

A Community Remembers
Interview: Yolanda Taylor

Laura Browder: ...high school

Yolanda Taylor: My name is Yolanda Burrell (?) Taylor. And I am a 1972 graduate of Huguenot High School... on Forest Hill Avenue, in the annexed portion of Richmond.

LB: So, Yolanda, let's start off by having you tell me something about how you grew up.

YT: Let's see, my--

LB: Tell me about your family.

YT: My family. My childhood started in what I consider the original West End, because a lot of people now think of West End as Short Pump. Um, I... my parents... when I was first born were living with my--my paternal grandparents... on Addison Street, which is also, if you're familiar with Richmond, they changed the streets in the whim in the middle of a street, so Addison is also Strawberry Street. But my grandparents lived on, uh--lived on Addison Street in the 100 block, right across the street from the, uh fire station. So I grew up with... two paternal grandparents. I grew up with, uh, two parents. Um, I would say that I lived a rather... I thought I lived a good life. I guess it was considered middle class. Um, somewhat sheltered because even though I was born in '54 and there was probably a lot of turmoil going on at the time... I was not aware of it. I think my--my parents and my grandparents made a conscious effort of not letting me... feel the brunt of what was going on at that time. As a matter of fact, uh, my--both parents worked, my grandfather worked, my grandmother kept me, and she did not drive... but--so we rode the bus a lot. I did not realize that at the time, we s--always sat in the back of the bus because... that's where we were supposed to sit. I just thought that that was her preference. Uh, we would just get on the bus and just--I just knew, just go straight back and we always sat in the... in the seat... right at the rear door that you just come around and go out the door. I just always thought that's where -- I called her Mai (?) -- where Mai wanted to sit. I didn't understand any differently. Um... I'm an only child. So, uh, I... didn--I had a lot of imaginary friends, I guess [laughs]. And as far as--as whites... the--I knew there were white people... cuz there were white firemen at the station. I don't think at that time there were black firemen at that station, but there were--there were white firemen at that station and I saw them. But, it never crossed my mind that they were any different... from my family. Um, my parents, when I was five years old, bought their own house and moved... at which point my great aunt moved in with my grandparents. And I still stayed there periodically. And my great aunt--I would walk her to the bus stop every evening because she had a--a night job downtown, uh, cleaning one of the buildings. But, again, it was a job so I didn't really think anything of it. My grandparents--I'm really not sure of their education level... as far as my grandparents. But, uh, my grandmother... both of them, uh--well, both my grandparents were, I mean... I assume that my grandfather did manual labor. But he was always clean, very well-spoken. My parents, uh, both attended Virginia Union University. My father, uh, fought in the Korean War. I... which I believe interrupted his education. And when he returned home from the Korean War, he went in to the post office. My mother... I'm not certain what interrupted her... education--I--to be honest with you, I don't even know if my mother has her

degree--that's terrible. But anyway, she was attended Un--Virginia Union. And I do know that she has taken a lot of courses... ou--uh, once, you know, time went on. Uh, she took finance courses, shorthand, all kinds of things. And, uh, my father took, uh real estate courses and all--types of things of that nature. So not--in addition to the post office, he sold real estate and then he became a, uh, a contractor, and a developer, a small, you know, uh... housing develop--developer. And, uh... again, my--my mother did financial classes and what have you, and she did a lot in the finance department with, uh, A.H. Robins, which is where she retired from. So, I...

LB: So what was your neighborhood like growing up? What are your memories of Richmond as a child?

YT: Well, let's see. The... first five years, um... again, pretty much sheltered, I'm an only child. My grandmother was r--I'm not gonna say pec--peculiar, but... very particular. Uh, she... would not let me go much further than the sidewalk right there at the front step. And she... was, um... there's no other way to say, she was color-conscious. My grandmother was, uh, light... in... not real light, but, uh, medium completion. But, she... basically had a thing about darker skinned blacks. She... just did not care for darker-skinned blacks. And she was one of those who when we walked outside in the summertime, I had to walk up under the umbrella with her. And I was like, "It's not raining. Why am I under this umbrella?" [Laughs.] And... she was like, "Just stay under the umbrella, just stay under the umbrella." So she was very color-conscious. Uh, my parents--when we moved, we moved--my par--uh, my mother still lives in the house that we moved into, my father's deceased now. But we moved over to Byrd Park. And, uh, I joke my mother, I tell her she has waterfront property because her, uh, the house looks out onto Swan Lake, and that's the one that has the island in the middle of it. But, uh, we moved into that neighborhood and... ironically, we moved into a neighborhood where at the time I was the only girl. And the next... child my age was five years younger than me and it was a boy. You know, I... I didn't have a whole lot of playmates. Again, I did a lot of barbie dolls and imaginary friends. My parents didn't let me have pets other than a rabbit -- that's not a pet. Uh, goldfish -- that's not a pet. Turtles -- that's not a pet. [Laughing] you know, it wasn't fun. So... anyway, uh, I have a lot of cousins. I do have a lot of cousins on my mother's side. And I would, uh, periodically get with my cousins. And my grandmother, again, was still keeping me cuz my parents worked. So after school I would go to my grandmother's house. And, uh, by that time... I had, uh, younger cousins on my father's side that my grandmother also kept. So one was five years younger and the other one was ten years younger. So...

LB: So you were still pretty much on your own, it sounds like.

YT: Prett--pretty much. Pretty much. I used to read a lot. Uh... I used to play... jack rocks. Didn't jump rope as a child. Um [laughs]... and, uh, you know, I--I... I guess I sought out friendships but, you know, if they're not there, they're not there. But, uh, you know, I had some... very close friends. Um, my parents grand--*god*daughter lived in Henrico. And so I would go out to her house and I was close with her. I was close with my cousins. My paternal cousins because they were there at my grandmother's house. And then I would periodically see my--my maternal cousins. Yeah, so I was close... big family. Big family.

LB: Now where did you go to school at this time?

YT: Ok, let's see. Kindergarten, I went to... or, actually it wasn't kindergarten. I guess it was like a pre-school, daycare, uh... it was Miss Madison's... down on... oh, what is that, Allen Avenue... but it's--it's in the West End, uh, in the Lombardy... area. So I went to Miss Madison's. Then I went to what was then Sydney Elementary school. And I believe that after a while, I became a--a--sp--special school, but Sydney was, I guess, almost typical of your... Sydney was almost typical of your, um... uh, maybe five... classrooms, small... type... uh... schoolhouse. And, uh, of course all my teachers were black. There was the, uh, one little room that was like the refrigerator of the kitchen, where all the milk cartons were kept in the refrigerator and... and I would walk to school with my mother's godmother... who was a teacher there. So I went to, uh, Sydney for junior primary one, two... three, four. And the second grade I believe I was at S...Sydney. Yeah.

