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Loretta Tillman: It's a final project and we rolled all in the trolley all over Richmond and we stopped and said, "This is a black history site, and that's an apartment of Maggie Walker and blah blah blah blah blah..." And I invited Sonya and the librarians and stuff and they came and so while the kids in their breaks between because I lived here a long time I said, "Over here used to be this thing and so and so and my grandmother and this thing and this and that and the other and they would just like: [pause (I'm assuming she made a surprised face)] and they said, "You oughta do a tour! And have a business and do this!" And I said, "Well maybe at some point later, but not right now." Then she called me several months ago and said that Vaughn and company were going to the museum so could I come and talk to them and then he contacted me and said could I come and talk to you. I told you! But you can't explain one thing without the other, so.

Laura Browder: My daughter's doing an AmeriCorps job this summer actually. She's excited about it.

LT: What will she be doing?

LB: She doesn't know. She's in college right now in California, just in her first year. They have some kind of thing for college students. I don't know what.

LT: It's so hard to [understand?] AmeriCorps. That's why I was asking what program. Is she going to be part time I guess? And going to college at the same time?

LB: No, it's a summer job.

LT: Okay yeah, they do have that little situation going on. That's one of those part time. It's just this kind of weird thing. AmeriCorps is one of those things I wish we would talk more about. But as they such money out of it left, right, and center.

LB: I can only imagine right now.

LT: You can imagine. Every year it gets less and less as we have more need for the services. It's 'cause we do firefighting and tutoring and old, you know, geriatric serving. Everything that used to be done by government directly or by nonprofits who may have had the resources to do it but don't now... or somebody else. But now here comes AmeriCorps.

LB: That's right, because what she's applying for is being a firefighter in the National Parks.

LT: I would expect that, where that was. It wouldn't surprise me, but one of the things I'd like to tell you about. There's a whole part of AmeriCorps that's probably the least known one and that's NCCC. And basically, that's why I wanted the kids over here to get involved with it, because basically... It's located on old army bases, that they decommissioned like a hundred years ago but they need to put some use to 'em. There's like five regional ones. You apply, you go there. It's got an age limit for the people. They provide housing, food, childcare, shelter, a stipend, everything. It's great for kids—well I call them kids—anybody who is up through 24. If you wanted to go to California, everybody's like, "I'm gonna go to California." Okay you've

00:03:03 never been to California if you're from here. Go out there, spend a year. You also get your educational [reward?]

LB: That's what she's interested in.

LT: Right. You get this whole wrap-around thing. Plus, you get to go and do some things you've *never* done before. Because they... literally projects come in... One of the things they did and I don't know if they're still doing it because... the cemeteries, I think we talked a little about that, the cemeteries over in Richmond, the Barton Heights one, they were instrumental twenty years ago in both documenting and cleaning it up. They weren't the only ones. But they would come in because if you were a nonprofit you would say, "Here's this project I wanna do. I don't have any money and funds but I can help do... this... Can you come in?" And they will, if they decide this is a good one. And like the one in South Carolina, they'll ship you up here for six months, and you'll work on doing that. And the next project might be firefighting. And the next project might be tutoring kids over in North Carolina.

LB: That sounds really cool.

LT: It's cool. But it's the least known part of AmeriCorps, and the part, I think, is the most useful for kids of all groups, from... all sorts of people. You know, if you're a rich kid from Manhattan, and a poor kid from Mississippi—you might meet. And that's good for both of you.

LB: Absolutely. Yeah, and my daughter is going to be an Urban Environmental Policy major.

LT: Oh, wow.

LB: Yeah! It's all about the city and changing the environment. So, she is desperately trying to get an AmeriCorps job this summer. Just because it's such a great thing.

LT: Great thing, yeah. So, if she wants to consider that...

LB: She's totally considering it.

LT: When she ends her time maybe spend a gap year doing that.

LB: That's a really good idea.

LT: Because the back end is, especially if she wants to go into policy, that's usually public. AmeriCorps looks really good. When I say "really good," everybody's talkin' about it—*really good* on your resume, even more than anything else.

LB: She said it's competitive though.

LT: It's massively competitive. But if she's done a little bit here, she has a leg up on the next round.

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LB: Interesting. So, if she could get the summer thing...

LT: Right, she'll have even more of a leg up to go do that gap in there.

LB: That's a really good idea, because she's already got a job freshman year tutoring kids at a Title 1 high school. I feel like she's on some kind of track. But so are a lot of other people.

LT: Right. And I remember what it was to be twenty or nineteen or whatever and wish to goodness my whole life would've been totally different if two things hadn't happened. If I hadn't lived in a segregated world—1. And all that that meant. And 2—there'd have been computers or things around, people around with information about whatever.

LB: That's right. Because it's really hard to know unless you're out there networking and going on your computer all the time.

LT: Right.

LB: I know exactly what you mean.

LT: So, I'm trying to spread the word. Even your kids and whatever. Because it'll probably still always be here it'll just be what's the size of it? Hopefully when we finally get a more enlightened situation in Washington they will fund it fully and properly again. And then there'll be more opportunities.

LB: Let's hope it's much sooner rather than later.

LT: Absolutely as we see every... single... day.

[Man 1 comes into room to sort out release forms.]

LT: I'll sign them both.

LB: You can never have too much paper, right?

LT: You can never have too much. I understand legality.

Man 1: I didn't mention much about what was said during that class because I think it's amazing and I wanted you to hear it firsthand but I think, if it's possible, can we start with your childhood and your mom?

LB: Yeah, I've got a whole list.

LT: And I brought something for you to see. Let me sign this. What is today? 1-12...

LB: The twelfth already?

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LT: Right? It's like, Wow! What. Where exactly are we really? I'll be 58 soon so I gotta kinda get myself together here. I thought you might wanna know about some of this so I thought I would bring...

LB: Oh, this is fantastic.

LT: Some of these... this is the original. The copy's too big. But this is my mother in 1925.

LB: In 1925??

LT: She was about twenty-ish. Yeah. It [the photograph] was in a flood and that's why it's in such a wretched condition. I had a copy made in Europe when I was living there.

LB: She's beautiful.

LT: That was her favorite "I love myself" picture. I mean she loved that picture. And when she died I made sure I kept this. It's gone with me everywhere.

LB: 1925? So, she was born...

LT: 1905.

LB: In 1905?

LT: Yeah.

LB: I'm sorry, I'm just...

LT: Oh no, no, you're fine!

LB: Because you and I are close to the same age but my mother was born in 1936.

LT: She adopted me. My actual mother who I did not bring pictures of because she's not pertinent to this story, but that whole story... if you want me to do a whole story on just *that* alone... that's a whole other wild and wooly situation with folks passing for white, and...

LB: I wanna hear. I wanna hear. So, let's just start at the very very beginning. Tell me your name and the date. And you're recording right?

Man 1: Yeah

LT: Let me show you this one. This is my dad. And that's in the 30s.

LB: He looks so debonair.

LT: Yes. Men did that then.

Man 1: Do you know where that was taken?

LT: It is in New York. Feel free to pull it up.

LB: It looks like a studio.

LT: It was actually a stud... both of them were. This one I think was taken down here. 'Cause she came from Amelia. That one was definitely taken in New York when they were living there. So...

LB: There is so much to talk about. I have a giant first softball question. Tell me something about how you grew up and tell me about your family and then you can talk for... four hours it sounds like! It sounds like a very complicated situation.

LT: Oh, it's massively complicated. I was born in New York, in Harlem, in 1960. And my mother, not these two, but my parents, were married. But my mother eventually wound up having ten kids—my biological mother—having ten kids. She adopted out nine of them. I was five of ten. And so up until very very very recently, the year and a half, none of the... well... I didn't know any of them and then I found them. And that's the other part of the story that you wanted to ask about. So, I'll tell you about that later. My mother did not obviously want me, so she put me up for adoption. I was taken very quickly to what would be called a family... well not even a family home... it was sort of a combination family-home/orphanage/child care center called Mount Morris Children's Center and it's still there. My mother was the director of the center. She had a Master's degree from Columbia. And she was a teacher. She had gone to Union. My dad, who, I did not know this, he worked five jobs at any given time when I was a child, manual labor type jobs. I just always thought he had a high school diploma. I know that because my grandmother... he had played football in high school and my grandmother apparently, his mother, ran out onto the field when he got tackled screaming, "Get away from my child!" and trying to beat up the ball players. But I didn't know until very recently thankfully because digitized records that my dad actually had gone to college for one year. He was also born in 1905 so you can imagine about the time he's coming along it's the 20s and the 20s were probably one of the more virulent times for racism. The Klan had five million members at that point in this country.

LB: I know. Now can I, I'm sorry, let me ask a question. Your mother went to Union. Do you mean Union in New York or Union here?

LT: Virginia Union University. She's one of the alumnus. So is one of her cousins. She graduated from there somewhere in the 20s. About '22.... '27, excuse me. In the 30s they wandered up... I don't know exactly... I'm not sure... I'm just reading the records. I know they had gone north and I had an aunt who lived in Princeton and she was a maid and she lived in this giant house in which I went to visit her in the 70s. I mean that thing was humongous. It had at least 15, 16, rooms in there. And I was wondering, "Why is an old lady living in a big old house?" She had a husband but no children. What I found from the census records was actually

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that was a rooming house. For some reason the family... what happened is... when people moved from one area to the other, someone would move into the area.

So, my grandmother had come from Amelia and she had moved and bought some houses over on Clay Street. And she then, because there was a situation where there wasn't a black high school or not enough high schoolers so kids would move here to go to either, well at that point it was Armstrong only. They would move from Amelia and Powhatan in here and they would stay with my grandmother. And then they would go to school. And then they would graduate and go on about their business. I have a lot of cousins and what, in our community, we call "fake cousins" who were... and "fake aunts" and stuff like that... who were these people. And my grandmother's well-remembered from those who are still alive or their children for having done this. But the same thing, the Great Migration, that's part of Great Migration. There's the other half that we all know they all went to New York and this and that. What would happen is somebody would move to somewhere, near or in New York, and then hordes of people would come to live in their house with them! And that's what had happened there. I can see the address. 'Cause I looked at it and I said, "Oh my God, that's my aunt's address." And what it is, she just kept the house afterwards and my father, his sisters, my mother, all of them moved there. I also found out some information that was very telling about the times. My mother had a college degree. My dad had one year of college and yet the only jobs they could find at that point were cooking in private homes, at the university, and things like that. So, everybody, my aunt who had a sixth-grade education, my dad who had one year of college, and my mother who was a college graduate, all of them were private home cooks. And then at some point my mother got admitted to Columbia and went there and became a teacher.

LB: Tell me about how you grew up?

LT: We lived in New York over a fish market for a couple of years and at that point my grandmother... let me go back and pick my mother's mother and her family up.... my great grandfather was a slave. He was born about 1820 or so. And my grandmother was born in 1878. So, she had been born just after freedom...

LB: ...late in life...

LT: No, his wife was not. He had bought his wife. That was the other part of it. He had bought. He was the son of his master. And he had freed him. But he had to pay for it. So, he paid his own father for his own freedom so he could get out. Then he paid my grandmother's father for her freedom, 'cause he was a slaveowner, white man. Then they got married and then they started having all these children. You're right. My grandmother was on the back end of the children. Some of them I didn't know. We had some aunts who were actually born into slavery. I did not know that because it was just the six or so that we talked about when I was a kid. But he made sure that... he could never read and write... but he made sure that every one of his children went to and graduated from high school. My grandmother *loved*, oh my gosh, she loved literature. So, all the kids have some weird name. The whole family, all of us, have weird middle names. Sometimes weird first names. So Hartwright, Orville Greenleaf Whittier Walker. Just on and on and on. And my mother was named Osceola [sp?] and things like that. She made sure though that her children got an education. And then the neighborhood kids with her move up here.

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By 1963 she's in her 80s. And she's living over on Clay Street in one of her homes and she's getting too old to take care of herself. Her husband's still alive but he's too old to take care of himself. My mother says, "Oh okay, let's stop and come home." So, we come home, we buy a house on Leigh Street. 1202 West Clay. Just as it was being built. My mother loved westerns. Like massively. And when we got there they hadn't finished sanding the floors. I mean they would sand the floors and I could see the dust and you can see that I was obviously watching a lot of them with her because I asked, "Where were the cowboys and Indians?" just from looking at the floor and everybody thought that was the funniest cutest little thing. I think we stayed at the house at 1202 West Clay (all these homes are still there) for a little while. Then we moved over because I turned three about a month after we came from New York.

