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Speaker 1 ([00:01](#)):

Excuse me,

Speaker 2 ([00:03](#)):

Which camera should I be looking at? Or does it matter? Just okay.

Speaker 1 ([00:07](#)):

Between the two.

Speaker 2 ([00:08](#)):

Okay. Okay. So don't look at Monica. Look at this way. You

Speaker 1 ([00:14](#)):

Can look at Monica.

Speaker 2 ([00:15](#)):

Oh, okay. Okay.

Speaker 3 ([00:25](#)):

Good morning.

Speaker 2 ([00:26](#)):

Good morning.

Speaker 3 ([00:27](#)):

Today is September 25th, 2024. My name is Monica El Amin. I'm the African-American History Coordinator at the DeKalb History Center. And to get us started, what is your full name?

Speaker 2 ([00:41](#)):

My name is Ella Colbert Green.

Speaker 3 ([00:45](#)):

And what are the names of your parents?

Speaker 2 ([00:51](#)):

My mother was Ella Brinson Colbert. I mean Ella Colbert, Brisson, and father was James Johnson.

Speaker 3 ([01:01](#)):

When you grew up in Lithonia, can you describe what it was like when you were a child?

Speaker 2 ([01:06](#)):

Okay. I did not grow up in Lithonia. If you hear my history, you'll know why I didn't. That's part of my story. I did not. I grew up in Atlanta.

Speaker 3 ([01:18](#)):

And so growing up in Atlanta during your childhood, what was that like?

Speaker 2 ([01:24](#)):

To be very honest and very straightforward, I grew up very poor. My family was just pushed into poverty as a result of what happened in Lithonia. And my family did not buy another house until 1978. And what happened in Lithonia drove my family to Atlanta in the 1930s. It took that long for my family to get back on track and get to have a pretty standard level of living.

Speaker 3 ([02:04](#)):

Can you talk about the story of how your family ended up moving to Atlanta?

Speaker 2 ([02:10](#)):

Sure, I can. It's a pretty long story. I don't know how much you want to hear, but my, let me see. I am going to go back in history just a little bit because my family got to Lithonia because my great grandfather served 20 years in prison for something he did not do. His brother killed a white man in Athens, Georgia, so they moved to Lithonia. So my grandfather grew up in Lithonia and somehow he met my grandmother. I don't know how they met, but he met my grandmother. My grandmother lived in Gwinnett County. He lived in Lithonia. So my grandmother moved to Lithonia. My grandfather built a house and that's where they lived. And so my grandfather, he went to the third grade. His name was Sam Culbert Colbert. Sometimes some people say Colbert, some say Culbert, but he lived in Lithonia. He built a house for my grandmother. And so my grandmother was a homemaker. She did not work. And they had three children.

([03:29](#)):

My grandmother had a great big garden and chickens. And during the depression, food was scarce, but my grandmother used to can vegetables all the time and she would have chickens in the yard, pigs, all of that. So they were never short on food, but they used to feed people in the neighborhood. My grandfather worked at a meat, some kind of meat place. I don't know where it was. And he would bring the scrap meats home and he would share 'em with people in the neighborhood. We always had, my family always had plenty of food. When you look at that house, it doesn't look like much, but they were middle class compared to where most people lived. And my grandfather would give away food. My grandmother, when people were hungry, they would send them to my grandmother because she always had a pantry full of canned goods.

([04:25](#)):

Anything you can think of, any kind of vegetables. They canned and they had a lot of meat because my grandfather would bring this meat from the meat packing place, and they had an ice box, not a refrigerator, but an ice box, and they had to get ice every day, so they couldn't eat all that meat. They would give it away. And that was one thing that people remembered about my grandfather, how my grandfather and my grandmother would feed people. My grandfather also, he worked at the meat packing place. He also used to pick up copper. They said he used to cut stone. Eddie was talking about the stone. He used to cut that stone. And when we would go down there, when I got grown, I would drive him down there in the daytime. He would never go at night, but I would get off work sometimes and drive him down there and leave before dark.

([05:22](#)):

But he would show me different buildings that he had helped build from cutting the stone. And my grandfather had a whole lot of guns. So it's my understanding that one night, these were some of his drinking buddies, some white men, they came in, he thought they were coming in so they could go drink liquor. Somebody said he sold liquor. I don't know. But if he did, he had a place back in the woods where he kept his liquor. So he thought they would come in to drink liquor with him. My grandfather was a real industrious person. He knew how to survive even though he only went to third grade.

[\(06:01\)](#):

So these white men came in at night. They were his drinking buddies. He thought they were coming in to drink with him. Well, they took him off to lynch him and why they were going to lynch him, I don't know the whole story. I really don't. But Ms. Lester told me that because everybody wondered what happened to him. They know they didn't kill him, but he got away. And when he got away, my grandmother said the next time she saw him, she didn't even recognize him. They had beat him so bad. And they came back and made my grandmother sign some papers and she had to give up the house. And so everybody knew that story in Lithonia. And so my grandmother's oldest daughter got married when she was about 15 or 16. So she lived in Scottdale. And my grandmother had two girls at home.