LB: Is that in the Maymont area--

YT: It's in the Maymont area. And then from Sydney I went to Maymont Elementary School. So... Maymont is on... I wanna say ah--I've--lost all track of school, uh, street names. But anyway I think that might have been Allen Avenue. But again, my mother would take me to her godmother's house, cuz by that time -- called her Titi (?) -- Titi also taught at element--uh, at... s--uh, Maymont. So I would walk with, uh, Titi when I was really young... to Maymont. And then when I got older, I was permitted to walk from home. Because it was not that far, it was within walking distance--and it was *safe* for a young child to walk by herself... uh... a few blocks... in those days.

LB: What are your memories of your education during this time?

YT: Elementary school memories... um... your teachers knew your parents. [Laughs.] They either went to school with your parents... or... they taught your parents. Um... all of the teachers... at that time, y--teachers could still... discipline students. Teachers could take a ruler... and tell you to hold your hand out. Uh, teachers could, uh, I guess... grab you. Um... very different from today. But teachers were respected then. I mean, it was a honorable profession. And especially within the black community. Because... um... in the black community, you had your--I guess your--your super professionals -- you attorneys, your doctors who catered to the black community. But then I think right up under that you had your--your educators. And, uh, you didn't have students really talking back to teachers in those days. And you didn't have students... um, not doing their work. I mean, you took pride in the fact that you... you... were learning something and you wanted to show what you knew. Um... and it was nothing for, you know--we laugh about it now, but... *then* you did not act up in school because by the time you got home... you didn't have to have a note. Because your parents already knew you had done something and regardless of what you had to say, it was your fault. You know, the teacher was always right. Um.... So I have g--I have good memories. I felt that I--I learned a lot... in ele--in elementary school. So...

LB: So this would've been the early sixties.

YT: This would have been--I came out of elementary school in '66. And the reason I specifically remember the year is my father... uh, was a member of a--a national fraternity. And we would travel every once in a while for conferences with the fraternity. In '66 the--the fraternity had their national conference in California.

LB: Which fraternity was it?

YT: Phi Beta Sigma. So he was a member of the Iota Sigma, uh, chapter here in Richmond, of the Phi Beta Sigma. But we--we drove--we caravanned. There were about--I would say, six families... cuz, uh--who caravanned to California. We took the--I think it may have been, like, three weeks of travel. We... took, uh, the southern route going... stayed there. And that took about a week. And then we... um, I think we were out there for maybe a week. And then we came back the northern route. So, I got to see the Grand Canyon. I got to see Ol--uh, Yellowstone Park, and Old Faithful, you know. I got to see a lot of things. My parents... traveled like that. One of the things that... I meant to--mention earlier, and of course, I do not remember this, but my grandmother would tell me and I called my mother and asked her about this. When I was three years old, my grandparents and my parents, uh, we all got in the car and we drove to Ontario, Canada. And I asked my mother, I said, "Why did you all decide to go to Canada?" She said, "I don't know, you sh--that was your father and your grandfather's idea, and we went." But she said that... we were treated *royally*. It was *so* different from the treatment here in Virginia. That the bellhops--s--she said that the bellhops just picked me up. I was, like, three years old. Said they just picked me up and carried me around like I was a doll baby. But she said they were welcomed into restaurants. Had no problems whatsoever. Said everybody was just super... super nice.

LB: Sounds a little bit different from here in the late '50s.

YT: Most definitely. Most definitely. Mm hmm. Mm hmm.

LB: Do you remember the kinds of changes taking place in Richmond as you were growing up?

YT: [Sighs]... remember, I don't know if I--I--would say I remember. I just... I think in--in knowing that I was going to talk with you, I started thinking back. And I don't know so much if I remember, it's just that I ack--acknowledge... why... my family did things they way they did things. I never thought of it before and I haven't confirmed this with my mother, but... there was--ok, there was one car. Which... the--my mother drove but the guys--my father and my grandfather generally did all the driving. So they would probably always have the car. Uh... but those times when my mother and I would go downtown... I never rode the bus with my mother--I can't remember riding the bus with my mother. And I--now that I think about it, that was probably a conscious decision on her part. There was always a yellow cab. She always called the cab company, and we always rode downtown in the cab. But you always went downtown dressed. I remember that. I don't remember... um... being treated badly... downtown. I d--I r--re--later, in later years, my mother--there used to be a store, um... I don't--not Bury and Burke (?). Was it Bury and Burke? Might have been Bury and Burke. One of the stores down on Grace Street -- she absolutely refused to go into. She said, "I will never shop in there" because as a--when she was in high school, she was not allowed to go in there... and try on things. So she just--

-once she was per--allowed to go in, she--that was a conscious decision on her part not to. So... But, um... as far as... changes? I... I don't really remember changes. I g--I was part *of* the change. And the fact that... and again, I asked my mother, "Why did I d--" you know, "Why was this decision made?" and she couldn't real--really remember. But, in '66 upon leaving Maymont Elementary, most of my friends went to... uh, Randolph... Junior High School. And some went to Bedford (?) Junior High School. Six of us... integrated Albert H. Hill Junior High School... which... is--in itself--that was a interesting time. I had never attended school with white kids before. I had never had a white teacher before. Um... didn't have any really... bad experiences, I would say. I would say I had some [laughing] interesting experiences. Um, Albert Hill, I don't know how familiar you are with the building. But it's one of those huge... school buildings... that is--what, one, two--it's main floor, second floor, third floor... and then there are steps that lead up to a roof. And, uh, I don't remember why but one evening, I had stayed back to talk to one of the teachers. I was up on the top floor. Had just gotten up there. Nobody else was around. I had not gotten to the teacher's classroom... but just as I was coming down the hall, several male voices--*young* male voices hollered down from the stairwell leading up to the, uh, rooftop. Um... and I don--I don't know if you want me to say it, but--but n-word, I mean, they--they said, "Nigger, go home." And, you know, I just stood there... and they kept--they kept, you know, saying stuff. And, uh--sometimes I can, you know, I don't use a lot of... good... sense. And I will say things and do things that probably... someone who has more common sense than I do may not do. But I was up there by myself not knowing how many of them there were. And I just stood in the middle of the hall and I said, "If you're that big and bad, come down here and say it to my face." So I stood there, uh, maybe five more seconds. [Laughs] I wasn't--I wasn't stupid [laughs]. And then I laughed. I--evidently I had already talked to the teacher at that point. Because otherwise I guess I would have gone into the classroom. But, um... I never knew who--who said it. Nothing ever came of it. Uh, another time... after lunch, we used to go out on the, uh, playground. And in those days -- I don't know how it is now, but in those days, the playground--they had the girls' playground and the boys' playground. So the girls would all on the playground and we used to play four-square. And, uh... playing four-square one day and the young--the, uh... the--the little white girl that was serving... uh, she started serving and she started out, "Eenie meenie miney mo, caaaa..." and she said, "Oh! I've forgotten how it goes!" And, you know, and then she--she started over again and she changed it to something else. But, I mean, you know, as a child, everybody had heard, you know, it's "eenie meenie miney mo, catch a nigger by the toe." So but she--she knew well enough not to say that. But, uh, like I say, you know, I didn't have any truly bad experiences there. I would just say they were interesting experiences because the teachers had not taught, um... black students. And none of us had ever had white teachers. Um...

