

Larry Gray Interview Summary

Interviewee: Larry Gray

Interviewers: Gabe Thomas and Randell Bronte-Tinkew

Interview Date: Wednesday, November 22, 2012

Location: Newport News, Virginia

THE INTERVIEWEE. Larry Gray was born in the small town of Lawton, West Virginia, in 1952. At the age of seven, Gray and his family moved to Virginia Beach, where he went to elementary and high school. His upbringing was filled with church and sports. He began working at the age of twelve by helping the school janitor. Although he encountered segregation of public facilities, he did not encounter much violent racism or discrimination. After graduating from First Colonial High School, Gray attended Norfolk State for a short period. In an effort to save up money to attend Virginia Tech, he joined the Army and fell in love with aviation. Gray did tours in Korea, Germany and eventually retired from the army after a distinguished service. As a supporter of civil rights, Gray hopes to end racism and discrimination, which he recognizes as on-going.

THE INTERVIEWERS: Gabe Thomas and Randell Bronte-Tinkew are both undergraduate students at Christopher Newport University. They are currently enrolled in Dr. Laura Puaca's civil rights history class, which is working to document the impact of the civil rights movement on Hampton Roads residents. .

CONTENT OF THE INTERVIEW: The overall goal of the interview was to record the impact of the civil rights movement on Larry Gray's life and experiences. The interview itself was held by posing questions in a free flowing manner and in chronological order. Questions covered such subjects as Gray's childhood, education, employment, view of the civil rights movement, and thoughts on the status of African Americans today.

TRANSCRIPT –LARRY GRAY

Interviewee: Larry Gray

Interviewers: Gabe Thomas and Randell Bronte-Tinkew

Interview Date: November 21, 2012

Location: Newport News, Virginia

Length: 1 audio file, MP3 format, approximately 103 minutes

START OF RECORDING

GT: So I guess we will go ahead and introduce ourselves. I'm Gabe Thomas.

RBT: I'm Randell Bronte-Tinkew. We are both history majors at CNU and we're conducting this oral interview project about the civil rights movement and the impact it had on your life here in the Hampton Roads area. Alright, so we just have a couple questions and want to start off by asking, where and when were you born?

GT: I was born in a little town in West Virginia. It was Lawton, West Virginia. That's because my father was in the military at the time and we kind of moved around. I was born there and, shortly after that, we moved into Virginia Beach. And that's my hometown where I grew up.

RBT: Ok.

LG: That's where it all started.

GT: Ok.

RBT: What year did you move to Virginia Beach?

LG: We moved to Virginia Beach from the little town of Lawton, West Virginia in 1959. I remember I was in the second grade.

GT: Oh, whoa!

RBT: Ok.

LG: Second grade, yeah.

RBT: And how old were you then?

LG: Seven or eight years old if I can recall, roughly. At that time you had to be at least seven years old to start first grade. I was in the second grade so I had to be no older than eight years old.

GT: And at that time classes weren't integrated yet, or?

LG: Yes. Now mind me, when I started school in West Virginia, the elementary school that I went to in the first grade was integrated at the time. We're talking about two different locations, also. The first grade was black and white kids. When I moved to Virginia Beach, I went to a predominantly black school. It was all black. So that was different to me. I remember my very first friend in life. It was this little white kid. His name was Steve Cox. I still remember him today. I was eight years old then. When I went to Virginia Beach and went to an all-black school, I was too young for it to be a culture shock or anything like that. But it was different. You look around and you are like, "Hey, everybody here is the same." But you didn't think anything of it because you were just too young to even realize it. So it started right there and then. Later on, five or six years later, is when everything started to change. You got older and you started realizing the changes that were taking place.

RBT: Just to take it back a little bit, I don't know if you can recall too much about when you were in West Virginia, but how was that different? I know you said it wasn't a culture shock because you were a little young, but did it have any impact on you at all?

LG: No.

RBT: No?

LG: No. Simply because you went to school and you got along and that was it. As I said, it probably had a whole lot to do with age and being so young. I remember you went outside for—at that time it wasn't physical education, it was called recess—and you would go outside and everyone would play together. In other words, it wasn't--. Everybody got along just fine. It wasn't racism (), or you over here and you over there. No, it was none of those kinds of things. Now, outside of school that was pretty much it. If you went to activities and churches and stuff like that it was black churches and white churches and so on and so forth. And then when you went to a doctor's office--. I remember going to the doctor's office in West Virginia where it was totally different from in Virginia. Here in Virginia, if you got sick you went to the doctor's office and, when you went into the office, on the door here it said "Negroes" and then on the other side it said "White." Those were the doors that you went in and then the receptionist who was on the inside sat on the side where the whites were. But everyone got to see the same doctor.

GT: Okay, yeah that's definitely something I was wondering, if you guys would be seeing the same doctor. Did the doctor treat you all differently or was he--?

LG: As far as we know, the doctors always treated us nice. You go in there as a little kid and, especially when you're getting a shot or something, you're standing there hollering and screaming so you could see your lungs. But the doctor would give you a sucker and talk to you, like an adult talking to a kid. He'd give you a sucker and all the same time giving you a needle. So it was pretty cool.

RBT: What were your family dynamics, like your parents, before you moved to Virginia Beach? Did they like that the schools were integrated in West Virginia?

LG: I don't think it was as big of an issue then as it is now in that state. My mom worked. She was a housekeeper and she worked for this white family. She worked there eight hours a day and then she came home and she took care of her kids. I have three other siblings, two older sisters and a younger brother. Incidentally, the family who she was doing housekeeping for, their little boy was my best friend. Mind me, I never saw him at the house. I always met up with him at school. But we were the best of friends. I remember when we moved from that area in 1959. I never ever saw him again. So no, to answer your question, no! In other words, you went about your way but we knew pretty much our limitations. In other words, it was there but it wasn't a source of say violence or people couldn't get along so on and so forth. It was mild compared to later on in the sixties.

RBT: Elaborating more on the family, you said you had three siblings right?

LG: Yes, I have three siblings. Two older sisters and a younger brother. He is three years younger than I am. My oldest sister was quite a ways further along in school than we were. I never was in the same school as my older sister at any point in time. In West Virginia, she went to integrated schools then. Now, when we moved to Virginia Beach, we could look out the front door and you could see the high school right here. But my sister was bussed. She would have to have passed like three high schools to get to the all-black high school. And we had high schools right around us in Virginia Beach but she just wasn't allowed to go. At that time, myself, along with my sister and brother, we were in elementary school. And my younger sister is two years older than I, so she was two grades ahead of me. When she graduated from elementary, she went to high school. I know it sounds kind of strange but back then they didn't have junior high. There wasn't any junior high at all. You had first through the seventh and then the eighth through twelfth was high school. So when she left

elementary she now went to the all-black high school. That left my brother and I and we were the ones who, later on down the road, got caught up in integration.