[\(07:05\)](#):

One was like, that was my mother who was about 10 or 11. And then her sister, who was about three or four, she didn't remember any of the story, but my mother did. And so they came back. They made my grandfather, I mean my grandmother sign some papers and they took the house and everybody in Lithonia knew that story. So my grandmother had to leave. All she could leave was her clothes and her children's clothes. As much as she could take, she went to Scottdale where her oldest sister was, and she stayed there for a while. Then when she got reconnected with my grandfather, believe it or not, they moved to Buckhead. Buckhead was not the Buckhead, you see over there. Now I'm from Atlanta and I'm 74 years old. So that Buckhead was like a little village for black folk where the Marta station and all that is now sitting in industrial area where they lived.

[\(08:06\)](#):

And they were these little rural houses. And when my mama and daddy got married, we just found my daddy's marriage license since my mother died. But when my mother married a second time, that's why she had, her last name was different. But when we moved to Atlanta in these little rural houses, but what happened to my grandfather just pushed us into poverty. It really did. So growing up in Atlanta was not easy for my family. I was the oldest. I used to hear a lot of stories about, even though I think they tried to shield us from a lot of what was happening with my mother and my grandmother, because for a while my mother wasn't married and we lived with my grandmother, but they were struggling. And I knew that. I knew that as a child. I was the oldest. So I knew that they were really struggling.

[\(09:16\)](#):

We lived in a house. My family was real big on education though, growing up. You asked me what was it like growing up in my family. When my family left the Buckhead area, we had to move because urban renewal and all that stuff came in. We moved to the Summerhill community. I don't know if you've ever heard of Summerhill over near Turner Field. When we moved over there, we moved in the little house. You could lay in the bed and look outside without looking out the window. We were poor. We were dirt poor. But education was real big. It was real important to my mother that we go to school every day, we do our homework, and you better not teacher, better not have to call and say you did something you didn't have any business doing. Because my mother worked for a judge, and she would leave home like at 5:30 in the morning, and she would get home like seven o'clock at night.

[\(10:19\)](#):

And every year at the beginning of the school year, she would send a note to my teachers and say, I know my children can sit here and be quiet, and if you have any trouble out of them, just let me know. And she meant it because she used to say, I'll jug a knot in you. She would grab your collar like this, she said, and we believed she would do it too. But getting an education, we couldn't sit around the house. We never sat around the house. In the summertime, we went to the Y. I have a sister and a brother, and my mother also raised my cousin, one of my cousins. But every summer we went to the Butler Street Y. There was an extension. You ever heard of Butler Street Y?

Speaker 3 ([10:58](#)):

I haven't heard of it.

Speaker 2 ([10:59](#)):

Okay. I know you've probably heard of Butler Street Y, but there was an extension in the Summerhill community. So in the summertime between the time school was out and time to go to the Y, we went to vacation Bible school. When vacation Bible school was over, we went to the Y. We could not sit at home, just sit around the house and do nothing. We got up early seven days a week on Saturday morning. By the time my grandmother, my mother worked on Saturday, but by the time breakfast was ready, we had to have the sheets changed on the bed. I mean, I grew up in a pretty rigid household because my mother, my mother did that because she was a single parent trying to raise us. And so Saturday morning, I'm serious. Every Saturday morning we had to clean. We had wood floors, we had to mop, clean, change the sheets on the bed.

([11:53](#)):

So by the time breakfast was ready, we had to have the sheets changed on the bed, and then we had to start cleaning. And we did that till about 11, 12 o'clock every Saturday. Every Saturday we would have a little time to play between maybe 11 30, 12 o'clock and maybe five o'clock in the evenings. We didn't have time to play because my grandmother would go to the grocery store just before the grocery store closed with her little rolling buggy. And she would buy vegetables, she could can, she would buy corn, green beans, all that kind of stuff. She always had a pantry with canned goods. We would have to shuck corn and pick beans and do that kind of stuff because when a lot of people would have to run out and go to the grocery store, it was going to be bad weather. We had a pantry full of food always.

([12:46](#)):

So in the evenings on Saturday evening, that's what we did. Well, Sunday morning, guess what we had to do, get up and go to church. And my mother church didn't go to Sunday school because she would stay home and cook. And when we got out of church, not only would we come back home and eat, but so would my cousins and my aunts and uncles and everybody. When I see the movie "Soul Food", that reminds me of my family. I know a lot of stuff was going on with grown folks, but the children didn't know. You ever seen the movie "Soul Food"?

