

## CALDIN STREET INTERVIEW TWO TRANSCRIPT

**Interviewee:** Caldin Street

**Interviewer:** Craig Isser

**Location:** Kalamazoo College, Kalamazoo, MI

**Date:** March 12, 2013

**Craig Isser:** Well, you're back again

This interview was reviewed and edited by Donna Odom, Southwest Michigan Black Heritage Society.

**Caldin Street:** Yes

**CI:** And last time we talked a little bit about your experience at Loy Norrix and being you know, one of the first students to integrate and I was wondering if you could, you know, tell me a little bit more about that. You know, what was the reaction of your family

**CS:** Yeah

**CI:** and of your community?

**CS:** Well, the community seemed to be eager to to to, integrate and to cooperate with the school system. To bring in minorities to Loy Norrix. It was just that it was so foreign, kind of foreign to, to those children, myself included, who were going to be the ones to break the ground. And we didn't know what to expect. You know how it is. When you, when you don't know you are afraid. And so, and not a happy camper. Cause I was the chosen one from my family to, to go to Loy Norrix. I had three older siblings and three younger siblings. All of them graduated from Central. I'm the only one who went to Loy Norrix. And I only went for two years, but it was a traumatic two years. Especially at the beginning of the school year when we had to deal with children, other students that, that weren't knowledgeable about any other people that didn't look like them. So, consequently, we had to, endure, racism in the form of calling us names when we got off the bus and, well, when we were getting on the bus. And I would take a bus all the way from the north side to downtown Kalamazoo and then transfer and then that bus would take us out to Loy Norrix. So, it was, it was really something that I had to endure for five, you know five mornings out of every week. But my mom and dad told me that someone needed to do it, someone has to do it. 'Cause when I asked, "Why did you pick me?" And he said, "It's just the time. The timing." That the school is going to be in a national magazine. I think it was *Life Magazine* at the time, and they would like to be sure to communicate this Kalamazoo Public School, wanted to communicate that the school is a public school, and it's, it's, they're really involved in bringing in diversity to the school. I'm not sure that term was used that much back then, but that's what in fact they, they meant. They wanted to bring in students from everywhere, so they went recruiting. And, (cough) as time went on, I kind of got used to it. Used to the name calling but, fortunately, I also had another outlet that would, that would give me, provide me with some degree of fulfillment and happiness. And that's singing. So, singing music is therapeutic and I sang in the choir there at Loy Norrix. Tom Kasdorf, Mr. Kasdorf was my, he was a vocal coach and the music teacher. So, whenever I was involved in the music classes, you know, it was just like, you know, very, very relaxing and I looked forward to going to my

music class. And, at that time, it wasn't, I don't think it was every day of the week, but it was most, most of the days of the week that we went to, to, to music. And, to this day I'm still in contact and have, we have cultivated a friendship with Mr. Kasdorf. So, whenever I see him, I wave to him, I walk up to him, give him a hug. 'Cause he's really, he really helped several of the black students you know, ease their, their pain of being there. 'Cause we were (clears throat), each of us were the only students of color in every class we went to, except choir and possibly Phys. Ed. you know, back then it was called Phys. Ed. But it was, it was, it was an educational tool and it gave us, it gave me more insight and then it helped me too, to realize that not all white families are the same. All of them aren't racist, but there, it was the handful and the teachers. Let me tell you, there was one teacher in particular that would give me a low grade, lower than my white counterpart and we would have the same amount wrong. And we would bring it to his attention and he would say, "Well that's because you, you wrote the, the language that you used to describe it or the way you answered the question or this or that and the other." And we would say, "Yea, but we still got the same amount right and the same amount wrong, but her grade is, you know it's a whole grade up from mine. She got a B and I got a C." And so, that was hard to digest and my parents even came to the school and talked to the principal and what have you and I think it may have caused that teacher to, to really think about what he was doing. But that happened early on, you know, when I first started and myself and the young lady that was involved in that, we befriended each other and we were bosom buddies throughout 10th and 11th grade. But it was just the idea that you had people in high places, and especially in a teacher mode, who was full of racism. And that's exactly what it was, you know. Hopefully, prayerfully that that, I, I, I would always say I hope nobody else, the people, the kids coming behind me have to experience, you know, what I'm experiencing. I don't have any way of really, really knowing that, but I know what I experienced and, you know, for the most part it was unpleasant. It was unpleasant except for, like I said, music and I took French, so, and 'cause I loved it, and I just took it and I said, it's a romantic language, I'm going to take French. And my