GT: So how far was the black high school actually from your house?

LG: I don't know how familiar you are with the Virginia Beach area, but we lived probably about two miles from the ocean front. And if you know where—at the time it was Union Kempsville High School. I would have to say that it was about twenty-seven miles away or it may be further.

GT: So you guys were really having to go out of your way to go over there?

LG: Yes. Like I said, if you've gone to Virginia Beach, and you have passed Witchduck Road, that's the high school. The high school was right off of Witchduck Road. If you've driven down Virginia Beach and you've seen that, you start clocking your miles from there all the way to the ocean front. That's how far she was bussed. So she would have to have passed, at that time, one, two, three high schools. Those were all the schools in that area. I know you [Randell] went to high school around here. I don't know what high school you [Gabe] went to, but if you look now there's quite a bit of high schools in the Virginia Beach area.

GT: Just passing three high schools trying to get to school must have been incredible.

LG: When integration came along, the same high school that we could look out our front door and see-- I walked to that school in the morning.

RBT: Let's talk a little bit more about integration. When the *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling came out, what were your initial reactions? Were you influenced by it? What were your parents' reactions? And how did it affect you overall? The ruling specifically.

LG: I don't know how much it affected me then. When we were getting ready to come out of high school, or we knew people that were graduating and they wanted to continue their education, they knew they wanted to go on to better schools and better colleges. But their chances were slim to none. There were a whole lot of cases where they were just flat denied. Stuff like that.

RBT: So basically the ruling didn't really affect you in any adverse ways?

LG: No. I graduated from high school in 1970 and pretty much you could go to any college or school that you wanted to. Doctor, lawyer, or anything like that was pretty much opened up.

RBT: Just a little bit more on your childhood. Were there any individuals that helped you significantly in your childhood? Like to get through rough times or--?

LG: Yes, compared to today, and I'm talking about blacks here. When you went to your all-black elementary and your all-black high schools, it was all-black teachers, including males. You had just as many male teachers as you had female. When I tell people these stories, they laugh because it's kind of humorous and I think I have mentioned it to you also. So, when I was in the third grade, it was nothing to have a kid in the third grade who was my size. The size I am now. Imagine somebody walking around like this [gestures] and who had facial hair and who had a wallet in their pocket. But black teachers didn't bash you. If you didn't learn, you didn't pass. You come back, you come back, you continue to come back and you come back. They didn't care if you were thirteen or fourteen years old in the third grade. It happened, it was there.

GT: So they made sure you got the proper education before you were able to move on?

LG: Yes. Otherwise you didn't move on. That the only you move on. Or you say "hey" and you just quit. And eventually some of the people did.

RBT: A lot of people did.

LG: Absolutely. Very seldom is a high school kid at the age of eighteen and eligible to vote. Back then it could have very well happened. But when you talking about voting, that's a totally different thing because, if it was before 1964, 1965, and the Civil Rights Act, we weren't going to vote anyway. Period, bottom line. But I'm just saying there were kids who were held back for so long and for so many years that--. The black teachers made sure that you learned. And it was close knit between the teachers and the parents. I think it's different now than it was back then because it was more of a family environment. The family was very, very close knit. But today it is the opposite.

GT: Would you say there were any teachers that specifically stood out to you that really helped?

LG: Oh yeah, absolutely, especially the male teachers. It's because--. You know, guys. In other words, when there is a man in your life you are kind of like hmm. You sit there and you didn't mess up.

RBT: Yeah.

LG: You sit there and you were quiet and, whatever he said, that went. And that's not taking anything away from female teachers because they were instrumental also. But, when you had that male species in there, it almost like he put the fear of God in you.

GT: It was a different type of respect.

LG: Absolutely. It's what the male species needed at the time and you don't see that anymore. The majority of the time now, in my opinion, if you have a male in your life

anywhere, he is probably involved in sports. Basketball, football, the big time sports. That's it. You hear it all the time in the news how the athlete looked up at the coach as a father figure. I don't blame them because the majority of them don't have father figures in their life.

RBT: That leads us into our next question. Did you have any interest in sports or different clubs in the community?

LG: Oh yeah, absolutely. Back then, we went to school. We learned. We had no choice. That report card came home and it was signed and it was looked at by the parents and it went back. There was no hiding. There wasn't any hiding at all. And sports--. We were involved in it just as much as the kids are today. We had baseball, football, and basketball after school. You did it after school and then homework. You don't go in the classroom the next day without your homework. But all the male teachers at the time, whether it was the third grade, fourth grade, or fifth grade, they took you out for recess and that male was out there with the guys and showing them how to do this and do that. So yes, absolutely.

RBT: So specifically when you were here in the Virginia Beach or Hampton Roads area, did you experience any segregation or racism within sports? And, if you did, how did that affect you?

LG: Well, it had an impact on integration in 1965. It was fall of 1965, because the Civil Rights Act was passed right around '64 or '65, somewhere around that time frame. And going back to school, you now had athletes. Some of the black athletes, because they were in the immediate area, chose to go to an integrated school. That changed sports altogether. White high schools that weren't that good in sports now came to a point of being dynamic. I mean just totally off the hook. Like in Virginia Beach, you only had Virginia Beach High School. So you had quite a number of blacks that lived in Virginia Beach who had been

bussed. But now they said, “Hey, I’m going to Virginia Beach High School” and they were great athletes. It had one heck of an impact as far as the schools that were in the areas that didn’t have as many blacks or no blacks to support their programs. You could really see the difference. When I was in elementary school and I played sports, not one time, from the first to the seventh grade, of all the sports that I played, especially summer sports, did you ever play against an all-white team. It never happened, never. From the time that I went from the second grade up until the eighth, not one point in time did a black and a white school play each other. It just didn’t happen. Never.

GT: So there were usually also, going back to sports, separate championships?

LG: Yes. It was only one black high school now, which was Union Kempsville. They played against Booker T., which was in Norfolk. That was the only black school in Norfolk. That was where all the kids over in Norfolk went. Over here on the Peninsula, that school that exists down there, right down in Hampton, that was the only school that they had to go to. Like in Portsmouth, there was I.C. Norcom. If you go to Williamsburg, up there was James Blair, which was the only high school that blacks went to. So, pretty much when they competed against each other they traveled some distance to play each other because you just didn’t play the white schools. They considered that a death wish. It wouldn’t happen at all.