Then my mother went, she got a job with RPS, Richmond Public Schools, as a teacher, second grade teacher. Over in Francis B.... No that wasn't the first one. The first one was Webster Davis, which was torn down some years ago. And then she went over to Francis Bacon which is still there, the building, but you know it's an old age home now. And she worked. But the problem was at that point they had closed the schools in Prince Edward, including Farmville. There was a call out apparently for anybody who had an education background to please come and help because the black kids were not getting anything at that point. My mother and my dad decided that—yeah, we're gonna do this. So, every time I was from about September of '63 to about May of '64, every Friday my mother worked. My dad did whatever my dad was doing, whatever jobs they were doing. And then everything would stop, we'd come to the house with the bags, get in the car, drive up Hull Street to Farmville. My dad would drop us off. He'd drive back here in the middle of the night. My mother would teach wherever the heck she was teaching—from where I understand people's basements you know and church, whatever. I would play out there in the tall grass which was irritating to me as a city kid. My dad would drive back up here on Sunday afternoon, pick us up, and we'd come on back to Richmond and do it all again for the next, however many weeks that is. And everybody asks me why can I remember that. Even if you were three you'd remember doing that routine. And then when it was over nobody talked about it. I kind of flushed it into my background until I went to college and then one of the professors said something about his brother and I said, "Oh that happened to me."

LB: How long did your mother keep teaching in these weekend schools?

LT: That went on for the year, that whole school year. The only reason it stopped was because the end of '64 they ended the... what is that thing called?

LB: Massive resistance.

LT: Massive resistance, mhm. And opened schools back up.

LB: So I don't even know what little question I can ask to keep you going, but let me ask you what was Richmond like when you were a child?

LT: This is me at three, and this is how people dressed. *Everybody* dressed like that.

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LB: What building are you in front of?

LT: That building is still there that I know of. That is Fourth Baptist Church up on Church Hill and that's their little education center.

LB: I did a group oral history, actually three of them, with members of the congregation at Fourth Baptist.

LT: I cannot remember why we were there, but that is Easter, some Easter program, because I can see the little Easter thing in my hand. As you can see, the way people dressed it was very proper, if you will, it was elegant. Children... I remember we dressed like this all the time. But there's a downside to some of this, and the downside was that even then things were changing but they hadn't changed a lot with regard to segregation. I mean it was there and it wasn't. So, I was going to segregated schools.

LB: What schools did you go to?

LT: I started out at Carver, George Washington Carver.

LB: I did a project there.

LT: And at that point, the new building was not there. But the back building, the old Harrison Street School was, and it was open. The odd part was my mother told me that... I don't think it was all... I think it was maybe a multi-age school at some point because my mother went there. She told me, she said, "Oh yeah, Harrison Street School and this and that..." And I was like... but it was just that building at that point. And that's the reason I was telling people, "Look at the way it's facing. It's facing right onto 95. Now why would it be doing that." And it's because that wasn't there then. It actually faced into Northside. So, kids walked in from Northside. And people living in the area also went there. And my mother was one of them. And then years later—I went there. Many many many moments later.

LB: Did you have Ms. Austin as a teacher? Did you ever know Marjorie Austin?

LT: The name sounds vaguely familiar. I can remember I had Ms. Holmes. At that point they didn't have kindergarten. We had JP1 and JP2. It was Junior Primary 1 & 2, instead of first grade, kindergarten and pre-k. So I had her. I cannot remember but I can see the woman's face as clear as a bell but I can't remember second grade teacher. Ms. Freeman with her beautiful watch was my third-grade teacher. Ms. Little was fourth grade. And at that point my mother died. And I wound up... That's when they also desegregated.

LB: So, what happened next? And how did your mother die and what were all the ramifications?

LT: My dad had died in '65. I can remember parts of 95 being built. 95 used to be a two-laner and then it became a three-laner. I remember it becoming a three-laner. My dad, being... *manly*... We were going out, to New York I believe, in the winter and it snowed and we're driving up 95. My mother had fur on. I had wool on. My dad had a windbreaker on. There was a

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truck. It slid. It took ten cars into a ditch with it. We had to wait to get out. We had waited out there for hours. And my dad was trying to get us out and on and on and on. And so, he caught pneumonia. Back then that could be a death sentence and it was in this particular case. The fact that he smoked did not help. At that point, as you may remember, two thirds of the population smoked. My mother included. And one day I woke up and my mother was having a heart attack.

LB: How old were you?

LT: I was nine. I woke up because I could hear this noise in the middle of the night. She was in the bathroom. She said, “Don’t worry, don’t worry,” and she was in the middle of a heart attack. The paramedics came and I was just looking out like, “What’s going on around here?” And my mother, she went back and forth, back and forth to the hospital. She stayed for months at a time and she’d come home. She’d stay for months at a time. And then one time she called me and she said, “I’m coming home tomorrow!” And I was like, “Oh, good.” This started in the winter and it went and rolled through my birthday into the late spring. She called and the next day I was in school. They told me to go home and I went home and they said she had died.

LB: Who was taking care of you when she was in the hospital?

LT: My neighbors. The neighbors were. They were. That was just the way things were back then. People died a lot earlier than they needed to. Everybody expected to be dead by 65. And many of them were. Which is why social security is kind of set where it is.

LB: So, would you live in the neighbors’ houses or would they just come look in on you?

LT: It was my one neighbor next door. The other ones knew what was going on but my neighbor at 1200 West Clay, she had five kids and I lived with her which was interesting in and of itself. She had a daughter. Her husband, he was a construction worker. And he loved to drink. Oh my god. And he had a gun. And when he would get really drunk he would clean the house. I don’t know if you’ve ever seen that routine with Eddie Murphy. One of his things... he was talking about cleaning [claiming?] the house and all that crazy... and I know that... I laugh my head off because I know that. I’ve lived that. And he would go out in the back and shoot the gun up in the air and claim [clean?] the house and this that and one thing and the other and fuss at people and kiss the children, pour liquor on the steak and chew it up and give it to the baby. It was just wild. And then we thought it was just cute as a button. We loved Uncle Billy. ‘Cause he didn’t bother us. He was just crazy. There were a lot of crazy people back then. And that just was the way things were in the neighborhood. You just had these... they’re middle class people but they still did stuff.

LB: Did you stay with Uncle Billy and his wife after your mother died?

LT: They wanted me to stay but then we got into this rather weird thing because I was adopted. That’s when it first started rearing its head again. The family came in and what happened was I had my fourth-grade teacher, Miss Little, she came in and expressed interest. My neighbors wanted to keep me. One of the cousins may have wanted. But what it was was I never went to live at my uncle’s because he said, “Well—we have male children in the house,” and this and

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that. My teacher who never did get married was like, “Well maybe if I get a husband he won’t want...” you know... and it went on like that. So, a sixth cousin wound up... I wound up living with her over here off of 37th street on [Midlothian?] Drive.

LB: So how does the fact that you were adopted play into all of this?

LT: Because they were trying to look out in the future and see what might happen.

LB: So that your birth mother might...

LT: Oh no.

LB: Or what?

LT: No. They made sure of *that*. They were concerned that I wound up sleeping with one of my cousins and having babies. The short and the long of that is—that’s that. Everybody was just like, “No.” And then of course the teacher had no kids and she really wanted me. I wish I had gone with her, but she was looking for a husband and... remember that time where women were just not complete without a man. I wound up living over here with a sixth cousin and her husband and her daughter and the grandmother. We were all safe. No weirdness. At that point, fortunately, the family decided because my mother had promised me that... ‘cause I was a single child... that I would be able to see my siblings. I really didn’t care about my birth mother and father. I had my parents. They were just sort of a side thing that came along with it. But I wanted my siblings back. And in my mind, I told my sister this, that I thought that all of us had the same dad—which we did not. And that they were all having a good old time partying back in New York and they either didn’t know I was gone or they missed me and I knew that I needed to get back to them. My family told me, my adopted family said, once my mother died—they never would’ve said that when she was alive—they said, “Oh just forget ‘em.”

Well at the same time, some other things they were doing. When she was alive they would say, “Oh, this is my niece,” this and that. But when she died: “This is my adopted niece.”

People like that... they are as they are.

So, when I got to be eighteen I had always wanted to get out and travel and run around. Anyway... I just... I got out of here.

LB: Where’d you go? What happened next?

LT: I got admitted to UVA. And there were four of us from... a lot of people don’t realize this but at that time... we had a class of about 300 and so. Maybe twenty of us went to college on any level. Most people either went to the military or they went to work because at that point Philip Morris was still a big business. Dupont. I remember, I mean as far as hiring... you could just...

LB: And where did you go into high school?

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LT: I'd gone to high school at George Wythe.

LB: That's right.

LT: I had gone to middle school at Elkhardt, which is gone now. I had spent my fifth-grade year, the desegregation year (that's its own story) at this school over here. What's that school over here?

Man 1: Westover Hills.

LT: Westover Hills, yeah. That had been one of the white schools.

LB: Tell me about that fifth-grade year.

LT: So up until 1970 they apparently had been fighting back. You would hear stuff on the news. But you were eight, nine, not really paying attention. What would happen for schooling was, after Brown they had set up this whole thing called Pupil Placement Board. Even though there was supposedly some choice in there, there really wasn't. So, they would send this little paper every year. You would sign you want to go to such-and-such school. And then they would place you. Well everybody knew it was just a big old ruse. They were gonna put you where they were gonna put you. When I was in fourth grade I think... no Daisy was third grade... Daisy showed up. And Daisy looked like you if you had blonde-ish hair and blue eyes and freckles, but she was black. I remember when she pulled into the school and literally the air sucked out of the room. Because it was like, "What is the white child doing here? Why are white people even here?" Because we never... white people were people that were on the TV. The doctor came to your house, you saw them on the street if you went out to Broad Street. But quite frankly, they weren't in your world and you weren't in theirs. And then there was this child.

She and I got to be really good friends and we found out, in fact, that she was black. It wasn't until many years later... I remember the day my dog chased her down Leigh Street, and then that was the last I saw of her. She never came back to school. I thought it was for the dog. But actually, it was because... she, I found out in the book, I can't remember what it was called but it was written by a VCU professor. Daisy was I think part of that case that actually totally desegregated schools in Richmond. Because her family wanted her to go to one of the white schools near VCU. I forget which one it was and there was of course the law suit left right and center. And finally Judge Marriage ruled that, "Mmmm, we're not going to do this anymore." His original intent was that the schools in Richmond, Chesterfield, and Henrico would be combined into one giant thing and that would've solved a lot of things. Because those who wanted to get out would've gone even further. But what happened was everybody in this neighborhood... well this neighborhood was a white neighborhood... but the black and white neighborhoods... the white folks moved out of here. And the black people moved in. And that's how the schools... and so they, the schools, as you know, in Henrico and Chesterfield are much larger. Richmond used to be the big dog and now they're the little dog because of white flight. They could not run far enough. And so, the counties have expanded and kept on expanding and now they have this metropolis actually that goes out into Amelia quite frankly and other places and down to New Kent and stuff. But they were just these little rural po-dunks back in the day. And Richmond was

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the big dog and then they just... they had to go. One of the schools that was white was Westover Hills. George Wythe was another white school, which surprises people today, but it was. The year that they did this, like I said, my mother died. And I moved here. I don't know what would've happened. About where I would have gone if I had stayed on the north side of the city. But being over here, they had two ballots. So, what that meant was they had to count up—you had this many black people and this many white people—“Okay we gotta move this many black people over here and this many white people.”

What it was was—they didn't have any buses. There were no school buses at that point because everybody was walking. They had to pull up everything. So, what they did was there was a GRT they rented I guess, a GRTC bus-bus. And we had a dedicated driver. What he did was, he would pull up to the Seventh Day Adventist church, what is that thing called? Ephesus. right there at 37th and Midlothian. He'd pull up right there at the stop. We would get on and what it was there was a cut... from talking to friends now... the cut was somewhere around 36th, 35th street, going forward into what is now George Wythe. And basically, they sucked up all those little black kids. We got on the bus. They drove us to Westover Hills. They dropped us off. And la de da de da. And we had never gone. We never had white teacher. We never went to school with white kids. They didn't know us either. And of course, there was tension. Now the kids probably would not have been tense. But you can always count on the adults to make things messy for kids.

I was determined that... I was like, “Well, there's these people around here. I'm going to be friendly with them...” And so, I was nominated to be on the student council. My black friends didn't want too much to do with me after that because I was kind of integrating myself in, into the situation a little bit too much. I did get elected and I was the only black on there that year.

LB: And those were the years, I remember talking to [name unc.-] Robinson who was probably a little ahead of you. When he said that when he went it was before they even started that [unc.] He was coming from Church Hill and it would take him two hours transferring to different GRTC buses to get to Wythe.

LT: I have a friend, Veronica, she.... a lot of people have just forgotten... and I was telling her about this. And when we talked she said, “Oh my gosh, I remember.” And because of where she was, of her age, that was another big part of it—she was a couple years [older]... she was in sixth grade when we were in fifth or something like that. So, she had to go to Bainbridge, which I don't even know if you know where that is—where the Manchester Medical Center is now? That was a big old school called Bainbridge. And Maury was next to it, which is still there, but it's like a old age home now. We love goin' there. And that was the elementary school. And then this thing here, this is the Boys and Girls Club, that was another

M1: Over on...

