

Transcript for Oral History Interview
Conducted for University of Maryland Course HIST 428M - Spring 2020
Instructor: Dr. Anne Rush

Interviewer's (Student's) name: Micayla Wilson

Interviewee's name: Franka Wilson

Interviewee's Country of Origin: Trinidad and Tobago

Interviewee's Current Residence: Catonsville, Baltimore County, Maryland, U.S.A.

Date of Interview: March 6, 2020

Place of Interview: Catonsville, Baltimore County, Maryland, U.S.A.

Introduction: This interview between Micayla Wilson and Franka Wilson discusses Franka's journey from San Fernando, Trinidad to Baltimore, Maryland as a child, and her subsequent settlement in the DMV area. With strong ties to her mother and grandmother, Franka touches on the familial bonds she clung to while transitioning to life in the US, both as a recently immigrated adolescent and as a young person navigating adulthood. The interview also reveals the significance of maintaining cultural ties, as Franka's continued efforts to maintain connections to Trinidad and the Caribbean at large allowed her to ground herself in her West Indian identity while living outside of the country of her birth. With an emphasis on both cultural heritage and her family, Franka affirms that, despite living in the United States, home is both Trinidad and wherever her two daughters are.

Keywords: Trinidad, Caribbean, family, motherhood, education, identity, race

M. Wilson: Hello my name is Micayla Wilson, I am Interviewing Franka Wilson, my mother, on the sixth of March 2020, and we are in Catonsville Maryland. Hi Franka, or Mummy (laughs) how are you today?

F. Wilson: I'm doing well.

M. Wilson: Okay. (laughs) Um so just to start with this interview, where were you born?

F. Wilson: I was born in Trinidad, West Indies.

M. Wilson: Okay, what town?

F. Wilson: San Fernando.

M. Wilson: And tell me a little bit about San Fernando.

F. Wilson: San Fernando is one of the main um cities in the south of Trinidad.

M. Wilson: What else about San Fernando sticks out to you, anything um interesting or unique?
 [inaudible]

F. Wilson: It's very um diverse. Some people say it's like the country, but I beg to differ. Um, there's a lot of diversity meaning um there's blacks and Indians, mixed, um people, um yeah, I— I really like it.

M. Wilson: Um-hm and tell me a little a bit about San Fernando when you were a child, back in your childhood. How was that living in San Fernando?

F. Wilson: San Fernando was great, um—

M. Wilson: Any memories?

F. Wilson: I remember going to school, some of my friends going to school. I went to um an Anglican school, which is, I guess the Americans call a, um, what is it? Episcopal school. An all-girls um Anglican school. Had a lot of friends. Um on Saturdays, some Saturdays, we would go down to the sea. We call it the sea. Um, my grandmother—I stayed with my—my, I stayed—I lived with my grandmother. Yeah, we had a—I had a—a lovely childhood in San Fernando.

M. Wilson: Okay, and what date were you born again?

F. Wilson: I was born on May 23, [pause] 1965.

M. Wilson: Okay wonderful, um and could you describe a typical day for you as a child back in Trinidad, back in San Fernando, tell me a little bit about it.

F. Wilson: A typical day involved going to school, um, coming home for lunch, we um—the school was not—not far so we would walk to school and then we would come sometimes we would come ho—well not sometimes. We would come home for lunch, eat lunch, and then go back to school. Um, after school we would walk home with our friends, do our homework, um help my grandmother with any—anything she needed help with. Um, that was a typical weekday. On the weekends we would basically play.

M. Wilson: Okay.

F. Wilson: All day.

M. Wilson: Um-hm.

F. Wilson: Or do homework.

M. Wilson: What kind of games?

F. Wilson: Um we'd play, we call it *munny-pully*, you all call it Monopoly. Um, played check—uh checkers. Played with our dolls, um, you know, fun stuff. And then you know on Sundays we would go to church. Not every Sunday, but we would go to church.

M. Wilson: Wonderful. So, what kind of work did your grandmother do? Was she the main um, before we answer that question, was she the main guardian of the house—was it just your grandmother?

F. Wilson: Yeah, she was. My grandmother, oh, bless her heart, we love we loved her so much. She was the um, what do I say, she was the main person in the house. Her husband died and left her with eight children. Um, my mother was one of her children, um and so she yeah basically was the main, the head of the household.

M. Wilson: And what was her name?

F. Wilson: Her name was Veronica Carter.

M. Wilson: Wonderful. And you said “us, left us in the household.” Who else was in the household with you?

F. Wilson: Um my brother and my cousin.

M. Wilson: And what were their names?

F. Wilson: My brother's name is Roger, and my cousin's name is Cheryl-Ann.

M. Wilson: Wonderful. Um and what kind of uh work was your grandmother doing? Was she just at home?

F. Wilson: Yeah, my moth—my grandmother was a, uh a homemaker.

M. Wilson: Okay.

F. Wilson: I think before, um, when she was younger, she was a seamstress. But um you know when she had the kids, she was just a homemaker.

M. Wilson: “Homemaker,” what does that exactly mean?

F. Wilson: It's like a housewife basically.

M. Wilson: Wonderful. And um eventually you moved from San Fernando, um. Before moving, uh, what were your expectations of the US?

F. Wilson: Um, basically what you saw on television. I thought everything was gonna be bigger. I thought that I was gonna meet some movie stars. Like Leif Garrett. Um I thought everything was gonna be you know much bigger and faster yeah.

M. Wilson: Um-hm. And why were you moving again? [inaudible]

F. Wilson: Because my parents were in the US, they were in Maryland um and they were able to send for us. They went up before us. I think they went to—where did they go? They went to—where did they—I think they went to St. Croix first, and lived there for a couple of years and then they moved to the US and got you know settled, and then they sent for my brother and me.

M. Wilson: Wonderful, and what were your parents' names?

F. Wilson: Patricia Thomas and Samuel Thomas.

M. Wilson: Wonderful, and where in the US did they settle first?

F. Wilson: They settled in Maryland, Baltimore, Maryland.

M. Wilson: Baltimore, Maryland. So those were your only two contacts before moving to the US, your father and your mother? Or did you have any more family members who were living in the US?

F. Wilson: Um, no I had c—I had relatives that were living in Canada. But in the US, I think yeah, they may—they may have—I had uncles, well I had, there, my dad's unc—brother was in the US, but I didn't know that at that time.

M. Wilson: Okay.

F. Wilson: I know 1973, we came on holiday, we came for vacation in 1973. Yeah, in 1973 we came on vacation to the—to Baltimore and um my um uncle and aunt on my father's side were here. And we also visited Montreal, we went to the Montreal Expo, I remember that. In se—in 1973. This is before we actually came to live. We came up here in '76, in 1976 for good.