GT: Now with having such little black high schools, were they over-populated?

LG: No, because if you look at Virginia Beach at the time, the population of blacks was only three percent. And I think the majority of the kids were in elementary school. But the high schools weren’t over-populated and the elementary was quite big. It wasn’t like the classrooms were all jammed up and you might have had five or six first grade classes. They say the larger the classes, the less the kids learn. But that wasn’t the case because, going back

to what I was telling you from the beginning, teachers spent time with the students. And if you didn't, you get to see them a second time, you get to see them a third time. And back then the kids were disciplined also. Discipline went away in elementary schools when integration came in, for whatever reason. Shortly after that, you couldn't touch a kid. A kid got a spanking in elementary school. But shortly after that, that was pretty much it because when integration came along, now you had black teachers in white elementary schools. The elementary school that I went to which was Seatack [in Virginia Beach, Virginia]. It was not vice-versa. You hardly ever saw a white teacher go to an all-black school even though that school had to be integrated. Very seldom did you see kids go to it, not even the white teachers go over there or attempt to teach. That's the way it was.

RBT: I think that's a pretty huge statement there, that with integration you lost discipline in the schools.

LG: Yes.

RBT: That's a pretty big statement. Were you involved in any church, as far as in the community?

LG: Oh, yes.

RBT: Did that have an effect?

LG: One thing about blacks and church, those two go together. For myself, I grew up in the church. From the time I was in West Virginia, I was in Sunday school in the morning and church in the evening. It was all day long in church. Going all the way through school, I was in church with my mother. And then you have all these aunts who would say, "Hey Larry, ready to go?" Even up to when I graduated high school, I used to go up to Washington D.C to visit my aunt and the first thing she'd ask when I walked in there on Saturday, was "Did

you bring your clothes to go to church?” [laughter] So I’m still going to church. I’m sitting in church now with my little cousin sitting here and he’s about this tall [gestures about four feet high]. So he’s sitting there and I’m still in church at nineteen. Even when I was in the army, she’d say, “Larry, are you going to church with me this morning?” So yes, church life was instrumental in the lives of all blacks because that dates all the way back to the days of slavery. When times were hard, when times were rough, the only thing that you had was the Bible and prayer. That was it.

GT: So it jus was like a big huge family?

LG: Absolutely.

RBT: Now moving along on the chronological timeline of life, what was your first job?

LG: My first job in life?

RBT: Yes.

LG: My first job in life? I’ll tell you that my first time ever working, I was in the sixth grade. That will get you right around twelve years old. And what happened is that I met this friend, a guy named Frank Owens, and he was a grade ahead of me. He was in the seventh grade. He used to stay after school and work with the janitor. He was mopping floors and buffing floors and so on. I got to know him and started hanging out around him and just helping him. And then, remember he was in the seventh grade, so he was going to high school. But I was there for another year. So the janitor kept me after school and I started working with him. Quite naturally you can’t pay any taxes [laughter] at twelve years old. I worked out there the whole time that I was in the seventh grade. It was probably about two hours after school everyday, religiously, that I was there. I lived right across the street from the elementary school and that distance he used to take me home. He always made sure that I made it home. So that was my

first job in life. My other job where I started paying taxes, I think I was in the eighth grade. You had to be like fifteen years and six months and so on and you had to have a workers permit. I was working at a restaurant and I think, at that time, the hourly wage was probably about a dollar twenty-five cents per hour. You had to work daytime hours and you couldn't work nights and stuff like that, but it was spending money during the summer.

GT: Do you remember what kind of job you had at the restaurant? Were you a server, busboy--?

LG: Dishwasher.

GT: Oh, okay.

LG: And at that time, mostly all the kids, whether they were white kid or black kids, if you had a job at that age, you worked and that was pretty much it. This was in the eighth grade. This was in a restaurant that was located on Atlantic Avenue. So this was eighth grade and integration had come about. But trying to get this job and work this job before integration or the civil rights of 1964 and 1965, I would have never been able to work that job. It was on Atlantic Avenue and, the majority of the time, that's where blacks couldn't go. Being on Atlantic Avenue, swimming in the ocean, walking on the boardwalk, forget that.

RBT: So the Civil Rights Act, from what you're telling me, really had a huge impact on your life as far as getting a job, as far as going places that you probably wouldn't be able to go before that time?

LG: Oh sure, absolutely. Fort Story, as you well know, is located in Virginia Beach. There were a lot of kids, black kids and white kids, who were kids of soldiers. Talking about Dam Neck Oceana Naval Base, there is a lot of income that it generates for the city of Virginia Beach. Those Navy guys, all the sailors, and all the soldiers have kids. Now, those black kids

from Fort Story, the majority of the time they went to a high school far away. I'm sure you are familiar with Cox [High School]. Now Cox is nowhere from Fort Story, but the black kids couldn't go to Cox. These were military kids who had to be bussed from Fort Story to Seatack Elementary School, which was a good little ways.

RBT: Now these were black kids in the military that couldn't go to—

LG: Yes, they couldn't go to the white schools. The military was still having problems with racism and prejudice in the military and stuff like that, but they didn't segregate. This was because it was mission-oriented. But when it comes to kids, they are not the ones wearing the uniform so they're told, "You're going to have to go to that school," or "Sorry, you can't go here." It was one of those things. If it had been a DOD elementary school that was located on Fort Story or even Oceania [Naval Base], they could have very easily have gone to that school. That wasn't the case.

RBT: DOD as the Department of Defense?

LG: Yes, Department of Defense, but that wasn't the case. When they came there, they fell right in line with the way things were.

RBT: On the outside.

GT: Going back to finally being able to walk along Atlantic Avenue, before that do you ever remember going up there or having friends trying to go up there and what happened?

LG: No, because you knew the rules, bottom line. Like I said, I was young and the only time I could go up there was because they had a theater up there. You had the Beach and the Band [theaters]. At the Band Theater, blacks went upstairs and the whites sat downstairs. Now for popcorn, drinks and stuff like that, you had to go in buy your drinks or your popcorn inside, you come back out outside and go through this door and you go upstairs. That's where you—

GT: Sat down.