teacher loved me because I caught on real easy and I was able to communicate. She used to tell me, she says, "I need for you to think about being an interpreter working at the UN in Washington, D.C. Go to college, get your degree and then move to Washington." And I'm looking at her like, "Really?" and she says, "Yes, yes" she says, "You've, you're, it just comes, it rolls off your tongue like that's your language." And so, you know, it was a good thing but I did so many other things after I graduated from high school in Detroit. 'Cause in my senior year I transferred and went to Chancey High School in Detroit because I was recording. Doing some professional recording back and forth from Kalamazoo to Detroit. I'd have to go to the, the studio and do some professional recording so it was just made a lot of sense for me to just quit and move to Detroit for my senior year. Mhmm.

**CI:** Can you talk about the transition from Kalamazoo to Detroit? Some of the differences.

**CS:** It was different, but it was - at Chancey High School was totally diverse. I mean there were students there from all backgrounds. So, it was a very easy transition. And it was, even though I had to go across town because the school in my neighborhood was not taking any other students, and I got to Detroit kind of late. My aunt and uncle whom I lived with, they didn't really check to see what the deadline was for enrolling and so that you could be in the school that's close to you, you know. I mean close proximity to your home. So I ended up, the same thing, taking a bus from my home, where I lived and then transferring and taking another bus going across town. So, but that I got a lesson, an educational experience about Detroit doing that, you know, so I enjoyed it. It was just that I had to get up so early in the morning (laughs). But just the idea of being in the big city and living in Detroit was exciting to me and I wanted to stay there. I didn't want to come back to Kalamazoo (laughing). Not as a teenager, you know. It's just much more exciting.

**CI:** So, now you know, at Loy Norrix you were kind of thrown into the Civil Rights Movement

**CS:** Yes, yes

**CI:** You know, following that experience, were you ever involved with other, further, you know, movements?

**CS:** No. I was, I began, had a membership to the NAACP, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and have had that association all my life, actually. From the time I was very young, even when I got to Detroit, my aunt and uncle were involved with the NAACP, so I was, you know, that this carried on over. I've transitioned to the Detroit branch, but I didn't get involved with other things. My older brother, one of my older brothers right up over me, 'cause there's seven children in my family, he was involved in the more radical movements because he was a college student. He had gone to the military, to the Air Force, and participated in Vietnam and all that kind of stuff and then he came back and so he was, he started at Western and he was more or less, he was with the rebellious movement. But they got things done and he did go to Martin Luther King's funeral, and that was a big, big deal for him. It was just huge for anyone to be able to go to that event back then. But, by that time I was just so far removed from Kalamazoo that I'd just hear about it, you know. Your brother Charles is, is on campus and he is, he's with this group and they're doing this and that and the other. And I'd get another call from Kalamazoo to Detroit, "Your brother Charles is, he's getting ready to go to Atlanta, or wherever the funeral was. To Martin Luther King's funeral." And I'm saying, "What?" And so, I was not involved in that kind of movement. Most of what I was involved in during the Civil Rights was peaceful. I didn't, you

know, so, and, and then there was a, a, a, an issue too at Van Avery's. There was a store down there, where the Ecumenical Senior Center is now, Van Avery's. I do remember that either during my, my visits back and forth, that they were trying to get to Van Avery's to hire minorities. We could shop in there. I could remember my parents taking us in there and there was a Rosenbaum Shoe Store right next door to it. So, my mom would walk downtown from the north side or my dad would just drop us off in the car and we would get our shoes, you know, school shoes especially, and then go in Van Avery's and get, my mother would buy us all ice cream but we could not sit at the counter, and it was just a bad feeling to have to be treated like you were sub-human or something. Especially with the, the, the local merchants and what have you. But, you know, you, we'd get through that and that, that's the good thing. Someone has to experience and someone has to be able to sit down and talk about it like I'm talking to you, and educate people on what it was like and what we did go through. 'Cause so much is, was kept out of the books. I don't remember having any sort of black history you know in any curriculum in school in Kalamazoo or Detroit. Not like it is now, you know. So, (clears throat) we missed out on that and a lot of times we didn't know, you know, who, who the Americans were, the shoulders we were standing on to, to move forward and make it a, a, a more even playing field and making it fair for everyone you know in terms of civil rights. So, and my dad he, my father is a Baptist preacher and a baker. This of those combinations. And he, he was very involved and he wasn't a real educated man, but he was very involved in the civil rights. Whenever things would go on in the city or the, the, the preachers in the community would get together, the African American black preachers would get together and discuss ways of resolving issues that were going on in the community. So, we had a pretty good education of what was gonna be, what, what's going on. My dad was home, and he discussed it around the dinner table, 'cause we were a family that always had dinner together and that was a good thing because there were so many, not a lot, but there were some families that did not have that you know to, to enjoy in their childhood. And, but my mom and dad they were very serious about keeping family, family and