M. Wilson: Um-hm. And was 1973, that was your first time coming to the United States?

F. Wilson: Yes, in 1973 on vacation.

M. Wilson: Okay. And um, on what date specifically did you move to the US? Do you remember that by any chance?

F. Wilson: Um, it was May 22nd, 1976. That's—yeah, its May 22nd or 23rd.

M. Wilson: Mm.

F. Wilson: The day before my birthday. It wasn't on my birthday 1976.

M. Wilson: Wonderful. And tell me about that moving process as a young girl. What—how old were you then?

F. Wilson: I was eleven, I was going on eleven.

M. Wilson: Um and how was that, moving to a completely different country?

F. Wilson: Um, I was sad because I would miss my grandmother of course, and my friends, my cousin. But I was also excited to go be with my parents, my mom, and my dad. I remember when we visited in 1973, I cried. I cried. I didn't want to go back to Trinidad because I missed my mother so much. I didn't even want to go on the plane, I was bawling and screaming in the airport. I didn't want to go back because I wanted to be with my parents. Um, but then three—they wanted us to finish school which is um high— (machine noises) elementary school and then um ... three years later we came up, and I—that was a, it was a little intimidating. Um, we went to New York, and I remember something about my um, something about the paperwork, I had to tell somebody about the paperwork that we had.

M. Wilson: So, you first went to New York before, before— [inaudible]

F. Wilson: Yeah, that's where the plane landed in New York. And then my parents came, drove up to New York to get us...

M. Wilson: Okay.

F. Wilson: My brother and me.

M. Wilson: Um, so walk me through the process of living in Baltimore. From—from Trinidad to Baltimore, so you said you stopped in New York at first, and then you moved after New—you drove down— [inaudible]

F. Wilson: Yeah, we—yeah, we rode the plane, landed in New York, and then we had to drive down to Baltimore. We drove down to Baltimore. I was just um—I don't know, it was May, so it wasn't, it was—it wasn't too hot, too cold. I remember just looking out the window and seeing all the big buildings and everything, but I also was kind of sad because I missed my grandmother.

M. Wilson: Um-hm. So, when you arrived, um how did the culture here compare to the culture in Trinidad?

F. Wilson: Oh, I think it was a complete culture shock, um. I moving from a warm place to a cold place. And then the school, oh my gosh. You know people would, you know—I had, of course I had an accent, and um and you know kids was like, "Oh gosh she's an alien why does she talk like that?" And "blah blah blah." I was very quiet, I was very shy, but I did well in school.

M. Wilson: So, was that a hard transition dealing with the, the children who used to—did they bully you? Was that what it was?

F. Wilson: Uh, I don't think it was bullying, it was just. Um, I ju—was just quiet, you know I just like—I just considered them to be idiots in a way. It's like, *You people are really stupid.*

M. Wilson: Um-hm. Okay. So, it didn't really affect you?

F. Wilson: No, it didn't really affect me, because I, in a way, I thought I was—I shouldn't say this, but in a way, I thought I was like, more—I was in a way better than them. Or smarter than them. I don't know why...

M. Wilson: Um-hm.

F. Wilson: But that's, that's how I felt.

M. Wilson: Okay. Um.

F. Wilson: Even though I came from a small island, I—I wasn't you know like, *Oh my gosh.* No, I was like, *okay, um yeah.*

M. Wilson: Um-hm. Okay. So, the transition, you would say education was rather smooth because of that? Or—

F. Wilson: Yeah, I think it was. It was. It was, because I—I got good grades, always getting A's, you know. And some of the things that we did in school I was like, *What—what's the purpose of this?* Like learning about um dinosaurs. I'm like, *what, are you kidding me?* What was the purpose of that?

M. Wilson: Um-hm. So aside from um your education, uh, your early education in America, what was the social aspect like? You talked about school.

F. Wilson: Uh social aspect, well I usually socialized with the kids on the—that lived on my street. They would come to us on the porch. Um, socialize—yeah, it was—it was fine.

M. Wilson: Um-hm, wonderful. And then um was there any way that your immigration affected your family directly when you first moved here, like your fore-family? When your brother came—so like how did that affect your family dynamic, when you first came?

F. Wilson: I don't think it had an effect. I mean we were glad you know to see to be—I, well, I was glad to be with my mom, you know. So, I don't, I—I don't know if it—it had an effect or not.

M. Wilson: Um-hm, okay. And so, what was it like to travel back to your home country for the first time?

F. Wilson: Oh.

M. Wilson: If you did.

F. Wilson: Yeah, we did, um. I—I think it was like two or three years later, we went back on vacation. Um, it was kind of strange, um. I don't think I got to saw—see my friends. I saw my cousin cause she was still there, and my grandmother, and then we also went to Tobago. That's the other part of Trinidad. And I remember going on there um for a little vacation. Um, I—I don't remember much about that, I just remember me going t—to Tobago.

M. Wilson: Um-hm.

F. Wilson: And missing my grandmother. But I know when I came up here, I used to um—every time my aunt in Canada would call, she lived in Montreal, I would think she was calling to say oh, oh my grandmother died, cause I don't know. I was just so afraid that she was gonna die.

M. Wilson: Um-hm.

F. Wilson: And then—back then we wrote letters to friends. You know, we, I mean we had phones, but you know, we just wrote—we, I remember writing letters to my school friends it was—it was interesting.

M. Wilson: Um-hm. And um. What were your professional goals, after coming [to the US]? Cause you came as an eleven-year-old, but um you stayed. Um so you grew older, in high school—

F. Wilson: Well, I wanted to be uh, first I wanted to be uh, a pediatrician, and then, uh, a lawyer. I don't know why, but.

M. Wilson: Mm.

F. Wilson: Yeah.

M. Wilson: And when did you develop that interest? That professional interest.

F. Wilson: Um, probably when I um, a couple years after when I came. I began looking at um—oh! One um, one a—one thing that I found strange was, back in Trinidad, we—basically there was no issue of like black and white, or race.

M. Wilson: Mm.

F. Wilson: You know, everybody—to me everybody got along, whether you were Indian, you were black, you were white, cause you know we had half white neighbors. But over here, oh my gosh, it was the weirdest thing. I was the—I was into *Tiger Beat*, it was a magazine for teen—for like, you know, uh—talked about um, you know what is it, celebrities. But it was, I didn't realize, I mean it was a white magazine, but I was into it. I—I had—I didn't see any problem. And I remember going to the store one day, and the cashier looking at me like, I just felt this weird thing, like she was looking at me like, “Why is she buying this magazine?” I don't know why I thought that, she just looked at me really strange, she was a white cashier. And then, I was like, *Is something wrong?* You know, and then um, I don't know, I think I—there was a commercial on television about um *Soul Train*, and you know stuff like that, and then, I began—I don't know how I began buying *Right On*. *Right On* is the—is the counterpart to *Tiger Beat*. And I started buying the *Right On* magazine because I was like, *Wait a minute, why*—it—it was such a, in—in terms of race, it—it was so pronounced here. I just felt like, back in Trinidad, there was no differentiation, but here is, everything had to be black or white, black or white. I

just remember that, buying that *Tiger Beat* magazine and this woman looking at me like, “Why is she buying that magazine.” I remember that.

M. Wilson: Um-hm. So, were there any other instances of race differences that you noticed, um, afterwards being in the United States? Any other glaring memories?