LG: Bottom line. The only other theater was Beach Theater, which was located on Atlantic Avenue also. You just couldn't go in that theater at all. The beach--. We couldn't swim in the ocean. We used to swim at what used to be Seaview Beach, that's on Shore Drive.

Everywhere we went, we traveled some miles. Twenty-plus miles, twenty-five, thirty miles.

This beach was located on the Chesapeake Bay. There was a fence line. We had about two hundred yards and the fence ran all the way down in the water on both sides. Don't get caught on the other side of those fence lines.

GT: So you only had a real small area and the rest of it was for whites?

LG: Yes. That was Seaview Beach. If you were a military dependent and you lived on Fort Story then sure, you could go in the water on Fort Story. But don't get caught outside of Fort Story or don't get caught outside of Seaview Beach. On this side it was Buckroe [Beach Hampton, Virginia]. I'm sure you all are familiar with Buckroe. That was the only beach that blacks could go to over here.

GT: Going back to specific unsaid rules about where you could go and could not go, around Virginia Beach was it just really anywhere?

LG: Sure, you could pretty much drive and go anywhere you wanted to. It's just when you try to go into certain places like buildings and stuff like that. Then it just didn't happen.

Grocery stores, no problem. But along Atlantic Avenue and strips like that, no. Sure, you had blacks who worked up there in hotels as housekeepers. I shouldn't say housekeepers because they cleaned it up. The terminology now is housekeeper. Back then it was maids. So that's the term. Maids worked up there in hotels but they couldn't stay in them at all. If you tried to

go into a hotel, no, forget that. Certain times during the day or night, you just couldn't go up there.

RBT: Getting back to employment and how this affected you, what would you say is your career job? What is, or what was, your career job, or career field?

LG: As far as when I coming out from—

RBT: After you graduated high school?

LG: When I first graduated high school, I went to Norfolk State [University] and I was going to major in industrial arts. That's where I started. I graduated from high school in 1970.

RBT: In 1970, so you wanted to be in industrial arts?

LG: Industrial arts, because I had a love for automotive and so on and so forth. So that's where I was headed until I got a job. I started working for the state and I started working for Sea Shore State Park [Virginia Beach, Virginia]. All the people I was working with were really nice folks, and they were graduates what is now Virginia Tech. Then it was Polytechnical Institute. Everyone who was working at the park was a lot of fun. We were outdoors in the woods all the time so you're meeting people. And I started meeting people who were majors in forestry and horticulture and so on. And I said I like this. At that time Virginia Tech was very, very expensive and said I need financial backing for this. So, my next move was when I joined the military. I changed my mind and wanted to go into forestry but once I got into the army and got into aviation I fell in love with that and that's the tale of the tape.

RBT: Were there any reasons, like did racism play a part in you switching your career path and joining the army?

LG: No, because when I was working for the State Park, working for the state of Virginia, it wasn't anything but nice guys there. Real, real nice guys. I was working the graveyard shift, from twelve to eight in the morning.

RBT: The demographics were black and white?

LG: No, I was the only black there.

RBT: You were the only black?

LG: I was the only black. There was this one guy who was a white guy. He worked there. He went to Cox and graduated the same year I did so we talked sports. First Colonial [High School] is here and Cox is just a couple of miles away so, when we got on the job, that's all we talked. He'd say, "Hey Larry." His name was Ernie, and we'd go back and forth. The rest of the guys were from Virginia Tech, so they were really, really nice. I didn't have a problem.

RBT: So, prejudice didn't have a part in you switching your career paths?

LG: No.

RBT: Was gaining employment ever difficult because of your race? Because you were black?

LG: No, I would have to say that being at a young age no. As far as going out and getting the little jobs and stuff like that, it wasn't a problem because all they're looking for is a laborer and a laborer is doesn't get a lot. They just want somebody to do the job regardless. But I never ran into the problem where, once you got the job, you were treated badly or anything like that. I've been to jobs where I had a supervisor—I worked at Sears also while I was going to [Norfolk] State—who we kind of thought was that way. But we tried to stay clear of all that, because that does cause problems.

GT: Going back to talk about Norfolk State a little bit, how was your college experience?

Some things that you enjoyed, some things that weren't as great?

LG: At Norfolk State, it's not like it is now because that was segregated also. It was all-black. That's where the majority of students went. If you went to school in Virginia Beach and Norfolk or any place like that, then you went to Norfolk State, Virginia Union, or Hampton [University]. Hampton was one of the prestige schools because they are expensive now and they were expensive then. There were a lot of people that came from out of state to go to Hampton. Just like you have a lot of folks that might go to Morehouse [College], down in Atlanta. That was your so-called upper echelon of schools among the predominantly black colleges. I got along, for the short period of time that I went there, just as well as I did when I went through elementary because it was all blacks. Now, after integration, Norfolk State did play Old Dominion University in basketball. Quite naturally, they didn't have a football team at the time, but they played them in basketball. The conference that Norfolk State is in is the CIAA. And Old Dominion, in basketball at that time, was still a powerhouse. So that was a big time rival. Right there in the [Norfolk] Scope, you couldn't get enough people in there. It was whites and blacks who were in the Scope and it was just a battle. And nothing ever happened, everybody got along.

GT: So the atmosphere with sports was very well and just people enjoying the sport?

LG: Yes. I think the hardest times of my life in high school were in '67, '68. I remember that very well because that's when Martin Luther King was assassinated. That was chaos. It was nothing I don't think anybody would want to live again, in high school. That's how violent it was. It was like somebody had lit a fuse to a stick of dynamite. There were fights and you could walk down the hallway and could just cut it with a knife. And you're talking about kids

that were sixteen, seventeen, and eighteen years old. They knew what was going on. It's not like you were coming out of elementary school when you went to school, you went back home, you played and did all the little things that kids do. Now, when you go to school in the eighth grade you start learning your history and you start putting this stuff together and you say "hmm." So by the time you reach the tenth grade-- I was in the tenth grade at the time and then this happened. So you had pretty much seen it all. In the spring of '63, I remember going to D.C and visiting the White House. Kennedy was president. In the fall of 1963, I was out of school looking at a funeral. '68 came around and then we see Martin Luther King was assassinated. And just before that, or right around the same time, we lose another civil rights leader, which was Robert Kennedy. So you start putting these things together and you say well, first it was Lincoln and it was all about slavery, abolishing slavery. Then we lose a President, who most people admired, especially blacks, then you seeing his brother being slain, then you see another civil rights leader and it goes on and on. And you say everything that happens here in this country, when it's bad bad, it has something to do with civil rights. But that's what you start putting together from the time you get to the eighth grade through high school then you witnessed all of this and you say, "Ah man," and start putting it all together. It had a huge impact.