Speaker 3 ([13:18](#)):

Yes,

Speaker 2 ([13:19](#)):

That reminds me of my family. My grandmother was the matriarch, my grandfather, I didn't say what happened to him. He didn't want to stay in Atlanta. He moved to Columbus, Georgia, and he didn't want to even come close to Atlanta or Lithonia. But my grandmother, my grandfather never got a divorce. He

would send money home until the children got grown. And he even did that for the grandchildren. And I think that's how we remained close with him. But I grew up in a very, you asked me about my childhood. I grew up in a very rigid childhood, and I think it was because my mother wanted the best for us. And my mother's off day would be Sunday and Tuesday. On Tuesday, we all walked to the library and got books. That was the only day black folk could go to the library. We had a great big library, but that was the only day we could go because of segregation.

[\(14:19\)](#):

But we would come home with an arm full of books and we would stop and get ice cream. That was a highlight of our week to do that with my mother. My mother was real big on education. She wanted all her children to go to college, and they did, but she was real big on education, and she never had to come to school because we were acting up. We knew better. And so all my brother didn't graduate from college, but it's because of my brother that my mother got to buy a house. So we were very poor. So my brother, he dropped out of college. He was going to Morris Brown, but he helped my mother buy that house. He sure did. He paid the down payment. He put his name on it, and she lived. And until she died, she took his name off of it, like the last 10 years she was there because some people wanted to do some work on it in the neighborhood.

[\(15:15\)](#):

And because of the amount of money he made, he couldn't have his name on the house. So when she was getting close to time, she asked us what did we want to do about the house? And we said, well, the majority of it should go to him. That was the only right thing to do. And then the other half was divided between me and my sister. So we talk about that all the time. How are we going to leave it to the children? Because the house, we still have it. It's paid for. But when I think about what happened in Lithonia, that story can be told so many times, not only for me and what happened to our family, but how many times was property taken away from our folk? And they really didn't like my granddaddy because they thought he was a smart nigga.

[\(16:07\)](#):

I just hate to use that term, but that's what it was. They didn't like it. And the white women liked him. Now, I found that out from Ms. Lester because when I ran into Ms. Lester, remember I told you they were barbecuing, and I ran into her. They told so many stories about my granddaddy because he was a very smart person. Even during the depression, he lived well. And white folks didn't like that. I think we are seeing some of that now with the Haitians. People can't understand why they can ride around in an SUV and wear nice clothes and buy a house. Well, these people are working for what they have, and just because their skin is brown, they deserve it like anybody else, if they worked for it, that's a big issue right now. Did you know that?

Speaker 3 [\(16:56\)](#):

Yes.

Speaker 2 [\(16:57\)](#):

It's a big issue. You know, see these things happening over and over again. And that's what happened with my family. It drove us into poverty thanks to people like Eddie who are recording this. And even I should have gotten those articles. They wrote some newspaper articles about this, and I didn't tell the rest of the story of what happened. If you want me to, am I going too far?

Speaker 3 [\(17:26\)](#):

No, no.

Speaker 2 ([17:27](#)):

Oh, okay. You're perfect. Well, when we ran into Ms. Lester, they were out there barbecuing. And I said, they got in the car, she got in the car with us, showed us all. I mean, we spent the day with my mother getting a chance to see what happened in Lithonia. And Bruce Street School was where my mother went to elementary school, and she had friends down there. Ms. Lester reconnected her with those friends. I had cousins down there that I had never met because my family didn't go down there that often. After I got grown and I got a car, I would take my grandfather down there to see some of his cousins, and then we would leave before dark. But I had a lot of cousins down there that I had never met, and Ms. Lester helped me to meet some of them. So I kind of keep in touch with them from time to time, but I've never been around them that much.

[\(18:21\)](#):

But what I was going to tell you, Ms. Lester insisted on having a program that he has recorded. Eddie has recorded, they had this big program where they recognized my mother. They recognized the N-A-A-C-P because the N-A-A-C-P tried to do something about that situation. And Eddie, hope you don't mind me saying that. You remember all that? Yeah, they tried to do something about it, and there was nothing they could do back in the 1930s. There wasn't a whole lot they could do, but they tried to bring justice to him. And I even heard Ms. Lester tell stories about things that happened in Lithonia during that time where they would hear the drums beat at night for two or three days, and they knew when that happened that somebody was going to die. They would find somebody on the railroad track in a few days, and she would talk about how sometimes they would hear the drum beats at night and somebody's house would burn down because they got mad with somebody.

[\(19:27\)](#):

So Lithonia used to be terrible, terrible, terrible, terrible. I could tell some more stories in Lithonia about my family that I learned. My great grandmother, my grandfather's mother, after my grandfather, after they moved to Lithonia, his brother, the one who actually killed somebody moved to Tennessee and he was working in the mines in Tennessee. And he got killed. He got killed in the mines. So his mother got a big sum of money. She took that money and asked the white folks to keep it because she was afraid to put it in the bank. She was afraid the bank would take it and wouldn't give it back to her. But guess what the white folks did? They took the money. She never got a dime of it. They were keeping it for her. And every time she would go and ask for it, they would have an excuse not to give it to her.

