

Valerie Scott Price Interview Summary

Interviewee: Valerie Scott Price

Interviewer: Mia LaRochelle and Keelyn Graves

Interview date: October 25, 2023

Location: Paul and Rosemary Tribble Library, Newport News, Virginia Length: 1 audio file, MP3 format, 0:50:16

THE INTERVIEWEE: Valerie Scott Price was born in Newport News, Virginia at Whittaker Memorial Hospital on August 13, 1952. She grew up in a family that was very involved in the local community: her father, Dr. Charles Waldo Scott, was a surgeon and first Black member of the Newport News School Board in the 20th century and her mother, Mae Hamlin Scott, was a science teacher at Newport News High School. Price attended Jefferson Elementary School from kindergarten to fifth grade. From sixth to seventh grade, she attended Walter Reed Middle School. When she began eighth grade in 1965, she helped to integrate Newport News High School as part of the “freedom of choice” program and graduated in 1970. She then attended the Hampton Institute where she received her B.S. in Early Childhood Education. After graduation, she worked as a teacher for thirty years, first in Washington D.C. and then in Newport News. She also earned her master’s degree in Early Childhood Education at Old Dominion University.

THE INTERVIEWERS: Mia LaRochelle and Keelyn Graves are seniors at Christopher Newport University. Mia LaRochelle is a history major with a minor in museum studies. Keelyn Graves is a double major in political science and American studies with minors in national security and history.

DESCRIPTION OF THE INTERVIEW: This interview was conducted at Christopher Newport University Paul and Rosemary Tribble Library in Newport News, Virginia. The interview took a life history approach beginning with Price’s childhood and moving into discussion about the role she played in desegregating Newport News High School. Mrs. Price also touched on how her family experienced this process and especially her father’s efforts to integrate schools through this work with the Newport News School Board. Toward the end of the interview, Price discussed the importance of education and the GETUP project that she created (Getting Educated to Understand Parenting).

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START OF INTERVIEW

Mia LaRochelle: This is Mia LaRochelle and my partner is Keelyn Graves. Today is October 25, 2023 and we are interviewing Mrs. Valerie Scott Price. This interview is being carried out as a part of the Hampton Roads Oral History Project at Christopher Newport University. Alright, good afternoon, Mrs. Price. So we are going to take what is called a life history approach and we would like to begin our interview with a few questions about your childhood. So, can you please state when and where you were born?

Valerie Scott Price: You want me to say my name first?

ML: Oh sure, if you'd like.

VSP: My name is Valerie Scott Price. I was born in Newport News, Virginia in Whittaker Hospital, which is no longer there, but it was the Black hospital in Newport News. And I'm the youngest of four children. I have three older brothers.

Keelyn Graves: You must've been busy. [laughter]. Could you shed a little light about who your parents were or what your parents' names were?

VSP: Oh yes. My father was Dr. Charles Waldo Scott. He was a general surgeon in the area and was pretty well known in the community. There was a C. Waldo Scott Center for H.O.P.E. on

Wickham Avenue that was named after him and a bridge on Sixteenth Street that bears his name also. And my mother was Mae Hamlin Scott and she was a teacher. She wanted to be a doctor initially but, after going into some of the medical classes, decided that wasn't the route that she needed to go, so she became a science teacher.

ML: Oh wow.

VSP: And taught earth science and biology in Newport News.

ML: Nice.

KG: Fantastic, thank you.

ML: So, did you grow up in a particularly religious household and, if so, did your religious upbringing play a role in your identity and motivations in life?

VSP: I grew up in a home that—. We believed in God. They sent us to Sunday school either with my grandparents or, you know, with my parents. I don't think we were overly religious but we knew the tenets of the Episcopal faith and tried to do our best to live a godly life.

KG: So, thank you for that. Could you describe how your community looked? Maybe it could be the greater community, maybe just your neighborhood itself. Do you have any, like, memories of how it may have looked?