LT: Yeah, right here, that was actually a school too. I remember going and playing with the band there.

M1: That explains the athletic field.

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LT: Yes. ‘Cause it was a elementary school. She wound up, when this all happened, she wound up going to Bainbridge. And then all of us got shipped off to Elkhardt. My sister, she was at Maggie Walker, ‘cause there were the two black school high schools—Maggie Walker and Armstrong—and if you were in the ninth or tenth grade going in, you had to go to wherever they were gonna send you. If you were in the eleventh or twelfth grade, you got a choice. You could stay where you were or you could go to your new school. Her new school would’ve been George Wythe. Her friend, I think, was in the tenth grade. She was in the eleventh grade. She elected to go and eventually graduated from Maggie Walker. And then her friend wound up going to George Wythe. Because she was in the tenth grade. This is the chaos that reigned around here during those years.

LB: It’s completely chaotic.

LT: Totally chaotic.

LB: But you know whenever I talk to people who lived in this neighborhood during that time... I don’t know, Philip Brunson, he was probably...

LT: Ohhhh, I know him. I know his sister.

LB: Yeah! And he said his parents were super involved with civil activities, Civil Rights activities around here, and there was a lot going on. Do you remember that as well?

LT: I remember that my aunt and uncle were not. But my mother had been involved. My mother... every other Monday night she was involved with the... ‘cause the union, the teachers’ union was a lot more active and powerful back then. She would get up and I would get my little boss. Coke had these bottles, these big bottles, they still had them then I think and they were called “The Boss.” So, get your Boss and your little bag of chips and whatever and she would... I would go next door to the neighbors and we would watch Tom Jones who came on Mondays. Oh my gosh I can remember all this stuff like it was yesterday. And my mother would go off to her little meetings.

LB: What were those meetings about?

LT: They were the... I don’t know much about what it was, but this was during the time period when the lawsuit was going on. And it was the black teachers’ union. I have no doubt, given my mother, and what was going on, that they were all involved in all of this. Curtis Holt and the whole crew. But my mother wasn’t going to tell me because I was too young and because quite frankly you... she was... like when we were going up to Farmville—you’re scared not just of the Klan, you’re scared of the job. Somebody find out that you’re doing all these things and you might lose your job.

LB: So, she died in ‘69? Is that right?

LT: ‘70.

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LB: '70. Okay.

LT: Early in '70.

LB: So, tell me, I've never heard of this black teachers' union. And I'm interested because this is such a right-to-work state. Right?

LT: Right.

LB: All of these unions have now disappeared. So, what do you know about that?

LT: They were part of NEA. But from what I've been given to understand, originally there was a black folk part and a white folk part. And they didn't merge until after. I can't remember what the name of that thing was. It's something you can look up. But she was heavily involved in this. To the point where... and I had gotten into my little routine and I remember the one Monday she did not go we fooled the neighbors because they were so used to her going and so nobody looked out the thing. I knew she was over in the house and I wanted to go hang out with the kids and there was my Boss soda and stuff. But every other Monday she would go to these meetings in the middle of the night. She would come back from work, get dressed, and go to these meetings in the middle of the night. They were always at night. She'd come back home, it was nine, ten o'clock at night.

LB: Wow. That's a lot of commitment after a full day of work.

LT: That's a lot of commitment after a full day of work. And feed the kids and at 6 o'clock, she'd be gone for about three hours and come on home.

LB: That's substantial.

LT: Mhm. My mother did not play about this. She really believed in integration and equality and all of that stuff we talk... she really believed in it. And fairness and all that. And she wanted that for her kids. She made me, when I was little... '68 they had the Democratic National Convention. And my mother sat me down and made me watch it with her. And she really wanted me to see one thing in particular. And that was that Julia Bond name went in the nomination for Vice President. For her, like she said, she didn't say this but this was what she would've said: Black history is every day. So if there was some reason, if there was something she wanted her child to be educated, I mean back then they covered all kinds of things, I remember they covered extensively Jackie Kennedy christening a ship and couldn't get the bottle to break and we watched Charles get his... when he became Prince of Wales... just on and on. My mother just, you know. But she did not play about black history, black culture, black this, black that.

LB: Was she involved in any other organizations besides the union?

LT: Not to my knowledge. My grandmother was a Eastern Star. But that to me is about it.

LB: So not organizations like the NAACP or other groups that were working on Civil Rights issues at the time?

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LT: She may have when we were in New York. That would not surprise. But once we got down here, you know, she's got this little... she's a sixty [year] old woman with a five-year-old kid, two parents who are in their 80s and a husband who, you know, is wo...

LB: She's got a full plate.

LT: She's got a full plate. Plus, she's working. I remember the people in the neighborhood hated us because we had a maid. But she, you know...

LB: What are you gonna do?

LT: Right. And you've got women... I mean... I don't know if I've got that picture, I didn't bring that one but women wore heels and A-line skirts and hose. You're not, you know, so. That's my mother.

LB: Tell me about the changes you remember seeing all around you in Richmond as you were growing up. Because you're at Wythe from what '74 to '78?

LT: Mhm, I surely am.

LB: That's after the bussing era and by that time, right, Wythe is almost all black.

LT: Right. There's still some white people there, but every year there's less and less and less. And it becomes more and more black. The buses, actually, by then they got a [unc.] buses, so they're bussing from down here. There was a cut, right around where that break goes for Hull and Midlothian. Those kids went to Kennedy. We loved Kennedy because Kennedy was the only school at that point with air conditioning. So, everybody wanted to go there.

LB: I can't even imagine a high school with no air conditioning in this heat with those old buildings.

LT: Young and old buildings. None of them. George Wythe didn't have it. None of them. They just. George Wythe was only ten, fifteen years old at that point. Nope. You got your church fan out and you go to rollin'.

LB: What was your education like then? What do you remember of Wythe from that time?

LT: I remember Wythe and at the other schools, they were hard on us. Let me put it this way—if you didn't want an education you weren't gonna get one. But you also had an out. You dropped out. Nobody stopped you. I remember a boy named [Truck?]. He was one of the Chavises and his father owned the Chavis Trucking Company. He was somehow connected to them but anyway his father was a dump truck driver. And when we were in sixth grade, he was probably a couple years older than us. He was technically in the sixth grade. He's probably still

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technically in the sixth grade. But he was driving a truck. So we would be at the bus stop and he, this little boy... Here's the truck. Here's the steering wheel. He's down. You could barely just see the top of his head.

LB: And he was barely eleven years old?

LT: Driving the truck. And he drove that for years. And you could see him drive. Because if you didn't look really closely, it looked as though the truck was driving itself. But you could see his little afro kind of peaking above. The kids were like, "Yeah that's Truck." And nobody thought anything different of it. He started when he was 11, 12, 13, somewhere in that general vicinity. 'Cause he loved trucks.

LB: You know I remember I was in contact with GRTC drivers. And two of them told me they started driving when they were five years old. And my son at that point was nine and they were horrified that I hadn't taught him to drive yet.

LT: Yep! People would just plop you in there. I had a friend... she didn't let her daughter actually drive, but her five-year-old knew how to do a stick shift. And actually they drove tandem. So, she would drive, and she'd go first and the little girl was shifting the gears. She was telling her and you know... People grew up a lot quicker then. People just did not... And it's funny because they wouldn't let us type until we got to tenth grade.

LB: But you could drive.

LT: But you could drive and...

LB: when you were ten years old...

LT: ... and people were smoking and just on and on and on you know. It's just a weird world for us now. It just...

LB: It's so much more regulated.

LT: Yes. There was hardly any regulation. You didn't go to school—you didn't go to school. You went to school—great.

M1: That's really interesting because driving would be more of a labor and typing would be more secretarial, kind of office. And trying to keep those separated I think, well, could you say that would be intentional?

LT: I think, they didn't even... The more technological it was... It's like now, I can remember when, like I said, tenth grade, that was it. They wouldn't even let you do it [type] in ninth grade. But yet, now you've got my two-year-old niece, oh not niece, my granddaughter. She can sit there and...[sound of typing] And I've noticed, over the years, the keyboarding, typing, whatever you wanna call it has gone down to like third grade last time I looked or paid attention. Might be even, before then now. But there were just... whereas... it had been a while before people

learned to drive so they figured, “Oh, okay. There are people out here, driving when they’re five and six and seven and whatever. So, we know they can do that. We’re not gonna worry about that.” They wouldn’t *legally* let you drive ‘til sixteen, but there were people driving. Everybody knows that.

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LB: Ellwood... I’m trying to think of his last name... he was a classmate of Philip Brunson’s and he went on to become the Attorney General of the Virgin Islands. He was at Wythe at that time. I’ll think of his last name in a moment but I bring him up because he talked about when the bosses were going to Wythe at that time, the Confederate Angels Motorcycle Gang would be shooting at the buses. Do you remember all of that stuff?

LT: That did not happen to me. And I don’t remember that per se. But what I do remember, and I think we talked about this, was that occasionally there would be, shall we say, “mini riots.” And when I say that... and that went on for years, I mean, not that there were a lot of them. I can only remember two over about a thirty-year period going into the eighties, nineties.

LB: Tell me what you mean by that.

LT: So, what is now Bainbridge and Blackwell. This is the Bainbridge side, this was the white side. That was the Black... was the black side. At that point Hull Street, all those businesses, they were full. That was like a mini Broad Street.

M1: But that was for white businesses on Hull Street?

LT: There were white businesses on Hull Street but black and white people would frequent them and when I got down there they were more black than white. But there were still a lot of white people living in the Bainbridge part of it. The Fischman’s [sp?] was still there. I don’t know if you’ve ever heard of it, it was a small department store. The bookstore, Clay’s Bookstore, was there and wasn’t what it was. I don’t even know if it’s still there. The thing is...

M1: It is.

LT: It’s still there? And over the years it’s deteriorated but at that point it was a regular old bookstore that also had this sort of backroom situation going on that is now moving to the front room. I don’t know how many people know that it’s got some stuff going on with it. All the stores were just full—the furniture store, all of it. Over the years it has deteriorated to where it is now. But I can remember, I think in the 70s, there was a little, shall we say “race riot,” with some Klan, over in the Bainbridge part because there was some black people starting to move into the area. And a lot of the empty land then was full and had houses on it. They’ve been bulldozed since then.

LB: Robin told me, Robin Mines [sp?], about getting a cross burned in her yard when she moved here. That’s when she lived around the corner from Tad Mines [sp?], her cousin, if you knew him.

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LT: I did not know him. I've heard of him before. I'd have to know exactly where he had lived because where we lived, up on that part, you know 37th, that had been white and they had moved out. And up until very recently, it looked like a part of the county. Like you all have curbs. We didn't have curbs.

M1: Kinda.

LT: Yeah! Kinda-curbs. We had nothing. And you still see parts of it that might have a curb up to here and then it's...

LB: But the Klan was active here.

LT: Oh, absolutely. When I was a child, about eleven, we were driving down. When they were building 95 we were going south on 95 and I live in Chesterfield now but I was always scared to live there until very recently because my sister took great pains as we were driving right on down the road to go, "Yeah, that's where the Klan burns the thing." And I was like, "O-kay!" And I was like, "Mnm. No." Having come through—I think I told him the story—I think I was five, that was when there was all the killings all over the country and this and that. And my mother had taken a lot of pains to make sure I did not know as much about all that. When I was in JP1 I was coloring and I always liked to have my little brown person, my little black person, my little brown person, yellow person, whatever, and I was just coloring away and I got my little peach crayon out to color my little white person and the little girl across from me said, "Aw you can't do that." And I said, "Well why not?" And she said, "Well the Klan will come get you. If you color white people on your paper." And still to this day I have a half second if I have to color things and go... 'cause that was literally trau... I mean she took great pains to tell me about somebody. I don't think she got all her facts straight. But she claimed that somebody had been hanged by the Klan in a closet in Hanover. I think I told you that part.

M1: I think so. It's so shocking.

LT: Yeah. And I went home and I told my mother and I remember her face kind of just like: "Okay. What do I do now? How do I talk to this little five-year-old about these fools?" And she told me something to make sure I stayed calm. But truthful. But not too much. But yeah. Mhm.

LB: And when you were living near Carver, right, you would've been so close to the Klan in Oregon Hill?

LT: Right. And in the 90s I think I shared with them that... I remember this. I just cannot remember all the details. And I did go look for a long while. The Klan was there and I remember that there was a mini riot because some black guys were in a car and they were over there and somehow the car got stalled or something like that. And because they were over there folks just kind of lost their minds for a half a second. And then there was, you know, a mini riot. And police had to come.

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LB: And when you say a mini riot, you basically mean a lynch mob?

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LT: That's to say that the white people were not happy and they made... There was a fight. There were some fights. It wasn't just two people fighting, it was like a group fighting another smaller group of black people.