RBT: Who personally influenced you, or whom did you look to as leader of the civil rights movement? Whose views—MLK, Malcolm X, Stokely Carmichael, JFK, Robert Kennedy, all those guys—how do you remember viewing those guys and what influence, if any, did they have on you?

LG: I doubt "if any," because we visualized and we saw these people as leaders. I can only speak for my family and how my parents brought us up. My mom, in looking at the news if

there was an accident or something like that or somebody got killed, my mom would sit there and say, “God, that’s somebody’s child.” It didn’t matter if they were black or white. It was somebody’s child. My mom felt for that person. So that’s pretty much the way that we were brought up. We never wanted to see anybody hurt, and we weren’t ever violent. We weren’t told to turn the other cheek or anything like that. We were told just to stay away from stuff like that. Just try to avoid it. We saw these people like Carmichael and Malcolm and the Jesse Jacksons and so on as leaders because they weren’t violent. I think the most violent people that we saw take up arms, as you well know, were the [Black] Panthers. They had just had enough. They said, “Hey I’m tired of being beat down and turning the other cheek. I’m not going to do it. I’m human just like anybody else and that’s it.” All the kids who I grew up with--. There was never violence in it. We learned from it so I would say all those people were instrumental. And the one who stood out the most to me would have to be Martin Luther King, undoubtedly, because he started at such an early age. This man was young when he started, I believe he was what—

GT: About twenty-one.

LG: Yeah, absolutely. So he was very, very young compared to today. As Martin Luther King said, “You march today, you march tomorrow, and you continue to march.” Well, you don’t have to march but you can get out there and you can keep the civil rights movement going. Now I say that for a certain reason simply because the Voting Right Acts--. As you remember, they just signed the Voting Rights Act again a couple years ago. I sit there and say, “I want what you got.” I don’t want to have this thing to come to somebody voting on it every ten or twenty years. The Constitution says that I can vote. I don’t want anything else to go along with it. All I want to do is go to the poll and vote. And they say, “Well, this goes on

like this because of the southern states.” In others words, if that wasn’t in place they could say, “Hey, we’ll bring back making you have to tell someone how many marbles are in the jar, and so on and so forth, before you vote.” But I would have to say Martin Luther King, although all of those leaders were instrumental in our lives. ()

GT: Talking about violence, I know in that the deep south, Mississippi, Alabama, there was lots of violence dealing with the civil rights. How did you feel or how did you think about that during those times?

LG: You know we had-- you got what you read and stuff like that. Especially with the guys that went from up north down to Mississippi. Do you remember?

GT: The three workers.

RBT: From SNCC [Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee], I believe.

LG: I was young then, so young that you weren’t into all this until you started to learn history and tying all this stuff together. As a young kid, you just didn’t know and you didn’t know things were different until integration. Like I said, the only thing that I found different was when I left Lawton, West Virginia and went to an elementary school where I didn’t see whites. Now it was all blacks. That was the biggest difference I saw as a young kid. The next biggest thing that I saw was integration. It was a big time because we stayed in our world, they stayed in theirs and, as a kid, it didn’t matter. Sure, your mom and adults and parents talked about it. They knew what was going on. But the thing of it is is that they had their hands full just trying to keep us straight and keeping us out of trouble. I had never had any problems with the southern states such as Mississippi or Alabama until I joined the military. And believe me, I had a lot of run-ins down in that part of the country. I can give you one example. My best friend was a white guy named Mike Thompson. We were in the army

together. Both of us were sergeants and we went fishing one day. We were in a boat bass fishing, and he caught this big fish, the size of a fish like that [gestures]. He said, "Larry, do you know what kind of a fish this is?" And I said, "Mike I don't know what kind of fish that is." And there were two white guys on a boat and he said, "Hey guys, do you know what kind of a fish this is?" They drove on over and said, "Yeah man that's a carp." He said, "Do people eat them?" Using the "N" word, he said, "Yeah, they do." I'm standing there looking on and, myself and Mike just looked at each other. And it was laughable. We just looked at them and didn't even say thanks. We just went about our way. That was in 1983.

GT: So, there were still lots of racism still in the Deep South in to the 1980s?

LG: Oh yeah. It's down there alive and well. I can take you to places right now where, if you go there, signs are still up. The same guy was my assistant with softball. I took a team up there and never ever saw racism like that until that particular day. Myself, my wife, and another guy showed up at the softball field. We get out of the car and see this white gentleman walking up and motioning to Mike, my assistant coach, to come here. He had that smile on his face and Mike had it on his face. We knew what was coming and we started looking around and you see all these signs—and this was 1984—that said "No Blacks allowed." So I had to pack up. The rest of the team was white. We had come from Georgia and went to Yemassee, South Carolina. And I had to pack that team up and go all the way back. The paperwork I had to do because we were the military. I had to file paperwork with the military. What they do is to put these places off limits to all military personnel because it's a dangerous place to go into for soldiers and stuff like that.

GT: That's incredible, especially with it being 1984.

RBT: I want to get back to that, so let's not forget about that because I want to talk about it a little more. But first, did you ever attend any political or civil rights rallies or events?

LG: No.

RBT: Was there anything going on in the community at the time do you remember? In Virginia Beach?

LG: No, I think the only-- I think the first political thing I got into was right around when I started working a little bit, but I had to watch what I was doing. That's when [Jesse] Jackson was running for President. Some of my classmates were asking me to do a little bit of work as far getting people registered to vote and stuff like that. That I could do because I know, when I turned eighteen, my mom said, "Whatever you do, you make sure you register." So that's why I was on the phone this year. Get out there and vote. It's not who you vote for. You just register. You make sure because it is a right and you have a right to do so. Who you vote for is totally up to you.

RBT: What were your feelings about the NAACP, SNCC, or any of those civil rights groups like that? What was your take on that?

