

ALICE RAINEY
Interview Summary

Interviewee: Alice Rainey

Interviewers: Megan Canny and Kelly Russo

Interview date: November 1, 2012

Location: Doris Miller Community Center, Newport News, Virginia

THE INTERVIEWEE: Alice Rainey was born in Newport News, Virginia, on May 17, 1931. Both her father and stepfather died while she was young and her mother raised her, her two sisters and two brothers by herself. Mrs. Rainey was educated in Newport News. She attended Dunbar Elementary School, John Marshall Elementary School, and graduated from Huntington High School in 1948. While in high school, Mrs. Rainey was a majorette in the marching band and remained involved with student activities, along with part-time jobs at Woolworth's Five and Ten and White's Drug Store. Following her graduation from Huntington, Mrs. Rainey got married and worked at Colonial Courts Motel until she began expanding her family. She has eleven children and worked various jobs in the Newport News area while raising them. Mrs. Rainey remained active within her community as a member of the PTA and gave back to the community by volunteering at the polls during elections. She currently volunteers at her public library and is an active member of Zion Baptist Church.

THE INTERVIEWERS: Kelly Russo is an undergraduate student at Christopher Newport University, where she is completing her bachelor's degree in History and a minor in English Literature. Megan Canny is an undergraduate student at Christopher Newport University where she is pursuing a bachelor's degree in History, with a minor in Political Science.

CONTENT OF THE INTERVIEW: The interview focuses on a variety of topics pertaining to the interviewee's experiences in Newport News over the course of her life. Specifically, the interview focuses on the interviewee's childhood and upbringing, encounters with racism, segregation or integration, and her personal impressions of the civil rights movement.

TRANSCRIPT—ALICE RAINEY

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Length: 1:13:47

START OF RECORDING

MC: This is Megan Canny, my partner is Kelly Russo. Today is November 1, 2012, and this interview is taking place at the Doris Miller Community Center in Newport News, Virginia. We are interviewing Mrs. Alice Rainey. This is for the Hampton Roads Oral History Project, sponsored by Dr. Laura Puaca. Good morning, Mrs. Rainey.

AR: Good morning.

MC: So what we are doing today is called a life history. We are going to ask about your life experiences growing up and that sort of thing. So we will start with your childhood.

AR: I was born in Newport News, Virginia on May 17, 1931 at home on 20th Street in the five hundred block that became Dickerson Court, but that's no longer there. We lived on 20th Street until I was about six years old. On each corner of 20th Street and Jefferson Avenue I remember Michaux Church—that's still there—Mr. Tony's store, which is gone, Mrs. Gertrude's Gas station, which is gone, and a grocery store which is gone. Our house was right behind the church and at four years old during the summer when it was warm and when the side door was open I would sit on the steps outside and look in. In the block there was a dance hall, hotel, and a store owned by Mr. Jim Williams and Ms.

Nellie. I remember our neighbors, Mrs. Lillie Thorton and her husband, Mr. B., the Johnsons, and my grandmother. After 20th Street we moved to 17th Street in the five hundred block. The five hundred block is between Jefferson Avenue and Terminal Avenue. At that time Terminal Avenue was Warwick Avenue. I attended Dunbar Elementary School on 16th Street in the seven hundred block from first to third grade. That is now Achievable Dream. My first grade teacher was Mrs. Manly and Mr. T.C. Ervin was the principal. We moved to 21st Street when I was about seven or eight years old. When we lived on 17th Street, the city was going to build Harbor Homes on the south side of the street so we had to move from there. They are getting ready to tear down Harbor Homes now. When we moved to 21st Street in the six hundred block, I attended John Marshall Elementary School on 24th Street. That's still there but it is not the same building. It was a two-story building when I went and they tore that down and now it is a one-story building. When I went to John Marshall School, I was only there for one year, fourth grade. Mr. Picott was the principal and Mrs. Inettie Edwards was my fourth grade teacher. Then I went back to Dunbar for the fifth, sixth, and seventh grades. When I finished the seventh grade at Dunbar, I went to high school. There was no eighth grade during that time. You went from seventh grade elementary school to first year high school. So when I finished Dunbar in the seventh grade, I went to Huntington High School. That was my first year, freshman. I was thirteen. At Huntington, my first teacher was Mrs. Drake. She was my homeroom teacher for two years and later she became Mrs. Green and a school counselor. I went to Huntington for four years. I was a majorette in the band. I enjoyed that and I really enjoyed all of school, elementary and high school. I enjoyed school because we had good teachers and the environment was just good. They