[\(20:25\)](#):

So she ended up giving that money to them and never, never reaped the rewards of using it. So my family had a pretty rough time on that side of my family. Other stories on the other side of the family, on my grandmother's side, but I know we're focusing on my grandfather, but he was a very industrious person and he took out some health insurance. I didn't tell this part. Now, how many black folk had health insurance back in the 1930s? But he took out some health insurance and when he was working at the meat place, and he would take off work some days, the days he took off work, he said he was sick, so they had to pay him, and he would go pick up copper and they would pay him for that day, plus he would go cut stone. The stone is Stone Mountain.

[\(21:24\)](#):

People worked to cut that stone and he knew how to do it. So he would go do that, and he would get paid from the meat packing place, and he would have money come in all kinds of ways. So he was smart. He was real smart. He really was. And unfortunately, I think the white people didn't like that. They really

didn't. So I don't know. But it was so interesting that when they had that program, that place was packed, wasn't it? People were standing in the back because of that church, because they were wondering, whatever happened to my grandfather, it was the house that Sam built. That's what they called it. I'm going to go in there before y'all leave and see if I can find those articles. I have two articles that were written by that newspaper in DeKalb County. Did you keep those articles by common

Speaker 1 ([22:21](#)):

Ground?

Speaker 2 ([22:22](#)):

Yeah, On Common Ground. Do you have those articles?

Speaker 1 ([22:25](#)):

I might.

Speaker 2 ([22:26](#)):

Okay. Somewhere

Speaker 1 ([22:28](#)):

In my archives.

Speaker 2 ([22:29](#)):

Okay, I've got 'em too. If I can't find them today, I'll find 'em for you. But that was real important. That program was very important. Lemme tell you why. I learned some things about my family and my family's history as a result of that. And I heard my mother say something that I never heard her say when I was growing up. And she said I was afraid of white folk. She never told, she didn't want us to have that fear. She never told us that. Never. I was shocked when she said that when we were at that program. She said, I have always been afraid of white folks. She never acted like it, like it. She never talked about it. And I think because she didn't want us to grow up with that fear. But that's my life story. Growing up in the Summerhill community, very poor, but very stable, very stable life.

([23:27](#)):

We never had a whole lot. We always had three pair of shoes. We had our school shoes, our church shoes, our play shoes. We knew to come in the house, take our clothes off because we had to take care of them. Every Tuesday when my mother was off work, she would get up and wash our clothes by hand, and when we would get home, they would be hanging on the line and she would wash 'em and put, this is something you never heard of Argo Starch. She would starch our dresses with this starch and she would iron them before the day was out. But she would stop and take us to the library and she wanted our clothes to look nice. She wanted us to act nice. And I'll never forget we played. My cousin and I got tired of going to church, and we didn't go to Sunday school.

([24:18](#)):

One Sunday we decided we were play and spend our money at the store. And before my mama came on to church after Sunday school, she knew we didn't go to church. So she sat up there and rolled her eyes at us the whole time we were at church, we thought she was going to kill us. And when we got home, she just fussed. She didn't even whip us. We thought we were going to get a whipping because we didn't

go to Sunday school that Sunday. But my life was really rigid. It really was. And I think my mother acted like a drill sergeant because that's the only way she could try to keep us on the straight and narrow and get us out of that neighborhood. That's what she wanted to do. She wanted a better life for us. And I think that's why I took care of my mother.

(25:06):

I took care of my mother. My mother, I don't want to talk about this, but my mother died right here in this floor because she was in a nursing home. I used to pick her up every Saturday and do something with her. And when she died, she kept saying, I want to go home. And I said, mama, you can't go home. You're too sick. So because they wanted me to put her in hospice, I wouldn't do it. So my sister and I got an ambulance, brought her home. We were in there cooking. She ate, and then she started saying, I want to go home. She wasn't talking about going back to the nursing home. She was talking about she was ready to go, but she wanted all her children and the grandchildren, I don't know why I'm talking about, I'm sorry.

Speaker 3 (25:52):

It's okay.

Speaker 2 (25:54):

But we called 9 1 1. They said, put her on the floor. And my sister was trying to resuscitate her while I was trying to, they were telling me what to do, but she passed right here in this house. But I was glad they had that program for her because it kind of brought things full circle for her. She got a chance to see friends that she grew up with and had to leave. She had a chance for somebody to recognize the work that my grandfather had done, recognize the work that my grandmother did. My grandmother would talk sometimes about how people during the depression would be hungry and they would come by the house and ask for food, and my grandmother would let 'em sit on the steps and she would give them some food. Let them sit right there and eat. That's a lot. That's a lot.

(26:51):

Most people were hungry during the depression in the 1930s. It was a rough life. But for my family, fortunately we had, my grandfather was very industrious and so was my grandmother because she had a great big garden. She had chickens and pigs. They always had food. Plus he was getting food from the meat market. And black folk, we can take a little bit of something that's a gift that we have. We can take a little bit of something, you know that scrap meat, but they could fix that stuff up. Do you hear me? They would take that meat and do something with it and make you bite your tongue. It would be so good. So I don't know what else you want to know from me.