VSP: I was born on Thirty-Second Street in Newport News and it was a segregated neighborhood. And behind us was Marshall Courts and there was a fence that divided our side of the grass from their side. And I wasn't even five years old yet when I learned what segregation looked like because the White children were playing on the playground that I could not play on. So, then we moved to Madison Avenue and we still didn't see a lot of White people in the neighborhood because it was segregated. And we saw White people in stores and the insurance

salesmen that came to collect money from our neighbors for whatever policies they had. So, you know, I was in a segregated neighborhood up there also.

KG: And, generally what were race relations like in Newport News? You talk specifically about your community, but overall, like if you went into the city for example, like further into the city, would you see more segregation? Less segregation?

VSP: Well, this was during a time that we couldn't try on clothes in stores. We couldn't sit at the lunch counters to eat lunch. And theaters in Newport News and Hampton had sections for Black people to sit. Either it was upstairs or in the back. And there was a theater in Hampton that you had to go up outside steps to get to the balcony, so—. Yeah, it was very segregated when I was growing up. And, I guess the most interaction I had with the other community was when I went to Newport News High School.

ML: Oh wow. So, thank you so much for talking about that.

VSP: Of course.

ML: We'd like to learn more about your experiences attending some of the city's segregated schools before turning into integration, and so we did see that you first attended Jefferson and Walter Reed. And are we correct in understanding that these were schools primarily for Black students?

VSP: Yes.

ML: Okay.

VSP: They were segregated schools. Jefferson was on Thirtieth Street. I was there from first to fifth. We didn't have kindergarten then.

ML: Oh wow.

VSP: Kindergarten hadn't started when I was in elementary school. And then, in sixth grade, I went to Walter Reed, which is now Downing-Gross Cultural Arts Center.

ML: Oh wow.

VSP: And seventh grade, I went to Huntington Annex, which was right behind Huntington High School. It was a little tin building. It had several classrooms.

ML: Right.

VSP: So, it wasn't a large student body. But, you know, that's where we went to seventh grade.

KG: And, what were your experiences like there?

VSP: At the schools?

KG: Yes ma'am. Could you elaborate?

VSP: Oh, they were very positive. I can tell you every teacher that I had from first through fifth.

ML: That's amazing.

VSP: Most of them from sixth and seventh. Then—. It was very positive. And they knew—everybody knew everybody. The teachers, of course, knew my parents so I couldn't do anything wrong. [laughter] They knew where to go and how to find them.

KG: Absolutely, were there any teachers who stood out to you in particular?

VSP: Well, one of the teachers that probably got me to be here today, back then, was Miss Sarah Whittington. She was our seventh-grade social studies teacher. And in, I guess it was the fall or spring of '65, 1965—I don't know if she talked to the parents first or to the students first—but she was talking about “freedom of choice” and integrating Newport News High School. So, she was the one that brought that to the students and encouraged a lot of us to go there, in the fall of 1965.

ML: Wow. Were you involved in any extracurricular activities when you were, like, in these schools?

VSP: We didn't have many extracurricular activities in elementary or sixth and seventh grade, but I did-. I was a member of the Y-Teens.

ML: Oh wow.

VSP: But that was not a part of the school. The YWCA on Orcutt Avenue had a group of Y-Teens and we would go and learn how to sew and had parties and I think we went caroling.

ML: Oh my god.

VSP: Things like that. Fun things you don't do anymore. [laughter]

ML: Right.

KG: And you mentioned your teacher who actually told your parents or yourself about the "freedom of choice." Was this something that you discussed at home when you were about to go to Newport News High School? Was that a decision you were even a part of or was that something made for you?

VSP: I think it was probably a little of both. It was going to be a new experience, definitely a new experience, because my friends and I hadn't been in that community particularly. I don't remember any hesitation particularly because it was very strongly encouraged through the school and through my parents to go. And what made it a little bit easier for me was my mother was going to be on the faculty there. And my older brother who had gone to prep school came back to start tenth grade at the school the same year, '65.