LB: And were there just the six of you from Maymont there, or were there other black students as well [coughs].

YT: Actually, I was the only one from Maymont.

LB: [Coughs.]

YT: Um... you ok? I was the only one from Maymont. The other five had gone to Amelia Street, which was across the street from Maymont. Matter of fact, I had started out [chuckling] at Amelia Street.

LB: [Coughs.]

YT: But, um, I--I asked my mother, I said, "May I go to Maymont?" because when I started out at Amelia Street, I was in my cousin's classroom. She was my teacher. And I [laughs] was--I was like, "I don't want my cousin to be my teacher. Can I go to Maymont?" So my mother, you know, I w--I went over to Maymont. But the, uh, the other five students--it was one--one guy and six--and five girls... who integrated Albert Hill. And, uh... we all knew each other. Because the black community was very tight knit. We all knew each other. And the more I think about it, I suspect that one of their mothers may have had something to do with it. Um... McEva Bowser, I believe had something to do with the school board at the time. And she may have had something... to do--I--I don't know for su--certain, but she may have had something to do with that decision for us to... integrate, uh... Albert Hill.

LB: Did you talk to your parents about what happened in the stairwell?

YT: Probably not. Probably not. That was the type of thing, I guess, where... you took it in stride. And... that--it wasn't really talked about, you know? We--we didn't really talk about things of that nature. Um... no I didn't. I don't think I--I don't remember saying anything to them. As a matter of fact, it's kind of funny because the--when we drove to California... going through Tennessee, and I wanna say Nashville, I remember seeing signs that said "colored-only." And years later I said something to my mother about it. And she said, "No, you didn't." I said, "Ma--" I could read. I could--I've always been able to read quite well [laughs]. I've--"No you didn't." I said, "Ok. Alright. Have it your way." [Laughs.]

LB: [Laughs] she just didn't want to go there.

YT: Yeah, she was like, "No you didn't." I said, "Ok. Alright."

LB: [Chuckles.]

YT: Yes I did. Yeah.

LB: So, Albert Hill sounds like you were in a tiny, tiny minority at a pretty big school.

YT: Very tiny minority. Um, one of the other young ladies' father would drive... uh, I would ride with her. To school. We rode the bus home in the evenings, but in the morning, he would take us to school. And, um... it was--you know, I look back now, there was like a little service station across the street from Albert Hill. And in the evening when we would be waiting for the--for the--for the bus, cuz we rode the public transportation, it wasn't a school bus. In the evening, when we would be waiting for the--for the bus, there was, uh, the service station sold Honeybuns. And--it's funny how you remember these things. And there was a young... I'm gonna say teenage white guy--kinda cute--and we started calling him Honeybun. You know, and we would just joke

with him and stuff and it was--you know, it wasn't... he was friendly to us, we were friendly to him and we never had any problems or such. Um, I don't remember problems. One of my--my friends was saying--she reminded me that, uh, a lot of the--the white students that were at Albert Hill had come from Oregon Hill. And that's probably, now that I think about it, those were probably the--probably the students who were up the stairwell hollering down. Because... as far as the... I would say the more affluent white students that were there? They were very friendly. They were very nice. As a matter of fact, there were ter--two Sherry's. And I remember them because one's name was Sherry Weaver, and one's name was Sherry Warner. And Sherry Warner's father was the minister of Grove Avenue Baptist. So she was--she was very nice. And then there was a young--young girl, Linda. I don't remember Linda's last name. But it was something about her that always looked Asian, I don't know if she was half-Asian or--or what. But she was very friendly. I mean, there were--the kids were friendly there. For the most part--

LB: How did your parents and you decide that you would go there?

YT: Again, that's one of those things I asked my mother and she said, "I really don't remember." I think the school board made some decision and how they decided which six kids were gonna be doing this, I don't know. I do not know.

LB: The mystery of the past, isn't it?

YT: I know, I know. I know, really. And, uh, so from Albert Hill, I went to Thomas Jefferson... for one year. Most of my friends went to John Marshall. I wanted to go--and a lot of my friends were at Maggie Walker. I wanted to go to John Marshall with a lot of my friends. My parents told me I would be going to T.J. because they were sending me to school for education, not socialization. So I ended up at T.J. Where I still had a lot of friends there. Made the, uh, cheering squad for the following year. And... uh, was going to practices during the summer. My mother came to pick me up, said that was your last practice. I said, "Why?" She says, "Cuz you'll be going to Huguenot." And I said, "Hugue-what?!" Had no idea what Huguenot was... so I had one year at T.J. and graduated from Huguenot.

LB: Now, why did you have to switch over to Huguenot?

YT: Because it was legistat--legislated busing. And I think it was the powers to be of Richmond trying to have a more equitable education... uh, process... for everyone. They were trying to integrate the schools, bring more whites in to the black schools and more blacks into the white schools. Huguenot was in... annex--was part of the annexed area. Cuz Huguenot was part of the Chesterfield school system and they were brought into the Richmond school system. Uh, so therefore, they had far more whites probably at Huguenot than any of the other schools. Um, a good number... of black students were bused to Huguenot. And... as I... I knew there was white flight--a lot of the students who were at Huguenot went further into Chesterfield. They did not stay at Huguenot.

LB: So you must have gone to school with Myra Goodman Smith. Did you--she was--she went to Amelia Street for elementary school. ANd then she went on to Huguenot later on.

YT: Ok...

LB: I don't know if you overlapped with her.

YT: I am awful with names. If you show me a face--

LB: You would know.

YT: I would know, but I am absolutely *awful* with names. I may have. I may have. You said she was... at Amelia?

LB: Mm hmm.

YT: Ok. Well, see, a--I--again, I was only at Amelia maybe two weeks.

LB: Right.

YT: Cuz I--I--

LB: Cuz you had that cousin.

YT: I had my cousin--my second cousin... whose house we went to on a very frequent basis, was my--gonna be my teacher. And I was like, "I--I--no. No. No. No. I don't wanna go to Cousin Eva," [laughing] you know?

LB: So what was Huguenot like during the years that you were there? What do you remember and... what kinds of things were you involved in then?

YT: In Huguenot?

LB: Mm hmm.

YT: Let's go back to T.J. for a moment.