Speaker 3 (27:41):

Eddie, do you have any questions? That was so

Speaker 1 (27:44):

Rich.

Speaker 3 (27:44):

It was



Speaker 1 ([27:47](#)):

Every time we do this, we learn something. But you kind of explained the effects of that incident that night, and I remember recording your mother and Ms. Bullock.

Speaker 2 ([28:05](#)):

They were friends growing up,

Speaker 1 ([28:06](#)):

Little girls growing up.

Speaker 2 ([28:08](#)):

They

Speaker 1 ([28:08](#)):

Talked about Scots (maybe hopscotch?) and all that stuff. But do you remember any of that conversation?

Speaker 2 ([28:16](#)):

I really don't remember a whole lot of it because back then my mother didn't get around real well. She was in a wheelchair and it took so much to try to get her ready and get her there. I don't remember much of that conversation, but they were such good friends and they lost each other because of what happened. I will tell you one other little thing that I learned about my grandfather. He had a whole lot of guns and he often said, I think I heard him say it once, but we couldn't talk about this around him, period. We were told, don't talk about what happened that night. But he had a whole lot of guns. And he often said to other people, I think I heard him say it once. If I had known what they were coming in here for, I would've took them with me and we all would've been gone because I would've killed him.

([29:13](#)):

That's what he said. And they knew that. They knew he had all those guns. So they acted like they were coming in to go drink with him. They were his drinking buddies. But I just remember, and my mother talked about that night, how terrible it was. They were terrified. I don't know how they got to Scottdale. They never talked about how they got there, but they had to stay with my mother's oldest sister until they could reconnect with my grandmother and grandfather, then get to Atlanta. So that's how my family, and it was a rough life. When they got to Atlanta, my grandfather, they was just rocky because he would come up here sometimes, stay on the weekend. He moved back to Columbus. He got another child down there. I have an aunt that's younger than me, so I have a aunt. We laugh about it because, and this is the weird thing, my grandmother and the lady he had the baby by we're friends.

([30:20](#)):

They ended up being friends. And that's kind of weird, isn't it? They were friends. We used to go down there and he lived with this woman and she would fix a big dinner for us. When we go down there. My grandmother would go, and I remember one time we were down there and the insurance man came and he was bragging about, I got two wives here. He liked to brag. That was probably why they got him. But he was bragging about both of his wives sitting there on the sofa and they said, Sam, you need to cut that junk out. But I have an aunt, I'll be 75 in November, and she is 70. So she's five years younger than I am. She's my aunt, and we are close. I talk to her all the time. Her mother is now deceased, my

grandmother, my mother, they're all gone. All of my aunts and uncles. But I talk to her all the time. She's okay.

Speaker 1 ([31:23](#)):

I remember your mother talking about when they came to get your grandfather, how many cars, how many men were out there. It wasn't just one guy.

Speaker 2 ([31:35](#)):

That's right. It was a whole slew of cars. And he thought they were all going to drink together. And it was maybe, I don't know. I don't even want to guess how many, but it was a lot of them. And where they took him off to, I don't know.

Speaker 1 ([31:50](#)):

The story is that they took him up to Arabia Mountain,

Speaker 2 ([31:53](#)):

Maybe so,

Speaker 1 ([31:54](#)):

And miraculously he got away.

Speaker 2 ([31:59](#)):

I wonder how did he get away from all those white men? He was smart. He was just smart.

Speaker 1 ([32:06](#)):

Dr. Stewart.

Speaker 2 ([32:07](#)):

Oh yeah.

Speaker 1 ([32:10](#)):

Can you,

Speaker 2 ([32:11](#)):

I don't remember that much of that story. I remember hearing Dr. Stewart's name. Didn't Dr. Stewart try to help him?

Speaker 1 ([32:18](#)):

He lived right within yards of Dr. Stewart's house.

Speaker 2 ([32:24](#)):

Oh, okay. The house. Yeah, that's right. That's right. See, I didn't remember that part of the story. He knew your

[\(32:31\)](#):

Grandfather. Yeah, he probably did. My grandfather knew everybody in town, but he knew he had to get out of town. So how he got to Scottdale and find my, but he was industrious. He found a way to get to Scottdale and reconnect with my grandmother. He got them settled in Atlanta, and he went on to Columbus. It's a shame how they broke up our family. They broke up the family. They drove us into poverty. They did some terrible things. And unfortunately, that story can be told a thousand times of our people and what we went through and continue to go through and continue to go through. For those who think it's over, they're living in a dream world, not, and I look at what's going on. I hate to bring this up, but it's true. When you see what's going on in Springfield right now, it's the same thing.