F. Wilson: Um. Yeah, um, I think when I was in high school, um, um, I think one of my closest friends was—was white—well she’s actually Jewish. And then I could see like the black girls—black girls would stay with, with each other, and then white, you know, some white girls would stay with each other. But I just, you know, I was like oblivious, like you know, you’re my friend, you’re my friend. And I remember—I remember, um, it was just—it was, I don’t know it was—it was really strange. I remember this one teacher, he was white, and Elizabeth Ozil, she was my friend, she was the Jewish girl, and we were friends, we were talking in class and um, she was pretty smart. And then the teacher, this white guy, he said um, he said something to the effect like um, “Somebody riding somebody’s coattails” or something to that effect. I—I was like, *Wait a minute, I know he wasn’t talking to me*. Because she was a really smart girl, and we were, well we were friends. And then I remember telling my mother, you know, something that—about the mark—the remark he made, and then during the um—I said you have to talk to him when you go to PTA, you know about the remark. I mean, I think he denied it or something, I—it was, but I—the way he said it was like, you know like, like I—he was trying to say like, um, I shouldn’t be friends with her, or she shouldn’t be friends—or basically she shouldn’t be friends with me, because, I don’t know maybe it was because I was black, I don’t know, but I remember that. I remember that specifically.

M. Wilson: Um-hm.

F. Wilson: I—I guess you know, he—he wasn’t used to black and white girls being friends, cause it was an all-girls school.

M. Wilson: Um-hm

F. Wilson: And yes. But she and I were friends, and we would talk in class. I remember this is Biology class, and we were talking, we were sitting at the chairs or whatever. And he said—made some kind of remark, that says—that say you know like—like that—that friendship shouldn’t be, you know—I shouldn’t have done—she shouldn’t be friends with me or something like that.

M. Wilson: Um-hm.

F. Wilson: Yeah, I remember that.

M. Wilson: And what high school was this?

F. Wilson: Western High School, on Falls Road in Baltimore.

M. Wilson: Um-hm. And um did that affect you in any way, um your thoughts or like perspective on the United States or just... [inaudible]

F. Wilson: Yeah.

M. Wilson: At all?

F. Wilson: Um and then I guess it was the—when was it? The nineteen—the late seventies. Late seventies, early eighties. I graduated from Western in ’82, and um. I don’t know, I—I think that was the era of *Roots*, you know, of the television show, and I became involved in looking at that and you know and wanted to go to an HBCU, and you know. My mother, she knew about Howard University, cause some friends of—of hers their daughter went to I think it was Howard. So, all I knew was Howard, Howard University. And um, I said *Okay, well maybe I’ll just go to Howard University. It’s all black*.

M: WILSON: Um-hm.

F. Wilson: *You know and probably I'll feel like you know, comfortable.*

M. Wilson: Um-hm. Did you feel uncomfortable at high school, and that's why you—
[inaudible]

F. Wilson: No, not really, but um that one episode with that teacher just like kinda changed my perspective on things. Um, I was like, *Okay, yeah, this is real.* Yeah.

M. Wilson: So, tell me a little bit about um life at Howard. Or, before that, even your college application process, getting into college, what was that like?

F. Wilson: Um, I actually—this is very um, was a very not, a, uh, a not a smart decision, I only applied to one school which was Howard University. And I got in, um. The application was, you know—I didn't have a problem with the application. I was in the advanced course at—at Western High School, it's called the A Course, which is the advanced college prep course. And you know, I didn't have a problem.

M. Wilson: Um-hm.

F. Wilson: Moving to Ho—getting into Howard was um—I think Howard was also known as one of the elite institutions back in the Caribbean, you know.

M. Wilson: Mm.

F. Wilson: Our prime minister taught at Howard for a while, early, back in the—like in the sixties or seventies. At that time everybody you know wanted to go to Howard, everybody in Trinidad knew about Howard University. It just, produced all these brilliant minds, so, yeah it was—it was fun. But I—I also missed my mother, you know. I wanted to come home every weekend until I started, you know, making friends and you know and...

M. Wilson: Um-hm.

F. Wilson: That slowly, slowly went away.

M. Wilson: Um-hm. So, tell me about Howard. The HBCU life.

F. Wilson: Howard made you feel as though, as a black person, you could do anything you wanted. Uh, if you felt insecure before, if you had low self-esteem, it gave you in my—in my opinion, the—the—it gave you—what can I say? What's the word? [pause] It made you feel like you're—you were invincible. You know people say, "Oh, it's a—it's a bubble," you know, "this is not the real world." But it—it to me, I mean, Howard made me more—what is it? I was more—I became more assertive. Um, more—my—my self-esteem rose. Um, yeah, yeah, I loved life at Howard.

M. Wilson: Are there any particular memories that you remember, or friends that you...

F. Wilson: Yeah.

M. Wilson: That you made?

F. Wilson: I friends—I still have friend till—till this day that I talk to every now and then. Um, my close friends from Howard, we still—we still communicate. Um, yeah. Um, although I must say the first year, I, you know had the roommate from hell, but other than that—

M. Wilson: Do you wanna speak about that a little bit, or?

F. Wilson: Oh no, I don't even wanna bring that up into the air.

M. Wilson: (chuckling) So besides, um any additional social aspects, um of Howard that really stick out to you from your time there?

F. Wilson: Um, no I just—just—I just loved Howard. I just loved being there, you know, being uh among people who looked like me, who, you know, weren't going to—oh, I—I, you know, one thing I—I did find out at Howard is that it wasn't class, it wasn't class disc—I mean it wasn't race discrimination, it was a lot of class discrimination, you know. Not—not um overtly, but you know, you can tell, you know. The girls from California and you know, it—versus, you

know, the girls from the South, and you know. There were—there were more—there is more class if your dad was a doctor, a dentist, or a lawyer, or you know, and your father was, you know, not one of those things, you know, you were the popular group, and so it's more of a class distinction at Howard.

M. Wilson: Um-hm. So where did you fall on that class distinction?

F. Wilson: Um I really didn't—um I think it's based on the—if you—if you took it on. I mean it's like—I—it really didn't bother me cause, you know, some of those California girls, those were the Valley Girls, but it wasn't like a major like, *Oh my God, I wish my parents were this and that!* No, it's like, *Okay, you do what you have to do.*

M. Wilson: And what did your parents do?

F. Wilson: My dad was a welder and my mom was a mental health counselor.

M. Wilson: Okay. Um, did that have any effect um on your college professional goals? Afterword? Cause you earlier on, you said you wanted to be a pediatrician.

F. Wilson: Yeah, um, I wanted to be a pediatrician—wanting something and actually doing—doing it is—are two different things (laughs). I went in with this grandiose idea of, *Oh my God I'm gonna go to med school.* Uh that wasn't the case. I did not like science classes, I hated all of em. And then my senior year, I called my mom crying, “Mom I don't know what to do! I don't want to go to medical school.” Um, I was, I—I did horribly my first year, it was just terrible. But then, you know, I got myself together and got on the dean's list a couple of times, um but, I called her crying, “I don't wanna go to medical school, I hate it.” She said, “Well okay, well you know, you can—if—why don't you just transfer to nursing? You know, you could always have a, um, your license, you could always work.” Okay, so I enrolled in the College of Nursing, and had to stay two extra years for my clinical. Clinicals. So yeah, that's how I became a nurse.

M. Wilson: So then what year did you graduate?

F. Wilson: I graduated in 1988.

M. Wilson: With what degree was this?

F. Wilson: Uh, Bachelor of Science in Nursing.

M. Wilson: And when did you come into Howard? Just to keep the dates?

F. Wilson: I came in in 1982, but I was supposed to graduate in 1986, but I grad—I had to stay two extra years to do my nursing clinicals.