ML: Wow.

KG: Thank you.

ML: Thank you. Wo, we'd like to learn more about your experiences with school desegregation. So, with that, we understand that you helped to desegregate Newport News Schools. And then, how were [to KG: did I mess up?] Sorry. How were you treated by the staff at Newport News High School? Did you feel supported by administration and teachers when you first arrived? And did they immediately support you or was there like a transition period?

VSP: Well, when we arrived, I don't remember anyone picketing, 'cause I'd seen [that happen] in other states. But there were no outstretched arms either. So, there were probably some conflicts to work out through our time there. The teachers accepted us into the student body for the most part. The coaches were probably happy that they had some good players or team members on whatever sport it was joining the student body. The guidance counselors—I can only speak for my experience, I don't know how they treated other people—but back in that day there were no computers and the internet. Colleges had catalogs that were books we could check out from the guidance counselors. And, you go in and request a school catalog and that was the guidance I received. I don't remember anyone saying, "Oh, you know, maybe you could consider this or consider that." There was no positive feedback and some of my classmates said they were discouraged from some of the careers that they had chosen because the guidance counselors didn't think they could meet up to their expectations of that field.

ML: Wow.

KG: So, you would describe the experience there as not, you know, outwardly malevolent but cold?

VSP: I think that's how you could, you could, it would be a good description. When we first got there, it got better as time went on but that's a good description. I think they weren't used to us and we weren't used to them and through interactions in class and other activities like sports you

know and certain things, things got a little bit better. One of my classmates, Donna, tried out for the cheerleading squad and the results were posted on a sheet on the wall and someone wrote the “n-word” across her name.

ML: Oh my god.

VSP: And the cheerleading sponsor was very angry and tore it down because she didn’t want any of that.

ML: Right.

VSP: And that negativity. And Donna went on to become the first Black JV and varsity cheerleader.

ML: Oh my god. Wow, that's amazing.

KG: Fantastic, that’s amazing. So, we hear that you. Oh sorry. We hear that you entered Newport News High School as an eighth grader in 1965 and you graduated in 1970. Is that correct?

VSP: Yes, yes.

KG: Okay. So, you mention that there are other African Americans within the school: yourself, I think you mentioned your brother for one.

VSP: Mm-hmm, there was a group of us that went from my class, the seventh-grade class.

KG: Okay. Were you all in the same class as you elevated throughout your high school career?

Or were you all separated?

VSP: We were separated into different homerooms and different classes, you know. Sometimes the schedules would coordinate and we would be in the same class or whatever. But for the most part they divided us up along the different classes.

KG: Okay. And then my further question after that is when you didn’t have classes with the other African American students, was there an attitude or a feeling of discomfort at all, or unease?

VSP: I would say maybe in eighth and ninth grade. But as we were there longer, I think things got a little bit better in the classes. Yeah, eighth and ninth grade, I think were the probably toughest. And entering as an eighth grader we were called mice.

ML: Oh my gosh, wow. That's crazy. So—. And how did the decision to attend Newport News High School come about? Can you share any specific experiences that motivated you to get involved with desegregation efforts?

VSP: Well as I said, in seventh grade I went to Huntington Annex, which was right behind Huntington High School, and we since we were that close, all of my friends thought we were going to go to Huntington High School in eighth grade. But, as I said, Miss Whittington talked to us and encouraged—I don't remember how many of us. But it was enough to say that schools had been integrated because students came from other schools also. And, I don't—. I think it was a good decision. It was a new experience. We were young thirteen-year-olds starting, going somewhere we had never been before.

ML: Right.

VSP: So, yeah, I think it was a good experience.

KG: So, we know that you enrolled in, well, Newport News High School as a part of the “freedom of choice.” But when doing this “freedom of choice,” was there any backlash from the faculty or the higher-ups at Newport News High School about your decision to enroll there or any—. Or do you know of any instances where the faculty, even though acknowledge that “freedom of choice,” still said, “Ugh, maybe we do not?”