LB: So, when the mini riots happened around here was it usually that same situation?

LT: Right. The one that happened in Oregon Hill was of that thing. Because for the same reason, it was like: "You don't belong here. We don't want you in here. And if we have to use violence to make sure you understand that we will do that."

LB: How did they end?

LT: Police would come. The one in Oregon Hill I can't remember. The one over there I think they took people to jail and they were booked for public fighting and intoxication because there's always intoxication with these things. And whatever else. You know it was one of those. And then it was just forgotten.

LB: I remember talking to [name unc.] West once. He was a GRTC driver who stopped in Oregon Hill to take a restroom break and then found his bus surrounded by a mob. Throwing bricks at it, trying to attack him. It sounds like it was a pretty frequent occurrence back then.

LT: Right. And that's pretty much what happened to those two guys. The only difference is I think they tried to fight back or something like that. And then it got a little more out of control than it needed to be. It was already out of control, but it was even worse.

LB: It sounds [unc. incredible? unforgettable?].

LT: Right. And then it would just get forgotten. Hushed up and forgotten once it was over it was just another day in Richmond kind of thing. Black people were just like, "Mhm." The white people were like, "Mhm." And then off they went. And then some years later some other weirdness would happen.

LB: Do you remember those Confederate motorcycle gangs up and down Hull Street?

LT: That I do not remember. What I do remember though is going out to the counties. We would have to go to... because at that point we were big school so we played from Hopewell to uh.... not Freeman... but we were out in the county. It might have been Freeman.

LB: Were you on a team? Or a cheerleading squad?

LT: I was in the band. So, the band went. I mean we all went... I wish I brought that picture. Actually, here's me in my little cutie outfit standing there. But I have a picture of the band marching with the majorettes. Because at that point you had majorettes and the cheerleaders with the pompoms and the football players nearby. We marched in. And we would play as we marched in and things like that. And we would go to these county schools and it was nothing for Confederate flags to be flying... everywhere.

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LB: I've heard some very intense stories about those games.

LT: Mhm. They were intense. Nobody ever really bothered us. We of course sat on our side. But they let you know. Because those flags were flying. They're flying. The kids, they would... one of the schools out there for the longest time, I don't know if it still does it, but that was their school flag.

M1: That was my school flag when I went to school.

LT: Mhm.

M1: It was crazy.

LT: Did you go to school in this area?

M1: No. Southwest Virginia.

LT: Ok. Yeah.

M1: Which is nuts. 'Til, I mean that was early 90s.

LT: Yeah. I mean there would be plenty of 'em. And they would come you know. And they would run out onto the field and they had a giant one of these things in front. You know somebody was... and they were running... and the players were running and you know that kind of thing.

LB: What else do you remember of your education during this time?

LT: I remember the teachers being very hard on us. I do remember the transition from Negro History Week to Black History Week to Black History Month. That was a big thing when we were in segregated schools. They took great pains. We actually knew our history. My sister and I go about this all the time because a lot of black kids now do not know. But we were made to know who Ace Randolph was and on and on. Some of these people, a lot of them, were still alive at that point. A lot of them were still alive. And they [the teachers] were just really hard on us because they knew we were going out. Now one of the things I do remember, oh goodness, when I got admitted to UVA, the family did just about everything they could to get me to not go. They wanted me to go to State. And the reason was they had just done two things recently. 1. Pretty fairly desegregated. And then of course it was shortly after that all the women would show up. So, I was looking, in '74, started looking at colleges because I was fourteen in high school so you started looking. They were still all males. And by the time, when I was sixteen I think is when they really allowed women to come. That place was a locker room when I got there. You can tell. It was really crazy. But the family was just like, "Oh no." There were two things they didn't. They didn't want me going back to New York. So, they were really happy when I got waitlisted at Barnard. But they also were very unhappy that I got admitted to UVA and did not

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want me to go there. And I perfectly understand why, because they were scared to death that the daughter, the girl would go up there and there was gonna be a lot of foolishness.

LB: It sounds like a scary place then.

LT: Oh, it was a... I've been there with my students when I was still teaching I took them there. Totally different. It was a drunken locker room. And it was also a place where racism was prevalent. I remember one year at the black history... I don't know if it's still down there but the Black Studies House... I was about a third year. Somebody had painted swastika? Or something racial in red on the door of that thing. That set off these bombs of like: "Oh my god, we have racism!" You know. Whereas all the rest of us were like, "Mmm. Yeah you do. Okay." There was always this undercurrent of stuff like that going on. There was separation. The black sororities and fraternities had their whole world and the whites had their world out there. They did not meet except when they had the meetings that they all had to show up for.

LB: Did you join a sorority then?

LT: I actually started one there.

LB: Tell me about that.

LT: I don't know if you know much about that whole world, but at that point there were only eight. They call it "Divine Nine" now. But there were only eight. And there were seven of them there. And so, the other ones, Sigma Gamma [unc.] was not there. And I've always been a little contrarian—a lot contrarian actually. And I was like, "No, I don't want to be bothered, I want my own thing." 'Cause I wanted it to be someplace that *everybody* could come to, anybody who wanted. I did not want it to be just a black thing. Even though it was historically black and I wanted to maintain that, I also wanted to let anybody in. And so, in the constitution, our chapter constitution—never mind you this is '80—I had written in there something along those lines. Along with something allowing LGBTQ people (it wasn't called that then) into the thing. That of course set off explosions...

LB: I can't even imagine.

LT: ... everywhere! We did have a young lady who was Caucasian who was interested. She showed up at an interest meeting and things like that. That was the hardest thing. And the only reason I got it done was because they were impressed by my personality. I showed up at a meeting and at that point everybody who was sorority or fraternity, black and white, they were just you know *this*. That was not me. I'm like this. So, I showed up like this [hand motion?] and I was like... And while they didn't like that I didn't come like this [hand motion again?], they were impressed with my argument and so they... cause you had to get the panel and the council to agree to you showing up. They agreed. And then off we went.

LB: And what was that like?

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LT: That was an interesting experience. I wound up separating myself from it eventually even though I started it, because I had wanted this different thing. And of course, the world being the world, they wanted to kind of follow behind what was. When the ladies started going that way I was like, “You know, time for me to step back from this.” And I did. The chapter, when I wasn’t there, and wasn’t the driver behind it, some people told me that they were not going to get involved with it because I was not a driver behind it. Everybody had known that I had spent years pulling this thing up. The chapter eventually, when I left UVA, it fell apart. And then they brought it back, ten or fifteen years later. And that’s the chapter that’s in there now.

LB: You know I have this huge list of questions, but I don’t think I need to ask most of them because you’re answering them. Tell me about some of your personal turning points during the Civil Rights era in Richmond.

LT: The biggest one for me at first was that one I told you about with the little girl telling me that. And that actually introduced me to the idea. I knew things were going on but you’re little and they just don’t have that resonance for you. That kind of pulled me into it. At that point, as I said, we had... You have seen black people. We are this myriad. And I don’t think people of colors and things because of what we come from. I remember Dean [name unc. Cannon?] when I got to UVA. I don’t think it had dawned on him. And at that point there were only 500, including graduate students, black people there at all. And there were about a hundred first years come in. And he would come and he’d talk to you and say, “Hi! Welcome...” And he saw all of us there and I don’t think it had ever dawned on him what we actually looked like and what was going on. He kind of stopped in the middle of his speech and he said, “Oh my gosh!” He was so excited. He’s like, “Oh my gosh! You all are so many colors!” and da da da da da and, “I never noticed it!” I mean he went on this whole little minute-long rant about just how wonderful it was that we looked the way we did. And we were just like, “Oh okay.” “Cause we were used to... All of us had the aunt who looked like she was a white lady, and the very dark chocolate uncle, and on and everybody in between. It just kind of brought to us like, “Oh. Okay.” That was another turning point that—yeah, there’s some weirdness going on with me, with that. Going to the school and having to be... We went where we were told. But getting there and having to actually live with the fact that there were all these white people there and we’d never had to deal with them. And just the reaction of some of the white and a lot of the blacks. And I realized their parents—*this isn’t them, this is their parents*—talking through them. Racist stuff is coming out of their mouths. So, these kids.... You don’t even know these kids. You didn’t know them before.

LB: What happens when these kids, white or black, from different backgrounds with parents who were saying God-knows-what to them, and they’re channeling... what happens when they come together? And you’re talking about at Wythe, right? Or earlier?

LT: No, this was earlier.

LB: At Elkhardt?

LT: No, this was even before then. This was at Westover Hills.

LB: Okay, Westover Hills. So, what happens when they start channeling their parents.

LT: One of the things is we didn't play together on the... there used to be a playground, a massive playground next to the school with swings and everything. I remember we used to just fly out of the swings. We used to love flying across the thing. It was just wild. But anyway. We weren't mean to each other, we just did not interact as much as we could have. Because we've been kind of told, in our own little ways, that, oh, you know, "You might wanna..." And that was gonna be enforced. They tried to enforce it with me and I remember I had to have a long conversation with myself about well what was going to happen. Was I gonna leave my black friends over here? Or then were these people gonna take me in?

LB: Yeah, that sounds very complicated.

LT: Yeah. For a ten, eleven-year-old girl, yeah.

LB: How did you think about? How did you resolve that in your mind?

LT: I finally, as I usually do, just say, "Well... screw it." You just do you. And if they don't like you, whoever *they* is, then they can just jump in the lake. And so I was friends with some of the whites, and any black person who wanted to be friends with me, they were fine. And we were fine. I was fine with them.

LB: You just kind of did your own thing throughout.

LT: Mhm. You know and you pay a psychic price for that because you're often by yourself because of that. Because once that was over they went their way to wherever they went. I don't even know where 'cause most of them did not come with us to Elkhardt. I don't know where they went. And then we went to Elkhardt. And there were very few white people at Elkhardt. There were a lot of white teachers, but not white students. I mean there were a few but not many. There were more when we got to George Wythe. But they were definitely in the minority at that point.

LB: What do you remember as big turning points for the community?

LT: *That* was probably one of the bigger ones. Just the whole idea of your babies are now going to have to go to schools that you were not prepared to send them [to]. You were always back then... that's one thing that folks don't understand as well... you knew you were black or you knew you were white. It wasn't something that was in the front of your mind, but it was always twirling in the back. You always knew. So you knew where you were supposed to be and where you weren't supposed to be. And now that's kind of... with that situation things are changing. So that's why my uncle told me, "You're black and you can't do certain things." 'Cause that's what he was growin' up with, the whole community. That's why they didn't want me at UVA. Because you just... there was a place... and you were getting out of it... and that was dangerous.

M1: Can I ask a question?

LB: Yeah.

M1: On that note, can you talk about Broad Street? ‘Cause it seems like that was a visual—you could see that directly off Broad Street.

LT: Yes. When I was a little kid, they used to have the Tobacco Festival Parade—which was an interesting thing unto itself. We lived on the northside of Broad Street. Black people were on the north side of Broad Street. White people were on the south side, near what is now VCU. We just didn’t know the other one was there. I have a young... well he’s not young, he’s my age now... but he and I met at LMR—Leadership Metro Richmond.

LB: Yeah, I did that.

LT: Yeah, okay! We were talking and come to find out we lived five blocks from each other. And we just did not... there was no way for us to know about each other. We were about the same age and there was just no way. And the only time you saw the other was when you went up to the Tobacco Festival Parade. And you was there for two, three hours while this thing was marching along. And you would see them over there, whoever *they* were. You didn’t interact with them but you could see them over there. And then you go back to your little world. And this kind of played out.

My mother had come from New York. My mother believed in having nice things. And in the black community... not that they weren’t there... but most people shopped... did not shop... at Harman’s and Miller & Rhoads, they liked that. They might come up to Broad Street and do Woolworth’s and G. C. Murphy’s. But mnm [no]. They also came up for... let me get it right now... Charles and Rayless, that’s what they were, they were department stores up near 2nd and 1st. That’s where a lot of black people went to. To the point where after integration happened and people could really go down to Harman’s and Miller & Rhoads and they did, those stores kind of dried up and they became sort of like these little chintzy places. People would joke with, “You got that from Charles and R... ugh... You cheap.” And this and that. There was also a little store on Clay Street. The building is still there. A lot of people don’t even know it, but it was a department store. It was called Troy’s. Also in the neighborhood, in the black neighborhood, there were a lot of things that you could get. Like at that point, most people did not... most people bought ice cream. You could buy it in the store but they had special ice cream parlors. And that’s where you would get a lot of it, hand dipped out. And there was one at 2nd and Clay. There was also a little, in people’s basements and things there were little restaurants and clubs and things. There was all this stuff, this whole little world that you could go to and you never had to go over to Broad Street and be bothered with it.