LB: Yeah--

YT: I was--I was only there for a year. However, um... one particular thing that stands out in my... memories of T.J.... My homeroom teacher--I don't remember her name. She was white. She, um, one morning I came in, and she was standing at one of the desks and had a map of the city of Richmond spread out... on the desk. And several of my white classmates were standing around the city of Richmond map with her. So I... didn't pay a whole lot of attention, I just went on to my seat. And at one point she called me up and I went up and she wanted to know, where did I live? Said, "I live on Lake Road." And she said, "But where is it on the map?" I said, "You're not gonna find it on the map." I said, uh, "Lake Road has never been actually written on the map because it's only three blocks long." I said, "I can show you were it is. But it's not gonna say Lake Road." And, um... so I proceeded to show. And she started questioning me about

where I--again, where I lived, and was I sure that that's where I lived. And I'm thinking, ok, I'm in high school. Been living there since I was five years old. I'm pretty certain I know where I live. But, uh, she--just... her demeanor and the way she was going about it, I was a little disrespectful in my response to her. And, uh, she took me out into the hall... and told me that she should take me to the principal's office because of how I was speaking to her. And, again... I said something I probably shouldn't have said. But I said, "Ok, fine, let's go." Because my thinking was she was wrong... and questioning where I lived. And why was she even doing it at--the--to start with. So sh--at that point, she--she said, "Well, next time. Next time." I said, "Ok, fine." [Laughs.] But anyway, back to Huguenot. Uh, Huguenot was, um... what can I say about Huguenot? I guess I'm one of those people that I adapt... um... Huguenot didn't really bother me as much as it bothered a lot of students. And I guess--I guess Huguenot did not bother me because I had already been to Albert Hill. And I had already been one year at T.J. Whereas a lot of the students had not had that interaction with white students and white teachers that I had already experienced. So... Huguenot did not, for the most part, really phase me. Uh, because I was supposed to be on the cheering squad at T.J., my mother did go to the office and said, "She will be on the cheering squad here. Because she had already made the cheering squad." And evidently she was given some grief about it but eventually I was--I was placed on the cheering squad at Huguenot. So I was the first black varsity cheerleader... at huguenot.

LB: Your mother sounds very proactive.

YT: She--you know--I've never thought of it that way. My mother's usually been very kinda laid back and she tells me I'm more like my father [laughs]. More of a hothead like my father. But I think in her own... subtle, ladylike way... she gets things done. And she's not.... She chooses her words more carefully than I do [laughs].

LB: [Laughs.]

YT: ...but... I, uh, I made it onto--onto the cheering squad. And my cousin was, uh, on the JV--put on the JV squad. Um... then, I'm not sh--I really don't remember how but some kinda way, I ended up writing a column... I had a regular column that I wrote for the student newspaper.

LB: What was it called?

YT: Yonny B's (?) Bag. Yonny B's Bag. Yonny B's Bag. I was--and I--I had an opportunity to just be sarcastic about things. I could just write about anything at school and just with a touch of sarcasm to it.

LB: ... a teenage dream.

YT: Yeah! Yeah, I enjoyed that. Yonny B's Bag. And... then... my senior year, I, um, I was on the homecoming court. And probably much to the disappointment of a lot of my schoolmates, I became homecoming queen. And that probably happened because the white vote was split three ways and the black vote was only split two. Because there were two--two blacks on the--on the court. And three--maybe it was four. But anyway, the votes got split, I'm sure, and that's how that happened. So...

LB: So that must have been a huge moment for you.

YT: Yeah, I guess it was... bigger to me now than it was then, you know. And--when you're in high school and you're a teenager, you just go, 'uh huh, ok.' [Laughs.] But now I realize, gee, I'm actually part of Huguenot's history. So...

LB: It's interesting to think about. As you think back on your time at Huguenot, are there any interactions you had with fellow students or teachers or administrators that stand out in your mind?

YT: My English teacher was Mrs. Waymack (?). I liked Mrs. Waymack. Uh, but she was so funny. They decided to do my senior year--I was by no means a drama student. Didn't--had no aspirations of standing on anybody's stage... and doing anything. But Mrs. Waymack was also so the drama teacher. And my senior year, they decided--the c--school decided to do South Pacific. And... she asked me to play the part of Leah... the island girl? I don't know if I was the most exotic looking thing in the class at that time [laughing] or what. But I played Leah [laughs]... in South Pacific. And, um, it was--it was interesting because the, um, the student who played the young lieutenant who fell in love with--with Leah... a lot of the girls were crazy about him. And he was just another white guy to me, I di... [mumbles, then laughs]. But anyway [laughs]--but there's like a--a--a kiss scene... in South Pacific. And just gave him this dirty look, like, "Don't even try." You know, like, uhhhh, we're not going there [laughs]. But, um... let's see... who else do I--I remember from--I remember, um... my algebra teacher. Was, uh... oh, I--his--I had his name. But anyway, *tall*... tall guy. And, uh, he didn't take a lot of stuff. I remember there was this one student who always just pick--from element--he's gone to elementary school with me. He used to always just pick at everybody. Always got beat up. But, uh, the, uh, the--the teacher just wan--they just kinda picked him up and just tucked him under his arm and just walked [laughing] down the hall with him to the office. So I remember things of that nature. I remember the football coach was Coach Schwartz. And, uh... I don't know why we started, but used to call him--when I say 'we,' not all the students, but one of my very good friend--my best friend at the time--she and I called him Uncle Bill. *Big*... muscular white guy. And we would call him Uncle Bill. And he w--I mean, we just--we'd see him out, go "Hey, Uncle Bill!" And he would--he'd greet us back and people would turn around and look. Like, "What?!" So I remember Uncle Bill [laughs].

LB: Was his first name Bill or did you just... kinda make that up.

YT: Yeah, his--his--no, his name was William Schwartz. His name was Bill Sch--people called him Bill Schwartz. But we c--call--we didn't call him Coach Schwartz. We didn't call him Mr. Schwartz.

LB: [Laughs.]

YT: We called him Uncle Bill, come to think of it, that's... kinda... revolutionary, I guess. I don't know [laughs].

LB: Back in those days--

YT: Yeah, yeah. So... I don't know...

LB: Do you remember any big turning points that you had during this time?

YT: Big turning points...

LB: YOu know, you can go back before Huguenot if you want--

YT: Yeah...

LB: ...your childhood and your... teenage years.