M. Wilson: Okay. And did you do any other schooling, um after undergraduate?

F. Wilson: Yes, I did. I earned my Master's degree in Health Education from Howard University.

M. Wilson: And how was that process?

F. Wilson: Um, that process—

M. Wilson: Tell me about it.

F. Wilson: That—how was that process? That process—well I worked; I was working as the nurse at the hospital. Um, I said, *You know what, I'm gonna, um, have them pay for my Master's, that I had to pay for my undergraduate degree.* So, I did the tuition reimbursement, um, so I was a nurse there, and going to school in the evening, um. Well yeah, it was fine.

M. Wilson: Um-hm. And so, you were—you ca—at this time you were living in D.C.?

F. Wilson: Yes, I was. I was living um, actually on sixteen str—sixteenth street.

M. Wilson: Um-hm. And, is that also where you lived for undergrad? Um, just to backtrack. Were you—

F. Wilson: In undergrad I lived in the dorms. I lived in the dorms um on-campus for the first—for the first year, and then off-campus housing second and third year, and then um, yeah on

sixteenth street but not the same. The sixteenth street dorms I lived in undergrad for my last couple of years.

M. Wilson: Okay, so you moved to D.C. around what date was it? I mean what year, rather?

F. Wilson: 1982 when I graduated from Western High School.

M. Wilson: Okay, and then how long did you stay in D.C.? Did you continue to live there?

F. Wilson: Yeah, I lived there after I graduated. I worked at the hospital for seven years. Then I [pause] I met your father.

M. Wilson: Oh, so tell me about that process. How did you meet your spouse?

F. Wilson: At the hospital, he was a—he was um an—an intern. Was he an intern? No, he was the chief resident for Family Practice. Family Practice chief resident, and um, he was one of the doctors on the floor. And he would always um—whenever he had the patient, you know, the doctors had to have a somebody; if they were gonna perform a procedure, they needed a—a witness, so you call one of the nurses to be a witness. And I—I wasn't assigned to the patient, but he was always calling me to wit—have witness, you know, be a witness to the procedures. I was like, *Why is he always calling me to do that?* You know, and then we started talking, you know. And then, you know, when he was on call, when the doctor—when he was—when he was one of the doctors on call, we were like, “Oh God, Dr. Wilson is on call, okay so that's good, we're gonna have a good night, cause he always answers his pages.” And we started talking and then going out, and you know, eventually dated, and then got married, and had you and your sister.

M. Wilson: Um-hm. (laughs). So, what was it like to start a family, in the US specifically?

F. Wilson: Starting a family in the US. Um, it wasn't—it wasn't too bad because my mom was, you know, my mom was—to me she was like my best friend, she was my best friend. So, I knew my mom was gonna be there so, I—I didn't—I had no problems.

M. Wilson: Um-hm. So, um, what kind of cultures does your family ascribe to? The family that you started, ascribe to? Is there any specific cultural emphasis? Or—

F. Wilson: Yes, um, the—although my husband is—your dad, you know your dad is from Barbados, yeah, you know, um, but I'm from Trinidad, so we tried to have a—a West Indian household, with West Indian—tried to subscribe to the West Indian culture that I grew up with, and that he grew up with also.

M. Wilson: Um-hm. And how did you make your West Indian culture present in your children's lives?

F. Wilson: Um, by the foods that, you know, I cooked, the music we listened to, going to the Caribbean events, you know, that—the local Caribbean events.

M. Wilson: Um-hm.

F. Wilson: Um, things of that nature.

M. Wilson: Um-hm.

F. Wilson: Reading, and—and talking to you guys about our—the culture that, you know, that we—that we grew up in.

M. Wilson: [inaudible]

F. Wilson: Speaking the—speaking with a—with a native accent—not native, but with an accent.

M. Wilson: And how important was it to you to teach your family about your culture?

F. Wilson: It was very important, um. I wanted them to—since it was part of my culture, I wanted to pass that onto my children. Um, although they were born in America, I still, you know, believed that, you know, they—they were Caribbean-Americans.

M. Wilson: And is there something specific, in your parenting tactics that you did to make sure that they stayed in touch with their roots? Your roots.

F. Wilson: As—as I stated (laughs)—as per my last sentence, um you know the cooking, the—the cooking, the—the you know, going to the different festivals, the Caribbean festivals, the local festivals. Um, keeping in contact with family members, um, visiting, whenever we could.

M. Wilson: How often did you visit home? Your home?

F. Wilson: When?

M. Wilson: Um, once you had a family.

F. Wilson: Once we had a family.

M. Wilson: Your family.

F. Wilson: Yeah, once I had a family, we basically went to um, to my husband's country Bar—Barbados, once a year. To your father's country, once a year, and sometimes twice a year. But we didn't really go back to Trinidad because my parents were still living here, and we had like distant, not distant, but cousins, but we weren't that close to the cousins, and I think my grandma, my grandmother, she died—oh Lord, my poor grandmother, she died before we—before I actually got married. So um, you know it was like, there's no use going back there [to Trinidad], we can just go t—to Barbados, because you know you have your grandmother and your grandfather who are still alive um in Barbados. But your grandmother—my mother and father were still up here, so we didn't see the need to go back to Trinidad as often. But as we got older, we visited Trinidad more often.

M. Wilson: And you mentioned um your grandmother passed away before you—you got married. When did you get married?

F. Wilson: I got married um...

M. Wilson: If you remember a rough date. [inaudible]

F. Wilson: Um in—in 1995.

M. Wilson: Um-hm.

F. Wilson: August of 1995.

M. Wilson: Do you wanna tell me a little bit about that, the wedding?

F. Wilson: Well, we had a, um, we had a—what was it? A justice of—of the peace, um, ceremony in August of '95, and then uh the church ceremony in F—February of 1996 in Barbados.

M. Wilson: [long pause] Okay, wonderful. Um. Also, by this time, had you become a citizen? Or, when did you become...

F. Wilson: Oh.

M. Wilson: A citizen?

F. Wilson: When did I become a citizen? Oh my God that's a good question, I don't even know. Oh, I was a um, I was a permanent resident for a while, and oh, yeah this is interesting. Permanent resident for a while, but I never really wanted to be a citizen, I just you know—I just had that tie to Trinidad, I—I figured you know I'm a US [Trinidadian] citizen, that's good enough. I had my green card, that was good enough, you know, I—I didn't want to give up my citizenship—my Trinidadian citizenship. But um, somehow, I can't—I can't remember how—why I changed—why that changed. But I know I held on to that US—to that—to being a green card holder for a long time. I—I just didn't want be a citizen, an American citizen. I—but I can't remember why I actually changed it.

M. Wilson: Um-hm.

F. Wilson: But anyway— oh yeah, I was tryna hold on to that, to being Trinidadian for the longest—for as long as possible.

M. Wilson: Mm.

F. Wilson: I think I was here for like, close to twenty-something years before I actually became a citizen. Although, I could have done it earlier, I just didn't want to.

M. Wilson: Mm. Did you want to stay close to home? You said that you didn't quite know why. Were—

F. Wilson: Yeah, I—I just didn't want to—I just didn't want to be—I didn't want to be an American. I wanted to be a Trinidadian living in America; I didn't want to be—I didn't want to give up my Trinidadian citizenship.