VSP: I don't know that I had all of the teachers that might've been on the negative side of us being there. But I did have some and they just didn't necessarily interact with us as they would some of the other students. There was one teacher who, you know, would ask a question. He

would get annoyed with me for asking a question, but someone else could ask a question and he would answer like that's what they were supposed to do. So, it was—. It wasn't all the teachers but there were some. As far as administration, I don't remember the administration saying or doing anything that would have made a mark of negativity with me.

ML: Okay.

KG: Okay.

ML: Right, so, what was involved with the process of going to Newport News High School and working on like desegregation? Like, was there an application? How did all of that work for you to get there?

VSP: Well, seeing that it's been more than fifty years ago. [laughter]

ML: Yeah.

VSP: I don't quite remember all the specifics of that.

ML: Right.

VSP: But I'm sure there was an application process because people were coming from other schools also. So, I don't exactly remember the specific process of how that came about.

KG: Could you describe your first day of high school at Newport News High School?

VSP: I don't necessarily remember the first day, being so long ago, but like I said there was no picketing, but there were no outstretched arms either.

ML: Right.

VSP: You know, we just tried to do our best and do what we were supposed to do and ignore anything that was not positive toward us.

ML: Right.

KG: Understandable. But you could say the atmosphere was different right?

VSP: Oh yeah.

KG: And in that atmosphere, do you feel that your education was either hampered or did it motivate you to succeed more?

VSP: Well, one of the things that Miss Whittington told us when she was trying to get the group together was that going to Newport News, being a Black student, we would have to be twice as good.

ML: Yeah.

VSP: So that there would be no hesitation or compromise that our skills would be up to par or better than what they expected.

KG: Thank you.

ML: And how did you get to school each day?

VSP: Well, for the most part I rode with my mother [laughter].

ML: Oh yeah, of course, makes sense.

VSP: In those days, in the days that she did not go to school for whatever reason I rode the bus.

ML: Right, and—.

VSP: And, one of the stories that one of my classmates told me about the bus on the first day, they were they were waiting for the bus and waiting for the bus and then found out that they had picked up all the White students first and took them to school and then went around to pick up the Black students. So, the Black students who were waiting for the bus were probably late.

ML: Wow.

VSP: Because they were waiting for the bus.

ML: Wow. That's—. Wow. And what were, what would you say the relations were like between you and your White peers? Did you feel welcome by them? Was there anyone in particular you would say was malicious or welcoming to you all?

VSP: I don't remember any specific negative experiences. I just didn't associate with the ones who were very negative.

ML: Right.

VSP: And there were some students who were very accepting and accommodating and wanted to be a part of an integrated student body. But then there were those, the others.

ML: Yeah.

KG: So, now with talking about the relations between Black and White students, we can kinda go bigger. And, so, how did you—. How did the broader, like, civil rights movement or that movement for desegregation and integration as a whole kinda play into your experience at Newport News High School? Did you hear any news at certain points of different events happening at the time and they would be discussed in school, almost like we do today, with international events?

VSP: I know when Dr. Martin Luther King [Jr.] was assassinated there was some interest in having gatherings to commemorate that situation. There was a march across 28th St. Bridge also. The administration allowed the Black students to have that event in the—it was either in the gym or the cafeteria. There was a program and my brother remembers that one of the students sang "Lift Every Voice and Sing," and other people spoke, so they were accommodating to things like that. As far as other situations, I don't remember any large gatherings because of other things happening.

ML: And so, with your friend groups from Jefferson and Walter Reed, did any of them follow you to Newport News High School and did any of them go to other newly integrated high schools?

VSP: Most of my friend group went to Newport News. I have a friend that started first grade and we went through every grade together through high school through college and then we even taught a year together. [laughter]

ML: Oh wow.

VSP: So, yeah, most of the people I was closest to went to Newport News.