intended for you to learn and that is what they worked towards, you learning. And that's what we did. I went to high school for four years because, like I said, there was no eighth grade. I was seventeen when I graduated from high school in 1948. But before I graduated from high school, during the summer of 1946, I worked at Woolworth Five and Ten store on Washington Avenue and the next summer, 1947, I worked at White's Drug Store on Jefferson Avenue around the corner from where I lived. That building is still there but it is not the same. It is an oriental business now. They serve Chinese food. That was enjoyable when I worked there, I was helping the employee make ice cream because they made their own ice cream. They would also bottle their medicines and I would help bottle some of the medicines. When we didn't have a label for the medicines, you could type it and I was glad then. I got excited when I had to type a label because I always liked typing. I enjoyed working and learning different things. That was a summer job. When I finished high school, I got married. After marriage, I started working at Colonial Courts Motel. That is still here on Jefferson Avenue past Main Street. But it wasn't like it is now. It was just twelve little cinder block cabins sitting back from the street. But while I was working there, the owners improved and remodeled it the way it is now. Then, Mr. White and his family owned it at the time. Then Mr. Brooks came and he owned it. And I worked there about five years. We would wash the glasses. We did the cleaning. We did the checking in, like the managers. Well, we did all the work, the two girls that worked there. We worked three days one week and four days one week. And sometimes, it was kind of funny, because sometimes when the people came in to get the cabins they would look all under the beds to see if there was any dust and stuff under the bed. They would even ask for the manager, and I would say "Well, I'm the manager." And they would

look kind of stunned. But they got the room anyway. It was a good job and during that time that job paid six dollars a day. The other jobs paid—like house work, because I did that in between too—three dollars a day. So you were kind of stepping up with six dollars a day. In a three-day week, we would make eighteen dollars. In a four-day week, we would make twenty-four dollars for that week. But I liked that job because one thing that comes to my mind was when Mr. White was running the establishment. His little girl came in one day and said to me, “Alice!” And he said, “Wait a minute. You don’t call her Alice.” He said, “You call her Miss Alice.” I liked that because that’s how we were raised up, to respect the elderly and old people. And I really liked that in him for doing that. I worked at Colonial Courts for about five years. After that I stayed home awhile because I was married and the children were coming along. I have eleven children, and they were coming along so I stayed home for awhile. While I was home, I did do some days for different people. I went to work one day because a lady’s daughter-in-law had just had a baby and she needed someone to help her. So I went to do that. I wasn’t feeling too well that day but I said, “Well, I’m going to try to do this job and work all day because being a mother and having children I know how it is when you come home and you need some help when you bring the baby home.” I said, “I’m going try to work all day to help out.” But, about an hour before the day was over, I went to the employer lady and asked her, “Well, may I go home? I just have to go home because I’m not feeling well today.” And unlike how Mr. White acted well to me, the first thing she said was “You know, it is going to cut your pay.” That would have been about twenty-five cents to cut my pay. And to me she didn’t say, “Well, how are you feeling? I’m sorry you are feeling bad, you’re not feeling well today” and then say, “Maybe it will cut your pay.”

