before I left Mickens I was the president of the bank, and he was the grandson... or?

ZAS: Grandson, he was the great grandson of Maggie Walker.

LE: And then the youngest son, the one that you see now on buildings and what not, he wasn't involved with the bank at all. But his father was the president.

ZAS: Yeah, he taught. He was a teacher, the youngest one.

LE: Okay. And when you look at Robert Scott, he had funeral homes all over Richmond.

ZAS: Okay. He had one son.

LE: And he got killed.

ZAS: And Robert got killed. I remember when he lost his life. I remember that. Yeah.

LE: He was a twelve-year-old, and more than a millionaire. 'Cause his daddy left him all the money when he died.

ZAS: He left him all the money. He was a youngster.

LE: And then when his mom died she left more money to him.

ZAS: Yes.

LE: And he never could... you know. And so that was just one business that just sort of went away. And even though they have the name, Scott's Funeral Home, it's totally different. It's the Lamberts.

LB: So now thinking back, what do you think of as the biggest turning points for the community?

LE: Richard Hunter came in from Seattle, Washington, took over the public schools, and combined Thomas Jefferson... it was Jefferson-Huguenot-Wythe, Marshall-Walker, and Armstrong-Kennedy. And it killed the greatest social event in the South.

ZAS: Yes it did.

LE: The Armstrong-Walker game.

ZAS: Or in the country. I have a cousin who said when he got to California teaching, they actually knew about the Armstrong-Walker Classic.

01:14:49

LE: This is something that the community rallied around.

ZAS: Yes.

LE: And nothing, even the Gold Bowl in its height, did not replace that Classic. That was the end.

LB: And that was what, '77?

LE: No, it was in the 80s.

LB: 80s.

ZAS: It was in the 80s when he came, because it was just before I came back here to teach.

LE: Yeah.

ZAS: I came back in '86.

LE: That was something... I wanna say we would even sell tickets at the pharmacy.

ZAS: We'd be runnin' all around the city. "You got any more tickets? You got any?"

LE: And then another thing—when the Harmonizing Four stopped singing.

ZAS: Oh yeah.

LB: When was that?

ZAS: When did they stop singing?

LE: It was somewhere probably at the 2000. Because that was another big event that everybody...

ZAS: When they had that big blocks [01:15:51 unc.]

LB: Where did that take place?

LE: At the Mosque, you know.

ZAS: Everything was there.

LE: But see there were things like that that drew us together, and when you could start going anywhere you wanted to—that's when the dollar started drying up. And then when the social functions start ending... it was nothing to hold us together.

01:16:22

ZAS: When you have no social life you have no community life together. Then you have no community. It doesn't matter the color of your skin. It's not what determines a community. It's the community life that determines a community. We had a community life that even though we were rivals, Armstrong and Walker, most of us had relatives that went to those schools. So it was big fun time in our families and in our communities when this great social event... Our schools... And then I think too, Leonard, you know they had that... We didn't get a part of the budget for sports through Richmond Public Schools, I don't know if you remember that... our football teams... and we didn't get new uniforms and things from the City like other teams. We didn't get that. So they said if we made money then we could keep it.

LE: And we made it.

ZAS: We made *money*, or as the kids say now, “We made *bank*.” That event made more money than anything that’s ever been held in Richmond, Virginia.

LB: So that’s where the whole sports budget came from then?

ZAS: Yeah. Then they took it back.

LE: Every Friday night it was amazing how they worked it out at Hovey Field. Armstrong would play one week. Walker would play the next week. And then you know even though the basketball game wasn’t this big, you couldn’t get in the Belgian building when Armstrong played Walker.

ZAS: No you couldn’t.

LE: I mean people were everywhere, the stage...

LB: Wow.

ZAS:

LE: What’d they say? They had thirty-three guys turned out for the football team at Armstrong. And I remember in ’63 it was 120 of us out there in heat like this tryin’ out for the team. And Maxie would run you to death. He’d throw your guts out.

ZAS: Over the edge. They’d just be throwin’ around that field. You should’ve seen it. And you know what was really something, was that when that game started at Hovey Field, it was like I don’t even... I have no idea what they were using for a sound system.

LE: They have a [01:19:09 unc.] out there.

ZAS: But you would hear those bands almost all over the city when they started playin’. Even if you weren’t at the game, you were at halftime, because you could hear it.

LE: And I mean and those games, one school, but the stadium would still be packed.

01:19:30 **ZAS:** It would be packed.

LE: It’d be packed. You know, some real rivalries. Booker T. would come and...

ZAS: Okay.

LE: I hate to think the great athletes that played before we were there but when you think on that field you had a Willie Lanier and Daryl Johnson who went on to play for the Boston Patriots.

ZAS: Leroy Sledge.

LE: Yeah. All of those great athletes on a Friday night there in Richmond. People would be everywhere, everywhere.

ZAS: It was like... I guess if you... Have you ever seen Friday Night Lights?

LB: No.

ZAS: You've never seen that show?

LB: But I've heard of it.

ZAS: That show always reminded me of us at Armstrong-Walker time. And when I moved to South Carolina... this was another thing that made it a happy place... you know what's just like having a Armstrong-Walker game? Is going to see Clemson play the Carolina Gamecocks. When the Gamecocks came to Clemson's... um... the Tiger Den...

LE: to Death Valley...

ZAS: Ooh. Yup. Don't come to Death Valley 'cause that's what it is. The first day I went down to South Carolina, to Anderson, I saw these chickens, rubber chickens, hanging from the telegram poles and the wires. And on the highway are these gigantic tiger paws... like this is some great tiger walking into Carolina country and these chickens are just flying over everywhere and this all reminded me of the Armstrong-Walker game. It really endeared itself to me because of that.

LE: It reminds me of how they used to decorate the cars.

ZAS: Okay.

LE: They'd get that...

ZAS: Crepe paper. We'd twist the crepe paper.

01:21:49

LE: Some of the cars would be green and white.

LB: Some were orange and blue.

ZAS: That's right. And your big rosette.