ML: Okay.

KG: Okay, so with talking about school, let's talk about your favorite subject, what was your favorite subject at Newport News High School?

VSP: Mmm, I'd never taken a speech class before and, being the introvert that I am, [laughter] I thought maybe that was something that would be good for me. And that was a good introduction to speaking before people. I enjoyed that class and I guess most of the English classes that I took. I wasn't that great in math but I got through. [laughter]

ML: Yeah, that's the same.

KG: I think that's universal.

VSP: And the sciences were interesting too.

ML: Yeah.

KG: No, I'm sorry, I said that's almost universal [laughter].

ML: Yeah, yeah, we also noticed that you were very involved with extracurriculars like French club, and you were your senior class treasurer. Was there any particular reason you wanted to get

involved in all of those extracurricular activities?

VSP: Well, the senior class treasurer—. How did you find out about that? [laughter]

ML: I found your yearbook.

VSP: Oh gosh! [laughter]

ML: Your senior year yearbook. Senior portrait looks great by the way. [laughter]

VSP: Oh, thank you. Yes, that's an interesting story about the senior class treasurer because we were having senior class elections and there were no Black students on the ballot for any of the positions so someone put my name up for senior class treasurer and, lo and behold, I won.

ML: Congratulations. [laughter]

VSP: Well, I can say I've never been a treasurer of anything since. [laughter]

ML: Oh my gosh.

VSP: And I was a Future Teacher of America, and—. What other organizations did you say I was?

ML: French club, we found that one.

VSP: Okay, I took French, yes.

ML: Yes, and you were also I think on like prom committee.

VSP: Probably, yeah.

ML: Yes, I think that's what we found as well.

KG: You're also here stated as the president of the Future Teachers Association.

ML: You were the president—

VSP: Ah, yeah.

ML: Of the Future Teachers Association.

VSP: Well, thanks to my mother. She was like one of the sponsors.

ML: There you go.

VSP: Not the president part but because I was active in that.

ML: Right, right.

KG: Can I also ask you a quick question about some of the other clubs at Newport News High School? With it being newly integrated, did you have any type of like African American clubs? Did you have any—. I know you probably wouldn't have seen like a young Black Panthers.

VSP: No, no whatever organizations were there, we became a part of if we were interested. But then there was no young Black student group.

ML: Right. And then, what was it like on your last day of, I guess, your first year in Newport News High School? Do you remember feeling a sort of like change in dynamic in the way the teachers and other students treated you from when you first got there to ending your first school year? If that makes sense?

VSP: Yes, I think that—. Like I said, as time went on there was more acceptance and more interaction and I think that's one thing that was important to me, was you can't make change if you don't talk to people.

ML: Right.

VSP: So, I think that's one of the things that helped us was the interaction and clubs and classes helped to say, "Oh okay, well, you know, they're regular people. They're the same as we are."

ML: And overall, how do you reflect on your time at Newport News High School and do you still keep in touch with any of your classmates?

VSP: Overall, it was a, you know, positive experience and—. I don't keep in touch with some of the other students. I see the ones that live in Newport News. There are a couple people I've seen that, you know, I speak to when I see them. But we're not in contact necessarily.

ML: Right.

KG: So, overall, how do you reflect on your time at Newport News High School?

VSP: Well, it was a positive experience I think, because I would not have had that interaction if I had not gone. My husband, on the other hand, he went through segregated schools from first grade through dental school.

ML: Oh wow.

VSP: He went to Black schools.

ML: Right.

VSP: They were predominantly Black schools all the way through. But I think it was a positive experience on everyone's part.

ML: Yeah.

VSP: And one of my classmates said that, "In the end people are the same wherever you go and everyone deserves respect and kindness in our interactions with each other." I believe many of us learned the same lesson and started to accept each other when the merit of our actions rather than the color of our skin.

ML: Wow that's really awesome. And so, after graduation from Newport News High School, you sought out higher education at the Hampton Institute. And so, what was it like going from a primarily White school to a historically Black college?