She just said “But it will cut your pay.” So I told her, “That’s all right. Let it cut my pay because I’m really not feeling well.” So I went home and I didn’t go back there any more. [laughter] The respect for people, other people’s feelings was not there. So after that job, I stayed home and reared my children. My children went to John Marshall. They went to Huntington. They all finished high school. Some went into the military. Some went to college. When they were still in school I worked with Head Start. That was very good because I just liked the atmosphere and working with children. When I filled out that application, they asked me, “As many children as you have, you mean to tell me you want to work with children?” I said “Well, that’s what I know ma’am.” I think at that time I had ten children [laughter]. At that time, I had ten children. At the beginning, Head Start was just during the day from eight to twelve during the summer. It wasn’t a full-time, year-long thing then. It was just summer and then, later, it became all-day and added on. At that time I had a baby. When they were going to become all day, they would train you to work like that. And they asked me if I would like to have that training, but I told them no because I had a baby then and I didn’t want to work all day every day. But I still volunteered with Head Start and volunteered with the school system, census taking, PTA meetings, and all that goes along with eleven children in school. Football and games and stuff. A lot of them played sports and they were cheerleaders and majorettes and football players and basketball players. After I worked for Head Start, I worked at High’s Ice Cream Store. That was on Jefferson Avenue and 28th Street. That building is still there and they are going to redo that and keep it in that area. I think they are going to make an apartment building out of it. But it is still sitting there on the corner of 28th Street and Jefferson Avenue. That was good, too, because High’s Ice Cream Store had been in this

community for years. They had one on 25th Street in the nine hundred block, and one on Jefferson Avenue and Hampton Avenue, and one on 28th Street and Jefferson Avenue. The Highs had been here awhile. I worked there for two years until they closed it. The business got slow because they were doing so much renovation in this area and business got slow. I worked there for two years. After I finished working there, I continued to volunteer at different places in the city after that. I started working with political stuff in the city. I volunteered there for years. I've done that since the children were little, since the fifties. What else? That's about rounded up because the children are older and they are away and what I'm doing now is I volunteer for Pearl Bailey Library. I work at the polls always. Each year when you vote, I work at the polls. That's coming up on the sixth of November. I will be at the polls on the sixth working. I have the Huntington Alumni. That's Huntington High School. That has been going on for about twenty-five years and that's good. They give out scholarships to children at the different schools. I enjoy that, giving out scholarships. That's about it. There are so, so many things that I volunteer for in the community, we will be sitting here awhile. Unless you have some specific questions.

KR: We do. What was your family life growing up? Did you have any siblings or, your parents were around and what not?

AR: Yes, yes I had two sisters. Well, I had two brothers but one brother died at an early age. He was about two or three in 1935, somewhere around in there, and he had meningitis. I had a sister older than me and a brother next to me and a younger sister. My younger sister died about—this year would be seven years ago. I had my mom. My dad died when I was five so my mom raised us. When she got married again, my brother's

father died when he was one year old. My mom was still there raising us and teaching us and showing us. That's why I say sometimes now a-days the young people act like they can't do the right things in the one parent family. I always check people on that because I had one parent because my dad had died when I was five. She did a great job with the four of us that survived—me, my two sisters and my brother. She did a great job on us. I really don't care for that "one-parent families can't do anything." I understand the importance of a dad but please do not say one-parent families can't do anything because they can. I know that from my life. We never got into trouble. We went to school. We respected people, which is very important, and we acted like children. [laughter] If Mom said something it was, "Yes ma'am, no ma'am." Now a days it's "Why? Do I have to do this?" But that one parent family can work if they work on it.

MC: You mentioned the different schools you attended. What was it like to go to school in the midst of all the segregation and integration that was happening?

AR: When I was going to Dunbar you didn't really know a whole lot, at six years old, about segregation and stuff. You knew where you lived and your parents explained to you what you had to do. I look at it sometimes—. When I was going to Dunbar I had to walk from 17th Street in the five hundred block to 16th Street in the seven hundred block. When the apartments were there, the circle was not there. We had to walk across the ditch on a pipe. I'm thankful I didn't fall in the ditch any one of those days. To get to school—like I said the apartments were not there, that was just open space—you had to walk across the pipe to get to the other side and go on down to 16th Street to Dunbar Elementary School. In Dunbar, in elementary school our teachers just taught us, that's what they did. You were going to get your lesson and they were interested in you. The