LE: Yeah. But the most... the adrenaline of coming out on the field and one side just roaring when Armstrong came on. But the roars would just... And then Walker would come out and the other side would rise up and the cheers would go up and it was just...

ZAS: And that year that Armstrong... There was one year we changed twice. Do you remember that year? That Armstrong had...

LE: Cannonball started Walker changing and all that...

ZAS: Yes, and everybody would wear like if we came out in orange and blue in the first half, at the second half...

LE: ...we'd come out in white uniforms.

ZAS: You'd come out in your white uniform with the orange on it or the blue on it. And Maggie Walker would do the same thing—they would switch up. It was a big deal. The women would be dressed so fabulously, and even some of the men. Some of the men were like rivaling those women. But I mean, just, you had to have a new outfit to go that game. You weren't going in your old clothes.

LE: And whoever won the game—everybody poured out the stands and Tom Mitchell says, "Please get off the field. This is a police order."

ZAS: Okay. "Please get off the field." Mr. Mitchell.

LE: And nobody would.

ZAS: Everybody was still on the field. By the time Mr. Mitchell would be cleaning up up there and everybody still on the field.

LE: And if Armstrong lost, Mr. Peterson would always be on the field congratulating the players at Maggie Walker.

ZAS: He sure would.

LE: 'Cause I never will forget the conversation he had with Willie Linear. They won the state championship. Willie went to college. Armstrong had beat him the year before 14-7 and he said, "I told you Mr. Peterson. [01:24:09 unc.]" And Mr. Peterson was just so gracious about it.

ZAS: Mr. Peterson was a gentleman. He was a classy man.

01:24:20

LE: Even though he put me out of the school a couple of times.

LB: Really? What happened?

ZAS: Mr. Peterson will get you now.

LE: Well, once there was a... The food started to get a little bad.

ZAS: Oh yes it did.

LE: And so I got together with some of the young ladies in the business department and they typed out all these things about when we gonna boycott the cafeteria. It worked perfect the first time. Then the second time somebody told him and he accused me of doing it. He says, “And all of ‘em were typed at your father’s pharmacy.” This is the first time it’s ever been told publicly to the whole class and the business—they did it. And then the second time it was before the Armstrong-Walker game. Kennedy had been assassinated. The first pep rally... it was just... it was like a wake. And I said, “No. We’re not gonna do this.” So I got a few guys and I mean we had confetti and everything. Mr. Peterson got up there, “This would’ve been a wonderful pep rally except for that group of...” So I got sent home for that.

ZAS: Okay. So you and Arthur Lee and the rest of you all.

LE: No, Waverly.

ZAS: Oh, Waverly, okay. ‘Cause it sounded like something Arthur would really enjoy.

LE: We lost the game too.

ZAS: Yeah, we did. Yeah. But it was just so... it was a time for unity and a time when... it was like a big family reunion.

LE: No fights. Nobody got locked up.

ZAS: Nobody got locked up. Everybody came home, I don’t care where... you could’ve been in the service.

LE: You talkin’ about both stands completely full, people on the grass, people standin’ around.

ZAS: People outside can’t get in because it’s already full. It used to be filled. The grass on the outside where the parking lots are now—that’s the University of Richmond’s center now.

LE: They were outside.

ZAS: Who has the stadium now?

01:26:59

LE: The Kickers.

ZAS: Huh?

LE: The Richmond Kickers.

ZAS: Kickers, yeah.

LE: Richmond’s got their own stadium now.

ZAS: They built their own, right?

LB: Yeah.

ZAS: Yeah. It was just everybody, everywhere. Soldiers would ask for their leaves during Armstrong... they wanted Thanksgiving... Nobody wanted Christmas. Everybody wanted Thanksgiving. And I know U. S. Army and the Marines said, “What in the world is happening in Richmond on Thanksgiving?” Because everybody came home and the guys would be in their uniforms at the gate. We would be so proud of them, you know. Everybody in your family who lived away was home. You have your big Thanksgiving party that Thursday. Friday there’d be dances all over the city.

LE: And don’t talk about Saturday. Saturday night...

ZAS: Saturday night. They’d say Saturday night, there’s a party in town...

LE: 10 West Leigh. Greg B’s ballroom...

ZAS: 10 West Leigh. Greg B’s ballroom... What’s that other little place? Market Inn? Market Inn. Just every business that catered to our community made money during that time.

LE: Didn’t make any during the game ‘cause wasn’t nobody...

ZAS: Nobody was there during the game, yeah.

LE: If you didn’t go to the game you stayed in the house. You didn’t want folk to know you didn’t go to the game.

ZAS: Right? I remember Michael’s Florist. There weren’t a lot of places you could get the rosette.

LE: Yeah.

01:29:02

ZAS: But Michael’s Florist used to make them, and then Johnson’s up in the West End. But people would run all over the city because you didn’t want to go to the game without your rosette. And my mom told me when they were... She was part of the first class when they had the first Armstrong-Walker game. They wore mums. So if you went to Armstrong you had a big orange... They would spray paint them. She said they had to be the orange mum and they would have orange and blue ribbons. She said all the way down to the end of your coat—long ribbons. She said Walker would have the big white mum and they had green and white ribbons on it. So they were mums.

LE: And that was another thing back then. It was real important to have fresh cut flowers.

ZAS: Yes.

LE: And the florist would actually deliver.

LB: Just as a routine thing.

ZAS: Yeah. Every week you had flowers. Your parents kept flowers in the house.

LE: And that still plays in me because you know I go to the grocery store to get flowers for my wife and like yesterday at church I got these oriental lilies and they didn't bloom they just sort of... and before church I'm out there cutting the lilies and putting them in the sanctuary.

ZAS: Okay. And we used to, in the churches, you had a flower club. Over there at First Union, you remember the flower clubs?

LE: Yeah.

ZAS: You had a flower club. These ladies, their job was to see to it that the flowers were on that pulpit, and in the sanctuary, and that it was decorated beautifully. And when you went there you always had fresh flowers.

LE: These artificial flowers, that's the worst to me.

ZAS: We never did artificial flowers. We certainly didn't. You're just as right as you could be. I can remember when I was in New Town and everybody would have these nice flowers, right, in their yard?