M. Wilson: Um-hm. Great. Um, so now I wanted to ask a little bit about your role as a mother. Um, define what it means to be a mother in your terms.

F. Wilson: (sighs) Being a mother is having unconditional love for your children. Being uh an example that they can—they can look up to.

M. Wilson: And, uh, describe your role as a mother. Who are you as a mother, if you were to describe it yourself? Who—what is Franka Wilson as the mom?

F. Wilson: As a mom I think I um, I'm str—I'm strict at times, I'm very, very strict about education. And um, education, and also, I have a problem with, okay, with rude children. I—disrespectful children—I just cannot tolerate that. I think—I believe in that, um, that—that old saying that children should be seen and not heard, um. I find that when I came over here, I—ch—I don't know, people had too many—children had too many rights. You know, like when adults were talking, they were all—I was like, *No, you say hello, and you greet the person, and then you go inside, you go somewhere else.* I ju—I don't know.

M. Wilson: Um-hm. So, you said, you mentioned the quote children should be seen or not—and not heard. Did you implement that—that idea um when you were parenting your own children, and if so, how?

F. Wilson: Yes, um, because, as you are aware, um, you know when we had company, you know, you would—you and your sister, would greet the company, say hello, but you weren't involved in, you know, what was going on, you would go to your room afterwards, you—I didn't have to tell you, because you already—you know, you knew you—this is adult—are—you know, this was an interaction with adults; you had nothing to do with it. Yeah so, that's one of the ways I, uh, implemented that practice.

M. Wilson: And where do you think that preference for that practice came from?

F. Wilson: From my own upbringing in Trinidad.

M. Wilson: Hmm.

F. Wilson: You know, my—my grandmother, we had guests, you know, we wouldn't, (chuckles) you know, we would say hello and then we would go back, you know, to our rooms, and like, goodnight or whatever.

M. Wilson: Hmm. And then you also said that you had uh a key, uh, emphasis on education as well. Um, how did you implement that when parenting?

F. Wilson: Um, by researching, you know, what schools my—my kids were gonna go to; what books they're gonna read. Um, I also believed in, what we called lessons back in Trinidad, it's like um, ex—what is it, what do you call it over here? Um, where you—you help—what is it? Augment, what the child is learning. It's um, so they can be better. Something like Kumon, I—I believe in that, I believe in that. Um, anything, that'll—that'll push the child to be better than—than, you know, than average.

M. Wilson: And do you feel like you were successful in that endeavor?

F. Wilson: Yes, I do. I have two intelligent, beautiful daughters. I'm so proud of you guys.

M. Wilson: What makes you specifically proud of us in that educational sector, any achievements that you—

F. Wilson: Yes, um, my daughter, Micayla, of course, you know you got the Banneker-Key Scholar program and—and the Honor's program, and my other daughter Malia is in the—also is, in the—in the Honors Program at University of Maryland. So, I'm very proud of you all, and you—both of you got into some exceptionally, wonderful universities.

M. Wilson: Wonderful. Um, and do you feel like you were a key contributor to their success, your children, us?

F. Wilson: I, um, I believe, yeah, your father and I, um, yeah. There was no television, as you know, no television during the weekdays, when there was school, during schooltime. Onl—you guys only looked at television, you know, on Friday nights or Saturday, but when it came to the week—weekdays, there was no TV at all. You come home, you have a snack, you do your homework, you know.

M. Wilson: Why no TV?

F. Wilson: Because there—I thought it was brainless, it—school, that—that TV-watching—watching TV should, I believed, was a treat that you get—you got on the weekends. During the weekday, it was school. After that, you know, Friday, Saturday, you can watch as much TV—although you didn't. Um, I know you wanted to, but, you know, um that's—that—Fridays and Saturdays were, you know, when you could watch, a um, limited amount of television, but not during the week. I was not a believer in watching TV during the weekdays. During school nights. And I didn't believe in—in doing anything on a school night, um, although you guys had extracurricular activities, but like, say to go and visit somebody's house—no, I just didn't believe that. School was number one important—was one of the important... [pause]

M. Wilson: Important?

F. Wilson: Was—was very important, was—your education was very important to your father and uh me.

M. Wilson: Um-hm. So, if you were to describe a Trinidadian mother, what—what about a woman would make her a Trinidadian mother? Any characteristics? How would you describe a Trinidadian mother?

F. Wilson: I would say basically a Trinidadian mother is very loving and kind. She welcomes everyone, you know, with open arms, um. You know, if you have, if you came to her house, the first thing she would say, "Are you hungry? Would you like something to drink?" She would you know try to feed you as much as she could; whatever she had she would give it to you. That's—I think it's because my grandmother was like that. Even though, you know, when I lived—we lived with my grandmother, we didn't really have a lot, but anybody who came to visit, she would give them, you know, she would offer them, whatever we had, and I think that was—that's where we got it from, but, well my cousin and I. And, well I guess most—most Trinidadians, you know, they—they are very hospitable.

M. Wilson: Um-hm.

F. Wilson: You know, um, first thing they want to do when they come to the house, they would like to feed you.

M. Wilson: Mm-hm. And that's specifically Trinidadian mothers, or just Trinidadians in general?

F. Wilson: I think—I think probably Trinidadian—uh Trinidadians in general.

M. Wilson: Um-hm. Any other specific traits of that are specific or unique to a Trinidadian mother that you think um stand out? Not specific to you, but like if you were to think of a Trinidadian mother, what does she [inaudible] like?

F. Wilson: I think she...

M. Wilson: How does she—

F. Wilson: Yeah, she's um, she's also very strict at times, um, and also, you know, um, I think they also adopted that phi—philosophy of, you know, children should be seen and not heard. Um, you know, there's—there's a time and place for everything. When adults are, you know, engaging in conversation or, you know, or socializing, you know, you say your hello's and then you—and then you leave.

M. Wilson: Um-hm. And I mention—I heard a little—a couple—a little bit of repetition, “seen and not heard,” um, things of that nature. What traits of a Trinidadian mother do you think that you have or you took into your motherhood?

F. Wilson: I think I took in everything I said.

M. Wilson: Okay. And what do you—what is traits of an American mother, if you could describe one?

F. Wilson: (sighs)

M. Wilson: To you?

F. Wilson: To me?

M. Wilson: If you have multiple, you can share those or. What would you attribute to an American mother?

F. Wilson: What?

M. Wilson: If you have multiple definitions of an American mother, you can share those.

F. Wilson: Oh, um. [long pause] An Ameri—I think Ameri—I think, um, this is a may—may not—may or may not be true, but I think American mothers, they believe in freedom of expression for their children, you know that—and they have—their kids have a lot of, um, quote unquote rights.

M. Wilson: [inaudible]

F. Wilson: I know, um basically um, you know, if—if t—the child, um, doesn't want to like, you know, say participate in something, um, “okay, well it's your right,” you know. No, I—it's not, you know, I would say, I didn't force you guys, you know, even with piano lesson, you know, you didn't really like it, but, you know, I thought it was something, you know, useful. And, um, I—I just believe that a lot of American children have, just have too many rights.