teachers lived in the neighborhood, most of them, and they would come to your home and visit. Each school year, the teacher had to visit each child's home at the beginning of the school year. You don't see that now. They'd talk with the parents and the parents let the teachers be the teachers and teach the children. That's what they did. I enjoyed school, I enjoyed school. That was in elementary school. When I got to high school it was just about the same. You know more about segregation then as you are growing up. When you are growing up, you know that you are in your community and you are doing good. People are getting along with people and helping people. I say caring about people. They are caring about people. Then, as you get older, you learn more about the segregation. At Huntington High, we had to have books from the white schools, from Newport News High School. We had two high schools in this area: Huntington for blacks and Newport News High for whites. So we had the books from other schools. We didn't get new books, brand new books. We got the old used books. But we used those books and we studied those books. We got our lessons out of those books and we learned. What we had, we learned. I have a thing here that might be interesting about some of the different places that were started in Newport News. As I got older, when I finished high school, I was interested in the government and things like that. I remember listening to my first speech on radio in 1948 and that was the first time. It was interesting and through the years you learn different things. I enjoyed going to school. I enjoyed the politics, some of it. I worked in those things and volunteered and it has been interesting in trying to keep up with it. As for the segregation, it wasn't too bad around this way. I remember in 1968, we had a riot here though. That was devastating to me. Over on Jefferson Avenue, I think that was the same year Martin Luther King, Jr., was killed, in 1968. I think they just went

haywire here in the city. We knew what we had to do and we worked the best we could with what we had. That was the best thing you could do during that time. All up in here whites lived. Blacks didn't live here. When this building was built it was for the white children. The one over—there is another building sitting right over there just like this one—that was for the blacks. That was Huntington High School, over there by that building. Huntington High School wasn't as large as it is now when I was there. You knew what you were supposed to do. A lot of blacks had businesses on Jefferson Avenue and in the community, and a lot of whites and Jews had businesses in the community. When that riot happened, it really hurt me. Well, actually, I cried. I knew the people and the businesses on the avenue because they had always been there since I was a child. They had been in the community, black and whites. They had been in this community helping the people. You could have a grocery bill and pay on payday and you knew what was what in your community. I had a good childhood and life in the city. I am still here and you try to look at people as people, as yourself. To love people, not for what they have or what they can do for you, but who they are. You just love people. My grandma would say all the time, "Why do you think you are here? You are here to help people." That's the way I was raised and that's what I teach my children, to love people and do what you need to do and what you have to do. I just get a little sad or upset when people do not treat people with love and gentleness. All of that went on in segregation. All of that went on. That's just the way I was reared, to help people the best you can and do the best you can. Did that answer your question?

KR: Yes ma'am. Going off of that, did you notice or experience any discrimination in the work place or in public facilities? You have already told us a little bit but is there anything else?

AR: In public facilities, there were places where you couldn't go and things you couldn't do. When I worked at F.W. Woolworth on Washington Avenue, I worked at the counter where they served lunch. You could work there and shop there. Sometimes shipyard workers would buy their lunch and go outside and sit in front of the store to eat. You could stand at the end of the counter and order food to take out but you couldn't sit down and eat. I'm washing glasses there, behind the counter. The waitress—she is white—she is waiting on a customer and she is asking me how much change she should give. I think she should have known how much change. I couldn't be a waitress because I am black. That was discrimination. It stands out in my mind and I mentioned that to my children through the years. It just struck me that she would ask me what change to get and she's the waitress. And the one about the lady—I'm working all day and she's talking about money. I don't know if that is one either. That might be a regular thing or something. When white travelers came to Colonial Courts Motel, they didn't think that I could be the manager. Blacks didn't travel much during that time. It was mostly the whites who traveled. That wasn't discrimination because I was given the job. I loved Mr. White for that. When the new bus terminal was built on West Ave., it was a nice building and larger than the one on Washington Ave. My sister was working there at the food counter for blacks. One day she wasn't feeling well and I went to work for her. You could do that then. I learned that there was a nice restaurant space with tables and chairs for whites with door separating it from the waiting room. As for the blacks, they had a little counter