LE: Uh huh.

ZAS: And I would come down the street and I would pluck one from everybody's yard on my way to school. I was gonna give them to my teacher. And I would always have a nice bouquet of flowers for Ms. Dyson, Ms. Vann and Ms. Peyton [probably Helen Peyton Wallace]. Ms. Peyton just, I heard, she changed her name to Wallace. She married. She was a Peyton though, when I was at Carver. But Ms. Peyton... Ms. Dyson... and Mr. Dyson worked for A. D. Price. And Ms. Vann, her daughter, Lola Vann, was head of the educational association for the longest time down there.

01:31:56

LE: Another name, Ethel Overby she was principal first at Elba School.

ZAS: Yeah.

LE: And then she went to be principal at Albert Norrell. But she was president of Richmond Urban League like 37 years.

LB: Wow. Starting around when?

ZAS: She was at the beginning, wasn't she?

LE: Had to be in the 30s sometime.

ZAS: Yeah.

LE: Right? And it's something you know when they don't have...

ZAS: ...no urban...

LE: See that's what bothers me, you know. No Urban League. The NAACP a shell of what it used to be. But you know when you look back to all those presidents—nobody came close to the 37 years. I came the closest 'cause I took over somebody else's term and then did mine too.

ZAS: Okay.

LE: I did two. Nobody else did two. And she did 37 years as president of Richmond Urban League.

ZAS: And the Urban League was very...

LE: ...influential...

ZAS: Yes.

LB: So tell me more about the Urban League back then.

LE: Well I can just tell you what I know from the 70s. It was, I mean, it was an interracial group with the power brokers on there. That's when I met Judge Tidey. He was on that board on the vice president's at... it was First Merchants then. But James Forbes, who ended up being pastor of Riverside in New York, he was the president. Darrel Rollins who was the pastor at 31st but also was the dean at Shaw University in Raleigh and got them accredited. All of these people were presidents of the organization. And when the Urban League had that dinner, they would have it at the John Marshall Hotel and it was the biggest dinner in Richmond. I mean, William Clay—I had him come to speak. I had Arthur Ashe come to speak. One year we had... who's the guy that used to be Secretary of Commerce under Clinton? Brown.

01:34:16

LB: Oh yeah.

ZAS: Okay.

LE: Ron Brown. But the thing is—nobody knew Ron Brown. And so that was the smallest group that night when he came and Manny Deese was responsible for him coming. Then years later when Ron got all... because he was head of the D.C. branch of the Urban League. When he became real big I said, "You all have to stop looking at the name and just come."

ZAS: Because there was a purpose, you know. And that's one thing, I think, in our elders... that they always saw the purpose. They supported regardless. They supported. It could've been a child up there speaking. The elders were supportive. You know.

LE: And that's the thing about Manny. You know, Manny was the first black city manager here. And a lot of people... well he was a very private person. And so really people didn't get to know him. But I got to know him when I went down to this little place called Susan, Virginia, and became pastor of a church. And Manny lived right on Lumberjack Lane. And he started coming to church. I really got to meet him and know him. When you look at a whole lot of the black public administrators all over the country—he played a part in developing them. The national black public administrators met here one year. He had me come and do the invocation. And I mean, it was like I was with a rock star being with Manny Deese. See...that's the type of people who've been here. And nobody talks about them. Nobody even...

ZAS: I doubt that there's very few people even remember him.

LE: He was the first...

ZAS: People like you and Mommy.

LE: First black city manager here. Led the... the...

LB: Crusade?

LE: No. Up in Baltimore, when they integrated the restaurants up there...

LB: Yeah.

LE: He led that as a student.

LB: So why does nobody know about this history in Richmond? That's what keeps surprising me.

ZAS: Does it surprise you?

01:37:08

LB: It surprises me because I was talking with a friend of mine who does oral history in Atlanta. And he says, you know, "If anyone was even remotely close to attending a march once, they would be interviewed five times." Right? And there are a lot of cities like that and Richmond kind of gets passed over. What's that all about? Do you know what I mean?

LE: This is the unspoken thing in Richmond—there are a lot of interconnections in black and white families. And the families that for years were in power were related to the white families. Even John Mitchell, we all know that he was born at Laburnum. So we don't know whether his daddy was the master or what... We whisper these things because I was at the museum and we got all these pictures of Richmond going back. There's a picture of A. D. Price Sr. And I'd never seen a picture of A. D. Price Sr. And I didn't realize how fair he was because A. D. Price Jr.

ZAS: Okay.

LE: But then that sort of confirmed the story that's whispered—that Price was related to the Bliley's. And then for years, you know Bliley didn't buy hearses and all that stuff, he just used all the Price stuff and just changed the thing on it. And so... these are the stories...

ZAS: We all knew the stories. We all knew the stories. You could hear them. Somebody was always talkin' about whose family was related to who. And... "How'd they get to work there?" "How'd they get that position?" You know?

LE: And so that's what happens. I don't know... just like... I don't know the origins of like the Lamberts, but I know their parents catered in all the homes. And so Richard runs the funeral home. Leonard was a lawyer. Benny was a state senator...

ZAS: They made all the connections. There was a legislator... and an ophthalmologist.

LB: I'm gonna be a devil's advocate here for just a second and say, "Is this different from any other city?" Like you go to Montgomery or Selma or Atlanta or Greensborough—would it be any different between the black and white communities there? Do you know what I mean? Is that so unique to Richmond?

LE: The difference here is that, from what I've read, the slavery here in Richmond wasn't as cruel and that if it was kept in check by saying, "If you're a rebellious slave you'll be sent south where it's really rough."

ZAS: Where it's rough, yeah. Nobody wanted to go.

LE: And slaves coming through, going north, telling their story... nobody wanted to go there. Because we... we're real passive. Real passive.

ZAS: Yeah. And I don't think it's that different in other places, but I do—for me—I see that there's a difference in the attitude of the people who were the enslavers in other states than the ones here. And that difference in that attitude is they will tell the truth. They know what they did. It's okay. It's out there. In Richmond... we don't wanna talk about it. And *we* 'll talk about it, meaning, the slaves. The enslaved will talk about it, but not the enslavers. Because we don't want to connect that stigma to our family.