[\(33:38\)](#):

Some of those people have the mentality that what those people have, they don't deserve. And that stuff starts building up in them, and then they find a way to take it away from them. How many times? Rosewood? Black Wall Street? I was looking at something just yesterday. There were over 50 or 75 massacres just right here in the United States all over. We had it in Atlanta, Oscarville, how they take our property because they don't think we deserve what we have. And so my family is not an exception. It was the norm. They get mad, take your property and you got to go. And there were no laws to protect us. Jim Crow did not protect us. Right after emancipation. I used to teach at a college, so I can talk forever. But emancipation after Emancipation Proclamation, those first 12 years were very good years for us.

[\(34:44\)](#):

Up until 18, I'm going to say 1881, there were laws like the Freedman's Bureau that would protect us. But after 1881, we started making so much progress. We had people in the Congress because we outnumbered the slave owners. And so we could vote people in who could look out for our interests. And they started realizing, Hey, wait a minute, now we got to do something about this. So after 1881, we didn't have the protection of the Freedman's Bureau that was giving people 40 acres and a mule and were protecting them, having troops down here to protect us. And then the Ku Klux Klan was organizing in Tennessee. And then it spread it like wildfire all over the united, especially the southern part of the United States. And this story can be told so many times about our people. It really can. Oh goodness. There were just thousands. I don't know if you've been to Montgomery. We talked about this, going to Alabama and look at all of the different, they have a museum with all the, have you been there?

Speaker 3 [\(36:06\)](#):

I haven't been.

Speaker 2 [\(36:07\)](#):

Oh, okay. They have a museum. I've been down there a couple of times. They have a museum where they show all the lynchings in mostly southern states. Now, it happened in the north too. We don't talk about it quite as much, but in the south, so many people. But I was surprised to find out that the largest lynching took place in New Orleans where they lynched 11 Italians at one time. I don't know, you might want to look that up. But after the Freedman's Bureau shut down, I don't know what happened with that. But we didn't have the protection that we were accustomed to that we had gotten used to after Emancipation Proclamation. And boy, it was wide open for lynching and taking our property and this whole thing that we even face today. It is the same. It's the same problem, but it's a different way to do it, if that makes sense. Because it's all about, it's not even about skin color as much as this is my opinion, it's more about resources, access to power and privilege.

[\(37:28\)](#):

If they lose that, if other people lose that who are of the other persuasion, we've got a problem. That's the way they're thinking. And then Booker T Washington said, you can't hold me down and not stay down with me. And that's what people don't realize. I was just looking at something about Mississippi. Mississippi is one of the poorest states in the United States. That's because of poor education, poor healthcare, money for Medicare. They won't work to improve education because all of the people who have access to resources, their children go to private school. So they don't care about public school, but they don't realize they're hurting themselves as well. When you hold me down, Booker t Washington said this, if you hold me down, you got to stay down. If you put me in the ditch, I'm paraphrasing. If you put me in the ditch, you got to stay down there with me if you're going to hold me down there. Doesn't that make sense?

Speaker 3 [\(38:33\)](#):

Yes,

Speaker 2 [\(38:34\)](#):

It makes sense. So I don't know what else my story, I don't know how much of this is helpful. Is there anything else you want to ask

Speaker 3 [\(38:43\)](#):

Me? The next question that I'd like to ask?

Speaker 2 [\(38:46\)](#):

Oh Lord, that was one question.

Speaker 3 [\(38:52\)](#):

So many great things that you've talked about,

Speaker 2 [\(38:54\)](#):

And

Speaker 3 [\(38:55\)](#):

I also would like to commend you and say you're a great orator.

Speaker 2 [\(38:58\)](#):

Oh, thank you.

Speaker 3 [\(38:59\)](#):

You're welcome.

Speaker 2 [\(39:00\)](#):

Thank you.

Speaker 3 [\(39:01\)](#):

And so my next question to you would be, if you were to talk to someone my age or someone younger about the importance of preserving your family's history, what would you say?

Speaker 2 ([39:13](#)):

I would tell them what so many people have said, and I don't want to quote just one, but if you don't know your history, you're doomed to repeat it. And we hear that a lot. We really do. Dr. Benjamin E. Mays who taught at Morehouse College, he's quoted saying that, but then there's some others who said it as well, but we need to know our history. That's why there's such a battle in Florida and other places to keep us from knowing our history. If you don't know your history, you're doomed to repeat us. What is happening? I keep saying Springfield, but what is happening there is not new. Willie Horton was an example of that. It is called the Southern Strategy where they find something to pit us against each other. And unfortunately, poor white people don't know that they're being pitted against black folk. And if they were smart, they would team up with us so they can get some of the resources that are available.