M. Wilson: Um-hm.

F. Wilson: Right, I don't know, maybe—that sounds kind of weird, doesn't it?

M. Wilson: It's okay, it's your definition (laughs). It's your definition. Any other attributes of what a—an American mother looks like, or acts like or thinks like?

F. Wilson: I don't—I think everybody is different, so I don't know. Um, I'm not—I can't—I can't speak on that, you know specifically, but, in general. I guess every mother wants to, you know, be the best mother for their children, and to love their children unconditionally, and every—no matter what culture you are in, but I guess every culture is different so.

M. Wilson: Um-hm. And of those traits that you mentioned of an American mother, do you think you have any of those? You mentioned some of the Trinidadian mother that you have, but any of the American mother that you have?

F. Wilson: Um, no.

M. Wilson: Um-hm.

F. Wilson: Damn it.

M. Wilson: Um, okay. Um, so I know you mention you don't really have traits of an American mother, but has American culture or life in America as an immigrant, shaped your idea of motherhood or like, how you...

F. Wilson: No.

M. Wilson: Mother?

F. Wilson: No that—it didn't. Because is still believe in my um, my—my Caribbean background, the way I was raised, you know, um. Yeah.

M. Wilson: Yeah.

F. Wilson: I don't think it shaped me.

M. Wilson: And, but the Trinidadian culture, you were saying...

F. Wilson: Yeah.

M. Wilson: It did? Okay.

M. WILSON: And you attribute that to whom or to what specifically do you think of the Trinidadian culture shapes your parenting tactics?

F. Wilson: My...

M. Wilson: If I mentioned that.

F. Wilson: The way, you know, the way I saw my—how my grandmother, you know she dealt with certain situations. My mom—how my mom dealt with certain situations.

M. Wilson: And I—okay so, you had essentially two parents. You had your—or two sets of parents, your grandmother and your mother and father. What were the differences in the parenting styles, if you could describe them? Were they different, similar, how was that? Like—

F. Wilson: My mom and, and my grandmother basically had the same parenting style. Um, although, my grandmother was a little more um, a little more strict in the fact that she—she didn't really want—she, you had to be home at a certain time, you know, when you—if you—you're expected to come home for—if school let out at three o' clock, you're expected to be home by a certain time, and if you didn't come home by that time, you know, you'd get in trouble. But my mom—my mom was a little more, um, a little more lenient.

M. Wilson: Okay.

F. Wilson: My dad was strict though.

M. Wilson: Um-hm. Okay. Um. [pause] Let's see. Do you feel like you've shaped your children's cultural identity?

F. Wilson: Yes.

M. Wilson: And how? Could you talk a little bit about that?

F. Wilson: Um. By, you know, ah, the way I—the way I raised them, you know. Um, I think I imparted my beliefs on how—on how to raise children. I think that came from my grandmother and my mother. Um—

M. Wilson: Okay. And then just to wrap up more about the motherhood, what about—what about your role as a mother do you take pride in? Like what do you take pride in as a mother?

F. Wilson: The fact that my kids are respectful, they're um, kind. They're—they are very—they have a good heart, you know. I raised my kids to—to be kind to everybody, do not judge, um, you know, just be basically good human beings.

M. Wilson: Um-hm.

F. Wilson: You know, anybody you see, if somebody needs help, you know, you go ahead and help—offer help. Um, I—my kids, I think they're very sm—two beautiful, well-rounded girls.

M. Wilson: Um-hm.

F. Wilson: I—and some of the things that I hear I would—I will say, I—my—I know my children would never ever do that, or never say that to somebody, when I hear of all these horror stories of kids bullying and stuff. I said I know my kids will never do that. They would never do that.

M. Wilson: Um-hm. And do you, why do think that is? As a result of your parenting, or is that individual characteristics of your children?

F. Wilson: I think it's all—I think it's a combination.

M. Wilson: Um-hm. So, I wanted to talk about, a little bit about your definition of home. Where is home for you?

F. Wilson: For me, home is Trinidad.

M. Wilson: Trinidad? Okay. Um, or, and is there any—that—was that—would you say that's where you feel most at home, or is there any place that you feel most at home?

F. Wilson: Um. Well—well I feel most at home when I'm home with my children.

M. Wilson: Um-hm. So, you would define your home as in Trinidad and with your children?

F. Wilson: Yeah.

M. Wilson: Those two places. And why? What about your children or what about Trinidad—like why is that home for you? Compared to say, Baltimore, compared to say, D.C., compared to the other places you've lived, that have housed you, why are those two—two things home?

F. Wilson: Because, this might—there are, you know, um Trinidad, I, you know, I was there until my formative years, and I think, you know, uh, growing up in Trini—I—I sometimes I feel like I don't belong in this country. I—sometimes I just wanna go back home. I want to go back to where I was born, the land of my birth. I—I just have that sense, I don't know why. I—maybe it's because of the—I'm thinking maybe it's because of the climate, or—but then when I go visit, and I'm on a plane, and I just—I was like, *Oh my God, it's just like everything just seems so strange. Like you have to come back here.* Although, there's a lot of opportunity in America, don't get me wrong, you know, but there's just something different about, you know, wanting to be where you were raised as a child.

M. Wilson: Um-hm. And you were raised as—in Baltimore as well as a child...

F. Wilson: Yes, I was.

M. Wilson: So why, why—

F. Wilson: But like I said, I was born in Trinidad, I spent my formative years in Trinidad, so...

M. Wilson: Um-hm.

F. Wilson: That's—that's where I would prefer to be.

M. Wilson: Um-hm. And would you say—oh, how many times do you visit home, or like how often are you in your home, would you say with your children or in Trinidad, how many times do you spend time in those homes?

F. Wilson: Um, well since my mom was sick, it was like two or three times a year, it was just in the past ten years, but before then, um, it was sporadic. We would go for weddings or something of that nature, but, like I said, we'd also go to Barbados, which is in the Caribbean, um. But now, um, at least once a year.

M. Wilson: Um-hm, at least once a year. And you mentioned before your mom gets sick. Did you wanna speak a little bit about that? Um, what was she sick with?

F. Wilson: My mom had—was diagnosed with Alzheimer's, she had it for ten years. So, we were back and forth, um. I—I know I didn't want to put her in a nursing home, there was—there was not—never gonna be an issue of that. I wanted somebody to take care of her, a family member to take care of her. Um, and because up here, it's—everything is so expensive, nursing homes, um

and you don't have that, that sense of—to me, you don't have that sense of community, where, back home, you would have, even if it's a neighbor, you know, you would say, "Okay," you know, "You can just come in and watch so and so." Or, people were in and out of each other's homes, and—up here, everybody's so closed off, you don—you know, you don't even know some of the people on the stre—that live on your street. Um, but I wanted somebody who was a family um member. So, we took her back, you know, back to Trinidad so my cousin took care of her. Um, yeah so, but I'm glad she—glad she's—she is in Trinidad, buried in Trinidad.

M. Wilson: Um-hm.

F. Wilson: Um. Yeah.

M. Wilson: And when did she pass?

F. Wilson: In nineteen—nineteen, sorry in twenty-eighteen.

M. Wilson: Um. Okay. Okay, um. And do you think, wa—that was the best place for her to be—
[inaudible]

F. Wilson: Yea I think it was the best place for her, cause my family was there, you know.

M. Wilson: Okay.

F. Wilson: Um, I didn't want a stranger taking care of her, uh, I didn't—I didn't want—she was definitely not going to go into a nursing home.