01:41:23

LE: And then, you know, because things aren't talked about subtly...

ZAS: Yes.

LE: We just accept a lot of things.

ZAS: Mmmm.

LE: I was chairman of Retail Merchants for two years and presided board meetings. No problems. The talk of the statues come up and I went to a board meeting. I hadn't been to a board meeting. And I looked and there are pictures of all the statues in the board room. I'm saying—I've been totally oblivious to this. I started really pastoring over in South Richmond when one of my patients got sick and asked me to fill in. He was close to Ruth's Chris because he met at Huguenot Road Baptist Church. And I would go down there and they... Last year I had to do an anniversary in that same area and I went into Ruth's Chris and I noticed pictures of the statues are in there. And so you know I stopped going. And I sent them a letter and told them, they take 'em down, I'll come back. But you know, they gotta take 'em down. Everything is real subtle. That's why you don't hear the cry to take them down. Because it's sort of something. They were there. I mean...

ZAS: They're just there.

LE: I went to the Lee Medical Building when I was a little boy. I went by that Robert E. Lee statue a million times but you know... it's just there. And what it meant... it was never taught to me, what it meant. It took this discussion to have me realize what it's about. That discussion is not happening in so many areas right now. That's why the children are the way they are. They don't know.

ZAS: They don't know. You're right.

LE: I'm taking a class and we were talking about the slave culture—at Union Presbyterian—and one of the things was a field trip to Washington to the museum. One of the guys in the class was a Pinckney. Their parents signed, ancestors signed, the Constitution, from South Carolina, and another young lady from Stanton and she says, "I never learned any of this in school."

ZAS: Wow.

01:44:51

LE: But it's written in the books but see... a whole lot of times... I hate to say this but black people—we don't read. I guess that's why I read so much. Because... a guy told me, Robert Harris, he was educated from Danville, he used to be here in informations, and he said, "If you wanna hide something from black folk people—write it down. Write it down and they'll miss it every time." My wife gets me all the time she says, "Your head is always in a book." I said, "It's so much. Every time I read something I learn more." Like I was talking about reading about King and Mordecai Johnson and Benjamin Mays, but then I'm learning about this theologian at the seminary that Mordecai Johnson went to and how that theologian influenced him so now I'm trying to get his books on social ministry and whatnot. I even bought one today and I haven't read the first one I bought from him yet, but, you know, you get to it and you gotta understand that we don't understand. I'm gonna be honest, like I always say, because the educational system is so Eurocentric, and then because our religious institutions, whether we like it or not, they are Eurocentric, and so they enforce the same narrative, and we're blind to it. I had a guy tell me. I'm in Middlesex County now and there was a lynching in Middlesex County. And so I said, "I'm gonna try to get the stone placed at the courthouse." I said, "If it's not placed at the courthouse I'll have it placed in the driveway of the church because we got eleven acres, you know. Never fill it all up."

ZAS: And you don't have to ask.

LE: And—"Why do you wanna dig that up?" I said, "It's part of your history."

ZAS: It's sometimes hard to say this to your own but I always say, "If you don't know your history, you're doomed to repeat it." To me, when my children were coming up, I told them two things about Richmond, Virginia. I told them, I said, "Your mommy lived in Richmond, Virginia. I was born there." And I told them, "It was a very racist city." I said, "And the other thing is—it was the capitol of the Confederacy. So I probably sound different to you than other folk when I'm talking about racism and things like that, but it had a lot more to do with the things that you experienced when living in a place like the capitol of the Confederacy. You had to know your place. You had to know your place here, you know? And if you didn't know your place, then you could find yourself anywhere, or up in a tree somewhere, or a cross in your yard... I'll never forget that as a little girl, not very little but not a teenager either, when they burned the cross in Oliver Hill's...

LE: Oh right, yeah I remember that.

ZAS: ...yard. And I knew Olive Jr. because my dad was a gospel singer and we would be at the radio station. He used to play the violin. Sometimes they would have him there playing the violin. And then we would go to Lott Cary conventions. We would go every year.

LE: That's another person who was a... I think he was at Ebenezer. And he was the first black missionary, and he come right out of Richmond, Virginia.

ZAS: The Lot Carry Conventions, we would always be there every year. It was an every year thing. As the youth of Lot Carry, we would be at this convention together and he used to do sermons sometimes at the Lot Carry convention. He would be the minister for the youth. So when they burned that cross, I was like, "Oh, my friend." You know? "Is he okay?" You know. "How's he feeling inside?"

LE: Oliver Hill's gonna be okay. He was such a [01:49:00 unc.].

ZAS: Okay. And I should have known that, right? I was a little girl.

LE: 97 years old he'd see me, "Edloe, you behavin'?"

01:49:11

ZAS: He was funny. It was just... you know. My concern... I knew Mr. Hill was gonna be okay. My concern was his son, you know, Little Oliver. But the things that you deal with, like you said, the things you know, the things you see people do to people, the way we were treated, you know, it made you complacent. It could make you that way. It could make you not react when you should be reacting because it's just like TV. You're looking at it all the time. It's happening all the time. It becomes a part of your life. We used to call the TV the "ignorant box." You look at it all the time. You know what I mean? It'll just dumb you down. And the same thing was

happening in the society to us because we just... we just accepted that certain things happen to us if you did this. Or if you didn't do that.

LE: You look at all the great preachers in Richmond—but how many of them are social justice?

ZAS: No.

LE: I had one person that was opening at that church. And they made sure that I was called to be a pastor down in Mathews County.

ZAS: Okay. “Take him somewhere else.”

LE: Because... you know.... I was in a group one night of black professionals—all pharmacists, physicians, and dentists, you know, and I talked about how, “What could we do?” because all of us had been, you know, been lifted. And I was told, “Every time black men get together we don't have to talk about what we gon' do.” That's the mentality. Jeremiah Wright, I can only think of two churches that he came to Richmond to preach in.

ZAS: That's right. That's right.