about eight feet long where you wait for the bus. No seats or stools. Most of the time you knew where you couldn't go and what you had to do during that time. When I worked at Button Hospital on summer as a maid, the white patients were on the upper floors and the blacks were in the basement. We shopped and worked on Washington Avenue. On Jefferson Avenue, there were a lot of businesses: restaurants, movies, cleaners, gas stations, banks, churches, barber shops, clothing stores, and shoe stores. Later in the years, F.W. Woolworth put a counter in the five and dime store that they had on Jefferson Avenue. They put a luncheon counter in there. We had all kinds of businesses on Jefferson Avenue so we didn't really have to go too far. When you went over on Washington Avenue to Nachman's department store you couldn't sit at that counter either at the beginning. The owners of Nachman's later made it so you could come in and sit at that counter and have lunch. Leggett's department store was on Washington Ave and when they tore down those buildings, I cried again. Just seeing the buildings get torn down that had been there so long. What else was over there? Bookstores and the bus depot. The Greyhound Bus depot was on the corner of 28th Street and Washington Avenue. We went in stores over there but a lot of stores we had on Jefferson Avenue and we really didn't have to go too far to get what you needed. When you went in the stores on Jefferson Ave. the owners knew you, whether they were Jews or whites or blacks, because they had been in the community for years and that's the way it was.

MC: You've mentioned that you do a lot of volunteering. When you were experiencing discrimination, were you active in your church? And what community groups came out of your church?

AR: My church did a lot of things during that time. Zion Baptist Church, they did a lot of things during that time. At the time I wasn't really too active in some of those things, but if you would like you could go and talk with someone at the church. I was married and had children and that was my priority at the time. I was still connected with the church, but I wasn't doing a lot of the things that they were doing and going out into the community. They did a lot. They were always active in that.

KR: Were you involved in any sort of protest or anything? I know you had mentioned the riot. Was that something that kind of affected you in any other way?

AR: I wasn't involved in that because when that happened it just took me by surprise. But I could stand on my porch and see people who were coming down the street and who was protesting and who was involved in it. They had a march that was going over town. It was where you went across the 25th Street bridge to the courthouse and they passed where I lived on 25th Street in the seven hundred block. Different organizations would send around flyers for you to fill out or sign on different matters, asking questions. I did that. I've always been interested my community. But yes, it did affect me. It affected the entire neighborhood. Buildings began to get torn down, businesses moving out of the neighborhood, and they have not been revised since.

MC: What about your family? Your close friends? Did they get involved in the protesting at all?

AR: Yes, because my brother-in-law—he's passed on now—my brother-in-law was in the march that passed my house. A lot of friends were in that march.

KR: What about the impact of World War II when you were growing up? Did you have family and friends who were involved in the war?

AR: I don't remember having anybody in World War II. I don't remember because when World War II happened, 1941, I was ten. When it ended in 1945, I was in high school so I wouldn't have had any friends in World War II. I don't remember hearing anything about other family members being in World War II when I was growing up, but I do remember when Pearl Harbor was bombed. It was a Sunday evening and I was on my way to BTU at church. I had friend that lived on my street who was in the war in '52. What was that? The Korean War?

MC/KR: Yes ma'am.

AR: He was in that. His name was Philip Baughns. But for World War II, I remember the ration stamps that you would get to go to the store. I remember those. We had the air raids. I remember that. That's when a whistle would blow to let you know it was time to put your black shades down and turn out the lights so if an enemy airplane was coming over, they couldn't see anything because the city cover you put your black shades down and a whistle would blow. That was so that if an airplane was coming over or something they couldn't see because the city would be dark. I remember that. But as for family or friends being in the war, I don't remember having anyone in the war.

KR: Do you remember the general attitude towards the war? Was it a positive attitude or a negative one? I know you said you were a little younger at that time.

AR: Well, I'm quite sure people didn't care too much for it because of the things that it changed. Like I said, there were air raids and the stamps that you had to use for sugar and butter and people getting killed in the war. I'm quite sure they didn't have a positive attitude for war. They were doing what they needed to do. I did notice the streets were full of soldiers and military and businesses were thriving.

MC: When you were growing up and going through the war, and at school, what did you and your friends do with your free time?

AR: [laughs] And going to school? With our free time? That's from first grade on up?

MC: Sure.