([40:24](#)):

They aren't that, some of them are not that smart, some of them are, but we are being pitted against each other. They're mad because the people in Springfield have houses and are buying cars and living well. But those people are working. Even the people in Springfield are saying that they're working hard for what they have. It's no different from what we do down here. We work. I work hard to live here. I do. And I said, if I never work again, how many times have I had two jobs or had a full-time job and doing some little part-time, something that's legal and honest and moral to make some extra money so I can sit here today and be comfortable. I've worked for this. It's not something, it's just God's grace and my hard work that got me here. So it ain't nothing fancy, but it's comfortable.

([41:16](#)):

So I think about that, but what would I say to a young person? Learn every day. Learn every day. Learn your history and understand your environment because that is critical to your success. It really is. You've got to understand what's going on around you. And to really understand that, you've got to know your past. We need to teach every child possible their history. And they're really fighting now for us to know our history. I heard, I hear so many historians talking about that. Now I'm AME/Africa Methodist Episcopal Church is where I go right up on Ebenezer Road. You know where that church, I'm sure you know where that church is. That's my church. But last year when we had Black History Month, we had a band, the book Sunday, and we invited some authors to come in who had written books because we need to make sure our children know their history.

([42:20](#)):

And that's what I would recommend, that they learn their history and that we get them focused on what's important. These children really, a lot of times, are losing sight and don't have a vision for their life because they've been sidetracked with things. They've been sidetracked with the latest technology equipment to the latest iPhone and the latest scooter and the next, the latest whatever. And they're not paying attention to those things that are important. What you get up here, nobody can take it away from you. So if you know your history and the resilience and the persistence and the wherewithal that our people have had, because in spite of what we've gone through, we are succeeding. People are still getting lynched. People are still dying in the street from gun violence. But in spite of all that, as a race, we are still moving forward. We are.

([43:28](#)):

And so our children need to learn about our strengths, our resilience, our strong history, and that having a vision for our life is the most important thing that they can do. And how do we take our children and

remove them from some of this stuff that's not important and teach them those things that are important, like getting a good education. And when I say getting a good education, that doesn't necessarily mean going to college, but doing what Booker T Washington thought we should do and get a good skill. Because Booker t Washington says, if you got something that people want, they will come to your door. So even if you are a shoe maker, or if you are a carpenter, or if you are HVA, if you know HVAC or if you are a plumber, somebody called me the other day about a plumber. Plumbers make good money.

[\(44:28\)](#):

So if you don't want to go to college, go do something like that and start your own business. And that's what people are doing. I remember when my son was getting ready to go to college, I said, why don't you major? I wanted him to do what I did. I'm a social worker by training. He didn't want to do that. He majored in environmental science and now he has all these different certifications. He has people calling him every day trying to offer him jobs. And he makes more money than I could even think about making because he has a skill. Skills are the key right now. It could be videography or there are a lot of things that you can do for services that people need. And that's what the Jews do. That's what Hispanics are beginning to do. I hope that's the right term to use.

[\(45:19\)](#):

But that's what they're doing now, whether it's yard service or whether it is roofing or you see them doing all those things, those are things that people need and they're making good money doing it too. So you see them one week, it's 10 of them in a truck, and they're trying to get to the next work site the next week you see them driving a gray, big pretty truck, don't you? Yes. So they figured it out, and the Haitians have figured it out. So we need to figure it out. But sometimes we don't see all the good stuff and the opportunities that's available to us. We are right here in the middle of it. We don't see it. But other people from other places, they come here and take advantage of it.

Speaker 3 [\(46:00\)](#):

It's very true.

Speaker 2 [\(46:01\)](#):

So what would I tell young people? Have a vision for your life. Know your history and understand the environment around you.

Speaker 3 [\(46:11\)](#):

That's very profound. And my next question is, based on what your grandfather has taught you, what are some of the biggest lessons you've learned from him?

Speaker 2 [\(46:25\)](#):

Well, one thing I think is something I've already said. To have good skills. I think understanding the environment, which he did not do. That's where they got him. I think he wasn't really aware of what was going on with the people that he thought were his friends. He thought these people were his friends who came in and got him. One thing that I've learned that in spite of the fact that they tried to destroy our families, we survived. We survived. And we've got survival skills. So I don't know what else I've learned from that.

Speaker 3 [\(47:11\)](#):

Eddie, do you have any other questions?

Speaker 1 ([47:14](#)):

No, she touched on everything. Yeah, I just keep thinking about how close we are to Stone Mountain and how that was like the center of

Speaker 2 ([47:25](#)):

Oh yeah. The

Speaker 1 ([47:26](#)):

Klan.

Speaker 2 ([47:27](#)):

Oh yeah. Oh yeah. Even I can remember when the Klan would, on Easter Sunday morning, every Easter Sunday morning, the Klan would have a big rally on top of Stone Mountain. Did you know about that? You've heard it. Yes, ma'am. Okay. And I remember one time they came through my neighborhood in Summerhill. Now this was in 1960. That was a big mistake for them to put on those robes and walk from Grant Park down Georgia Avenue to Capitol Avenue, make a right and go to the Capitol. Now, the police had to protect the clan because these guys that hang on the block, they were ready for him. And so it wasn't a nice story. If it hadn't have been for the police protecting the clan, some of them would've been hurt because these guys who hang on the block were prepared for 'em. And it would've been a war. But the police was holding them back and making them, because the Klan had the right to parade down the street. They had a permission, but coming through a neighborhood like that and marching was not the smartest thing they could have done.