LE: The only time Otis Moss has been here, he was at Union Presbyterian Seminary. Barber, Freddy Haynes does come up occasionally but, I mean, these are social gospel preachers, but you don't have them here in Richmond.

ZAS: And you know I was in Philadelphia when that was Leon Sullivan and when he went to Ford's Board, I said, “Oh my god. I think that's Leon Sullivan [01:52:16 unc.]” In Philadelphia, he built... there's a mall... it's still there. He built a mall, his church on the mall, in Philadelphia. He had the biggest church and I understand they're trying to sell the church.

LE: Well they went through a whole lot of stuff, we don't need to go into that.

ZAS: Yeah, yeah. But he was such an activist. And Harris.... Harris... Dolores? Harris. She actually ended up in Congress, from Philadelphia. But they were really close in dealing with the social issues of the people in north Philadelphia.

LE: Corey Walker, he's here in our intellectual social justice but a lot of people aren't embracing him, so I don't know... And he was my classmate when I was in seminary. I don't know how long he's gonna stay dean over there because he speaks to the issues.

LB: I mean... yes to the genteel silence in Richmond, but still, given the community here, given the strong ties, why so much resistance still to social justice conversations or actions? Right?

LE: And I don't know because, like, you talk about the stories. I'll never forget I was sittin' there listening to Ed Harris speak one day and he talked about how when he burned Second Baptist Church down and they went to him and said, “Well, what you all gonna do?” And he said, “We gonna build a better building the next time.” This was the 1800s. But that spirit... it's not here anymore. It's... I don't know. When you look... like... that story isn't told. None of

John Mitchell's story is told, the trolley car boy, you know... his running for governor. It's just... you know.

ZAS: He knows that story. People [01:54:37 unc.].

LB: You know who knows that story? Brian Palmer, who's doing the photographs for this exhibition. He'll be in touch to take your portrait. He is obsessed with John Mitchell. That is his personal hero.

ZAS: Oh wow.

LB: So he'll have a lot to talk about.

LE: He's been in touch with his great great nephew...?

LB: I think he is in touch.

LE: Yeah. Cary Mitchell?

LB: Yeah.

LE: Because he has a thesis that somebody did on John Mitchell back in the 50s.

LB: Oh, interesting. Well tell Brian that when you meet him.

LE: Okay.

LB: Because he'd be completely fascinated to learn that 'cause he's doing a lot of work now with his wife in East End Cemetery and Evergreen to try and restore all the graves there.

ZAS: He was telling me about that. We were talking about... Marty Jr. said to me one day. He said, "Did you know that Maggie Walker purchased cemeteries in every state just about in this country?"

LB: I never heard that.

01:55:44

ZAS: I said, "I never..." I said, "No." And he said they're trying to locate all of them now so they can document where they are. But she had actually purchased, in just about every state, a graveyard for African Americans.

LE: You go down to Evergreen... Webster Davis... because that's the school down in Fulton. And Bowler.

ZAS: Bowler School.

LE: All these people and it's just...

LB: So what do you think... two questions connected... what do you think the youth growing up in Richmond now need to know? And what do you think are things that the community knows but is in danger of forgetting?

LE: Anything that happened more than ten years ago.

ZAS: Okay.

LE: And sometimes, you know, not even that far back.

M1: That's right.

ZAS: That's the truth.

LE: I guess what hurts me so much, being involved with the black history museum, is how few people belong and how few people give. We have to wait on Dominion, Altria, West Rock to fund it. And I mean, you can't see but so many things when somebody else is funding the story. You've got the beautiful new building, but we've got all that space on Clay Street and a lot of stuff there and it's not even being seen. Just like we finally brought out some of Marian Anderson's gowns.

ZAS: Oh wow.

LE: There's a bunch of 'em on Clay Street.

ZAS: She had a very good friend in Richmond

LB: I didn't realize that the Clay Street facility was still kind of there and full of materials.

LE: Well alright.

ZAS: That was our library.

LE: Yeah. That was the library.

01:57:53

ZAS: We don't wanna let it go if we can help it. It's important to our community so you don't give it back if you have it. You know what I'm saying. But I didn't know they had Marian Anderson... she had... her best friend... you remember Mr. Arrington, that was the janitor at Armstrong? His wife and Marian Anderson were best friends.

LE: Well probably that's how we got the gowns at the museum.

ZAS: Wow. Wow. I went to Howard with her niece and she was goin' on, she was like, "My auntie's gonna be here and we're gonna..." And I was like, "Okay." And then I said, "Well who's your auntie?" 'Cause she was like, "You should know my auntie." And I said, "Well

who's your auntie?" She said, "Marian Anderson. She's gonna be here on campus singing." I'm like, "Yeah!" She said, "That's my aunt." I'm like, "Okay." You know you just never know who you're gonna meet at Howard.

LE: I tell you. I missed out. And it makes me mad because when they refused to let her sing at Constitution Hall, and she went to sing at the Lincoln Memorial... my daddy was there.

LB: Really?

ZAS: Wow. Wow.

LE: So he told the story. He would tell me all of this kind of stuff.

ZAS: Okay. See.

LE: Just like the Armstrong-Walker. Big thing was the Howard-Lincoln football game.

ZAS: Yes, yes.

LE: We had this exhibit and I walked in there and the first thing I saw was a poster for the Howard-Lincoln game. And it was like my dad came in.

ZAS: Yeah. The memories, yeah.

LE: But see that's why I said my frustration with not being able to get to my nieces and nephews and talk to them. Because a lot of it is oral history. I'm just hoping one day, you know Elvatrice does a real good job but I'm just hoping one day we could one day set up and just have people come down and do oral histories and record them just like they did...

LB: That would be the best.

LE: Just like they did at the Library of Congress. To listen... you know I had never heard that 'til a few years ago and just to listen...

ZAS: Narratives.

02:00:18

LB: Yeah.

ZAS: And I knew about them years ago but I never could... And I knew because my ex actually worked there and he said they were there. And I was like, "Really?" And he was like, "And anybody, you can go in and read and listen to everything you want."

LB: Yeah.