AR: With our free time, we had dances at the YWCA. I helped with the March of Dimes. We jumped ditches. We played jack rocks and dodge ball. We played with bicycles, roller skates, doll babies, and dish sets. We learned etiquette and had the Girls Scouts and Drama Club in high school. We were children. We cleaned. We were learning. We learned how to cook when we were home because I followed my mama around the kitchen to see what she was doing and how she was doing things. And we went to Sunday school. On Sunday morning, you were going to Sunday school [laughs] and you were going to church too. We had BTU on Sunday evenings. Some called it BTU, some called it BYPU. You went to church and, if you did not go to church or Sunday school, you didn't do anything that day. You didn't go anywhere else. But we played like children and learned. Like I said, we learned how to clean and how to cook in our free time. Well, that wasn't free time. That was anytime when you learned that. And we had fun like children [laughs].

MC: What about when you were in high school?

AR: Just about the same thing because, when I was in high school, you had things that you needed to do at home. That's cleaning. We had to sweep our front yards and we didn't have grass. We had dirt but you had to keep it clean. You had your toilet outdoors. You had to keep that clean. It wasn't in the house. Anyone could come through your yard and use that if they wanted to, but you had to keep it clean. When I was in high school, I

was jumping ditches [laughs] and climbing trees, a tree that was in my backyard. If you had brothers and sisters, you helped take care of them and visited your neighbors. I liked to dance, so I would go to dances at the USO on 12th Street on Jefferson Ave. It was on 25th Street in the six hundred block at first. It was fun and we had our games: our football games and basketball games and that was a weekend must. You go to that game. Even the grownups in our community were at the games. They were very well attended by the community. We had our homecoming games and parades. We had a lot of things because, when I was in Huntington, they had a lot of things that you could do, such as the YWCA, Drama Club, and choir. Just like I was in the band, there were different trades and different things you could do to help keep you occupied. We had a good time at the football games and the basketball games. There was also Pythagoras Club, Math Club, and Student Council.

KR: What was it like being in the band? What were some of your experiences?

AR: Oh, they were good. I loved band. One time we were at a football game and the cheerleaders didn't go to that game so the majorettes were cheering. And there was a football player who was running the ball. Well, he was running so fast that he came over the sideline where we were and knocked me down. [laughs] There I was, on the ground, but I wasn't hurt bad. We went to Elizabeth State College one time and played for their homecoming game. We had the same colors, blue and white. We high schoolers thought that was good, going to a college game and playing. At that time, it seemed like it was so far away. It was in Elizabeth City, North Carolina. But as you grow you see that it really wasn't that far away. That was interesting and fun. We would always play Phenix in Hampton. That was like our rival. And we played on Hampton—well, it was Institute

then—Hampton University field. Hampton University had a jabbawalk and invited us to participate in it. That's a show that you do different talents in. We were really excited that was at Hampton University in Ogden Hall. We had a skit about Arabian Nights and we had dressed in Arabian attire. That was fun. I was doing a dance on that one [laughs]. That was good. Hampton University had those shows once a year in the spring. I really enjoyed the band. I was the secretary of the band. Oh, and one time we had a contest to get new uniforms for the band and, after the contest, we had a dance at the Elks Home. The Elks Home was on 22nd Street in the six hundred block. You know about the Elks Home, that lodge? We had a dance there and the one that raised the most money for the uniforms would be crowned queen. So I did that too. I was queen because I had raised the most money. But it was just fun, and the band got new uniforms. That year when they got new uniforms, the majorette uniforms came down to below the knees. They became long. You know, originally, majorette uniforms stop about right here [points to leg]. But that year, because the long skirts were in style during that time, that's how the majorette uniforms were made too, with the long skirts. Mr. Ballou was our director. There was a majorette at Hampton High School named Alice Carter and that was my name, Alice Carter. And when we went to band rehearsal one day, our director had put a newspaper clipping on the bulletin board and had underlined her name. And we read it. He put it there for us to read. We were surprised to learn that someone at Hampton High School could be named the same as one of our majorettes at Huntington High School. We also had the same initials, Hampton High School and Huntington High School. H.H.S. And our colors, blue and white. I often wondered through the years how could I get in touch with that Alice Carter. Our band was voted several years the best band in the region. It

was really a good time. Mr. Ballou was a dynamite band director. We had batons and we twirled them, but you don't see batons now much. You see flags and dancing [laughs]. I went to a parade Saturday—that was Hampton University's homecoming parade—and I did see some schools with batons. They weren't from here but they had batons. So my daughter said, "Oh, oh Mama, there's a baton." I said, "Oh yeah, good," and I said, "They're twirling them, too" [laughs]. It was really good seeing majorettes twirling batons.