LG: Well, any kind of organization, as long as it wasn't violent and was organized so that it would help minorities—and when I say that, I mean blacks and stuff like that—then we were for it. The bottom line is that we needed all the help that we could get. Buying a house, buying a car, or anything you had to have financial backing to get wasn't going to happen. Even when all those avenues were opened up and when the civil rights act said, "Hey you will not be [discriminated against]. Go in and ask for a loan or something like that," you weren't looked down on but it still happened. Any kind of organization that was out fighting for your rights, in other words, we said, "Hey go for it." But the NAACP is primarily it. It's

one of the oldest organizations in this country. It's lost some of its luster now, simply because the younger generation has not stepped up to the plate yet. I'm one of those political guys. I sit around and I try not to talk about it in public, but I do have a friend and we talk in the afternoons and we talk in the morning and so on and so forth. If I sit down and look at the younger generation right now, you don't see Jesse Jackson. Even though a whole lot of people don't like him, I don't have a problem with him because he was instrumental in my life. Sure, everybody had their faults, but the thing is when you look at the younger generation of blacks, I can't come up with one who's out there involved in a civil rights movement. A lot of people would say, "Well, why would you want a civil rights movement?" Well, in my opinion, everything is not okay and it goes right back to the Martin Luther Kings who say, "Hey, what you do today, you do tomorrow, and you continue to do it." It's because--. You saw what happened in this election. When you look at the demographics and you look at Romney and you look at Obama, you say, "When are those southern states going to change?" The light bulb ought to come on for everybody in this country and say, "Guys we've got problems because we can't change that part of the world, period. At all." It's slowly changing but how far it will go, I don't know. That's just the way it is.

RBT: Going back to your experiences in the army and specifically in the Hampton Roads area and Virginia Beach, did you have any run-ins with authority figures, white police? I know blacks had a lot of trouble with that in certain areas. Did you have any encounters with that?

LG: When I was a kid--. Let's just say you had some incidents in a black neighborhood and stuff like that. On the police force, you might have two black cops on the whole Virginia Beach Police force and you never ever wanted to see those two guys because they were

mean. They were the only two. So, in other words, if it happened in a black neighborhood, they went there. But no, we never had a whole lot of problems with that.

RBT: What about any discrimination in public facilities around the Hampton Roads area? Do you have any recollection of public discrimination? I know you were telling me about the segregation in the theatres.

LG: That was the only time that I saw that, because you knew where you could and could not go, bottom line. That's probably why you didn't have incidents, because you knew your limitations. You knew your limitations so you didn't violate them.

RBT: Now, with those limits, how did that make you feel? What were your feelings towards that? Were you limited, being a black male, to certain things that regular white folks could do?

LG: True. You didn't realize that until the time you reach a certain age. That's when you realize what was going and then you think back. That's when I put the timeline together to where Martin Luther King, the Kennedys, Robert Kennedy, and Malcolm X and all these guys were killed. In other words, when you're in elementary school, the chances of you putting that together and tying this stuff together to where it meant something, no. It's the time you start learning history that you realize what was going on, what was meant by it, and so on and so forth. When I went to the eighth grade at Virginia Beach High School, and I didn't tell you this--. My very first day in Virginia Beach High School, I was sitting probably seven rows from the front and, looking across my shoulder, I heard somebody calling names. I turn around and I look and it was the white kid. He was sitting there calling me every name but the child of God. I turned around and said, "Guy, do you know me?" He got quiet and he

didn't say anything else. That was my very first day in that school, but I never had any incidents after that.

GT: It almost seems like once they actually started to get to know everybody, then, there was more of a good group dynamic would you say?

LG: Yes, it's just like today, especially on the athletic side of the house. In other words, you see kids getting along just great and having fun. When I was growing up, Jesus Christ, you had rock music. I like rock music, at that time psychedelic music. I love psychedelic music. Jimi Hendrix came along and it was psychedelic music. Well, hey, guess what? Everybody likes psychedelic music. Even blacks like psychedelic music. Well, when it came to soul music, that didn't cut it. But, when you go all the way back to some of the older blacks and their music, that was so-so. As time went along, everything and everybody started getting along and mended.

RBT: In retrospect, do you harbor any resentment towards others for the actions in the past, for atrocities committed either here in the Hampton Roads to yourself or to other blacks within the country during the civil rights movement? And, if yes, how do you deal with this and does it still affect your behavior or your way of thinking today?

LG: I try not to go around carrying a chip on my shoulder. Is it hard? Yes, because you are reminded—and I tell one of my friends this to this day—you are reminded everyday of who you are here in this country. Take the way you would go into a store and buy something in the same line from the same cashier. You will see how that [white] person speaks to a person, carry on with that person, and pay for the item until the person is completely checked out. When you get there, there might not be a word muttered. If you don't watch it, in other words--. If you have change coming back and if it doesn't come down the change machine,

there are a whole lot of times if it's a flat counter that people now, rather than touch your hands, will put in on the counter. Yes, that stuff is still prevalent. In other words, yes. Does it bother me? Yes, because I know what it is. I've just seen you treat that person differently. I've just seen it, so what was your reason for treating me any different? It's not what you see but also the media. It constantly goes on in the media (). It just eats away. The minute you think everything is okay and you see something like that, it flames up again. Take my job. I work at Boeing up in Philadelphia. I asked my leader one day--. He's white and we sit around and we joke. I said, "When I first got here, people don't speak to you around here." He said, "Larry, I glad you noticed that." I said, "Yeah, people don't speak. There's nothing to it." They walk and they pass each other, just like this. They look at you right in the eye and they just go by. I know they can talk and I know they can speak to people. If the guy behind me, if he doesn't know him, he'll go by and say good morning. Well, he doesn't speak to me. Could I be taking it somewhere else? Sure, I could, but that's just not--.

GT: The subtle ways in which it's very noticeable.

LG: You get a reminder of this all the time. Another incident was when I was down in Alabama. This was right after I had retired in 1997. One late night I was going back to the hotel—it was probably 9:00, 9:30—and I stopped at the convenience store. I said, "I'll get me a drink before I get back to the hotel." I walk in the store and turn down the aisle to go back to the freezer to get a drink and the lady who was in there goes, "Sir, can I help you?" My blood started boiling. I said, "Jesus Christ, Larry." I go back, get my drink, and then go up to the counter. I have a smile on my face and I started talking with her and trying to make her laugh. And then I said, "Ma'am, you might want to try and get another job because this job is probably not good for you." I think, in a way, I made her feel okay because I said,

“Hey, don’t stereotype me. I don’t know what bad experience you’ve had in your life or what’ve you’ve seen on TV, but I’m not that person.” It happens all the time. It’s the little things. But most people say you have tendency to look at it. I’m 60 years old. I’ve been doing a lot of looking. It’s the bottom line. Most of the time it is what it is.

RBT: Now, how do you cope with that on an everyday basis? Do you just put it in the back of your mind?