sharing things with each other. So, I was really blessed to have had my parents, they weren't perfect, but they, they did a pretty good job for raising us. Yes. Mhmm.

**CI:** So, out of curiosity, do you remember when you heard about Martin Luther King's assassination?

**CS:** I was, I was living in Detroit at the time, and I was living in Detroit when the Detroit riots broke out. I was living right down in it because I had gotten married and, well no I hadn't gotten married yet I was engaged but my, my fiancé and subsequent husband lived in a two family flat on the west side that his parents, his, his relatives owned. So he and his mom lived upstairs and his mother's sister and her family downstairs and I remember you couldn't go anywhere. You felt like you were in a war zone. It was terrible to feel the tanks coming down the street, I mean and you had to duck. We were like up on the balcony at times and we was, we would crunch down because the tanks were coming down the street just like we were in a war and the whole house would shake 'cause they're big heavy tanks. And that was very frightening, very frightening, and you could see the fire and smell the smoke 'cause we didn't live that far from Grand River. He didn't live that far from Grand River 'cause I wasn't living with him at the time, just visiting you know. And in some of those buildings, unfortunately there are buildings in Detroit, right now, still standing, they're not even, they're eyesores. They are dilapidated, they can't even be renovated but they're still there, windows broken out since the '60s. Can you believe that? Since the mid-60s, mid to late '60s. Some of these the owners have not even bothered to, they just pay the taxes and leave the eyesores up, and if you ride up and down Grand River in Detroit you will still see some of that. It was, it's awful. I, that's, that's very disheartening to me to see whenever I go back to visit. Yeah, and but, you know, that's another thing that needs to be, you know, dealt with in the Detroit area. To bring in and restore it back to the beauty that it once was like. It was a very pleasant,

metropolitan area you know, and now you just, you see stuff that you can't, you can't believe it's still there after all these years. You know, and it brings back \_\_\_\_?? to have to ride down Grand River or anything. I eventually moved to the Northwest side and into Southville. After me and my fiancé got married, we moved the Northwest side and then once we were able to, we built a home in Southville. So we kept moving away, away from it but my, half of my heart is in Detroit, but it's still, it's still, they need to fix those streets. They need to, to tear those buildings down that are eyesores, 'cause it's still so many of them still there you know. And I guess that's why Snyder has appointed the city a new, a manager to help come in there and do some of that stuff. Mhmm.

**CI:** Now, with being part of the music industry, did that give you any perspectives on the, you know, on the, you know, on the civil rights you know, being -

**CS:** O yeah, yeah, yeah, that, that music played a big part in the Civil Rights Movement. You could, certain eras and certain, certain sections of music, especially the Motown sound. That came out of Detroit. The Motown sounds, matter of fact, that's where I was going to record when I would leave Kalamazoo on the weekends, about every other weekend in the 10th and 11th grade. I'd be going to the, to Detroit, to Motown to record (clears throat) Because my girl group got a contract with the Motown because of the two older members were students at Western and they, we encountered Barry Gordy Jr.'s nephew at Western and he encouraged us to go and audition for Motown, which we did and then we started recording. But I couldn't travel a lot back then because I was still in high school.

**CI:** Mhmm



**CS:** So I had to just lay low until, you know there was a, a Christmas break or summer break or Easter break or winter break and that's when I would be able to go out with the ladies and do promotions, record hops, stuff like that all around Detroit and Canada.

**CI:** Cool.

**CS:** Mhmm

**CI:** But, you know, when, when you trav--, did you get to travel?

**CS:** Oh yeah

**CI:** You know, did you see, you know, different, you know-

**CS:** Did a lot of traveling. I've done a lot of traveling and you see, oh in your travels you really get, it's educational you know to travel. Parents should take their children traveling with them at all, you know, at all cost. Children learn when you expose them to certain things, you know, and I was fortunate that my parents, at least my mom was adventurous. My father wasn't very adventurous. He didn't even want to get on a plane. He wouldn't get on a plane. But my mom, she, she would and just the exposure alone to the music world and, and traveling to different cities and states was very educational.