My mother was not one of those people. She was like, “Mnm [No]. We goin’ to Thalhimer’s. For some reason she could not stand Miller & Rhoads. We never really darkened the door of Miller Rhoads. My aunt was the first black secretary to Mr. Miller or Mr. Rhoads, I can’t remember which one. But she would darken the door of Thalhimer’s, yes, absolutely. So this is where we get this thing.

They talk about this Santa, the Miller Rhoads Santa, he was actually the Miller Rhoads and/or Thalhimer Santa. This is the Thalhimer Santa.

01:15:43

LB: That's a great picture. You look like you're not too sure about that Santa in that picture.

LT: Yes, I'm telling him something that I have no idea what I'm telling him, but I wanted something that I need him to tell me because they said, "Look over here!" And click! And they took the picture. And that's why I'm like [makes a face] because I'm in mid-trying to tell him, "I want the Barbie," or whatever. So she wouldn't darken the door of that, but she would not darken the door of Charles Rayless or Troy's either. I remember I wanted some go-go boots. And you couldn't buy them at Thalhimers or Miller Rhoads but you could buy them there and my mother was like, "Nope." Not doin' it. We would go down there and be some of the only black people that were there.

LB: Were you allowed to try on clothes at that point? Because I remember Rebecca Warden [sp?], who also went to Wythe, saying that she and her mother would go there but they were not allowed to try on the clothes.

LT: I don't remember ever having any problems, but offhand, being so young, at that point we may have had them and I just did not know enough about it. I do remember going down there and being looked at. We went into... Woolworth's and Murphy's, they had lunch counters at that point. And it was mainly white people who were in there. And my mother stopped at Woolworth's because at that point you would walk down there. You could park on the street and then walk down there. And we went in there and it was a white lunch counter. And my mother sat herself in a booth and sat me next to her and was like... dared anybody to say one thing, but I remember turning around and looking and everybody was boring down on the both of us for being there. My mother didn't care. We got our food. We ate it right there. She was not havin' it.

LB: She sounds like a tough lady.

LT: She was. She just was not having it.

M1: So was that before the lunch counter re...

LT: This would've been in '63 or '64.

LB: So after?

LT: It was close on that. Like from what I'm given to understand, I would've been alive but very young and don't remember the details of it. This was also at the point when Richmond, that whole area, was actually finally getting around to desegregating in a substantive way.

LB: Yeah.

LT: And my mother was one of those who was just like, really? I'm gone [unc. goin'??]. Let's go.

LB: Because I remember John Dorman, remember he told us about, he was picketing Woolworths in '60, '61.

01:18:33

LT: Yeah, right. And this would've been very shortly thereafter. Because you can see, looking back at it now, you can see that a lot of things were sort of twisting around at that point. They were very hard and fast, this and that. And then all of a sudden it gets a lot more fluid, even though people are still living on their sides of whatever, things are, you know. My mother walks in and nobody's like grabbing us and throwing us out, but they're [LT probably staring]... they're gonna make you feel uncomfortable and they're gonna get up on your own rather than somebody making you get up on your own.

LB: Yeah, yeah. How did your mom talk about what was going on in Richmond at that time? Did she talk about it in the home?

LT: We didn't talk about it as much. But she had the news on. Now the news I remember like it was yesterday. I can remember the Vietnam War going on. On the news I remember they used to keep the count. They would put up—this many dead American on this side, whatever on that... Viet Cong... at one point they had three they had Viet Cong, and then they had North Vietnamese and then the dead Americans and wounded had their... I remember that that going on. I remember the rioting going on as I got older I remember even more rioting going on.

LB: Do you remember the riots here in '68? After Dr. King was assassinated?

LT: I remember there being a lot of talk about riots but again my mother would make sure that if it was something she thought would literally scare the bejeezus out of me and something like that was scary to an eight-year-old... that she kind of made sure that I didn't... If I knew about it it was only cursory. But I remember rioting as a general principal all over the country when he died. That I remember. Oh my gosh there was so much rioting. But I remember there being rioting in '66, '65. Even though I was very little, it just. You're that young and it's something that's going on and it's in your world and it's scary but then you get your Barbies out and you just... it's not there anymore like that. And then tomorrow you look at the news and it's rioting again. You're slowly coming into fruition. Because that was a really scary time. There was rioting. There were serial killers. There's us and Asians. There's wars every which way. I remember being told to eat my food. My kids always get after me because I always clean my plate but we were told there's starving children in Biafra. I can still hear that like it was yesterday. And there were starving children in Biafra. We didn't know where that was, somewhere in Africa. We didn't know what was going on but we knew that they were starving and we better clean our plates because we could be starving at any minute. Especially with health being the way it was. Because back then it was nothing if people had cavities in their mouth. I don't know if I told you but remember me telling you about the several friends of mine, but one in particular, Sharon, she had black spots all over the place in her teeth, and I remember going to my mother and saying, "Well I want some black spots." "Cause I thought it was cute because you know. My mother looked at me like, "Girl, you better go." She just looked at me with that look like. You know, she was like, "Brush your teeth." People didn't go to the doctor like they did. My mother... I don't know if you know of the Bowers?

LB: Yeah, I know that name.

LT: McEva Bowser, she just died. Her husband's mother was Rosa D. Bowser who was a good friend of Maggie Walker's. And that building at 00 Clay Street was where they had the—oh gosh, Lord knows—they had the women's' club. The Negro Women's' Club was there. The first black library was there. On and on and on. That was his mother. I remember Dr. Barrington Bowser because his house is right there, is still there, on Adams Street between Clay and Adams. It's the big Italianate one that sits up behind the church sort of red. He practiced in the basement. That's where his office was. And I think they lived in the top of the house.

LB: And that must have been when Francis Foster, Dr. Foster, was practicing and working at VCU and...

LT: Yeah. Mhm. Absolutely.

LB: So, a lot was really changing.

LT: Yeah there was a lot changing. For black people, they didn't have offices like often like they have now. Like now you would go to a doctor's office. That time you could go to a doctor's office. 'Cause on Lee Street... Lord what is the name of their family... they were optometrists and I remember going there with my great uncle and my mother. But at the same thing, around the corner you had Dr. Bowser in a house practicing and he had a full old office there. He had a full office. I remember he had these giant goldfish in this tank. Loved those things.

LB: I was surprised to hear you say earlier that there were white doctors who came to your house.

LT: Yes. There was a white doctor who visited my grandparents. Because when I was real little, there were still milkmen. There were still services. Down when we were talking about Broad Street. And I think I shared this, that over on Marshall, where now sits the civic center, the convention center, that thing. At that point, when I was a kid, that whole area was just an open market. So, you would drive down there and you would see carts, trucks, things like that, unloading vegetables and things and you'd see where the butcher was and stuff. Sometimes blood was running in the gutter and vegetable parts were dropped on the ground and this and that. Also, where the armory is—that was a market, like you would see in Europe kind of thing. I remember buying freshly ground hamburger from there when I was a kid. Every now and again my mother would go there and also, I remember when 17th Street, we would drive through there and the slave posts were still up. And my mother took great pains to tell me. And she called them slave marts. The slave marts were still up then. But they were the posts where they would chain slaves there when they were selling them.

LB: In the 60s. That's amazing.

LT: Mhm. And there was a market there, an open-air market there too. Not with all the nice awnings. It was just cobblestones and whoever pulled up. I remember occasionally even seeing horse drawn buggies coming through the city every now and again.

LB: Because people in Church Hill still remembered the ice man coming. Even in the 60s.

LT: Yes. Yes. We didn't have... where we lived he didn't come or at least I didn't know that that was him. But yeah people had the...

LB: ...iceboxes.

LT: Yeah! They had the iceboxes and the washing machines with the things on the top and you had the runners and things yeah. That was yeah. It was a different time. A totally different time back then.

LB: My dad still calls the refrigerator the "icebox."

LT: The icebox! I do too. Every now and again. And I didn't even know then what that was because there were so few of them relative to... you know most people had some version of some sort of electrical thing. But I can imagine in the old houses. Because my grandmother lived a block away. We were at 1202 and she was at 1202 ½. She had a potbelly in the house. There was no central heating. There was no nothing. There was a potbelly, which was very warm. And she cooked on the potbelly and just on and on. And that's what heated the house.

LB: It's such a different time and it seems so amazing to have all of these different Richmonds coexisting within blocks of each other. So that there are houses where you still don't have. I mean, I've interviewed, when I did my Fourth Baptist interviews, people there clearly remembered, they didn't have indoor plumbing.

LT: I remember that. I did not know what they were. When I was a child we went up to Amelia. And Old Brick Church, they called it Old Brick Church, it's called Liberty Baptist, it was built by the ex-slaves right afterwards and you know they had hung the chains up in there to show... you know. But at that point, up through the 70s, they didn't have indoor plumbing. They had a potbelly. They didn't have any air conditioning, nor heat. And my mother said... I told my mother, I said, "I need to go to the bathroom." And we started going outside and I'm like... But I remember, I thought about it and I said, "Oh I'm gonna have to go to the bushes." Because I can remember stopping and—Lord knows why, because there were places you could stop on 95—but I remember as a child stopping a few times, pulling off the road, and we would get out of the car and walk down into the gully and that's where you went to the bathroom. Which now, thinking about the times, that was not unheard of or uncommon for black people traveling on the road. Didn't occur to me then but that was something you did and I thought, "Okay we're gonna have to go to the thing, good God." But nope, my mother took me to the outhouse. So we went into the house which I found absolutely fascinating because there was no snakes but there were worms in there and there were spiders hanging off the thing and I thought this was the most amazing thing. There was a hollowed-out stump and somebody put a little toilet seat on top of it. And they had a thing a little roll of toilet paper and that was that. And you could look out and see

people doing things and it was cold because it was really cold outside. But yeah. And I remember years later there were things I remembered I didn't know what they were but people did have little outhouses in the back of their house. I don't know if... I think my grandmother had one back there if I'm not mistaken.

LB: Yeah, my grandmother had one.

LT: Right there on Clay Street.

LB: So there you are, living a life where things are changing all the time. But it sounds like you were constantly moving between worlds. You're on student council but you're also still living in this super segregated environment. But there are all these attempts at integration taking place, right?

LT: Right. It's sort of a herk and jerk thing. Because at that point Richmond is also changing because all the white people had fled out of the city and the money went with them.

LB: When do you remember that happening?

LT: That I remember very well, that started to happen in '70. And at first you didn't notice it. And then there was the massive fight about what was going to happen to 6th Street, 5th Street. Because people said, "Oh, people aren't going downtown anymore." When I was a child, Broad Street was packed 24/7. Then it became less packed. And more black people and less white people. Then they were like, "Well we gotta do something to get the white people into the city." And they came up with that crazy Plan One, and it had another name too they called them together. And it became what was 6th Street Marketplace. But it was originally envisioned as something a little more than that, or a little different than that. And then over the years it, you know... But that thing started up probably in the early 70s and it took them at least another ten, fifteen years to actually build it. Only to tear it down twenty years later.

M1: And now they're proposing something different.

LT: Oh gosh. Now that I moved out I'm like, "What is it now?" Honestly, I have not kept up. You'll have to tell me.

M1: Yeah. They want to make a development. The city wants to go in and tear 6th Street down and then build something new.

LT: There's hardly anything left there.

LB: Yeah. That's true.

LT: I'm like, "What are you gonna get out of there?" Oh, my goodness gracious. Sixth Street is where Miller Rhoads was on this side and Thalhimer's was on this side. And you used to, I remember, running across the street you know. And the Loew's Theater which was... what is that thing called now? The little theater that's back there. It's not called...

LB: The Hippodrome?

LT: No, not the Hippodrome. It's...

LB: The National?

LT: No, it's behind the... it's on Grace.

LB: Oh, I know what you mean, the Carpenter.

LT: Yes. Well it was the Loew's Theater then and it was a theater. Then it became a grindhouse theater. And then there were theaters and all that. The National and all that. The Colonial and I forget the Town, were over there and they became grindhouse theaters and I can even remember the Booker T., which is the Empire, that was the black people's theater. And then once we could go downtown, that kind of languished for a long time. It just sat there and then eventually they bought and turned it into the empire.

LB: Because a lot of people today who are seeing the show are going to have no idea what a grindhouse theater is, could you just say something about it?

LT: So basically, they were nice theaters and then over time the movies they showed became less A-level movies than B-level movies... Blaxploitation movies in particular were popular back in the day. You know, Cleopatra Jones, and Blacula and all that. And the quality of the actual facilities deteriorated such that you would go in there and you might leave your shoes in there because there was so much gum and God knows what on the floor. You went in there and you saw those things and it got the name "grindhouse" because of that. Because God knows what you were gonna see. And then there was also the Lee Art Theater. That thing. Way up where what is now VCU. My personal favorite in all this. Because I remember "art theater" and I could see it. That was one thing. We did cross Broad Street to go to the People's drugstore which were over there. Like I said, my mother was like, "Mnm. We are going where we need to go." And the Lee Art theater was right next to it. I think it used to be the VCU police station. And now it's something else, I don't know what it is.