ZAS: And I was like, "Really? At the Library of Congress?" Because in my mind...

LE: Everything is there.

ZAS: In my mind nobody could go there right off the street.

LE: We used to go there when I was at Howard.

ZAS: Well I knew we could go there as students from Howard, but I wasn't thinking, "Everybody goes in here to listen to what they want to listen to." But it's all there if you wanna hear it. And when I first read those, what really struck me was Richmond being this port. And then nobody who was talking... was from Richmond.

LE: And that's the other thing—you go to the national museum and there's a lot of things early about Richmond, but almost nothing about the civil rights movement and very little after that.

LB: It's strange.

ZAS: Yes, yes, yes. You're right.

LE: So you see all of this stuff before 1910, but after that...

ZAS: You see the big picture that was up on the wall of the... it was a Juneteenth picture, I believe. Emancipation Day Parade. It's up on the wall. And everybody walked in. Everybody's looking at it. I said, "That's Richmond, Virginia. I've seen this picture before." I had seen the picture in VCU's archives. The picture is on Franklin Street and I had never seen that many African Americans doing anything except a Armstrong-Walker game. But these were all African Americans and they were celebrating and dressed—wooh!—they were lookin' like they were goin' to the game.

LE: And a lot of stuff is being thrown out too.

LB: Yes.

ZAS: Mhm.

02:03:00

LE: There's a art collection that the Gottwalds have and this guy toured art and held it and he trained all these people and they were ready to throw it out. It's worth millions of dollars. And the other day when they were building the new grocery store, they were tearing down the house where Reverend Joseph Carter lived and he had all of this stuff and they were ready to throw it away and the guy said, "No, I'm not gonna throw it away." He carried it to the museum.

ZAS: Oh heaven alive.

LE: And this is how, see, the older people appreciated something. When I got the Distinguished Retailer in 1994, Reverend Carter taped the newscast. I didn't even have a copy of it myself.

ZAS: Oh, get out of here!

LE: But we don't, we don't do that. What I told the museum, I gave them the tape back so they can digitalize it. But I also now willed them the award, along with... I was the first black to get Virginia [02:03:59 unc.]

ZAS: [02:03:59 unc.] connections. That's awesome.

LE: So I'm gonna give all of that to them.

ZAS: That's awesome.

LE: Because all this stuff, that history, is never told. And to think it was 2015 before black pharmacists got recognized in the state.

LB: That's crazy.

ZAS: In the State of Virginia. Wow.

LE: When I went to school...

ZAS: He would be proud of you.

LE: ...my father couldn't belong to the National Association because the State Association didn't allow black members.

ZAS: Right.

LE: And I ended up being a national officer in the student association, but couldn't belong in my home state.

ZAS: Wow.

LE: And only when they passed Medicare and Medicaid did all the state associations open up.

LB: It's a long time coming.

02:04:54

LE: And I had been president of the American Pharmacists Association Foundation before I could become president of the Richmond Pharmacists... and I wasn't even practicing pharmacy.

LB: That's so crazy. So when did that happen here? When did it open up here?

LE: Well they opened up, but it was just three years ago that I became immersed in it.

ZAS: And you had closed!

LE: Yeah. I sold the pharmacies. But I guess because I was a national officer they said...

ZAS: “Oh, we can do it.” Yeah.

LE: We got some strange stories here.

LB: Well, I’m serious, I think it would be amazing to get a sound booth set up at the Black History Museum and do some oral history because you know what, I mean, this exhibition is gonna be opening in January. It’ll be up all spring and we are looking to do a lot of connected events. We’re publishing a book out of it so that you’re text panels and portraits will be in that book. Elvatrice is doing an essay. Michael Paul Williams is doing an essay. I’m doing an essay. And then we’ll have an interview with Brian Palmer, the photographer, in there as well. But we’re gonna be doing, hoping to do, an event at Armstrong and maybe doing an event at Black History Museum would be the thing to do with a sound booth.

ZAS: Oh that would be wonderful.

LE: But you know most people aren’t even aware of 2019.

ZAS: Okay. And I had been working on that when I had Clara Muhammad, was when they first started talking about it and Clara Muhammad was still open at the masjid. I registered to be a part of all of that and in those original talks we were meeting at Janean’s place [02:07:05 unc. name spelling] and we met with Senator Marsh. We did a lot of talking about how we would like to see all of this come out. You know, what would we like to see.

LE: But it’s been co-opted now so it’s... you know. The story of what happened 400 years ago, it’s basically...

ZAS: It’s not our story. It’s not our story. The one thing that I think really bothers me about Richmond is that we still have that 17th Street thing going and we will not speak of it as it really is, you know. How do we separate that it’s a graveyard down there, and there’s the Lumpkin Jail down there, and all of these clubs and everything, and all of these buildings that have been there since the graveyard was there.

LE: And the gate where Prosser hanging is.

02:08:15

ZAS: And the site for Gabriel Prosser’s hanging. All of those things are still there. So we have those things, but each and every one of those buildings on Main Street has a bank or an auction house or... if you wanna put some plaques up—tell it. You know?

LE: And with modern technology,

ZAS: Clean your slate, you know. Repent. Get pardoned. You know what I’m saying?

LE: No. Reconciliation.

ZAS: No. I don't like reconciliation. I'll tell you. You can't reconcile a thing with me on this one. Now, you know... here's... I went to the sermon and I'm standing there and the folk are there from Benin and our folk and I'm thinking, "Okay, well the major people who should be here, if this is a real reconciliation..." Far as I'm concerned, the people who really had really worked to change Richmond for my people were there. I was like, "Okay, so where are the group from Virginia Union?" You know what I mean? They weren't up on the stage. Where were the folk from the... the elders from the NAACP that was really working... where were they?

LE: Well, you know, you can sum up how Richmond is in one thing. I have to go down to Newport News occasionally to teach. And I go across the city parkway and there is Nat Turner Boulevard. Is there a Turner Boulevard in Richmond? Nat Turner Street? Nat Turner anything? In Richmond? That sums it all up.

ZAS: Okay. No Nat Turner.