VSP: Well, one of the main reasons I went to Hampton was because of their early childhood program. That was my major there, and I don't know-. It was very familiar, the campus was very familiar, too, with me because my grandmother used to be one of the hostesses at Holly Tree Inn.

ML: Oh wow.

VSP: And she worked there when Rosa Parks came. And she [Parks] worked there for a brief period. After the bus boycott, she had a hard time finding a job and the president of Hampton offered her a job to be a hostess at Holly Tree Inn. So, you know, that's how long I've been involved with the campus, because I would come and she would babysit me or whatever, and I would roam the campus and it was very safe at the time.

ML: Right, yeah.

VSP: It still is, I'm sure. And so, I was very familiar with the campus and a lot of the administration so it wasn't that much of a transition to go there.

KG: So, another additional question would be, did your fellow students at Hampton know about your part in the "freedom of choice."? Did you know about any other students that were a part of that "freedom of choice" action?

VSP: No, we didn't talk about that. We just accepted that we came from everywhere. And we started from that point on. We didn't necessarily dwell on what happened before in our high school years in particular.

KG: Understandable. And, after, we see that you later went back and worked in Newport News High School in the public system.

VSP: Newport News Public Schools.

KG: Sorry, Newport News Public School system, beginning in 1977.

VSP: Yes.

KG: So, could you elaborate a little about how it may have changed or stayed the same at that point in your career?

VSP: Well, I was one of the first four First Step teachers, which is the preschool program, so we were rather separated from the regular schools. When we first started, there were four classes in

one building and then we expanded to two buildings of nine classrooms. And then we went into Jefferson, my old elementary school.

ML: Yeah.

VSP: Jefferson, and that was a center with all nine classes in there. So, it wasn't until, I think, 1986 that I went into a regular elementary school as a part of the First Step situation because they wanted us to spread out into the schools. But then our principles didn't know what to do with us because we were a Chapter 1 program, and you know, do we get included with everything that's a part of that?

ML: Right.

VSP: So that wasn't a racial thing, it was just a program situation of trying to figure out if we were accepted or not.

ML: Right. [laughter] So, looking back, what role do you think that school desegregation played in the broader, I guess, civil rights movement?

VSP: Well, I think it helped. In the segregated schools, we would get the books that were handed down from the White schools. Some of them were in poor condition and I think that integrating the schools helped in that situation because everybody got the same books.

ML: Yeah.

VSP: It was not a situation where, you know, pages were torn out or it had been so worn that it had fell apart.

ML: Right.

VSP: And the materials at the school were probably better than some schools that didn't have the same equipment.

ML: Right. Do you think that there was anyone in your community in particular who was, I guess, against school desegregation or had, I guess, apprehensions about you all going to or integrating with White students?

VSP: Yes, because there was a feeling that, when we were in a segregated neighborhood, you had people who worked in all sorts of areas from medicine, to postal workers, to insurance, to custodians. Everybody lived in the same community but then when we integrated, they thought that was a demise, excuse me, the demise of the Black community because people started moving [to] other areas, and businesses started to close, so there was some pushback about that.

ML: Right.

KG: And so, can we go a little bit further into that pushback a little bit? If that's available with you.

VSP: I don't have much more to add to that.

KG: Okay, so then going forward, how do you view—what do you view—as the most important accomplishment of the civil rights movement?

VSP: As I said before, I think when you bring people together to have conversations or to work together, that helps everybody, because there's, you know, camaraderie. There's collegiality. There's a sense of community outside of your community. So, just bringing people together, I think, has been a benefit of the civil rights movement.

ML: Yeah, and do you find anything, I guess now in 2023, in our modern day and age, do you—. I'm sure there are things but are there, is there anything in particular that you can, I guess, pinpoint as an unfinished legacy of the movement itself?