YT: [Pauses.] Hmm.... I don't know if it was a turning point. But I guess it was, again, a conscious... decision. By my parents. Um, because of... limited resources, uh, limited accessibility to things.... um... I remember being part of a--a group. There were a lot of, um, social organizations for children. They still exist but I don't think they're as prevalent as they were then. There were groups called, um, Hansel and Gretel. There were groups called, uh, Jack and Jill I know still exists. I was a remember of Tots and Teens. And I asked my mother, I said... you know, "What prompted you to put me in Tots and Teens." And she told me, she said, uh, Florence Ford, who was my second teacher, told her, she said, "Put Yolanda in Tots and Teens." And I think a lot of black parents at that time... put their--their children through those organizations... because it was an opportunity for the kids to come together social--sociably. To go places, experience things as a group. Uh... to go skating, to go to a play, to go... um, just--day trips or, you know, but to get that exposure... that otherwise they may not have had. Or it may not have been safe to have in smaller numbers. So I remember that. I remember... again, you know, it wasn't a big deal made of it, but I realize now, or as I became older, I realize things were done the way they were done because it was not safe to do otherwise. Um, that if we traveled, we traveled with food because there were not places that we could just stop and go in and eat. Um... if we traveled--and as a child, you know, you had to go to the bathroom, you were told to hold it as long as possible, and if a safe haven had not been obtained, then the car was pulled over to the side of the road and you did what you had to do at the side of the road. Because it was not safe to do otherwise. Um... I guess, you know, memories like that... are prompted by things that may happen later in life. It's something that you kinda put behind you. Um... I don't know. Yeah.

LB: What do you think were some of the big turning points for the community at this time?

YT: Wow. Um.... I mean, I was born in '54, which everybody knows is Brown versus, uh, Board of Education. Um, the--the march on Washington. Um, just integration, civil rights. Um...

LB: How about the community in Richmond?

YT: The R--the Richmond community--you had a close knit black community. I do not remember... when Second Street was thriving. Um, that was prior to... wow... [laughs].... Ok.

That--that was... that was a time prior to my reaching adulthood. Or being able to go, um, places by myself. I was still a child. So where I went was dictated by my parents. My parents, of course, grew up in a time when Second Street was a thriving... community for blacks. That was... uh, where you had a lot of black professionals. That was where you had black retailers. Black businesses, black-owned businesses, black hotels, Eggleston's. Um, so that's not part of my history that I remember. And I know it, you know, I can only imagine what it might have been like when I got through that area now. Because I love old architecture and I can just imagine how beautiful it must've been, how thriving it must've been, how... how... pride-ful it was for--for blacks and, you know, at that time when, um... black celebrities came to Richmond. And that's where they gravitated to because they were not accepted into the Thomas--the Jefferson. They were not accepted into the John Marshall. So, you know, that's where they went. And that's where they rubbed elbows with, you know, with pla--with black community then. So...

LB: Were all the changes that were taking place discussed in your home? Did you watch the news together and...?

YT: Well, let's see. Let--let's remember that way back when, before cable TV and twenty-four-hour television, there were only three stations, not even PBS. [Laughs.]

LB: I remember.

YT: Yeah, you remember, you had CBS, and ABC, and NBC. Um... black and white TV. Uh... the news came on... I guess you had the six o'clock news and eleven o'clock news maybe? Cuz TV went off at 11:30. [Laughs] uh, [laughs] I was brought up in a time when... children were not part of the conversation. Children were seen and not heard. And... uh, if anything of real relevance was being discussed, I was sent out of the room. Or the comment--if the conversation already gotten started, some--one of the adults might say "little pitchers have big ears." So [laughs]. So, again, I would get sent out of the room or the conversation would get changed. So I really don't remember all, you know, anything.

LB: Not so much.

YT: Yeah. I don't remember conversations being, um--taking place. What I do remember is as a child, you did not really see... blacks on TV. And it was a *big* deal if they were. Um, if, uh, blacks were on TV, then, my--if--ok, let's say Ed Sullivan. If, uh, someone came on T--then all the sudden it was like, "Call Aunt Jenny, call Aunt Jenny, call Aunt Jenny! Tell her--tell her colored folks on TV. Channel six, channel--" you know. So, you know, it was a big deal. Uh, to see blacks on TV when I was a child. You had Amos and Andy. I remember Amos and Andy. Um... that was in--that was all--all negro. Uh, and you had white policemen on it. But, uh, aside from that, I don't real-really remember... all negro casts of anything, other than Amos and Andy.

LB: And they were in blackface, weren't they?

YT: No-no. Now, this was--when I was watching--

LB: Later on. Yeah.

YT: Amos and Andy, when they started out, was on the radio and I believe they were white actors in blackface doing that. But, no, the cast of Amos and Andy on TV were black. Yeah. I remember Amos, Andy, Algonquin J. Calhoun, and Sapphire, her mother. Yes. [Laughs] yeah. As a matter of fact, um, in later years, I have... I've always written poetry. So I have, uh, I've written poe--uh, book of--published two books of poetry. And a couple of the books reference childhood memories of, uh, second-class citizenship is what I call it. Or, uh, blacks not being on TV and things like--I have a lot of historical perspectives in my--in my poetry.

LB: What got you started as a poet?

YT: Let's see. I guess I just enjoyed writing? And... as a child with no income and Momma or Daddy's birthday came around, y--I would write a poem. And give them a poem. Or something of that nature. Course, they were very simplistic then. They were *roses are red, violets are blue*... but then I--I would--

LB: I bet your parents loved--

YT: They loved it, yeah. Yeah. So and then I just--that was my way of expressing myself. It was just--if something bothered me or if something was on my mind or what-have-you, I would just sit and write. And, uh... I would write stories, but most of the time, I would write poetry. And it was--for my own personal satisfaction and benefit. I was not doing it for anyone other than myself, other than those that I specifically wrote for my parents and gave to them. But anything that I wrote was very personal and I kept it to myself, and--up until a few years ago when I decided, I'm gonna... go ahead and see what happens [laughs].

LB: And things happened.

YT: Yeah. Yeah, I--yeah, I--it was one of those things where I decided I wanted to leave something behind to my daughters other than a memory. So something they could say, "Oh, my mother did this."

LB: Such a great thing to leave.

YT: Yeah, so... yeah.

LB: So when you think back on all those years, how do you think your--those experiences shaped who you are today?

YT: That's interesting. Um... like I said, I--I'm--I'm pretty... laid back. I can get my--my feathers can be ruffled, and when they are ruffled, they are ruffled. But for the most part, I--I'm able to... keep even-keeled. Um... I think the experiences of going to school or integrating early on helped formulate, uh, later decisions. As far as, uh, furthering my education. A lot of my friends left Huguenot with a very... bad taste in their mouth. And decided that going to college--they wanted to go to an HBCU.

LB: What about it left such a bad taste in their mouths?

YT: [Pauses.] They just--

LB: I mean, I know you can't speak for them--

YT: Yeah.

LB: ... but I'm--I'm asking you to anyway [laughs].

YT: Right. You know, I c--I really can't speak to that. I think they just... [pauses]...the fact--well, I guess part of it is...oh, ok, let me start over. I think sometimes you get out of things what you put into things. And... I... I was accepting of the fact that I was in an integrated situation. I was not gonna take al--any guff off anybody. But I wanted to--to learn and make the best of the situation I was in. So... I--I made--I wouldn't say I made white *friends*, because a friend is someone that you probably, you know... stay in contact with and you have a lot in common with. But I had a lot of white... close acquaintances. And I... you know, the reality was that as I went forward in life, I knew that I had to go al--go along to get along. And that I was not gonna l--live in a segregated world. I was gonna live in an integrated world. And I needed to be as acc--as accepting of the differences that we had, and try to find some common ground. Because... that's the way the world was, you know, evolving, and that's what was gonna happen. Um...