Speaker 1 ([48:44](#)):

Yeah. And I do remember your mom talking about when she was a little kid, they didn't have electricity. They had the kerosene lamp, and when she heard the drums and they started marching, they shut off the lamps.

Speaker 2 ([49:00](#)):

Oh, yeah, that's right. Would

Speaker 1 ([49:02](#)):

Be dark.

Speaker 2 ([49:02](#)):

That's right. That's right. Because they didn't know where the Klan was going to be going. Yeah, they had kerosene lamps and everybody did that because you didn't know if they were coming to your house or somewhere else, and you would just get quiet. Maybe they would think that nobody was in the house. So

Speaker 1 ([49:23](#)):

Yeah, I've learned so much and I've heard dozens of stories, so, which I wish I could have had recorded, but I think it was a great interview. We got a lot of rich

Speaker 3 ([49:39](#)):

Information. I hope so. Yes, I agree.

Speaker 2 ([49:43](#)):

Okay.

Speaker 3 ([49:44](#)):

Anything else? Nothing else on my end.

Speaker 2 ([49:48](#)):

Well, let me say one other thing I think is important. My family survived because, and was able to improve their lives because my family realized the importance of an education. My mother finished high school, she got a GED, and she ended up working. We didn't stay in that situation because after, in the 1960s, like 1963 or somewhere along there, my mother was able to get a job with economic opportunity, Atlanta in the poverty program of the 1960s. And she worked in community organization. And my mother helped so many people helping people was real important in my family. And she would, even after my mother retired and she was living at home, we could be sitting there eating dinner and somebody would come by and say, Ms. Brinson, my lights turned off. What can I do? Ms. Brinson, my cousin died and he didn't have any insurance.

([50:54](#)):

And my mother would figure out, she was a very resourceful person. She would figure out what they could do and help those people. That's what she did as a profession. So she did that for many years. But she was able for her children to go to college, I was able to take her on some really nice trips. After I got grown, I took her to South America. I took her on several cruises I took her to, she used to come to New York. I lived there for a while. And I'm just thankful that in spite of what we went through, we survived it. And we are okay. That's real important. My brother moved to, he bought a condo and after my mother got, he helped my mother get a house. He bought a condo in Stone Mountain and he stayed out there for a long time.

([51:45](#)):

But when my mother got sick, he went back to live in her house. And my sister, her and her husband bought a house in Clayton County and they traveled literally all over the world. He was in the military. So imagine where my family came from as a result of what happened that night. Matter of fact, I was able to send my son when my sister was living in Panama, South America. I was able to send my son over there when he was like 10 years old. I sent him over there on a plane just to see what it was like to live in South America. So we've had some great experience as a result of that. Our life has not been just doom and gloom. And when he got in the 11th grade, I'll never forget, I wanted him to know how the government worked. I actually took him to the White House. We've been inside the White House, we've been inside the Capitol, and I took him to Canada. I took him to on several cruises, and I can't count how many states. And that was on purpose because if you can expand somebody's vision, it makes all the difference in them trying to figure out where they're going. If that makes sense.

Speaker 3 ([53:06](#)):



It does.

Speaker 2 ([53:06](#)):

So I just thought I'd share that. And even with my grandchildren now, I tell him all the time, the more it is nice if you can put 'em in private school, but it's even better when what's going on at home can expand their vision. You've got to have a vision. A vision is a roadmap to where you want to go. So, okay.

Speaker 3 ([53:35](#)):

Wonderfully put.

Speaker 2 ([53:36](#)):

Okay.

Speaker 1 ([53:38](#)):

And that's a wrap, (rustling, inaudible)?

Speaker 2 ([53:42](#)):

I didn't talk about my education, I just think I need to mention it. I think it's important because my grandfather went to the third grade. My grandmother went to the sixth grade. Even though they were very resourceful and lived well when they were in Lithonia. Well, I have an undergraduate degree, I have a master's degree, and I have a PhD. So I just wanted to share that.

Speaker 3 ([54:06](#)):

Alright.

Speaker 2 ([54:07](#)):

Okay.

Speaker 1 ([54:09](#)):

We got that. Amen.

Speaker 2 ([54:13](#)):

How long did I talk? Because I'm a talker now. I'm

Speaker 3 ([54:16](#)):

An hour and a half. I got 54 minutes, 17 seconds.

Speaker 2 ([54:20](#)):

Okay, I can talk.

Speaker 3 ([54:22](#)):

This

This transcript was exported on Dec 04, 2024 - view latest version [here](#).

Speaker 2 ([54:22](#)):

Is recording differently.

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