**CI:** Mhmm

**CS:** Yeah, so we, it was, it was something I wouldn't trade for anything. I had a very, I think, enriching life as a young person. Yeah, mhmm.

**CI:** And in your travels did you witness, you know, different, you know movement, you know, and different, you know examples of civil rights?

**CS:** Yeah, yeah. You would, you go to different cities and they, every city during that tumultuous time, from like the mid six-- early to mid-60s to the 70s, early 70s, every city had its own, own problems and issues that they were dealing with. They were directly related to the civil rights of human beings. It was, everywhere we would go, you would, you could see evidence that there had been some kind of, you know, not necessarily uproar, but just, you could see that there had been some, some, some of the areas of the different towns were disturbed through the you know, civil rights activities and, you know, what have you. So, that's just, that was just a part of that era. You knew if you went to New York, or you went to Chicago, Ohio, Washington D.C., you knew if you went to these places, Baltimore, that you were going to see some parts of those cities that were ravaged from riots and from you know, citizens becoming, citizen's unrest because of the Civil Rights Movement. Mhmm. Yeah.

**CI:** Did you end up going to college?

**CS:** Yes, I, after I traveled right out of high school, I was scheduled to go into Detroit, University of Detroit. I didn't live far from there. And, but right out of high school I was, we were offered a, a, a, some, a lot of money to go on a tour, and so that's what we did right out of high school. I was making so much money that I just put the college thing aside even though I had been accepted.

**CI:** Mhmm

**CS:** But then, and we sang for a while. We went, what I'm talking about is, we went on, my girl group, which is the Velveettes, we went on a Dick Clark Caravan of Stars tour

**CI:** Wow

**CS:** So we got, we met him. We've met him and been around him. He was on the bus once with, with, with all of us and two groups, well the Zombies from England were on this particular tour and we were terribly discriminated against down in Georgia. And a restaurant would not serve us, 'cause they were used to, I mean we just pulled the bus had "Dick Clark Caravan of Stars" right on it and now they don't travel like that, buses with tours with the celebrities. There's nothing on them so you don't know who's in them but back then, you know, you put your name on your buses and what have you. And we would go into restaurants all up North, gone, you know we'd do some touring up North and Canada and we came back down to the South and we didn't experience anything like that, you know up North here,

Michigan, Indiana, Wisconsin, all of the states that, that are considered North of the Mason-Dixon Line. But when we got to that Mason-Dixon we didn't really understand 'cause none of us had experienced this. Especially those of us who had lived in Detroit for a long time. We were used to being treated equally. And, we were not, we were pulling up at a restaurant. I'm not sure the name of it, I think, I'm almost sure, I won't say the name of the restaurant, it used to be a chain of restaurants that was you know, situated throughout the United States, but Dick Clark got awfully upset when they wouldn't serve us because they told him they did not serve colored people. See, Dick Clark was from Philadelphia, and he moved from Philly to the West Coast. So, he really, that he didn't understand that he was not going to tolerate it and we all got off the bus, had to be 30 of us that get to sit down at the table and we were waiting to be, for the waiters or the waitresses to come out and take our orders and they never came out. And so this was quite surprising to the, the group, the band from England because England is a lot like the United States. It's the mother country. But, they were not racist like they were in the United States for some reason. So, they were stunned. They could not believe that we weren't, they would not serve us because of that. Because we were people of color. But it was not just us, it was a lot of white groups and bands on the bus too. So, and everybody was just like, "What, what are we gonna do now?" We were hungry. So Dick Clark, he, he got off the bus 'cause he was doin' some business on the bus, that's when he did his books, when we got off and went in to sit down and then he would catch up on his paperwork. And he would join tours for about a week, 'cause we were out there for four weeks. He didn't stay the whole time, but and he would, he went in that restaurant and he went back to the kitchen and he asked them, "What seems to be the problem here? We have 30 or 40 people out here waiting to be served. You are a restaurant? You are in business aren't you?" and one of the waiters says, "Yup, yes we are, but we just, we don't serve colored people." And he said, "Where's your manager?" And so, the manager came out. He was hidden somewhere back in the back and he repeated what his waiter said. So Dick Clark said, "This is the most insane, ridiculous thing I have heard in my life. You,