LB: So where did your path take you, after Huguenot?

YT: UVA. I went to UVA. And the decision to go to UVA was based on n--nothing other than the fact that when we were taking college tours, when we got to the grounds of Mr. Jefferson's Academical Village, I absolutely fell in love. I walked around and I was like, "I love this school. This is where I want to go." And that's where I applied. And that's the *only* place I applied. Stupid me. But anyway, it's the only place I applied. And I was wait-listed. But I got in. I got in. And, you know, that was cuz a lot of m--like I said, a lot of my friends decided, 'I--I'm through, I--after h--after high school, I just wanna be with my own. I don't wanna deal with whites anymore, I don't wanna deal with whites anymore.' And I was like, you know, that's fine. That's fine. But four years from now, chances are, I'm gonna be dealing with whites. So I might as well continue to deal with whites. And that's how it was. Um... enjoyed UVA. Had good experiences there. Cheered while I was there. Um... part of the Black Student Alliance. Um... chartered the first--was on the charter line of the first black sorority there. Um... so I have--I have good memories of U--of UVA. Good memories...

LB: So what sorority did you join?

YT: I am--

LB: ...Or help charter?

YT: I am a proud charter member of Kappa Row Chapter at the University of Virginia of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated... [laughs].

LB: So are you still an active Delta?

YT: I am an active Delta--be forty years next year, yes--

LB: Wow.

YT: ...[laughs]. Forty years and the--the t--the chapter will celebrate it's fortieth anniversary in, uh, September of next year. And the sorority celebrates it's centennial, the entire year of 2013 [laughs].

LB: ... a big deal!

YT: [Laughing] it's gonna be a very big deal, yes, yes.

LB: Now, I'm sorry, I'm gonna have to take you back for just one minute--

YT: Mm hmm! Go ahead.

LB: ...cuz there are a couple of questions I skipped right over, which is: during those years that you were in high school and, again, growing up, can you think of an example of really good leadership that you experienced, and an example of leadership that was not so good?

YT: [Clicking sound]... Ok... I was never a leader. I'm a doer. [Laughs.] I don't like leading people so I can't speak from experience of my having leadership -- good or bad, but--

LB: But you saw.

YT: ...but, um... mmm... let's see. Leadership, leadership. It was--it was interesting because I think... I think that--and I can't say for sure, but I think that when we were bused to Huguenot, that the situation was such that they thought we were just gonna be there. And not take on any leadership roles. Um, but we did. We got involved... with every aspect. Because we had--we were students who had been in leadership roles in the schools we had been in. Or wh--been participants in the schools we had been in. So the fact that we were at a different school did not mean that we were not gonna be participants... in this new school. So at Huguenot, if you had been involved in student government at your prior school, you were involved in student government at Huguenot. If you were an athlete at your prior school, you were an athlete at Huguenot. If you were involved with the yearbook, then you were involved with the yearbook at Huguenot. We came in... many of us came in with the idea that we are now here and we're gonna be a part of this school. I think that was surprising to some of the... Huguenot originals... that were there. They did not expect that. As a matter of fact, um... one of my fr--childhood friends was elected the president of the, uh, SCA, I believe, and there was some, uh, upset folks. Because they just knew that one of the Huguenot--original Huguenot students would win that--you know, win that election or what-have-you. So there were things, you know, things of that nature. Um, I w--nothing that stands out in my mind.

LB: Do you remember a really good leader? And a leader who's not so good that you encountered or had dealings with?

YT: Not off the top of my head. We're talking forty years ago, I don't--

LB: I know! I know! [Laughs.]

YT: know, I don't remember, I don't remember, I don't remember. I wish I did. Um... wow. [Clicking.] Not really. Not really. Hmm mm.

LB: How do you think all those experiences that you had then, and that--that Richmond was going through--how do you think they changed the community?

YT: ... Richmond, I think, was probably so... segregated... at that time, that... over the years, people learned that as much as... there were differences, that people were also very much alike. Um... I guess one of the things that I am really... becoming, uh, aware of--and this is bec--has something to do with the fact that I have now been out of school forty years, and we're getting ready--to, uh, celebrate our fortieth, uh, reunion, but has come to light. I knew there was white flight at Huguenot, when we were bused in, but I did not realize the extent of it. Because, of course, you don't miss people you never knew.

LB: Right.

YT: [Laughing] so... so, I was not aware the extent of it. I was not aware that at past class reunions for Huguenot, that students who left Huguenot because of the legislated busing were coming to the class reunions.

LB: Really?!

YT: [Laughs.]

LB: Tell me--

YT: [Laughs.]

LB: ... and talk to me, please, about your current experiences with--

YT: Yeah.

LB: ...with the class reunion.

YT: It--it's--it's been real interesting because past class reunions, when I would be with some of my friends, someone would say, "Who is that?" and I w--"I don't know, I don't remember how that person is," or whatever. Well, come to find out--like I said, there were students who would have--were supposed to go to Huguenot... but did not graduate from Huguenot, but they were coming to Huguenot class reunions. This year, for the fortieth reunion--because there were seven

affected high schools with the legislated busing, there--a group came together and decided there would be a citywide reunion. All of us graduated in '72. All of us went through turmoil in a time in our lives where... you're already all over the place because you're a teenager. Now, y--you're devastated because where you thought you were going to go to school, you're yanked from that place. For those who were at primarily black high schools... because that's where their br--big brother, big sister, possibly their mother, father had graduated. It was a family tradition to graduate from Armstrong High School or Maggie L. Walker High School. All the sudden, you are now at--neither one of those schools, you've been yanked and put somewhere else. So it was, you know, all of--all of us went through some type of turmoil... with the legislated busing. I am learning... that... evidently, a lot of whites--white parents, white students--felt that it was only devastating to them. That it was not devastating to the black community. That our parents were not outraged over the fact that their kids were being bused. And having to travel. For hours -- to and from school. Um... like I said, I'm only learning this. And it's--it's interesting, um... it's interesting in the fact that I had one student to email me that she stayed at Huguenot her junior year. Well, let me back up. Because it was--it was almost funny. It was one of those things where you're reading something and... the obvious is not really stated but when you read between the lines, you're reading what you're saying, the student said in her email to me that with busing, a lot of good students and a lot of good teachers were lost at Huguenot. Ok... Well, guess what? A lot of good students and a lot of good teachers came into Huguenot. She went on to say that she felt she didn't learn anything, that her junior year, she--she didn't--she was not prepared for college. So she transferred where she took college-prep courses. Guess what? I stayed at Huguenot. And I took college-prep courses. *And* I went to UVA. [Laughing] so... It's--it's just interesting to me, that, you know, something of that nature was said. But back to the citywide, this--I thought it was a great idea when it was--when the subject was broached to me that there would be a citywide fortieth class reunion for the class of '72, I thought that was a great idea. Because [clears throat], number one, by people being yanked from the school that they thought they were gonna be with--be at, and from friends that they thought they were gonna be attending school, this was gonna be an opportunity for everyone to come together, and even though we did get separated, we're still together at this one reunion! And--

LB: [Coughs.]