M. Wilson: Um-hm okay. Um and in your home—um you mentioned being with your kids as one home and being in Trinidad as another home—do you belong to a particular community, or tribe, or ethnic group, or social group? Are there any groups that you belong to?

F. Wilson: Um, y—not particularly, I mean, I um, I volunteer. I do a lot of—I used to do a lot of volunteering when, when you were all in school. Um, I belong to the Catholic Church, volunteering there every now and then, but not—not to say a particular, uh group.

M. Wilson: Um-hm. And do you continue volunteering or is that just solely when you were raising your children...

F. Wilson: Well, well I...

M. Wilson: When they were younger?

F. Wilson: I continue to volunteer now as well. You know with the Red Cross and the Alzheimer's Association.

M. Wilson: Um-hm. Tell me a little bit about your jobs there, or your work there.

F. Wilson: Um...

M. Wilson: For each.

F. Wilson: Basically outreach, we do outreach for the Alzheimer's Association to get word out about, you know, find—help finding a cure. Do a lot of fundraising, and I just started the Red Cross, um volunteering with the Red Cross um in September of this year—of last year.

M. Wilson: Um-hm.

F. Wilson: Um, basically the same.

M. Wilson: Um-hm. So, I know you went to nursing school, but now you're volunteering. What was the job process up until now.

F. Wilson: Um...

M. Wilson: After graduating?

F. Wilson: After I graduated from nursing school, I worked for seven years, and I, um—then I said I met your d—no, what is it? We got married in 1995. Yeah, I was a nurse for seven years at Howard University Hospital. Um, got my Master's, got married, and then I decided I wanted to be a stay-at-home mom.

M. Wilson: Um-hm.

F. Wilson: I wanted to stay home and raise my children. I didn't want to go to work, and have them in daycare, I—I didn't want to do any of that. So, luckily, thank the Lord, you know, I was able to do that. Um, so I stayed home for 10 years, and then I was also volunteering with a Girl Scout—Girl Scout Troop Leader, you know, I worked at the—I volunteered at the, um, Attorney General's office. They had a Health Advocacy unit. With my nursing background I—I did that as well. Also, volun—volunteered at the Immigration Outreach Service Center. Did a lot of volunteering while um I was um also raising the kids, raising you kid—raising you girls.

M. Wilson: Um-hm.

F. Wilson: Um, and then, af—after um ten years, I decided I, you know, I wanted to go back to work. So, I went back on a part-time basis. So, I was at the Maryland Department of Health. There for ten years. And then they relocated to Annapolis, and then I'm currently doing per-diem, which is as-needed nursing. But right now, I'm on a break, so.

M. Wilson: Um-hm. So, you—you've been in a lot of positions, um, Girl Scout council—uh leader, IOSC, um, working in the Department of Health, and now per-diem nurse. Is there any favorite that you have, or any memories you want to talk about from any of those positions that you really stick out?

F. Wilson: I loved—I enjoyed, really enjoyed working at the, um, Attorney General's office. Um, I'm sorry, volunteering at the Attorney General's office. I really enjoyed that. Um, I was also thinking—while I was doing that, I was thinking about going to law school. Um, but then that changed. (laughter) I took a class, I—I applied, and then I—there was this um, what was it, I forgot. The summer program, I got it, I—I was accepted into before you go to law school. But I—I got an A in one class, and then didn't do well in the other class. I was like, *Okay, this is really—maybe this is not for me.*

M. Wilson: Um-hm, okay.

F. Wilson: Um, but I really enjoyed my work at the Attorney General's office, um. Yeah.

M. Wilson: Um, what does—do you thinking your work there influenced your, um, thoughts of becoming a lawyer?

F. Wilson: No, no...

M. Wilson: Oh.

F. Wilson: I wanted to become a lawyer before that.

M. Wilson: Okay.

F. Wilson: Yeah.

M. Wilson: When did those professional thoughts like get—come into mind? After nursing, or was that still in undergrad?

F. Wilson: That, that wasn't in undergrad—well, I don't know, I was—maybe I didn't really have a um (laughter) a what is it? A guidance counselor to guide me, because I was like all over the place. I wanted to be a pediatrician...

M. Wilson: Um-hm.

F. Wilson: And then I wanted to be a lawyer...

M. Wilson: Yes.

F. Wilson: And so, I was like, *okay*. I—I actually, after I graduated, and after I was working as a nurse, some other nurses—uh nurse friends, we were like, *We should go to law school, we should all go to law school.* I was like, *okay*.

M. Wilson: Um-hm.

F. Wilson: I think that's where it stemmed from.

M. Wilson: Okay. And in nursing school, or after nursing school?

F. Wilson: Yeah.

M. Wilson: Um, and what was it like, being a Girl Scout leader? Tell me about that because that was—

F. Wilson: Yeah, that's interesting, because I—I consider myself to be shy. I don't really like speaking in front of crowds or groups. So, becoming a Girl Scout leader was uh out of my comfort zone.

M. Wilson: Hmm.

F. Wilson: But it was very interesting because I got to be the leader for your troop and your sister's troop, um it was—I enjoyed it. You know, I became friends with the other moms, which was very—I really enjoyed it.

M. Wilson: Um-hm. Wonderful. And then IOSC? [inaudible]

F. Wilson: The Immigration Outreach Service Center. I became involved in that, that was affiliated with the church, because I was also thinking about going to law school, so I was, you know—I thought maybe that would help as well.

M. Wilson: Um-hm.

F. Wilson: Um but also, you know, helping the, um, asylum-seekers, you know, with their paperwork was also—was also very interesting. I enjoyed that as well.

M. Wilson: So, you mentioned that IOSC was affiliated with the church. What church is this?

F. Wilson: St. Matthew's Catholic Church.

M. Wilson: Okay, and do you attend this church? Are you...

F. Wilson: Yes, I am a member.

M. Wilson: Do you belong to this church?

F. Wilson: Yes, I'm a member of the church.

M. Wilson: Um-hm. And what kind of religion is this? Or—

F. Wilson: Catholic. Catholicism.

M. Wilson: Were you always Catholic? And were you raised as a Catholic?

F. Wilson: Yes, I was.

M. Wilson: Okay. And were your guardians Catholic...

F. Wilson: Yes.

M. Wilson: As well?

F. Wilson: They were.

M. Wilson: Okay. And then um, you began working in the Maryland Department of Health, am I correct?

F. Wilson: Yes.

M. Wilson: Okay. Um, what was that like? For ten years... [inaudible]

F. Wilson: Yeah, that was um...

M. Wilson: When you came back.

F. Wilson: My first job after, you know, after ten years of being a stay-at-home mom.

M. Wilson: And when did that start? What date?

F. Wilson: That started in nineteen—um, no, in twenty—in 2008.

M. Wilson: Okay.

F. Wilson: In 2008. That was interesting. Um, I—I enjoyed that as well. Um, I was a—a nurse auditor with the Sexual Assault Reimbursement unit. Basically, um there were three nurses for the entire state of Maryland. We handled all the sexual assault cases for the entire state.

M. Wilson: Um-hm.

F. Wilson: So, um, reading, um, you know—and sometimes, you know, you'd be overwhelmed with the cases, and you know, and especially when it involved children, but...