LB: I remember when I came to VCU, you know, before, and it was still there.

LT: Oh yeah! The Lee Art Theater. And I asked my mother because I kept seeing "Art" and my mother was always takin' me up to the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts. And I said, "Oh, art. Mommy can we go?" And my mother was, she gave me that look like, "Girl you better go on now with that mess." She wouldn't tell me what it was. And of course, later on I discovered why you know there was.... The "Art" was the least of their concerns in that theater at any given time.

I don't know if you ever heard of Dapper Dan?

LB: Yeah.

LT: Dapper Dan was still there and alive on Broad Street with his cars at that point.

LB: No one else will know what Dapper Dan is. So talk a little bit about Dapper Dan.

LT: Dapper Dan was a used car salesman. Julian's was on the corner of Harrison and Broad. And across the street was what is now... well Universal Ford was there... that was the first black owned car... first-run car thing. And Dapper Dan was across the street. And that man was... shyster doesn't even begin to get to it from what I'm told by everybody and his cousin. That man, he had a saying, "I would give 'em away, but my wife won't let me." And the thing is, the fact is, could you even give them away? His cars were just total trash. But it was the only thing some people could afford. So they went to Dapper Dan. Of course now sittin' on top of that is that VCU bookstore thing. But that was his area.

LB: So that was a black business? A white business?

LT: No, Dapper was, he was white. But black people could get a car. Because that's another thing a lot of people don't understand from that time—a lot of black people did not have cars. They just didn't. Broad Street, I mean even on Leigh Street, we had a bus, called "Leigh Street 55." That shows you. There's no Leigh Street 55 anymore. My mother had a car. That and there were very few cars on Leigh Street at that point. I think one of my neighbors had it and the other one had not. And sometimes they would ride with us places. I remember my mother took kids when they had to go to Graves school. On her way they would get in her car and she would drive 'em down Leigh Street so they could get there a lot faster. Otherwise they would have to walk or catch the 55 to get there. But we just didn't have... people just didn't have cars like they have now. So Dapper was a way to... he and his ilk, because he wasn't the only one. Roy had one too. And some other people. He was a way to get a car for cheap. It's just that the quality of said car was dicey at best.

LB: As you were growing up, what kind of other turning points do you remember, either for yourself or your community or in your school? Were there moments that stood out to you as things being different before and after that happened?

LT: I remember something that happened and it wasn't in the school. But something happened in Richmond at Parker Field, which is the Diamond, you know some people might not know that the Diamond used to be called Parker Field. They had these big... sometimes they had outdoor concerts there. For some reason somebody got the idea we would have a rock concert one day and a soul concert the next day. You realize now that it was because one had a mainly white audience and one had a mainly black audience. And they didn't want them anywhere near each other.

LB: And what year, around, is this?

LT: This would've been somewhere between '72, '73. Tickets were ten dollars which is hysterical—everybody thought that was astronomical at the time. I remember saving my

allowance trying to make sure I had all the money to go and everything. The rock concert went on Saturday and there was riot there. It wasn't a race riot. Just some...

LB: ...white riot?

LT: Yeah. Some melee. It was massive. It was all over the news. And so the next day came and they cancelled the black concert. Didn't even let it... There were rumors that night that they were gonna let it go on but...

LB: Who was supposed to be playing there? What were the bands?

LT: I can't speak to the white bands. I can tell you who was gonna be there. The Delfonics were gonna be there. And, oh gosh, there were so many. Not Lou Rawls but he was like Lou Rawls. I can't remember his name right now. He was gonna be there. Oh, I can see him! My sister loved him.

LB: George Benson? Or no?

LT: No, because he was a jazz musician. This was only soul music. Which was... because also you gotta remember we had... I mean we still do have separate radio stations, but they were really separate then. We had W-ANT and W-ENZ. That was the black stations. Everything else was white. Also everything was on AM. There was very little on FM at that point. I would have to think about it but it was all day. The thing would start at around ten o'clock and go until like ten o'clock at night. It was just like this huge thing and there was gonna be one band after another that was popular back then. There was just so many I can't even remember. Fifth Dimension might have been coming I mean there was just hordes of names that were coming and they were like... I remember black people, all of us saying, "We don't act like that at our concerts. Why would you do this to us?" But they were like, "Oh no, we can't take a chance."

LB: That sounds incredibly disappointing for a twelve, thirteen-year-old.

LT: Yeah. My sister was gonna go, she was like seventeen, eighteen. I mean everybody was going and it was just... you know... you just. And everybody... the thing that struck was that... you heard this in the black community: it was racist. And because... Why us? Why? We hadn't shown up at that. We had not been involved in all that lunacy. You knew that was a different audience. That's why you had separated them to begin with and then this foolishness had happened but we got penalized. And people were very very angry with the white people behind this.

LB: I can only imagine.

LT: It still strikes me to this day that it happened like that, but it doesn't surprise me. All these years later.

LB: Yeah and the 70s must've been such years of change, right? With the white flight taking place, city council finally black...

01:42:38

LT: Yes, I remember that, I remember that. Oh my goodness, years before, my aunt, who lived in Princeton, she had traveled down here for Linwood Holton's election. That was a massive... oh my God. It wasn't like people dancing in the streets, but in their homes they were. They would just, like, oh my gosh. Because he was a Republican. And we hadn't had a Republican. We'd had all this, this string of folk who were Democrats, but Dixiecrats would be a better way to describe them. And then you started to see the changeover for the Republican party. Because many blacks, my mother included, were Republican.

LB: It's so hard to imagine that now, isn't it?

LT: Oh, yeah!

LB: That "Democrat" in the South used to be something so opposite.

LT: And Republican too.

LB: And Republican too, yeah.

LT: I remember my mother when Nixon got elected. I asked my mother who she voted for and she didn't say anything about what it was and then there was some report on the news about some birds. And I don't know how Nixon was even caught up in that thing but they were shooting these birds up this thing and shootin' 'em. And that irritated me and I was like, "Ah! President Nixon why isn't he doin' things. He's bad because he's Republican." And my mother was like, "No! And we got into this argument about this and it was just like she wanted me to be a Democrat but I think I'm pretty sure she was a Republican because that's what she had inherited from, you know, before.

LB: That must've been such a huge mental shift.

LT: Right.

LB: I mean starting with Goldwater, right?

LT: Right. And I didn't know much. I knew his name. I didn't know much about him. But everybody I knew was voting Democratic or whatever, but there's this whole collection of people from a certain age who had come up when Republicans were the good guys and Democrats were not. And at that point you see the flip over. So all the younger people, if they were not, you know, black, they were gonna vote Democrat. And the older people were... because there was a lot of shift. They weren't Republicans. A lot of shift at that point on what we were gonna be called. Because there were people, the oldest people were, we were still colored. The people who were in the middle group, we were negroes. Younger people were Afro-Americans and then we were black and then African Americans. And all this is coexisting all at the same time inside the community and there's some turmoil about that, shall we say.

LB: Yeah, I remember everyone at Fourth Baptist sitting around and comparing what they were called on their birth certificates. Right? Depending on when they were born.

LT: And I remember being... because I come from the militant end of things... you know colored people. Just being called “colored”—that would be considered the old-timey, and you know just useless. “Negro” had been respectable when I was younger, like a little girl. And that’s the one with the thing, the other thing with that one was “colored” had a small “c,” it was always written with a small “c.” Whereas “Negro” was always written with a capital letter. So it was more respectable. This and that. But then that too became out the door with that too because it’s useless. It’s old timey. It’s Uncle Tom-ish.

LB: So how do you remember the black power movement in Richmond?

LT: I remember it. I remember seeing people. I mean when you would go down to the movies, oh my gosh. There were people. I remember when afros first came in. That, younger people, that was your ultimate symbol you know and you had to get the perfect afro—nice little globe there. And then I remember us having the combs. He’s just died recently, the man, what is his barber shop? There are two barber shops. One is on First and the other one is on Broad Street. And he invented this comb. What is the man’s name? It’s the one you see with the little fist. The little pick with the fist. But he didn’t invent that but what he invented was the afro comb, and it’s like a comb but it’s got teeth this long. You ever seen that thing? And it’s gotta little fist on the end. And so you would see people wearing these things. It was part of the afro. Like you would wear these things in the back of your head. Which is amazing to me now as heavy as that thing was. And you’re constantly making sure your afro was... And that was the biggest part of it. You know and people, my sister, she had a poster of Angela Davis. And I had somebody, I wanna say Huey P. Newton was on my room. People admired them. Sometimes you would see people in dashikis. I remember when I was real little we saw people in dashikis. And my mother goin’ up and talkin’ to them you know I was scared to death and she went up and talked to them about it and you know everybody was kind of interested in that and kind of caught up in... We didn’t wear necessarily dashikis, but there was a certain amount of admiration for the whole thing even. And you would see them sometimes out there. People who were obviously into black power. But it wasn’t like it was in New York where you would see people marching and it was this whole thing. It wasn’t like that.

LB: Philip Brunson remembered going to a few Black Panther parties at VUU. Did you ever get involved in a Black Panther party.

LT: Mnm [no]. By the time I came along, ‘cause he’s older than I am, we... they were not as they had been. By then the COINTELPRO and all that had kind of broken the back of what they were or what they could’ve been as they spread.

LB: Myra Smith. Did you go to LMR when Myra was the head of it?

LT: Yeah.

LB: So she remembered her elementary school teachers in second grade selling the Black Panther Party newspaper back then. ‘Cause she’s exactly your age.

LT: We had... in Carver people were more... I hate to use the word “respectable,” because that’s not what I mean but that’s how they thought of themselves. You wouldn’t see people with the party stuff. What you would see is Ebony. Because Ebony was a big thing. You could tell by peoples’ homes where things were kind of going. The Afro, the Richmond Afro...

LB: Afro-American?

LT: Mhm. Was still a big paper back then. There were still some people who had that. They would get that because it came in the afternoon. And then there were people who got the Times Dispatch. My mother only got Times Dispatch. Some people who got the News Leader. And then other people had other things. You could kinda tell some things about them just by what kind of papers they were subscribing to.

LB: Jet versus Ebony...

LT: Ebony and things of that nature. So some of my neighbors who were more working class, they had Jet, whereas we had Ebony.

LB: Was the Afro-American a daily newspaper back then?

LT: I believe it was.

LB: That’s amazing to think of now.

LT: Yeah, yeah, it’s just. Things slowly just slipped away.

LB: But you were growing up in one of the periods of biggest change.

LT: Right. And at that point everything was as it was, whatever that was. But then the 70s I think is where you start to see some slippage. And by the 80s there’s a lot of slippage. And by the 90s things are starting to just... things have already started to disappear but things that were there... In the 90s I think is when the Afro finally closed up shop and the free press showed up.

LB: So it took a long, long time.

LT: It was a long slide. It was a long slide. Because what happened was without a coherent community you have no constituency. And they can get other things. So why stay with what you had. And that’s what it was. We were also told, sometimes overtly, sometimes covertly: white was better.

LB: It’s kind of strange now to think of Richmond’s militant past in the 1930s when the Southern Negro Youth Congress was founded here. Right? With James E. Jackson? And the Communist Party was stronger than you might imagine.

01:51:55

LT: Oh yeah. I tell people that things that used to go on, even in my particular time period, we can't conceive. But one of the big arguments now, you know when Bernie Sanders was saying that we could have free schooling. And I remember talking to people who were in their 30s. They thought, "Oh no, we can never have it." And I said, "You know, let me tell you something. I can remember when Reynolds cost five dollars a credit. And I remember when we had no student loans. I remember when you could pay for what it was if you had to with a [unc.]" They were just stunned because for them this has never existed. So for them taking out student loans to go to school, that was what one does. But I can remember when that wasn't all there was to that story. And there was free colleges in this country. And there was nearly free here with what we had. Some of it seemed expensive. Back then it seemed expensive. But even then five dollars a credit was not an expensive proposition. And so the thing flourished. When things get lost, they got lost. And if there's nobody, no constituency, that either wants it to stay or wants it to be remembered, then it gets completely and totally lost. Such as the outhouses in the city, the Communist Party in the city, the... you know...

LB: Do you remember the Communist Party at all when you were growing up. Were there still people you knew who were members or kind of fellow travelers?

LT: We did not know anybody who was that but the Communist Party was always with you. And the reason was because indoctrination was a big part of school. One of the things we had to do... I'm sure you've heard this from many people.... The bomb was about to fall at any time. So we spent a lot of time, like we do tornado drills in school and this thing, all these different kind of drills. We didn't do any of that then. What we did do, however, was duck and cover. And I can remember jumping under the... 'cause desks were wood... jumping under desks, you know doing this, and you laugh now because you think, "That was not helping anything." But that's what we were told. And then part of the news every night... the whole thing... this comparison with the Viet Cong and all that was this whole communism versus you know. When they talked about things that were going on in the world it was often... you know the whole Cold War... it was with you at *all* times. And then they would try to play out the whole, anything that was *here* that was going on in those *same* terms. Bad communists. Good whoever that wasn't. And you got that message all the way through. School they did it. Church they did it. Street. It didn't matter.