VSP: I can't think of anything right now but I'm sure that there is still a lot of work to be done. You know you have the golden rule that gets ignored a lot, but I'm sure that there are a lot of other ways that we still have work to do.

ML: Right.

VSP: And with the removing of our history from textbooks, from conversation, from education, that's a big setback because it's history: it did happen and people need to know about it as generations come up. So, to ignore or to deny the history, I think that's been one of the things that is very disappointing, and an aggressive way to go against our community.

ML: Right, and I think, just a follow-up to that question, how have you seen—. As a teacher yourself, how have you seen, I guess, education regarding Black history change over time? From your time as a student, beginning high school in an integrated school and then becoming a teacher, how has that changed? Did you notice any changes?

VSP: Well, I think that's one of the things that we had to institute, having a Black history week.

ML: Right.

VSP: Or acknowledging Black history in February in high school. And, as far as in teaching in school, there was Fredrick Douglass, there was George Washington Carver, Rosa Parks, they were basically four or five people that everybody learned. But there was so many more people that everybody should've learned about. So, I think today has gone back to not being as positive an experience to teach about it. So, I'm not sure where we are today.

ML: No, totally.

VSP: So, if you're not learning it at home or outside of the house in the community, I'm not sure you're getting it at school.

ML: Right, right.

VSP: I'm pretty sure that you're not getting it at school.

ML: Yeah, that totally makes sense. And then is there anything else that you would like to contribute that we may not have touched on? If you have any other stories, anything that you really wanna say.

VSP: Well, my father was on the school board for two terms and he was outvoted six to one whenever integration came up in the fifties. And my brothers went to prep school out of state because the state would pay for at least a portion of their tuition, whatever, not to integrate. So, my oldest brother Charles went to a school in Connecticut. My brother Bobby went to a school in Massachusetts. And Jon went also to Connecticut, but he was only there two years and he came back and went to Newport News High School when we went in '65. So, you know that was—. That sort of—. I feel it negatively affected me because we didn't grow up necessarily together because they were away at school. But he was always outvoted and I don't—. For the state to pay the parents to send them anywhere but [White schools in the area], to keep the schools open, 'cause there was such a threat to close the school, like in Farmville, where they actually did close the schools. There was a threat in Newport News also and that's why my father and mother decided that my brothers should go away to school.

ML: Right.

VSP: So, that's a situation I'd like to mention. And, I mentioned about Donna and the cheerleading. And there was another situation my senior year where the Black football players were going to protest not having a Black senior on the homecoming court.

ML: Oh wow.

VSP: And, so that's when my classmate Mattie was then put on the homecoming court.

ML: Wow.

VSP: So, homecoming went on, you know, without a hitch. But, you know, there was that possible backlash that you know we were not included, and we had to make ourselves known to be included.

ML: Right.

VSP: So, we had to assert ourselves quite a bit.

KG: Do you feel that fighting, well not fighting, but realizing like who you are and everything kind of stemmed from that? Like, all of y'all fighting for your places within the school system? You know, making your voices heard? Do you think that kind of affected how you live your life today?

VSP: I would think so, because if you didn't make your feelings or point of view known then, you know, you were just sort of sidelined. So, you had to assert yourself in situations to be heard and, most of the time, it made a difference.

ML: And do you feel like being a teenager and having to take on something that is so, I guess, beyond you, something that's much bigger than yourself, did that affect you at all in any way when you were a teenager? Did you realize the impact that you were having going to an integrated high school?

VSP: No, it was just the way it was. That's where we went. And that, our daily routine, was going to that school. I don't know the difference, you know. I can't say what the experience would've been if I had gone to, say, Huntington or another school. But even today people assume I went to Huntington because it was the Black school and all-. Everybody went there. My father went to Huntington. My mother grew up in North Carolina so she didn't. But people assume because you're Black, you went there.

ML: Right.

VSP: So, then I have to say, “No, I went to Newport News.”

ML: Yeah, yeah, wow.

KG: So, what was, what was like the single biggest thing you took away from your educational experience as a whole?