you're going to not serve my people here. And we are going to sing for you later on tonight and a lot of you will be in the audience. You know. And you won't serve them because they're colored? And the guy just turned flush red and and he says, "No." Dick Clark, he turned around and looked at all of us, said, "Let's go." And he looked back at the guy, the manager, he says, "I'll see to it that you're out of business. I'm gonna put you out of business." And that, I had never seen that restaurant chain since the 60s. Really. ??To an honestly stop?? and think about it, he, Dick Clark made a statement and he stuck to it. Yeah. He was such, he was a nice man. Dick Clark was a very nice man. But that, he could not tolerate. He was, he was not going to keep his mouth shut. Because he, he wasn't, there was not a racist bone in his body. You know. So, but we, we experienced that. I mean that stuff happened. Things you hear people talking about, especially about African American artists, talking about what they went through. Like going to the back door to sing for an audience and then having to go back through the back door, not being able to even eat at the establishment. That's some of the most (laughs) ridiculous stuff you could ever think of happening to, to human beings. Especially in the entertainment industry. But, it, it happened and it's over with now. It doesn't happen unless, I mean there's mild forms still, mild forms of racism wherever you go you have people that are afraid when they get on the elevator with too many black people, African American people. That's been, that's something that we just, it's kinda humorous because no other race is treated that way when you get on the elevator with. I was reading a story one day, Eddie Murphy and, let's see it was Eddie Murphy and Michael Jordan that were in Las Vegas together on a gambling trip. They were on, they got on an elevator and this lady, this white lady was on the elevator, and when they got on she took her purse and started holding it very close to her and she was perspiring like (laughing), she started perspiring and she just didn't know, she was so scared and when she got to her floor and opened the elevator door she ran (laughing), ran off the elevator to her room. And so they got off too just see what room she was in. So then I guess the next day they had

some flowers or something delivered to her room and said, "Sorry that we frightened you so much last night." And they signed it

**CI:** Yeah

**CS:** Yeah, you know, Michael Jordan and Eddie Murphy. You know that fool, she felt like, I mean these guys are probably immaculately dressed and the whole bit, but that's the kinda stuff, those are the kinds of things that, it just needs to stop. My mother worked at the State Regional Psychiatric Hospital here for 20-something years and she used to come home with different stories about, she never, everything was basically confidential about the patients, but she used to say at the dinner table stuff like, "Well, now you know, crazy doesn't discriminate." There's crazy people in every culture, every group on this earth, there are people that are mental, mentally ill, they had mental and physical illnesses, and it just doesn't discriminate. It just, it can happen to, to anybody, but when you start misusing people because of a racist belief, then that's when you have to, it's serious. It's serious that something needs to be done. And she would experience working with patients that would use the n-word, call her the n-word sometime and my mother was a small lady, not very tall, but it was, it was like, she's up North here. She was raised in the South, and that was just everyday happening down there when they would go in town to, to shop on their uncle's flat-bed truck. Some of that would be those names would be called, them, but that was way back in the 20s and the 30s maybe. And then to come up North and have a job taking of crazy people, people that are mentally unstable and imbalanced and still be referred to, you know, as the n-word, it was kind of disheartening, very disheartening to her. When we would talk about it around the supper table she would often say, I said well we would say, "Well how does it make you feel when they do that to you?" and she said, "Well, initially it, it, it was very upsetting, but then I started looking