LB: And no one knows really what a communist is anymore.

LT: No, they don't. And so the odd part is, you know, when Bernie came along last year, and older people kept saying, "He's a socialist." And the younger people were like... And I was like, "Thank goodness," because now maybe we can have a proper discussion about all of this rather than: "Bad commu..." I mean I can't tell you how much that was a part of everything: Bad communist, bad communist, bad, bad, bad. Even when you went into the service they had a whole class just to deal with teaching people about the Communist Manifesto and Das Kapital and things like that. They wouldn't teach it. But they would teach it as: "Well this is what communists believe and this is what they believe and this is bad." You know.

LB: Yeah it was hard to...

LT: It was everywhere.

LB: So how do you think your experiences shaped how you are today? The person you became?

01:55:45

LT: Well, they definitely made me the lefty that I am. I already had that sort of contrarian thing. But seeing the outlines of what could be and having a mother and a dad who never said, “Just because you’re black, you can’t be a Rockette.” And then having to come over here when they died and then have people actually *constantly* remind you. I mean we knew. I remember the day I knew I was black. The one was that thing. But I actually remember looking at my skin and looking at the TV and saying, “Oh, I don’t look like those people.”

LB: How old were you?

LT: I was seven. I just looked up one day and was like, “Oh.” TV was black and white back then so you know that played up itself really nicely. But having a mother who didn’t remind you, say to you, “You’re black,” and let you find that out, find out what that was, just allowed me to actually see the outlines of what *could* be. Because that whole time period was about what *could* be. Martin Luther King, and these people around then—what *could* be. So I never lost that. Not one day out of my life have I lost that. And raised my children with that. So that hopefully they are not gonna have to deal with what my mother, Lord knows, what she was dealing with because finding out some of the things about my biological family and you know that they wouldn’t have been like that if it wasn’t for the virulent racism they had to deal with during the Nadir.

LB: What did you find out about your biological family later on when you went back to learn about them?

LT: Well my mother had always, since I was five, let me know. Because people thought she was my grandmother and I had to explain she was my mother. So eventually we had to settle. She told me. She promised to take ‘em. And we talked about all of that. Well I was looking for them pretty much since I was five. There was no computers. There was no... There are record laws and most of them it’s... twenty-five is the bare minimum. And we hadn’t reached that. Well now we have. And so when I finally found my sister and we got to talking about things—oh my goodness. And then actually getting to see the pictures and the stuff. A cousin of mine was just talking about this Monday. You can see the other half of this. Because we’re descended from... [unc.] Do you know who Robert King Carter is?

LB: I’ve heard that name.

LT: You know of his place. He has one of the plantations out there on Route 5. Lord which one is it. Berkeley? The one with the...

LB: Oh yeah.

LT: Or one of those. Well it's taken a long time but we are probably descended from Robert King Carter.

LB: That's so crazy.

LT: Amongst others.

LB: Yeah.

01:58:43

LT: I'm still doing my digging. But the first increments you see of this is my... I have a picture of my great great grandmother. She is a quadroon. Do you know what those are?

LB: Yeah.

LT: 'Cause a lot of people don't. Her mother was a mulatto. That's where the whole Robert King Carter comes into it. She somehow got involved with two white men. One who became the governor of South Carolina and the other one was a dentist. Yeah. Oh, these stories. Every black family, whether they know it or not, has these stories. And she was... We were looking for a name. Because nobody was called "Clowny." It's actually a form of Clooney. It took a while but my sister and I found her and her children listed as an item in a will. And what it was was the lady who owned her had married somebody and that's one of the sons is who she got pregnant by the first time. It turns out that the lady had her will made, 1864. And she said, "Yeah, this, and this." And the first item was: "For Emily and her family of children, I will her to my niece. And that's when we knew, because her first marriage was to a Mr. Clooney, or Clowney. And then she went on to have four more kids, all of them look pretty much like you look. My great grandmother had blue eyes and red hair and the whole kit and caboodle. One of them wandered off to Pittsburgh and pretended he was white for the longest time. His son would never come near the family. He would come down here. He would have contact with them but he'd make sure he was always somewhere else. Because he didn't want nobody to know. And one of the daughters gets disowned because she married an obviously black man. And on and on and on it goes.

Eventually my grandmother, who was very light, she marries a dark-skinned man named Mr. Cleveland. Casper was known to be rather "violent," shall we say. We thought that... You know he had been a World War 1 veteran if that had anything to do with it. Then we found out his father was the same way. And all these people... Casper was born in the late 1890s. His father was born about thirty or forty years before that, had been a slave as a child. And you're seeing now. I don't know how much you know about this but there's a movement in the black community to kind of look at the slave experience, the whole Reconstruction experience, the whole Jim Crow, all of that as a trauma. And how that has been passed through the community one person after another. I can see that because of my uncle and what he said to me. Other people were the same way in that just like keep the white people over there for God's sake, don't get yourself, don't get your head too big, don't get too expectation. And this is in the 70s. You think, "Oh, no we've integrated." No. This is still rolling through the community. And it still is today, just weaker versions and expectations.

02:02:57

And that's what I said when I started about that program I got involved with. Because a lot of our kids don't know about that that these are options. They know about the obvious stuff—nursing and driving a truck or whatever. But they don't know: "Hey! I could be a geologist. Or I could be a nuclear physicist." Or whatever. Because they don't know anybody that's like that. And the reason is because of these terrible traumas. That these things have inflicted upon black people. And not just black people. And that we couldn't get out from under because we were black. Whereas a poor Irishman, because we're actually descended from you know a boat that some of the tides come in on... They could get above this over time because they didn't have that impediment. And so you know maybe I'll pay a little money make sure my son goes to school. My grandfather, great grandfather, did that. But my mother was still looking like this. So she could only go but so far. Whereas you know. You've got this other stuff. And so it shows itself in violence. Many cousins who have moved up... their parents and grandparents who have moved up to Chicago, they never turned around and looked at South Carolina again and they, you know, when I contacted them, they're like, "Oh thank God. Oh we didn't know!" And we're like second cousins. These are brothers and sisters. But they were just like... Because South Carolina was South Carolina in the 20s. That wasn't a nice place to be if you were a black person.

LB: What do you think that people in Richmond need to know? Are there things that you'd like kids growing up in Richmond today to know that you think they don't know?

LT: I would like them to mainly know that you, you come from, whoever you are, you come from a long line of people who had to struggle. And that there literally is, in this one case, no pain, no gain without pain. You need to look back at that and you need to embrace it, whatever it is. And then change it if it's bad. I'm a big proponent of pulling down these statues. Make no bones about it. The only reason I want them down is because they're representative of some very bad things. And you can find somebody who is not representative of some very bad things if you have to have a statue up there, but not somebody who fought to keep slaves. And you need to embrace that if you're white. And if you're black, you need to embrace the fact that you had slave ancestry. There's nothing wrong with that. There's a lot of people, I'd say the majority of us if you go back far enough in the past, you're gonna find somebody who was slave or near a slave. So okay. It is what it is. Embrace it. But if you're on the other side, you need to understand where we're coming from. I think until Richmond grapples with that, as the capitol of the Confederacy, we're never gonna really have that peace and justice that everybody, not just in the city, but... and as the city changes, as more people who look like you move into the city and more people like me move out, that's kind of good because you know we saw that with the election, it's a little bluer now in Chesterfield than it used to be and that's a good thing. But I wonder what that's going to be like as far as... what's the city gonna be like when this is over and I want it to be a better place. Not one where we just resegregate only now y'all are in and we're out. That scares me, and a lot of people that I know, a lot. You know. It's not that we don't want folk in. We just don't want to lose what good things... we don't wanna lose that diversity in the city because it's bad for everybody. You, me, all of us. We'll just repeat what we already had only one group's in one place and the other group's in the other place, and it used to be flipped.

LB: Yeah, it's amazing now when you go into Richmond public schools—how completely resegregated they are. There's a couple of white schools, and then almost all the other schools are black. Like I go into Armstrong—everyone's black. Right?

LT: Everyone's black. The unfortunate part of that is, as the tax base is growing, the schools are deteriorating. The buildings are in even worse shape than they were.

LB: Because they're not spending the money on them.

LT: They're not spending the money. You know. When I worked there last year... And I have no bones about talking about that... there were... George Wythe is... I'm an alumnus who is in favor of just bulldozing it at this point because it is in such wretched shape. If you're not going to do something, *no one* should go to school in those conditions. I mean the place is literally falling apart, right on top of the children.

LB: I know. We just did a play with the Armstrong Leadership Program students and the thing they were most horrified to learn is: the city is supposed to spend \$3.40 per square foot per year on maintenance. The county spends \$3.89. At Armstrong the average is sixty-three cents. We did a whole scene about that.

LT: I wish. I hope that folk from the school board saw it.

LB: We're doing a special performance for the school board and the mayor.

LT: And make sure the media is there because people need to talk about it in those terms. And not: "Bad school. Bad school. Bad school." You need to understand why it's so-called, "Bad school." It doesn't. It's like the traumas we were talking about. This stuff doesn't just... People just don't wake up and say, "Oh I'm just gonna be *bad*." Whatever that is. It's a long process. Most of the people who were involved in said process are no longer on this earth to tell you, "Oh yeah, we used to do this." And you don't read history.

LB: It's been so interesting getting the 1966 alums together with the current students. Because their experiences are so so different.

LT: Oh yeah. I talked to... I was supposed to... When Olivia was there I went there. We were supposed to have a conversation like this. We never got that straight but I did talk to kids and they, you know, we had no guards there. I don't know if you've been in the front but there's a big... it was a school motto... not the motto... but the... oh gosh what's that thing called? It's in the floor. It's like a little emblem.

LB: Yeah.

LT: That thing used to be guarded by the ROTC. You *had* to go around it. I mean that was just like "No." You did not touch it. I see people just [sound of footsteps]. They even have the little place... You have to go across it because that's where the door is now. All the doors were open.

You could come in any door you wanted. Now you can't. There were no buzzers. There were no guards. And she was just shocked. And I said, yeah and people didn't skip.

LB: No metal detectors.

LT: No metal detectors, yeah! And people didn't skip. We didn't have passes. We didn't have... hardly anybody got put out. We didn't have a in-school suspension. It just... We hung out. We had lunch on that long hall. We were outside. I never went into the lunch room. I never ate in there, I never went there. We'd just sneak off and go. Because at that point there was a 7-11 and a McDonalds nearby. And the train ran across Hull and Midlothian. Right across the street. And that's why the... if you look at the yards... the weird shape? It's 'cause the train was running right there. And we used to sneak across there and you know. The principal occasionally would chase us across there. But for the most part... The DMV was over there. All of that's gone now.

M1: I don't mean to interrupt, but it's almost noon and I've got ADT coming in a couple minutes. So if somebody knocks on the door, I just... we're working on the system so.

LT: You're fine. You're fine. I understand.

LB: Is there anything I didn't ask you that you would like to talk about.

LT: I don't know. I honestly don't. I've been through an interesting life.

LB: Yes you have.

LT: You know. I've lived all over the world and I've done all kinds of things.

LB: What did you do after UVA?

LT: I started wandering. So I moved to New York for a little while. Then I moved to Hawaii under a volcano for a short while. Then lived in Los Angeles for a bit. Then came back to D.C. for a little tiny bit. And then went in the service. Lived in Texas. And then moved to England.

LB: Which service branch were you in?

LT: Airforce. And then I moved to England for three years. And then Reagan. God bless him. I have a different memory of him than other people. He built up the... You know the Cold War was raging pretty badly. He built the service numbers up to unreal levels. People talk more about the hardware now. But the same thing with the people. And then midway through that they decided: "Well we've had enough." And he picked, he meaning service, picked a thousand people. They said, "If you came in or need to re-up between this point and this point you got to go." And I had a baby. And I was homeless. I was a homeless vet. And they had no services. People didn't even... We hadn't had a war in so long people didn't know what a vet was. I remember going over to Richmond Development to sign up for something and they said, "Well you can't apply for Veteran's. You're not in the service." It was like, "You don't even know

what that term means.” Then I went to... finally got a place in... over for eighteen years in Wickham doing the drug thing in the 90s and early 2000s. That was shoot ‘em up every which way. That was just bad. That was bad. Then I went to school while I was there and got my Bachelors and went on to graduate school. Didn’t get to finish. But it was at VCU in the history program. First black person in the history program.

LB: What year were you there?

LT: Let me get this right... I got there. They opened that up in ’94 I wanna say.

LB: Yeah, that’s when I got to VCU.