M. Wilson: Um-hm.

F. Wilson: You know, you—you got used to it.

M. Wilson: Um-hm. That's a pretty intense topic to deal with, um. What made you want to work as a nurse auditor for these specific cases?

F. Wilson: Well, um, I—the—the hours were—were what were really appealing.

M. Wilson: Um-hm.

F. Wilson: The fact that it was part-time, three-days a week, um. You know, I didn't want to do clinical nursing, I didn't want to work in a hospital anymore.

M. Wilson: Um-hm.

F. Wilson: Um, so this was a non-clinical position, so...

M. Wilson: Um-hm.

F. Wilson: I said you know, let me see what this—what this is about.

M. Wilson: Alright. And is there any particular reason why you didn't want to work in clinical? You said you didn't want to.

F. Wilson: I—I, you know, I worked in—as a nurse in the hospital for over seven years. And I just had enough, you know sometimes—you know there are all types of nursing. You can work in the hospital, doctor's office, law office. And I—I just, you know, realized, clinical nursing was not for me. It's just—you have a lot of burnout, and I—I did it, now it was time to do something—try another aspect of nursing.

M. Wilson: Um-hm. Did you—so you felt burnout? [inaudible]

F. Wilson: Yeah, I did, I did. You know, and there were days where you wouldn't—couldn't even eat lunch, you were so tired. You couldn't even walk to your car. Working in a hospital as a nurse is very stressful.

M. Wilson: Um-hm.

F. Wilson: So yeah.

M. Wilson: Any specific things that stick out to you or that told you, *Oh this is very stressful, I don't want to do this anymore?*

F. Wilson: Yeah um, like I said, you know, you were so tired. You'd do twelve-hour shifts. You were so tired you couldn't even walk to your car. Um, it was just a lot. Um, and when I was working at the hospital, I did three years of med-surg, a year of, um—what is it? Um, transplant. And then I did three years on the oncology unit, and yeah, I think the oncology unit was the worst one. Cause you would see patients that, you know, were your age in the bed, you know, cancer, and so it's like, *That could be me*. You know, it would get to you sometimes. *That could be me in that bed*. There were no history, of—of cancer in the—no history of cancer in the family, and, you know, young girl getting her Master's, and all of the sudden, it's like, oh my gosh.

M. Wilson: Um-hm.

F. Wilson: Yeah so, that was—that would be emotionally draining at times.

M. Wilson: Um-hm. So, you said that was quite draining and you knew you didn't want to do clinicals anymore. Of the multiple jobs or positions that you've held, which one was your favorite?

F. Wilson: Um, work paying? Nonpaying or non—

M. Wilson: Or whichever position...

F. Wilson: Um...

M. Wilson: Paying or nonpaying, you can do either.

F. Wilson: I would say the um, working at the Attorney General's office, I enjoyed that.

M. Wilson: Um-hm. And why? Any specific reason why?

F. Wilson: Um, the fact that you get to negotiate on behalf of the—of the consumer, and you know, you interact with the attorneys on the phone, with the doctor's office, and try to negotiate on their behalf. I enjoyed that type of work.

M. Wilson: Um-hm. So, it seems like, besides the Girl Scout leader and the IOSC that everything had a health relation. Would you still say that health is still, um, a passion of yours or something that you're interested in? Cause it—it was a common theme in your positions.

F. Wilson: Yes, it is.

M. Wilson: Wonderful. And do you plan to continue your time with Alzheimer's Association and...

F. Wilson: Um.

M. Wilson: Red Cross, or any other new interests that you have?

F. Wilson: Uh, yeah, well, the Red Cross, I'm—I've just joined the Red Cross so um, I'm looking forward to seeing what are the opportunities, you know, what they have to offer. Um, the Alzheimer's—yeah, I plan on—on helping them with their um walks and fundraising every now and then. Not as involved as I was before.

M. Wilson: Alright. And so, I've asked you a lot about your home, um, your culture. Is there any time when you haven't felt at home? I know you gave me some— [inaudible]

F. Wilson: When I haven't felt at home where?

M. Wilson: Um, in America. Cause I've asked you about your home, you said Trinidad was your home. Was there any place or— [inaudible]

F. Wilson: I think why—I don't feel at home when it—when it's fall and winter, cause I do not like the cold.

M. Wilson: Um-hm.

F. Wilson: I just do not like it.

M. Wilson: Um-hm.

F. Wilson: So, um, during the summer I can tolerate it, but the fall and winter, it—it becomes a little drag, and dreary, and depressing. I just feel like, I just want to go back to Trinidad.

M. Wilson: Go back to Trinidad okay. Um. Okay. Uh so, the main culture that you identify with, what would you say it was? If you were to—cause you've lived so many places—

F. Wilson: Trinidad.

M. Wilson: Trinidad. And how are you continuing to stay connected with this culture, if you stay connected with this culture?

F. Wilson: Um, by, you know, visiting. Um, you know, continuing to prepare the same types of food I prepare, listen to the type of music, um, any activities or—or any um social activities that involves you know the Caribbean culture, you know, I'm—I'm usually a part of it, um. Yeah.

M. Wilson: What kind of foods do you cook, or activities? You mentioned food, activities—

F. Wilson: Food, um. You know the, um, curry chicken, um, plantains, dumplings with soup, um.

M. Wilson: Okay. And then activities, you said you— [inaudible]

F. Wilson: Activities, um the carnivals, are usually—um, we attend, you know, the most—the carnivals. Um, which is customary. Um, any—anything dealing with the Caribbean culture, um, I usually try to—to do it as much as I can. Um, if there are books by Caribbean authors, I usually go to their book signings or things of that nature.

M. Wilson: Um-hm. Wonderful. Well, is there anything else that you'd like to tell me or discuss before we finish? Any other aspects about you, your culture, motherhood, education?

F. Wilson: I—I just want to say that, um, don't get me wrong, I enjoy living in America, it has a, you know—I really do. But um, but Trinidad will always be my home.

M. Wilson: Okay. Well, thank you very much for this interview. Um, I had a wonderful time. I hope you enjoyed it too.

F. Wilson: Thank you my dear daughter.

M. Wilson: Wonderful.

Addendum:

M. Wilson: This is Micayla Wilson, interviewing Franka Wilson, um on the sixth of March 2020 in Catonsville, Maryland. This is an addendum to the previous interview.

F. Wilson: I remember you asked me about um, my trip from Trinidad to America, when we finally, um, came here for good. I remember my brother and I, we, um—it was Pan-Am, Pan-Am Airlines, Pan-American Airlines. And we were—we were—since we were two children—my brother was nine, I was eleven—they had us in first-class. Um, and we kept looking back at the other people, and we were like, “Why can't we be back with them?” Cause there was only like about two or three people in the first class. We were so upset, we were like we wanted to be back in the back with the other people, you know, making noise and laughing and we were like—but then we realized that, although it was first-class— but, and you know as a child, you didn't want to be up there by yourself, you know. But, yeah. I guess it was—it was all good.

M. Wilson: Wonderful, thank you. Anything else that you'd like to add before wrapping up the interview?

F. Wilson: No, um. I just wanted to say I'm so proud of you and continue the good work.

M. Wilson: Thank you. Great.