LE: That sums it all up. And I mean, Schlesingers, you know, big fancy restaurant in Newport, it's right off of Nat Turner Boulevard. Yes. I mean, you should see, I mean, medical offices and everything on Nat Turner Boulevard. And when I see it—15th Street right there beside the Reconciliation Statue. Make that Nat Turner Boulevard.

ZAS: Oh, you makin' a suggestion?

LE: Yeah.

ZAS: 'Cause I was gonna... If Gabriel Prosser's thing is right here, and you got your statue, so...

LE: Well that would even be better, but all of these people... You see how the system had it. It's systemic how certain things aren't lifted up. Even how they moved John Mitchell's house.

ZAS: Okay. How you do that. He did not live right there.

LE: Yeah. And where Shorty got the plaque where the paper used to be. But how do you move somebody's house like that and put it somewhere else?

02:11:50

ZAS: Anywhere you want to. That's just like... it always bugs me that there's a Two Street Festival. Because there's never been a Two Street in Richmond, Virginia.

LE: It was always 2nd Street.

ZAS: It was always 2nd Street.

LE: Or the deuce.

ZAS: Or the deuce. That's all it's ever been ever year of my life. And then here comes some other people who think they can name something that... and the festival was never even there in

the first place. That festival did not start with the folk who are dealing with it now. It was a community affair. And that's what happens in Richmond. They come and usurp community affairs and make them their own and then they become this grand thing because they can throw dollars behind it. It becomes this grand thing that looks like it's real Richmond. It is not real Richmond. Jackson Ward did not have the borders that it has now. It never did.

LE: It's a untold narrative.

ZAS: It is. Okay. It is. It really tears at you when you know that the real story is not being told. It's not going to take anything from one community to let another community shine. It really doesn't.

LE: In fact when you know most stories, it's a whole lot...

ZAS: ...it's richer.

LE: Yeah.

ZAS: It gives you a much richer culture when everything is together, you know, that combination. You always get a better meal if you have more than one thing on the plate. But this is just... you know... this has been Richmond for all of my life. And I'm going to pray that this is not Richmond by the time my grandchildren are my age. You know what I'm saying?

LE: Yeah.

ZAS: I'm at a wit's end. I just think that, like you say, maybe this booth will help, but I think that we have to come up with a way to write our own narratives and to be able to post our own history. And we thank people like you, but it's not your job, really. It's our job because it's our history, and we know it. And so when you do what you do it keeps it from getting totally lost. So of course, those of us who know what it is appreciate what is being done. And then at the same time you have very ambiguous kind of feelings about it because, for me, nobody tells your story like you tell your own.

LB: It's true.

02:15:30

ZAS: Nobody knows it like you know it. There are details and there are feelings and things that you can't put to my story and I can't put to your story. So it's very important that we find whatever mode we have to find a way to get this real history. Who's willing to work on a historical project that will tell the real history? Sort of like the family that was living in the mansion up on the hill by the island, by...

LE: Who Dooley?

ZAS: Dooley. And they talked about the "other side." You know? The other side of Richmond has to be told.

LE: Downstairs.

ZAS: And downstairs, yes. It has to be told. As you can see, we're the children out of this. We're not that far out of being enslaved, even though people would like us to think that was a long, long time ago. See I know it wasn't that long ago because when I looked up my family, and I found my grandpa and I think my mother told you about him coming down and selling the groceries and veggies and stuff... Charlie Fleming was a slave. I had always been told that: "Your grandfather was a slave. He lived up Broad Street Road. He was in Goochland." We knew that... As a matter of fact they said whoever Bryant Park is named for, it was an enslaver of my family. Whoever... who was the guy that had the tobacco... not him... what's the other family... I can't even remember. Just left my mind. Just went just like that. But anyway, there was a guy, he had the tobacco and he was really big in Richmond with Tobacco... do you remember the name? Let's see Bryant Park.

LE: Those were the Bryants.

ZAS: They were the Bryants, yes. The Bryants and there was another family. And I can't remember the name right now.

LB: Not Reynolds?

ZAS: It wasn't Reynolds, no. These were... Ginter.

LB: Okay.

ZAS: But not the Ginter that had the tobacco.

LB: Okay.

02:19:50

ZAS: Not him. There was another family of Ginters here in Richmond—the ones that lived in Goochland. As a matter of fact it was called "Licking Hole." Wasn't even called Goochland, it was called Licking Hole. And Licking Hole is where my family was from. When I looked at the census, even though I had always known, all my life, that my grandfather was a slave, when I saw "servant" beside his name, it just... I just... it just brought to tears. Because it was real then. Hearing it is one thing. Seeing it on documents is something else again. When I saw that and then I saw my granny's name there as one of his children and also seeing "servant." And his wife and then all these folk in the house, you know? That was a turning point in my life—to really know that yes, this was a real deal here in Richmond, Virginia. And it wasn't that long ago, because my granny grew up knowing that her mother's father was a slave. And she knew him. So it couldn't have been too long ago because my granny would have been about 112 now if she was still living. So like... you know... we're not that far removed from the slavery issue of old, you know. In the narratives it always makes it seem like it was a thousand years ago. It was not. It was yesterday. And so, before people like Leonard and I and my mother and any other aunts and uncles that they may have that are still living can tell these stories and... Our families are dying out. So who's gonna tell the story? Our children don't know them. So it has to be documented... has to be. Like I said, I'm not sure how we bring all of that together, because

young people... they're just not that interested because it doesn't affect them. They don't know that the life that they are living has already been affected by it and will continue to be affected by it until they understand it... 'cause you can't walk away from something that you don't know anything about. Ghosts just stay there. They don't move. And until you know that they're there, and you can get rid of 'em, then it'll be there. So we have to do something, you know. That's been on my heart for a good while now and I just have not figured it out. You know... exactly where to put the pieces. But I do know it has to be done and it has to be done soon. Leonard and I have to get our crew together.

LE: I'm always working on something.

ZAS: I know you are. And I don't know... maybe that would be a nice project for one of the universities... preferably Union.

LE: If Corey can convince...

ZAS: There it is.