LG: You put it in the back of your mind. In other words, you know you don’t get out there and make a scene or anything like that unless it’s bad to a point where you might have to go see management or something like that and you have to let people know just what’s going on. It’s almost like you got this cheek, but you can’t have that one. That’s what you see in the younger generation now. You have younger generations of blacks—and you’ve probably seen it for yourself—who talk to the mom and dad and they say, “God, if that was me I couldn’t have taken that kind of stuff back then.” You have to take a trip through the south. That’s the bottom line. You have to go through states like South Carolina, Alabama, Louisiana, and stuff like that. Believe it or not, now it might be a little off the subject, but I took a trip all the way out to California. I was in the hills of Oakland. And I traveled out there for a company that I was working for at the time. And the guy said, “Larry, do you want to go down to San Francisco Bay with me tonight and see a friend because he’s getting ready to get married?” He’s a retired pilot and my background is also aviation. So I said, “Sure, I’ll ride down there with you.” We were in Stockton, California, so it was only a 45-minute ride. So we go down there, and I had no idea we were going to end up in the hills of Oakland. We’re in these big old mansions. Now, before we left he had said, “Hey Larry, you look okay. You don’t have to change clothes.” But I changed clothes and good thing I did. Now,

I'm in this big old mansion. The guy who he was going to see, his mom lived in this mansion and he lived across the bay. I'm sitting at the dinner table, mom's sitting here, he's sitting here, and the son's sitting at this end of the table. I'm like, "Man, what in the world? This is a real long table." My friend used to always ask me about civil rights. For whatever reason, he used to do that. This lady is in California by way of Missouri, and I could see my friend, on the other side the table, getting a little nervous because she's starting in on our conversation. I could see him over there thinking, "God, please don't let this lady say anything out of the norm" because he pretty much knew me. I told him afterwards that he didn't need to worry about me because I don't go off. I said, "Hey, we could sit here and debate about this till the cows come home." I never raised my voice. That's just the way it is. She was asking what you think about this and what you think about that. And at the time--. Do you remember Bob Dole? He was in Congress () and as far as the Democratic side of the house, most people didn't care much for the guy. You got to sit and listen to both sides, because something good can come out from both sides of the house. But that was one night he was glad to get out of that house.

RBT: How has the civil rights movement, as a whole, impacted your life growing up in Virginia Beach and the Hampton Roads area? And, what affect did it have on you negative or positive in a broad sense?

LG: I said a while ago that I don't go around with a chip on my shoulder, but I'm vigilant. In other words, I keep my head up. Everything that goes on around me, I pay attention. I'm smart and intelligent enough now to know when I'm being treated unfairly and bad. It's not just me. In other words, I look out for other people. It doesn't matter what race. It has taught me a lot, to the point where I can sit down with a group of people. First of all, I'm a

registered Democrat. I have voted more times Republican than I have Democrat. It's kind of hard to believe. I say that because most people sit around and say, "Well, blacks vote race," and that's not true. For us, it was always vote for who we thought could do the better job. Yes, I voted for Reagan. I voted for Papa Bush. I was old enough to vote for Nixon and Carter. In other words, I was old enough to vote for Republican presidents. It was who we thought could do the best job that was best for blacks because we knew we had it hard. When I hear that blacks vote race, that's not true. If I'm not mistaken, didn't we have Alan West down south? And the blacks didn't support him. Now, when Al Sharpton was running for presidential office, back in 2008 when he was a candidate, you're sitting here saying, "Do you believe that the blacks here in this country would go out and vote for Al Sharpton?" That's not saying Al Sharpton is a bad person because he is a good man. But can he run this country? The answer is no. Will I go out and vote for him as president? The answer is no because I know he can't do the job. I shouldn't say he can't but everything leading up to Al Sharpton would dictate to me and my opinion would be "No." Would he have gotten the support of minorities the blacks and the Hispanics and so forth? I doubt it. No. I can go out on a limb and say no for that. I've learned a lot and it's not all about me. It's about everybody. During the election I didn't just call you. I was on my phone calling everybody.

RBT: What changes did you see as positive in the community during the civil rights movement and what were some of the negative reaction you encountered as far as in Virginia Beach and what were some the positive things that came out of it in your community?

LG: Virginia Beach wasn't a bad place to live. They never had a whole lot of violence. Even when segregation was there, Virginia Beach was never a bad place. If that was the case, then the two or three percent of us probably would've moved out anyways and said the heck with

this place. But we didn't because it was nice atmosphere. We had a good time. We knew everybody. In other words, it wasn't a bad place. Even when integration came about, did we see a big change? No. Everything was pretty much okay. The only difference was we could go on the boardwalk. We could go in the ocean and so on and so forth. We didn't have a problem with that neither. You didn't go down there and say, "Hey, boy, what you doing down here?" That was never the case. It was always a good place to live. That's just the way it was back then. Just as long as we don't see you walking up and down the boardwalk or out there jumping around in the Atlantic Ocean or being somewhere you shouldn't be, that's fine and dandy. The parents made sure the kids stayed in the yard. In other words, you had a boundary. That was it. You either had your big sister, or your big brother or, at that time, older people who looked out for everybody's kids because they knew both parents worked. Big sister, big brother took care of siblings. But it wasn't just your family. It was the family next door and the family across the street. And not for one minute--and I know you might have heard this--a parent would leave word that if he or she acted up, then spank their butt. It happened. When you got home, you got another one. And the majority of the time, you got from both your mother and your father. In Virginia Beach, everything was mild. It was never ever violent or anything like. The most violent experience I'd ever seen was when the college students came to Virginia Beach. It had to have been around 1989, when a million college students came here for Greekfest [Sept.2-4, 1989]. What happened was that--. You've been to Virginia Beach before? You know how you cruise up and down Atlantic Avenue with your music wide open in your car and stuff like that? You had one million blacks that went there for college break. The population of Virginia Beach is a little over four hundred thousand right now. So you had a million blacks going there for Greekfest from all over the

country. Now you couldn't cruise Atlantic Avenue with loud music. They were making the laws up as they went along. When the black guys with the boom boxes came along, the cops would say, "Hey, turn your music down. Turn it off." But the [white] guys who were the residents there would cruise by with the loud music in their cars and nothing was being done. They were enforcing and making laws as they went along. All violence broke loose and that's when they tore up Virginia Beach. It was in shambles. That was in the late 80s or early 90s. That was the worst I've ever seen in Virginia Beach.

GT: What was your view of the most important or significant moment of the civil rights movement?