LT: Yeah. Opened it up in ’94. And I had little kids. And nobody. It was just me and the two little kids. That’s hard to do. It really is. I had a fellowship and I handed it back. And they were like, “But, but...” And I was like, “I can’t do this. I cannot do this right now.” I kept coming back but I never quite... I got to finish all my classes but I didn’t write my thesis. I was like, “You don’t understand. You are guys and you know you gotta wife or whatever and your little kids.” It’s just me living in Wickham Court. You have no idea what it’s like. And then I did a bunch of things all over the place—community development, community organizing, got recognized by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development. I can’t remember if it’s HOOD or... no it’s Health and Human Services but it wasn’t called that it was HEW I think then. For walkarounds. ‘Cause I used to walk around to every house in there and find out who was, ‘cause it was for pregnant women, ‘cause if you had a high mortality rate for kids and so. And then finally decided I wanted to become a teacher and so went back, joined AmeriCorps when it first started, and got my little teaching license and started teaching. Started out in Petersburg and came forward and then went to Henrico. And then retired out of there two years ago.

LB: It has been a super eventful life.

LT: Yeah. Massively eventful. ‘Cause I’m just kind of like here. I haven’t even got to all the little points. But I’m glad I had that life. I really am. There are point where, you know, everybody’s like, “You’re still poor, you’re still whatever.” I said, “I’ve never been acquisitive to begin with so having more stuff is never going to...” I really did like helping people. And you know making sure their lives, and especially kids, were better than the lunacy that

02:15:12 – Recording goes silent for 18 seconds.

LT: You know, the chaos of my own life. You know ‘cause they would tell me things and I’m like, “Sweetie, let me tell you. You think it’s bad. Let me tell you about this so that you know you can get over. You can get above this mess. You just have to decide you’re going to get above this mess.”

LB: I was talking to Marvin Roane at Armstrong yesterday. Do you know him?

LT: His name sounds familiar.

LB: He and Yvette Rajput run the Armstrong Leadership Program together. He was telling me that even now they have first generation high school graduates. In 2017. '18.

LT: And they're not immigrants?

LB: Nope.

LT: That's the thing people would think. "Oh they're..." No. There are immigrants obviously that fit that I know. But what we're talking about. And some of them are white. A lot of them are black. But some of them are white. And folk just do not understand that there are a large number of people in this... you know. Because when I came through high school, one of the things we did not have was a push to college. I think that was one of the more stupid things we've done in this country. The idea that somehow people are not who they are. So if you really are somebody who likes to putter around with your blocks or whatever—yeah you might become an engineer. But maybe you wanna become a technician. We've kind of cut that off and said, "Everybody needs to be an engineer." And everybody doesn't have the wherewithal to do the stuff that it takes to become an engineer. When I came through we had three diplomas. I don't know if anybody's ever talked to you about that. We had what was called an "academic diploma." They call it an "advanced diploma" now. We had a business diploma, which was mainly, you saw the main group that was in there were women. They were trying to be secretaries. Then we had the general diploma. That took care of anything and everything else. But mainly they were gonna become tradesmen, go into the service, things of that nature. Those last two have been meshed together into the standard diploma now. And what we've said basically is that you can go to college and when people think college, they don't think Reynolds, or Tyler, or anything like that. They think VCU. And the truth be told, you can't go to VCU with a standard diploma. I don't care what your grade point average is. Let's just be honest about it. That's a mistake in and of itself. But telling everybody that you need to be something that we now require, because everything that we require college for now we didn't always used to require college for it. Telling them that they need to go to evermore amounts of college to get through to get to anything is a mess and it is depriving us as a country of all the tradespeople. We're discovering that now. The other kinds of workers. 'Cause everybody's not meant to... There are people that are happy working at McDonalds for their whole career. But we tell them, "You're trash, because you should want more." We tell people, "You're trash if you live over in Wickham Court. You should want more." Many many many people I used to work with, LMR, or whatever say, "Ughhhh Loretta. You've got a college degree now you need to be out of there." My situation didn't allow me to get out of there quite yet. Them telling me I'm trash doesn't help either.

LB: I can't imagine what Wickham Court must've been like in a city with such a huge concentration of property and more public housing than anywhere south of New York City at that point. And the crack epidemic.

LT: That was during the crack epidemic. Oh yeah. That was definitely during the crack epidemic. And you're right about that. One of the things... cause we had... the marijuana people

were her, the crack people were here, the heroin folks were over here. This one wasn't as much than this. Yes. And the odd part was—the mayor lived two blocks, three blocks, away.

LB: Who was the mayor back then?

LT: Walter Kenny. And yet, every day, gun fires goin' off. Every single day. Buildings deterioratin'. The school is a mess. And he lives three blocks away.

LB: He doesn't wanna see it.

LT: Mnm. And he got after me one year because... I don't know if you've ever seen there's a field over in the housing area. 'Cause a lot of people don't know that the oldest dump sites in Richmond are where the schools sat, and that particular thing, where those houses were.

LB: Oh yeah.

LT: And occasionally they had actually built on a dump site. And of course the houses started to sink. And they had to tear them out and whatever.

LB: And school got those fumes.

M1: Northside right?

LT: No this is the east end. Oh, no that's right there was one in Northside too. But if you look. There's still. The little burners are still there. The school's gone but the burners are still there because they have to stay there because even though it's negligible, there are people who are older than I am who can talk about things when they were actually burning day and night. You know, burning off the gas. And they moved the buses because the bus barn used to be out there behind Wickham Court. I gave Giles a map I had from when I was community organizing. They had taken an aerial shot and you could actually see, you know, 'cause I was saying, you all may not know where the outlines of this are. But here look at this, all the buses here and the school and this and that and one thing and another. They moved once there was a... something had happened... there was a near explosion or something and they moved the buses out but they kept the school still running for many years thereafter. House blew up. I remember that. It was just a mess. But anyway on the land that the other houses had sat on, I wanted, we didn't have any kind of facilities, rec facilities, because Wickham Court and the houses do not get along. There was a tennis court that one guy had gotten built by the city but they had neglected it and then now it was a big old mess there. And there was actually a spring, a water spring, there that you could drink from. But they've long since done away with that. And then Wickham Court had their little thing but they wouldn't you know come across. So I said, "Well let's build a track." That's about the only thing you can build is a walking track on there. I got everything together. I got all these people together and we built the thing on there. And Walter Kenny had spent up until the day of that we were doing it down in City Hall trying to get folks to get it to stop, get it stopped. Because he hadn't done it. And then, once they were like, "No, we're not gonna get involved in them building a track." He got a couple of his friends and he came because he knew news media was out there and they came. And they walked the track and he talked to the news media. And

everybody was like, “Loretta, you built that thing.” I said, “Let him do whatever. I don’t care. I gotta track out here and we got this done. That’s all I care about.” And the city didn’t ‘til many years later recognize the official park. But by then, because they hadn’t done much with it, the track has been overgrown. Although I’m hearing rumblings that they’re trying to put it back in, but why do we do what we did twenty years ago? If he’d just taken care of it. But they don’t care about that.

LB: That’s such a tangled story.

LT: Yeah. It’s always just massively tangled from when we went to clean up that mess over there between the two projects: Raven Street and where the houses were. The things we found on that thing. Because there’s dumping.

[doorbell]

M1: I’m so sorry.

LT: No you’re fine. There is massive dumping. There’s still. There’s a dump. There’s actually an old creek this runs behind. It’s dead now. But beyond that until you get to 95, there used to be just flat land. Now if you go by there you’ll see what is a moonscape. And it’s like a hilly moonscape. And that’s because that was a dump site. People would renovate a house like this and they would go dump it over there. But before that, even free stuff, they would dump anywhere in that area that they could find. So they would back up. We would find shingles galore that had basically been beaten into the ground because when they had renovated the Raven Street and all that, they had taken the shingles off the thing. They didn’t wanna pay so they just backed it up into that area, houses be durned, and just dumped it in the thing. We found some... there was a dead dog and some kitties that had just been born. And some snakes. And God knows how much dead foliage and tires and you name it.

LB: It’s like going to East End Cemetery now and seeing...

LT: Yes. Yes.

LB: ... all of that stuff.

LT: Yes. That’s exactly what it looked like. I’ve been there. It looks exactly like that. Only difference is we dumpin’ on alive people not dead ones. We’re living all around it.

LB: It’s crazy. Someone’s gonna write that history someday.

LT: I hope so.

LB: Maybe you.

LT: We’ll see about that, but. I hope somebody will. You know. Because I don’t want city planners... I want city planners... a lot of them know stuff, but I want city planners in particular

02:26:39

to know the history. Because if you don't know the history, having been a social studies teacher, that's the most de-empowered group of topics in the whole curriculum. And the reason is because knowledgeable people are empowered people. And people actually knew, "Wow, we used to have this. Why don't we have that? Maybe we need it now." Or: "Oh, this is how this happened. Okay. Maybe I'm not gonna blame so and so because of their religion or their color or their sexuality," or whatever it is you use to blame people who are not you for your problems. Maybe you'll look and say, "Oh maybe I do need to, as you know, blacks and whites, after Civil War, in some cases, get really close to working together to actually do something and then here they come, the folk that have no interest. And they say, "You're white so you're better. Don't go over there with them." Even though economically you need to be with those people. And these people still aren't going to do anything for you just because you have white skin. If you knew this, maybe you'd understand. And maybe you'd do something really significant to change your life... by working with others who may not be like you. But we need to make sure. We make sure. I used to tell my students all the time. I said, "Yeah, you need to know math. But mostly you are never going to use more than maybe every now and again to add something up. English—how many of you are going to read the great books after you leave here? Let's be honest. Science—you might hear a news article and maybe understand it on TV." I said, "But you will use government every day."

LB: That's true.

LT: "You need to know geography every day. You need to know economics every day. It would help your life if you knew psychology and sociology. Because we have seven subjects. And anthropology. So you'll understand those people if somebody's going, 'You need to hate them.' And you definitely need to know your history... just because. It informs everything."

LB: It's true.

LT: And that will be for the rest of your life. So this stuff is more here. This is for the rest of your life. And you will never get a good life until you know this. The life that you want, 'til you understand the social studies. But we make sure, in this country, that—nope, not empowered.

LB: Well thank you, Loretta. This has been an amazing interview.

LT: Thank you for having me!

LB: Will you come talk to my class someday?

LT: Mhm. You just tell me. I do it every year for everybody else's classes.

LB: I'm teaching a freshman course called "Representing Civil Rights in Richmond." And so these are students who have just got to the university. Right?

LT: And they're coming from everywhere.

LB: They're coming from everywhere. Some of them are coming from Richmond. I've had students from Creighton Court.

LT: Good.

LB: Yeah. It's changing over there a lot.

LT: Yeah, they definitely. They're the first to get what's coming.

LB: But, there's a lot of change that needs to happen still.

LT: Yeah. Oh absolutely.

LB: So. Anyway I would love it.

LT: Oh just let me know. Because I'm getting ready to go into my thing. My friends. I go and talk about all of this all the time starting right around February up through May. You know, everybody's like, "Can you come and talk to my students about... fill in the blank."

LB: I will try to avoid February because you will be so booked that month.

LT: You do what you need to do and I will work with it okay.

LB: Okay, 'cause I can work around for sure.

LT: No, you fine. You do what you go to do.

M1: Have you ever thought about just writing a huge book. I'm sure people have said that before. Because the story's amazing.

LB: The story is amazing.

LT: People talk to me about this all the time and I want to do it. There's something in the works, not about the actual writing, that might allow me to actually have the time to do it. Because it's amazing how much of your life work can take up.

LB: It's so true.

LT: And then you look around and years have passed. And I really want to write both ends of this. Both the biological end and the adoptive end and my own part and the both of those and how that fits into things. But if things go... My doctor told me something the other day. If things go... I'm not as robust as I used to be let me put it that way. I'm not sick in the sense I'm going to die of cancer or something like that. But it's more like—hey maybe you need to start transitioning to a more retired life. And with a retired life, then I will have that time finally to actually do something with. But yeah I will definitely let y'all know because I give talks all the time and you know I guess it's time to actually do something with it other than just talk.

M1: It's amazing that you're doing these talks though. I mean because with our students, they loved every moment of interviewing you. We have students from, as you saw, from across the city. Not as many from Creighton Court and Northside, just because of the feat it takes for them to travel to... which is nuts to my mind that it takes so long for somebody to come down because they don't have a car, they have to ride a bus. They have to change a couple times.

LT: They have to ride a couple of buses, yeah.

M1: But they loved every moment of it. And thank you so much for doing that.

02:31:32

LT: Oh no, any time.

M1: We also just need to get you to say your name and your title.

LT: My name is Loretta I. Tillman. And I am an retired teacher. That's probably the best title for me right now.

M1: That was perfect! Thank you so much.

LB: Thank you!

LT: Thank you all! That's probably the best title for me.

END TIME: 02:31:54