MC: What is it like to see your grandchildren attending the same school that you attended?

AR: Oh, it was great! It was great because I have some in Achievable Dream now, on 16th Street, and I had some that went to Huntington. It wasn't a high school then. I had children go, but when my grandchildren went, it was Huntington Middle School. And it's great. Some of my children went to Ferguson when the integration came in. But now you have Heritage and so it's good. I love it, and they love school. They participate in it. I had about five graduations this year from college. And that's the grandchildren now [laughs]. It is really good to see them going to your school and all of my children always say, "Don't say anything about Huntington now, because you know what Mama is going to do and you get her started she is going to run it down about Huntington to you." And I say, "That's right, because that's my school." So it's really good to see them go to those schools.

KR: What do you view as the most important accomplishment of the civil rights movement?

AR: [pause] Now, it's good that they had the civil rights movement, and they put it on the books. I think that was a good accomplishment. I don't know anything could have been any better than to recognize and to realize that we needed that. When they put it on the books, I think that was good. Now I don't know how things were going on, but when they put it on the books, I think that was a good thing to do. Did that answer your question?

KR: Yes ma'am.

MC: So when your children were going through school, that was really the height of integration and that sort of thing correct?

AR: [nods affirmative]

MC: What was the attitude in Newport News towards integration?

AR: The attitude in Newport News toward integration—Well, I talked with people and they thought it was a good thing. The children wouldn't have to go to just one school. They could go to different schools and could go to different places. The attitude was good because I had mentioned to a lady one time about busing. I was concerned about the children and the little ones getting on the buses so early in the morning and traveling so long on the buses. And the lady said to me "That's alright, they can travel to Williamsburg as long as they get their good education." So I'm thinking the attitude was good about integration. Now around here when that came in, we had two high schools in this area. Huntington was for the blacks, and Newport News was for the whites. When integration came in and they had the freedom of choice form to pick what school you would like to go to, we had about a couple of students—I don't know if we had any more than that, we might have had more—that filled out a form to attend Newport News High. We had no children fill out a form to attend Huntington, no whites to attend Huntington. I

often think about that because right here at Marshall Courts—do you know where Marshall Courts is? It was sitting right there behind Huntington. But no white children filled out an application to attend Huntington. All they had to do was cross the street. Huntington was on one side of the street and Marshall Courts was on the other side of the street. Now I know that happened and I often wonder why some of them didn't fill out applications to attend Huntington. But maybe it was because they were getting what they needed where they were. And maybe the blacks that filled out to go to Newport News were thinking maybe they can get something else. I often wonder why they didn't fill out a form. I think I would have filled out one to go across the street to a school closer instead of getting the buses. Integration in the schools—. Some of the children were kind of upset because they had to change their schools from where they had been for so long. But I never heard of any incidents or anything with the children because, when my children were going to John Marshall, whites came down here on the buses and all. I never heard any incidents that they had because one of my daughters—she and a fellow, what is that little boy's name? Tom Terwilliger. But she would talk about him all the time when she came home. They were good friends. They became good friends. I think they just didn't like the idea of breaking up what they had been doing all the time and then having to go to another school. See, some of my children that was in high school was about to finish Huntington. But then they had to go up to Ferguson and finish Ferguson. It's just a matter of wanting to stay where they had been.

MC: Did you ever hear about Christopher Newport College and the whole incident with the Shoe Lane property and that fight? Did you know anything about that?

AR: No, I didn't know much about that. I didn't know much about the Shoe Lane stuff up that way. I know Christopher Newport started down in this area, and it's really growing and it's growing good. But I didn't know anything about that. So what happened up there? [laughs] When they wanted people to move or something? Oh yeah, I knew a lot of blacks lived in that area. I know that. But as for what when on there I didn't hear anything about that.