VSP: The importance of education. You know, that was something I learned early on but it was in the forefront in high school because, you know, you wanted to get into a good college and have a career. So, it was brought to the forefront, definitely, in high school. Education is so important and your future depended on it.

ML: Right. And was there anything from your own personal experiences that motivated you to begin your organization GETUP? And, like, kinda where—. Why did you do that? What was, you know, I guess, your motivations behind that?

VSP: Well, I taught preschool for twenty-seven of my thirty years: three years in Washington DC, and twenty-seven in Newport News. And one of the things that parents ask is, “How can I help my child?” And I figured, when I retired—I taught thirty years—and when I retired, I knew I wanted to do something. So, I researched how to start a business and I started the GETUP project. My daughter helped me come up with the name and it stands for Getting Educated To Understand Parenting.

ML: Oh wow.

VSP: That’s what GETUP stands for. And I wanted to do workshops and presentations so parents would know that they have to start earlier than signing them up for preschool and then giving them to the teacher saying, “Now they’re yours.”

ML: Right.

VSP: No, it starts from the very beginning, from day one—even before they're born— reading to them, playing music. There's so much that can be done at home before they actually start the official school. And that's what I wanted to do, and I also created three games that I have the copyright for. One was Body Bingo. One was, Your Manners Bingo. And then one was GETUP for School.

ML: Wow.

VSP: And one of the nursing homes bought Your Manners Bingo because the Boy Scouts would come to play the games with the residents and she said both of them needed a refresher.

[laughter]

ML: That's really funny.

VSP: Use Your Manners Bingo, yeah.

ML: Wow, that's amazing.

VSP: So, I did that for a few years and then my brother got sick and I was his caregiver. And the people thought it was a good idea but didn't necessarily want to pay for my services so it lasted from 2005 to 2018.

ML: Wow, that's a good period of time.

VSP: I enjoyed it, I enjoyed, you know, spending time with the parents and telling them they're not their child's friend, they're their child's parent. And I enjoyed that.

ML: Wow, that's amazing.

KG: That is absolutely amazing, and so my final question for you really is, out of everything that you have done, all of the experiences that you have lived, is there anything that you think was the single most greatest accomplishment?

VSP: I don't know. Having two children and working and getting my masters all at the same time. [laughter]

ML: Yeah, that's--. Wow.

VSP: That was a lot. Or having them when they were four years old. So, I had four-year-olds for twenty-four hours a day for those two years that my children were four: my son was four then when my daughter was four. But I don't know. I think everything has built up on the other thing to make all the experiences worthwhile. I don't know of anything I would change. I was pretty proud of myself for researching how to start a business 'cause that was not my world. My world was in the classroom. And, 'cause I had to apply for taxes and everything, selling the game. So, yeah that was a pretty big accomplishment, too, I think.

ML: That is--.

VSP: Or being married for almost fifty years. [laughter]

ML: That is an accomplishment. That's a really big accomplishment.

KG: Trust me, if my mom had to deal with two of me at four, I don't know. [laughter]

ML: And a husband.

KG: Yeah.

ML: Oh my gosh. Well, thank you so much again. If there is anything else you would like to say, feel free to say so.

VSP: I think we have covered everything I had jotted down to make sure I wanted to cover.

Yeah. Nope, that's everything.

KG. [Mrs.] Price, thank you so much for talking to us today. It's really enlightening to hear someone talk about their experiences, and we really thank you.

ML: Yeah, thank you so much this was—. I really loved learning about your experiences, and your time, and all the clubs you did. [laughter]

VSP: I'm impressed that you did your research.

ML: Yes, I did. [laughter]

VSP: You're telling me things. [laughter] Did I do that? [laughter]

ML: You're like, "Okay tell me my life story." [laughter] Well, it was really nice to meet you and speak with you. Thank you so much for taking time out of your day to do this with us.

VSP: Well, thank you.

KG: Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW

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