RBT: The milestone that was reached that was the defining factor of the civil rights movement--

LG: Now, when Brown v. Board happened, I was living then. But I would pretty much have to reflect on the Civil Rights Act because it involved so much. I would have to always go back to that because it involved all of your black leaders who at that time we looked up to. And after Kennedy was assassinated, Johnson said, "Hey, this is the right thing to do" and he signed the bill into law. So I would have to say the Civil Rights Act.

RBT: What do you regard as some of the unfinished legacies of the movement, or what are some of the most pressing problems that are facing African Americans today?

LG: I could sit here and probably argue that for a while.

RBT: Just a couple of major points that you think the civil rights movement hasn't accomplished just yet. Or you would like to see accomplished, if anything.

LG: First of all, people here in this country think everything is well and okay. But it isn't. In other words, if you say that racism and prejudice isn't alive in this country and well, then

you'd be lying to yourself. Anybody who says that is, in my opinion, in denial. I just wish it would go away. A whole lot of people say that all the work and the legacy that Martin Luther King laid down and fought for and ended up losing his life over is that--. You kind of look around among the blacks in this country and see that they can do far more with the opportunities that they have afforded to them and get a whole lot more out of them than they are getting right now. That can be from young teenage blacks who have unplanned parenthood. You blame them. You got to blame the young blacks. They look for this. If you check your history and you find a teenage black female, you can go back generations and you will find out that her mom, her mom, the mom before that were the same. It's a domino or chain effect. Then we can go all the way back to the days of slavery. That was how long ago? Quite some time. Sure, we've been out of slavery for almost 200 years, but is there an impact? Yes, absolutely and I'll tell you why. It is simply because what blacks were not allowed to do back then, from owning property, having good jobs, making good money, learning how to save, buying this, buying that, and having kids, meant that when got to the point in their lifetime to pass it down to this generation, there wasn't anything to pass down. That's a ripple effect, in other words. Now, houses were cheap when I was kid. You could very easily buy a house for seven or eight thousand dollars. Back then, seven, eight, nine, ten thousand dollars was a lot of money. Well, blacks weren't only not allowed to own property. There were also laws that they couldn't just go in and ask for a loan. It was just forbidden. In other words, when they come along and pass the Civil Rights Act, you still didn't get a loan because, "Hey, guess what?" You didn't have any good job. So slavery had a lasting affect and it still has a lasting effect. Pretty much everything you own in life, you really have to go out and buy it. Sure, and I know we hear it all the time, that the government is taking care of

people. Handouts and stuff like that. It's just the impact that slavery has had. And most people sit around say, "Well, that was back then." Now, to anybody who says that to me, I say, "You're not me. You've never had to live, not one day, in this shell. You don't know how I feel. You don't know how I'm treated. You don't know how it is to go in there and ask for a loan and they say no. When you leave out the door you say, I have good credit so why?" But they go right back to say, "Well, people are being treated equal," and I think that's one of the biggest things now. You don't know when you're being treated equal or not. Those are the doubts that are in the minds of so many blacks. It's one of those chips you walk around with on your shoulder because, deep down in your heart, you know you're not going to get a fair shake. That's just the way it is.

RBT: Looking back, is there anything you would change either physically, socially, or politically about yourself during the Civil Rights era?

LG: No, because I think the way that I got through it was from my upbringing, from my parents, and from my family. I think I did a pretty good job. I always tell somebody that I think if I was born two or three years earlier that I probably would not be sitting talking to you guys right now. I thank God for my mother and my father. It was hard, I'm telling you. As a little kid, you don't have any responsibility. All you do is eat, sleep, play and so on and so forth. But, then you become an age where you realize, "Hey, why am I being treated like this?" And you see your counterpart is totally different. How come they wear good shoes and good clothes and why am I walking around in here with shoes with holes in them? You can see the difference, bottom line. I remember when my mom worked for this family. I remember a whole lot of times the parents used to bring clothes home that their kids wore. Hand-me-down clothes. That's just the way it was.

RBT: That pretty much concludes the interview, is there anything else you would like to contribute?

LG: No, I probably talked too much! [laughter]

RBT: Do you have any recommendations for future interviews for this project?

LG: God bless his soul, he just passed away. I went to his funeral here about a month and a half ago. I wish you all could have sat down and talked to this gentleman. He was seventy years old and one of our fellow golfers. He used to tell me that, when he was in the military, you went to basic training and you came out of basic and you went to AIT. That's your advanced individual training. He gets on the bus--. He's ten, twenty, years older than I am. He was born and raised in Florida. Now you're talking about back in the '30s, the late '30s. He's on the bus with some of his white counterpart soldiers on their way home. The bus stops at these rest stops, and you can get food and go to the restroom and stuff like that. He gets off the bus and he can't go in the building. Now, his counterparts go in and order food. They just have a window for blacks. You could walk around to a window from the outside. He had to order his food from there. You never get your food ordered until the whites get served on the inside. So when the whites get served, and before the blacks get their food, the bus is ready to go. So half of the time, they didn't get their food. If they got their food, they got it and walked all the way around the building and they went and sat on milk crates in the kitchen somewhere. And he was in the army. When I sit and I think and go back, it's not that long ago. If you look at this country now, you say, "How on God's earth did this country let something like this happen?" Because if you look at this country now, and somebody came here, you would swear nothing like this ever happened here in this country. You sit there and you think and say, "I'm 70 years old." But, if you go back to when they passed the civil

rights law and ask, "How many years ago was that?" It wasn't long ago at all. If you ever get a chance to go to Alabama, go down to Montgomery and go down to the civil rights thing down there. They have a time clock down there. It's a clock and you will see so and so was born on such and such date and died as a result of being bitten to death by dogs, or beaten to death by a water hose, or beaten to death by clubs. And that's how these people actually died. That's down there in the Civil Rights Museum. You sit back and you say, "Well, you know something they did not bring me from another country. I am a product of my ancestors who were brought here and put into slavery. But don't bring me from a place I know and treat me bad, or take my life." And you sit there and you say, "Why?" You know, you continue to ask yourself, "Why did it happen?" And the only answer that I always get, even today, is that's just the way things were and that's not an answer. We have 50,000 soldiers who are missing limbs, who are abroad and fighting for people. They are not just fighting for this country but they are fighting for people. They are making better lives for those people over there. Well, when we're doing it for those people, then you kind of look back and say, "What the heck happened here?" in our own country. It's just how it is. ()

RBT and GT: Thank you for the great interview. It was wonderful. This concludes it.

END OF INTERVIEW

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