at it as, as a disease, as a mental illness for people to really be, have that born and bred inside them, and to be taught that from the time they're toddlers and sit around the din-, the table, the dinner table discussing negative ways to deal with people that didn't look like them and all that. That's a topic of discussion at some dinner tables." And so, and he, she said, "I knew it was going to take a whole lot of doing to undo some of the, the thought process of people who were, you know, authority positions and still had that, that, that mental, mentality, you know." So, but you know, you have to just move on and move forward. You can't, you can't let it hold you back. You really can't. And I'm just, I'm grateful that there were people strong enough, like when I saw the Rosa Parks, they just did a Rosa Parks statue in the, in the, what is it, the capital. And the guy just completed it and they unveiled it yesterday. It's beautiful. I met Rosa Park once. I went to her funeral in Detroit. It was so, it was beautiful. But I met her and she, she and my mom favored an awful lot, at least they looked like they could be sisters 'cause my mother when we would go to Detroit they would, a lot of people who went restaurants and what have you or gatherings, a lot of people, some people mistaked her for Rosa Parks. They walk up to her say, "Ms. Parks, Ms. Parks" and my mother would say, "I'm not her. I'm not her, but sometimes I wish were here because I'm always, I'm mistaken for her a lot." 'Cause they did, they looked like they coulda been sisters. And when I met Rosa Park it was three months after my mother passed away and it was at a hotel in Chicago. I was at the NAACP convention, annual convention and I saw this woman standing from the back, but then I saw two other younger ladies standing on either side of her. We were checking in the hotel and so, I'm standing right in back of Rosa Parks and I heard one of the other young ladies say, "Ms. Parks you can move forward now." So I said, I was speechless. I said, "That's Rosa Parks." And so I walked closer to her back and I tapped her on the shoulder real gently and I said, "Ms. Parks" and the two ladies on the side started moving in on me and she turned around and she said, "Hello." I said, "Can I shake your hand?" I said, "I'm so honored to meet you." And she said, "Sure." And she shook my hand, very gentle. Gentle touch, just like my mother too and tears were coming down my cheeks and she, she

just, she looked at me and I said, "You look so much like my ma. And I lost her three months ago." And she said, "Oh I'm to hear that, but I'm glad that I favor your mom." Something she said to that effect, but that was the high point. That was a very high point in my life, actually meet-- I didn't, no one else was around, no one was around to take a picture either. You know, I said, "Oh God I wish I had had somebody, but I was just standing their 'cause I wanted to check on something for my room and here, oh, it was just, was one of those "ah-ha moments" you know, in my lifetime. I just didn't get pictures of it. Mhmm (laughing). So you know, and just reading about her and whenever I see something about her I say to myself, "I was that, I was, I shook her hand," You know, so, and she's to be commended, she was a brave one to do what she did. That was very, very brave, and we used to ask my mother, "Would you have done what she did?" She'd say, "Sure." She says, "Yeah, I would of done it. If I was tired. She'd been workin' all day and (sitting)?? Well," my mother says, "You know, sometimes people are chosen. God chooses some people to just do certain things, you know, to cause change." And I, I really believe that Rosa Parks was a God-send. 'Cause it did. It started that Civil Rights Movement. It really, you know... She was brave, you know. So you can't help but admire her at her age for being brave and strong and determined. Just willing to lay her life down or go to jail because something, it just was not right what was being done. So, but yeah, it's, it's, it's made quite a journey you know, growing up and going through the things that I went through. I think I told you before about my parents drove us all south and we went to the gas station and all that. These kinds of things (were)?? just a regular happening, especially to the African Americans who were north after the Civil War and they were free in terms of slavery and then each generation after that, you know, they never experience that kind of separatism up north. But then you go back down south and a lot of them had a lot of family down south and the same stuff, and some of it was treacherous. You know, it was really sad the story of Emmet Till. I don't know if you know about that. That, I was a little girl when that happened. I never will forget I had nightmares. I went to bed with nightmares 'cause I was, had four brothers. When I'd have the nightmare, I, one of



their, them had, was the face of this guy that got beat up so bad and I would wake up in a cold sweat and just breath in hard. And then I'd run into my brother's room across the hall, 'cause my four brothers each had their own bedroom across the hall from the girls. And I'd just look at them, especially the teenager ones, the older ones, and I would say, "Gosh, he beat him so badly." And I'd think about Emmett Till and I'd go back and get into bed and go on to sleep. So glad I live up north. See he was from up North. He was from Chicago. He was going down there visiting. I'm just glad my parents never sent us down there alone visiting like that because it coulda happen to any family. You know, it's such a terrible injustice for what they did to that boy and it's just something that I'll never forget 'cause I remember that. I remember being, looking at the face on the cover of a Jet magazine. I'm thinking, well it was inside Jet magazine. 'Cause his mother wanted people to see man's inhumanity to man. What, what happened, and this is what they did to my child. So, it is just, those were tumultuous times.