YT: ...naive me, I'm thinking that's a great idea. And, um, I provided a contact for Huguenot, uh, thinking that Huguenot would also take part in this reunion. As it turns out, Huguenot's having their own reunion. And as it has been explained to me, um, it is probably gonna be primarily for this students who left Huguenot, but [laughs] that--so therefore did not get to graduate from Huguenot... with their friends.

LB: Ok, this is even wilder than I thought. So in other words, not only would Huguenot students not--the white students are not participating, but students who weren't even at Huguenot are having a Huguenot reunion?

YT: They're gon--the way the email--it was interesting, the--the email that went out provided a site. And being of curious nature that I have, I went to the site and at the bottom of the site it did say something to the effect that, um, 'please note, this reunion is not just for the class of '72, it is

for any student who attended Huguenot or knows someone who attended Huguenot...' [laughs]. And I was like "...what?!" [laughs]. So... yeah. Ok.

LB: I'm dumbstruck.

YT: Yeah. Yeah. To--th--that's al--to me, I think--to *me*, I think that's a little bizarre. Evidently, I think differently than other people. But to me, I thought that was a little bizarre. So... but, and... I--I had--responded saying my disappointment v--you know, expressing my disappointment in the fact that this was happening. And I got basically told that I was being hateful. But, um, I said, you know, what it boils down to is... everyone wants to reunion with those that they are most comfortable with. My childhood--my childhood friends are a lot of the students coming to the citywide, uh, reunion. And that's the one that I did not have a choice in the seventies as to where I was going to go to school. I was told where I was going to go. I am now an adult. I have freedom of choice. And my choice is to attend the citywide where I will see lots of friends. Versus a few friends who may show up at the Huguenot reunion, but were probably more or less acquaintances more so than friends. So, but I had hoped that Huguenot would *embrace* the idea of the citywide... and join in with the citywide. Not to say that there won't be some Huguenot students at the citywide? But unfortunately, I have no heard from a lot of the African American students who were forced to attend Huguenot say that they plan to attend the Huguenot, um, reunion. The irony of it, too, is... the young lady who responded to the email that I sent out and said that I was being hateful went on to say that had it not been for the forced busing, she may not have met and made friends with a young lady who went to elementary school with me. And, uh, you know--and may have not had that opportunity to make a, you know--meet a African American and what-have-you, blah blah blah blah. And I'm thinking, ok [clears throat]... a good number of us had to go to Huguenot because we were forced to go to Huguenot. But if memory serves me correctly and I kinda think it does, there happened to have been... siblings who were black at Huguenot. I think they were--it was a s--a brother and a sister who... I don't--they--he may have been a y--the older of the two. But I'm thinking, you know, you had an opportunity. Why'd you have to wait... until it was forced upon you? But I said, ok, I'm not even going to go there. I just left it alone. I was like, ok, whatever.

LB: So then I--I know you're gonna have something to say to this next question cuz it feeds right into... [laughs].

YT: Ok...

LB: Are there things that you would like the generation of kids grown up in Richmond today to know, because it seems like right now, you're having one of those... moments that sometimes occur in life when you get a chance to really -- I don't mean *this*, I mean the reunion -- where you're revisiting the past and maybe looking at it in a new way. [Pause.] What do you think kids growing up in Richmond today need to know?

YT: Not just in Richmond. Um, I have two daughters. The younger is twenty-one. The older is twenty-eight. They've only known integration. They have not known the... turmoil and some of the stuff--just like I don't--know and did not experience some of the things my parents experienced and they did not experience things that their parents experienced. Fortunately, our

daughters have not experienced some of the things that their father and I have experienced. And, um, it's good. Because they see people as people. They do not, I think, approach life with skepticism. With, um... with, uh, you know... like, are you accepting me as I am, or, you know, what--what grounds are you... welcoming me on--in. Um... they--both of our daughters are well-rounded, well-educated, well-spoken, smarter than their parents. Um, they--I s--they have, uh... m--varied ethnicities among their friends. Uh, they don't see... they see color, but they don't see color the way I guess we do. They see the person first, and then maybe they, you know, acknowledge, depending on how that person is receptive of them, as to whether or not, you know, how--they're gonna interact with that person. Whereas I guess some of the experiences that... we have had, t--I tend to go in with a little--little more trepidation than--than they. Um... I had--when I was in my early twenties and, uh, fresh out of college, waiting to hear about, uh, grad school, I was employed at what was then called Thalhimers... at Azalea Mall. And, um, became a, uh, department manager. And, uh, the store manager, for lack of any other description, was this West Virginia redneck. And, uh, he didn't care for me. And I didn't care that he didn't care for me. As long as I did what I had to do, it didn't bother me. But, um, he would, uh, come in, just to try--I guess to see what he could find wrong in my department. And, uh, there was a young lady who worked in cosmetics who, uh, would put things on hold. She would always buy the stuff, but she would, you know, put things on hold. And I th--I don't know what his beef was with her, but he didn't care for either. She was English. So I know it--it wasn't a color thing. She was.. uh, but she was English. And, um, he came into the department, went in my office one day, just passed by me, didn't say anything, went into my office, and just brought out a armful of things, and said "Put these on the rack. Put 'em back on the rack." And I was like, "Why?" He goes, "Because they can't be held anymore." I'm like, "Why? The hold notice is, you know, till... whatev--" "That date has expired." And I said, "No, it hasn't." He said, "The date has expired, put 'em back." I said--and I stood my ground--I said, "No, it hasn't." So I said, "Let me explain to you why I know that date has not expired." I said, "Before you came into the department, we were having a discussion about today's date. And we were saying that at 12:34 today, it's gonna be 12345678." Because it was the sev--no, it was the--

LB: May sixth.

YT: May sixth of 1978. So [laughs]... So he just looked at me and turned around and walk outta the [laughing] department. But... but, um... so I--you know, he never had much to say to me after that. You know. Cuz--and I'd--uh--he just--I di... he didn't like the idea, I think, that I had gone to UVA. I don't know where he went to school, but anyhow. So [laughs]. He just...

LB: How do you think your experiences during that time have affected or shaped your relationship to people of different backgrounds?