LE: ...the alumni that they need someone. I'm not taking anything away from John 'cause I think he's a great guy, great. But Corey is all brain.

ZAS: Yes, yes, yes.

LE: He's just intellectual.

ZAS: That's right.

LE: Corey can appreciate he understands the story. You can always tell. That's the thing about the academy and theology—it's so small everybody knows...

ZAS: ...everybody. That's right.

02:24:10

LE: Whenever somebody comes to Union Presbyterian, 'cause they got all the money, you know I see Corey and the next thing I know I see them together. We all know each other. And that's what got me so upset with Dr. Cannon when she was at Virginia Union. She was... that lady... she has helped me so much. I didn't know where the confine was until I met her, where they tied the slaves up. I didn't even... That's how the story happened.

ZAS: That lady. Wooh. That lady is awesome. I just read the things that you and other people were saying about her and I was like, "Oh, I wish I knew her."

LE: Oh, I'm sorry it took me so long to meet her.

ZAS: Yes.

LE: It was about four years ago. And I walk in her office. I say, “I’ve heard so much about you.” “I’ve heard even more about you.” I said, “Don’t try to make me feel uncomfortable.” But you know I’d just sit there and...

ZAS: That lady is awesome. She’s awesome. You know you know when you feel a kindred spirit, whether you touched them, looked at their face, had a face-to-face or not—you know they’re kindred spirits because of the things that they’re willing to say out loud.

LE: And see that’s how Richmond is ‘cause here’s this lady—she wrote the definitive statement on womanist theology for the whole United States. And most of the black preachers don’t even know about her.

ZAS: Can you imagine?

LB: That’s crazy.

LE: I hear she even teaches at Harvard. I mean, you know, she’s faculty at Harvard, Yale Divinity too, lectured everywhere. Lectured, you know... studied under Cone.

ZAS: James Cone. That man is awesome. He’s an awesome teacher. I love Dr. Cone.

LE: But because she speaks, you know... How’d she say it? She said, “Leonard, you need to debunk and disentangle this.”

ZAS: That was a good statement.

LE: Because she speaks that way and she not embraced here.

ZAS: Okay, yeah and she won’t make it.

LE: But she doesn’t have to make it.

ZAS: She doesn’t need it. When you’re that kind of courageous person... you could care.

LE: I think she could get Alice Walker to come here and speak with us.

02:26:38

ZAS: And that’s impossible, right?

LB: Wow.

LE: But we don’t appreciate...

ZAS: Somebody...

LE: ...as a community.

LB: So any last words from either one of you?

LE: I think I said my last one when I talked about Nat Turner.

LB: Those are great last words.

ZAS: I just would love to see a project, you know, like I said before, where we could pull all of this history, people who are really willing to work... even if some of us have to come together and see where this can be maybe a research project for a group... and that we have to see how we can get them funded or whatever.

LE: We got a bunch of dissertations.

ZAS: I don't want no dissertations.

LE: No, but I mean, no, you say that but I mean the thing is—when you start digging and you get down and you see stuff... In dissertations you see stuff...

ZAS: ...that you would never see.

LE: You would never see. That's why I say if you...

ZAS: Yeah, that's true.

LE: 'Cause if you did something just a black business history in Richmond, I mean. That's just...

ZAS: Yes.

LE: ... stuff I would want to know.

LB: *Built By Blacks*, right?

ZAS: Mhm.

LE: Yeah.

02:28:13

LB: I mean, that book if you've read that. Yeah.

LE: And that book on the Armory just came out. Stacy...

ZAS: Stacy Burrs.

LE: Yeah and a couple other people did it together.

LB: Well thank you both so so much.

M1: Alright.

LB: All three, I should say.

ZAS: We are so glad that you are working on some of this, you know.

LB: I mean I know I'm not from the community. I'm not even from Richmond, but...

ZAS: It's okay. You saw the need and you filled one.

LE: But you learned a whole lot.

LB: Well you know, when my dad came to visit me from Rhode Island, where I grew up, for the first time—he was so shocked by Monument Avenue. He still calls it “Traitor’s Row.” I said, “Would you ever consider coming to live here?” “Not while you still have Traitor’s Row.”

02:31:58

ZAS: That’s something. I went to South Carolina to teach and when I applied for the job, the guy there, the principal, he was just really racist. So I’m Muslim, I’m female, and now I tell him I’m from Richmond, Virginia. And then I say, “And Richmond, Virginia is the capitol of the Confederacy.” And I told him, I said, “Now...” I mean he showed you he was prejudice. This monster had three missing teeth. He ate what he wanted and then he said, “You want some.” “Have you lost your mind? Do I look like somebody who eats after other people?” I said, “My mother didn’t even let me eat after her. We don’t do that at our house.” And then I told him, I said, “You know what? I’m gonna tell you like this... Yes, I’m African American. Yes, I’m a woman. Yes, I’m a Muslim. You’re gonna choose one of those that you want to be prejudiced about. And I’m going to let you do that. And then you have to leave everything else alone.” I said, “Now which one do you wanna pick?” He just looked at me like I was crazy. He looked at me like I was just out of my mind. And when I told him that Richmond, Virginia... ‘cause he was sure it was Alabama... ‘cause he’s from South Carolina... and I said, “No.” He said, “No it wasn’t.” So his girlfriend was the librarian—although he was married—and so he takes me to the library so she can prove to me that I did not live in the capitol of the Confederacy. I said, “Do you think that a little black girl that had to pass the White House of the Confederacy any time she wanted to leave one side of town and go to the other... Do you think I don’t know that I lived in the capitol of the Confederacy?” He said, “Well nah.” Lord when that woman opened that book he turned so red. I mean you could just... it started here and went on up. He turned so red. He said, “I can’t believe it.” I said, “You know what? You don’t deserve to be a racist. You need to know your history.” And I feel the same way about us. We gotta know our history. We gotta know it.

LE: Alright. That’s been interesting.

LB: It’s been fabulous for us.

ZAS: It’s alright. I’m so glad you got to meet Leonard.

LB: Me too.

ZAS: Yeah.

END TIME: 02:32:31