**CI:** Do remember the trial \_\_\_\_\_??

**CS:** I don't. I didn't keep up with the trial and you know, several of 'em were dismissed. They weren't even found guilty. No, and then, but you know, it still, my dad says, "Still that's, you can't harbor, hold that hatred inside you. You," and by him being a preacher, he would always say, "You have to forgive." And we would say, "Forgive for what?" You know. He'd say, "You have to forgive. According to the Bible, you to forgive. And you'll find out as you grow up, why." And you know, it's true, when you, as I matured and became an adult and when I started, re-started going to Sunday school, 'cause when I was younger I, we'd go on but it was because we were robotic and my dad made us go. You know, we had to go. We didn't, we would adhere and do our lesson and what have you but, we did not put and maintain all the information that the Bible had given us. But the older I got and when I started going to Bible study

classes, I saw why you have to forgive. You know, and it's better for you because once you forgive and release that venom, that toxic, that toxicity from your system, 'cause that's what it is. 'Cause when you keep it inside, it makes you sick. It starts to vacuum your health. And my mom used to say that because of her position where she worked, she said, "When you hold in negative, bad feelings, a lot of that can start sickness in your body." And you never realize that until you get older and you can understand what they're talking about. So, and you know I tell my son and my grandson, I say, "You have to say I'm sorry or and you have to forgive people who do, do you wrong." You know, and they're, they eventually will embrace it. I was telling my nephew one day, and I think I, I can say this, sometimes I'm a teacher to my nieces and nephews 'cause they, they, they, they, I just love them, and my one nephew, he was about 15 and I was over to my sister's house one day and he was throwing out the garbage she said, told him to take the garbage out so he took it out and he just threw it in the dumpster. Some of it went on the sidewalk and what, you know, and so I was leavin' the house at the time. I said, "Why did you just throw that in there like that?" He said, "It's garbage." I said, "Yeah, but if you were a garbage man and you were picking up garbage from people's homes, would you appreciate seeing garbage all outside the dumpster? Driving that truck and seeing all that out there?" He said, "I'd just leave it there. You know, I'd pick the barrel up and throw it in the whatever they do now." I said, "But, but, why don't you just start tying it up. Whatever bag you have it in, just tie it up and then put it in the dumpster." I said, "Just think, put yourself in that garbage man's place." You know, and he kinda looked at me. He said, "Auntie Cal you just--" I said, "No, I'm, I'm you know, really want you to start thinkin' about that. You know, how you, how you do that." I said. Because he said, "They're just garbage men." I said, "I but they're a child of God just like you. They happen to every, there's a, there is a role for everyone to play on this earth, keepin' it in order." I says, "And they clean up. What if they, we didn't have any garbage men. What do you think? And no dumpster trucks? What do you think, how do you think this world would look?" So he would, you know, he would, he would kinda, he would look at me sometimes and he'd say, "Ahhhh" and

he would, he would say, "Am I doin' this right Auntie Cal?" When I started coming around more, he says, "Is this what I should do Auntie Cal?" I'd say, "Yea." You know, so. But, you know I think that's the responsibility we have. We, you have to teach the younger children, younger people. Well the Bible tells you to do that too. The book of Titus. That the older people, generation, are responsible for training, you know, the younger people and showing them how they should act and what they should do, and how they should react and how they should take care of themselves, how they should dress and all that. It's like, all right there. Mhmm. Yea. But that helped me to, what am I trying to say, survive the racism that I was subjected to in the different environments that I, that I lived in. And there was never, nothing really extreme, except like I was telling you about the bus trip where the restaurant wouldn't serve us. 'Cause when we would go down there my dad and mom and the station wagon, my father always bought station wagons, we didn't even stop at restaurants. We stopped along the road near an area that was, looked like a park or something and we'd get out and eat on the grass. My mom would take out the food that she had prepared and would take the picnic basket out and take the food out and, and, and she always had big jugs of Kool-Aid for us to drink, and water. So, so we wouldn't have to experience that you know. So, but that was, you know, the first trip down south was the one that traumatized me with the lady standing, looking down at me and asking me what am I doing. "What are you doing in here little girl?" and it was like, "I had to go to the bathroom." You know, and "You don't belong in here. This is not the place for you to be. Get." And she was a customer. You know, 'cause I remember when we, when I came out I kind of looked at her like what's wrong with you? I did not pay attention to that signage, you know, that said "Whites Only" or whatever it would say. I didn't pay attention. All I knew was I had to go to the bathroom, yea. And my mom and dad, I never will forget when I got back in the car. Yea, but you know, those kinds of experiences, it wasn't just me, but I'm, I can speak to them because I, I experienced this kind of stuff.