YT: Well... I try to be accep--accepting of everyone. All of us a--you know, regardless of what we say, all of us have our prejudices. And... going back to my daughters... uh... when our daughters beca--well, the--when the older one started dating, the first thing I said to her was, "Ok. Let me explain to you. Your fath--you are your father's princess. You know your father is not gonna say stuff that's going to be embarrass you, but your mother will [laughs]."

LB: [Laughs.]

YT: "So I'm telling you right now: do not have anyone coming to this house to pick you up whose pants are not up on their waist. Do not have anyone coming to this house with their hat on when they walk in the house. Do not have anyone coming to this house who has those little knits--"(?) cuz that's--they were just starting to be stylish then. The little, uh... the little knits that--I've forgotten which you call it, but anyway. Uh, the hairst--style that guys were wearing then. So I was like, it was the beginning of locks. But, eh--locks were not prevalent then. So, I was like, "Don't be doing that. Cuz you know your mother is gonna stand right there and say 'young man, pull your pants up, take that hat off and--'" you know. Whatever. So anyway. Um, going back to your question. So... as it turned out... my daughter dated black guys, she dated white guys... you know--um, and, um... it was funny cuz her younger sister asked me when she started dating, "Momma, how you gonna feel if I bring a white guy home?" I said, "Did your sister bring a white guy home?" "Uh huh" "Ok then. Alright." You know. So I try to be accepting. Um... because that's--that's the way of the world. I mean, you have to--you can't stay... set in the hit--in--in the past. You have to move forward. One of the things that when she was--the older one was in high school and the little fella that she was dating was white. Really nice guy and, you know, my friends would say, "Well, how do you feel about that?" I said, "Ok. You know, I'm trying to get over it." I'd say, "I'm not--I'll be honest with you, I'm not over it yet. But I'm trying to get over it." But, to be honest with you? I said, "I'll tell you what. I think the boy would take a bullet for her. I think he would be like the Secret Service. If somebody, you know, aimed a gun at her--he would jump in front of her." So I said, "for that, I can't find any fault with him," you know [laughs]. Um, but, you know, we still tried to be conscious of the fact that--it was still--it was in... the, uh, what, early... late nineteen hun--nineteen nineties. But it was still kind of a--to me, a new thing for Virginia. And, uh, we still told her to be careful. One... one winter when we had one of those *crazy* snows... and school was closed and they wanted to, uh, go, uh sledding. And, uh... I--we--we said, "Well, where are you going?" And she said, well, they were going to Crump Park. And we said, "Well, who else is going with you?" And she said, "Oh, just the two of us." And we're going "Uhhh, no." Because we were like, even though their friends were accepting, even though, um, you know... there were still people out there who were not accepting. And to be over in Crump Park? With all the snow--and stuff? Somebody who saw this little black girl with this white guy? May go over and try to do something. So we were like, "Nnnno. Uh huh. No. We--we're not ok with that. ... You know, tell him to come over here, ya'll can go, you know, wherever, but... not over to the park by yourselves, no. Not unless it's a group of you." You know, so, I think that... even though things have gotten much better, we still have to recognize that there are people out there who... do not agree with mixing of the races. Um... and... will still do harm to folks, because they don't see things... you know, they see things differently. So... but it's ironic because that daughter now lives in New York. Where it is definitely a mixing pot. And, uh, when I go up there, it's almost like, ok... this is just a whole new world. You know, and you just see everybody with everybody. And it's totally different.

LB: It is. It's completely different there.

YT: It's completely different from here. Yeah.

LB: Yolanda, are there things that you feel that we as a community need to particularly remember that we may be in danger of forgetting?

YT: History. Um... I think... in order to--I think a lot of times the younger generation, not knowing... what went on--not that they don't know -- it's one thing to experience it and its another thing to read about it. Um... because just to think of the things that have changed in my lifetime... I think that we still need to recognize that... history... we've moved past history, but still we need to recognize history, and know the history and know why people feel the way they feel. Um... and the thing is, I don't know how to convey that to the younger generation, because they only see it as history. Therefore when something does happen that smacks of old history, they're caught totally off guard. Cuz it's coming so far out of left field for them, it's something that is so... they are so out of touch with. That they don't understand. And, um, I think when we try to explain it to them, they--they just--they don't get it. They don't get it. So a lot of times I think--and the thing is--you know, a lot of times, I think the best way is to talk to older people, and y--to have a better understanding of what they went through. But then you find because of some of the ugliness, that the older generation is not willing to talk about it. They don't want to remember what they went through. It's a--it's kind of a catch-22. It needs to be--it needs to be discussed, but...

LB: It's like peeling back a scab.

YT: Yeah, it is. It is. It is. Yeah. Yeah. Um...

LB: There's some tough places to go.

YT: Mm hmm. Mm hmm. Because I think now... how often in this time, 2012, might I be actually coming in contact, or may have come in contact, with one of those young boys at Albert Hill calling names at me. You know? It--I could very well be coming in contact with that individual now. You know, "Were you the one that did that? How do you feel now?" So...

LB: And now--I mean, I keep flashing back to your experience with this Huguenot reunion and these imaginary Huguenot students [laughs] you know? Coming to the--their reunion and not wanting to participate in the citywide is just... it's history reverberating still.

YT: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. And I just got tickled because, um, one of the responses the--the young lady put in the email to me was like, really? After forty years, you're still--you know, you can't get past this? I'm trying to get past it. I want to--you know, I want--everybody come together! But... Ok. Fine. [Laughs.]

LB: It is what it is.

YT: It is--it is what it is. It is what it is.

LB: Yolanda, are there--is there anything that I've not asked you that you would like to address?

YT: Hmm... I don't think so... Let's see... Oh, I did get tickled. I got kinda tickled because I thought back to the, uh, email I got where the student said -- or, former student said that, uh, they lost a lot of teachers and a lot of good--a lot of good teachers and a lot of good students. Because of the forced busing. And then ironically in this past Sunday's Parade Magazine, I was flipping through. And there was an article, and um... and I just--my glass just fell, where'd they go? Ok. Um. I can't read without my glasses. [Laughs.] But there was a--there was an article in this week's, uh, Parade, and it's, um... it's written by a, uh--it's about this bestselling author, and goes back to his high school to thank the person who first encouraged him to write. And the article is, uh, entitled--is by--this is by Brad Met--Mez--Melser--Melzer: M-E-L-T-Z-E-R. But, um, he--it's entitled "World's Greatest Teacher," and... his teacher is this black woman. And I was like, "Oh my goodness!" And he definitely is not black, but, you know, I'm thinking "Gee... she might have been one of the good teachers that left Huguenot. I don't know." [Laughs.] I doubt it, but anyway--I just got tick--I got very interested in reading that. I was like, oh, wow. That's interesting. So... But, um.

LB: Well, thank you so much, Yolanda, it's been such a great interview.

YT: Thank you! Thank you for having me.

LB: Ohh, thank you for sharing all your memories.