KR: What are some of the most pressing problems facing African Americans today? What do you think?

AR: Boy, that's a hard one because the problems today almost seem like they're more than they were back then. There's jobs. There's education. And that's about the best I can do. Jobs and education, because those two things mean a lot to people. They mean a lot to people. Jobs and education.

KR: What do you regard as the unfinished legacies of the movement?

AR: Now when you say legacies, what do you mean? Because things are still going on that have been going on. So when you say unfinished legacies what do you mean?

KR: I'd say exactly that, things that are going on, or that went on that are still going on. What kind of examples do you have, or would you say?

MC: Things that still need to change in your mind?

AR: Just about everything [laughs]. Just about everything still needs to change. It needs to get better and better and better and I guess you could put some segregation in there because some folks are still carrying that on in different places and different ways. It might not be the same way that it was back then but it's the same thing. So the legacy just needs to go on and on and on because you have people that are younger now. Little

people, children—. They're going to see the same thing as I saw or other people saw when they were coming up. It just needs to change. It's the same thing that's going on. Maybe in a different way, or a different manner but it's there. It's there. People need to love each other, respect each other. That's the legacy and if you can get that going then you really have something. And that's the main thing I think. I don't know if that answers your question or not.

MC/KR: It does.

KR: Are there any topics that we haven't covered that you'd like to elaborate on?

AR: No, not really, I think you all have done pretty good here. Yeah, I think you've done pretty good.

KR: Is there anything else you'd like to contribute? Any statements or anything?

AR: They're doing things now down in this area that are trying to get it fixed up, get it redeveloped down in this area. So I think that's a good thing because it seems as though when the integration came in and different things happened down in this area, all the things that were down here went out. It's been so, I guess, bland down in this area for years. They call this the poorest section, the poor neighborhood. You know why? I don't know why because things down here, the few stores down here—. The things in there cost more than they do in stores that are out of this area. Now if this is a poor area, why are the things costing more? I don't understand that. I'm thinking is it all a state of mind they want you to think you're in. I don't know that this is the "ghetto." I would tell children years ago, "No ghetto. It's in your mind. No ghetto." When they ask me where I live, I say 29th Street, Newport News, Virginia. I don't live in the ghetto, or in the poor

section of town. I think it's important for children to grow up, not with a negative mind set but with a positive mind set.

MC: Thank you so much, for everything you've contributed to us. Do you have any recommendations for people who might be interested in participating in this project?

AR: Well, you could go to the seniors in that room over there, and ask some of them. Some of them might be interested. You could go over there and ask them. Would you like to ask them today?

KR: I don't think today actually. I think we would have to set up an interview like we did with you. But that's good to know that there's another—

MC: There's a group of people.

KR: —who would be interested.

AR: Yes, because I think Ms. Brown is there. I think Ms. Brown at one time taught school, and I think Ms. Brown might be ninety and you could probably get some good information from any of the ladies over there.

KR: Ok, awesome. Well thank you again very much for meeting with us.

AR: OK, thank you.

MC: Thank you.

AR: I had something here I was going to ask you. Do you see this card here? We talked with some people at Pearl Bailey Library one time from the college of South Carolina University. And they did an oral history about Huntington High School and I thinking maybe, if you would like, maybe you could call. You could get this on the internet and see some things about Huntington High that went on in earlier years.

MC: Thank you!

KR: Wonderful, thank you very much.

AR: And I have some dates here, I don't know if it would be any help to you, of different things in Newport News and when they started. And I have pictures of the community, different things in the community, if at a later time you might like some pictures of how the community was and how it is now. This book was written by my fourth grade teacher. My church is in there when they started. Did you see Zion Baptist Church in there? And First Church, that was the first – is that this one up here? [points at book] I was in Miss Golden Newport News pageant. I was in that and won that and it was nice. That was in 1996, and I said, "Oh, well that was great because that was my church's one hundred year anniversary and that was Newport News' one hundred year anniversary. And I said, "Oh well, that's great."

KR: That was a golden year! [laughter]

END OF INTERVIEW

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