**CI:** Mhmm

**CS:** But, it it hasn't made me a hateful person.

**CI:** Yeah

**CS:** It really hasn't. It made, it was educational. And it was something I could sit and I could talk to younger people and let them know, you know, what, regardless of their background, you know, the importance of treating people with respect and embracing people unlike yourself and just knowing that mistreatment. See, in life I believe you have the users and the usees (laughs). You either using somebody or they're using you to advance or to get, you know, further ahead and become successful. As long as that use is positive, it's when you misuse people that's when, you know, there's consequence. There's dire consequences to misusing people. So there are people that do and there are, so many people do it. They just misuse other people just to, for their own personal gain and I think over a period of time it comes back on them in some kind of way, it does. Yeah.

**CI:** You've talked a little bit about the NAACP.

**CS:** Yes.

**CI:** Do you remember, you joined when you were in high school --

**CS:** Yes.

**CI:** Do you remember, again talking about going to that convention where you met Rosa Parks, do you remember any other experiences?

**CS:** Oh, oh yeah, yeah I remember when I, I went to the annual Freedom Fund banquet in Detroit, and before Barack Obama, he was a city councilman, and he was the speaker, the keynote speaker in Detroit. Detroit's the biggest sit down banquet. I mean, it's in the Guinness Book of World Records, the Detroit NAACP Freedom Fund Banquet. It's like, circle in this for, it's in \_\_\_\_? Hall too, where it takes place. So it's kinda like a pie.

**CI:** Yeah

**CS:** And then each quadrant, there's got to be 25 people at a \_\_\_\_?? in each one. And then from each quadrant, seats about 250 people, you know. No, 2500 people is what I'm saying, meant to say. So that's the largest sit down banquet and I think like over 10,000 people that, I, I've been to those a few times, and it's really a quite interesting to see how they have gotten it where everything moves so smooth and you wonder how can they feed all these people at this time. And, and the food is still warm and it's not, but they have it down to a science. The logistics of it all had to be figured out long time ago. But I remember when I saw Barack Obama speak for the first time. It was at the Freedom Fund, NAACP

Freedom Fund Banquet in Detroit. He was so eloquent and it was so funny because people were just eating and trays were, you know, you could hear the silver on the plates, and so when it was time for him to speak, when he came to the microphone and then, you know, they had monitors all over the place too, so you could sit and you could look as well as watch it from the, the, the, the stage, the main \_\_\_??. When he speak, when he started talking, people just shut up, and 'cause he started sounding so presidential. People were saying, "Where'd he come from?" 'Cause some of the people did not know, they knew his name was Barack Obama but they didn't really know that much about him. So it was like, this guy sounds like he could be president one day. I mean you heard that all throughout the place. People were saying, "He's amazing." So, and so I had that privilege of seeing him. I had the privilege of shaking Bill Clinton's hand and you know at an NAACP convention because he was a keynote speaker one, one, one year. And my girl friend was working with the board there and so she would call me whenever they had interesting speakers or someone of great notoriety. She's say, "How would you like a ticket?" See, and their tickets are very expensive. It's like 3 or 400 dollars a ticket. But there are people that are real comp-- certain people, my girl friend, she was involved with the organization of the banquet so they would give her comp tickets, about four of them I think. And so, she would call me and say, "Better get on the road and come to the banquet 'cause so and so's going to be speaking." So when I, when she told me that Barack O -- this guy named Barack Obama from Chicago was gonna be speaking, that he was a councilman or something, and I said, "I don't know." She said, "No, he's supposed to be pretty good, so why don't you just come on down and enjoy the food." But I was so glad I went because I could actually say that, you know, I saw him before he became, you know, president of the United States. Even before he became senator. He was, you know, he did that. I think that's where he did that banquet, just before he became senator. Mhmm. The next thing we know he's running for president two years later. (Laughs). So yeah, I, I thank, I thank God for the different experiences that I've had.

**CI:** Mhmm

**CS:** Because, you, there are people that, just, their lives are so dull and boring and they can't say certain things that they, you know, they can't bring to the table something that's uplifting and enlightening and exciting, you know, about what they've done and who they've met and all that kind of stuff, so I, I can really honestly say that all the positive just outweighs the negative, the negativity of racism as when I was growing up. I, you know, I wasn't, I didn't dwell on that. I didn't let that define who I was. So, mhmm.

**CI:** Thank you so much for sharing

**CS:** You're welcome. Yeah. You're quite welcome.

**CI:** It was a pleasure.

**CS:** Well thank you, my pleasure. My pleasure too. (Laughs) Okay, we got to take this off huh?