

# Jessica Muhammad

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Fulton County Schools Archives, Teaching Museum South, Hapeville, Georgia

*Jessica Muhammad (formerly Jessica Allen) was born in Fayette County, Georgia in the 1950s. She attended elementary school in both Fayette County and for a time in the city of Atlanta. After moving to College Park, she attended Eva Thomas High School and College Park High School – eventually graduating from Henry M. Turner High School (City of Atlanta) in 1971. Muhammad was a student leader in the sit-ins and protests surrounding Eva Thomas High in 1969 and carried her activism into her adulthood, when she worked on both Lonnie King's and Andrew Young's campaigns to win the US congressional seat from Georgia's Fifth District.*

**JM:**

Yeah. Well, I'm now looking through this yearbook. Eva Thomas High School for the year of '66, 1966 and, actually, this this was before my time. I think I came in '67 from Fayette County Training School.

**MS:**

What does it mean a training school?

**JM:**

I'm so glad you asked. In the days of segregation. Here in the South. Most of the schools were distinguished by having training school to indicate the black school. Okay. The white schools were just regular high schools, or elementary schools. But for the Black schools, they were training schools. So that's a carryover from the mentality that African American people apparently did not have the aptitude for Scholastic academic work, but we're better off being trained. To do I suppose manual labor, labor for the industrial era.

**MS:**

Industrial training. Yeah. For sure. Well, so. So, you came from Fayette County. So, let's, let's go back there. And let's talk about if you would just kind of tell us about your childhood.

**JM:**

Oh.

**MS:**

Tell us about your family.

**JM:**

Yeah, I will. So, my mother. Her name was Airy (sp.?) Arnold. And her parents were Mamie and John Henry Arnold. Mamie came from an Arnold owner. Her family did and so did John Henry. So, Mamie Arnold married John Henry Arnold. Now, that does not mean that they were not the same slave master. Matter of

fact the story we were told is that Parker Arnold owned most of the Arnold's who descended or came out of that enslavement.

**MS:**

So, your grandparents? Your directly, they were slaves?

**JM:**

No, no, no. But my great, great grandparents were.

**MS:**

Great, great grandparents.

**JM:**

Yes.

**MS:**

And they had they-

**JM:**

They were Arnold's as well.

**MS:**

They took the name of the master.

**JM:**

Yes, yes, they took the name of the Master.

**MS:**

Was that typical?

**JM:**

Yes, that was typical. And I'm told that it was typical, because with plantations having the name of the owner after emancipation in the so-called freeing of the enslaved then- they- we were seeking our families. So, the way to know how to find your family, was that, okay, they were at the Arnold plantation. So, if you were sold off to somebody in Alabama, then the way to look for your people would be the go back to where you came from. And that would be the Arnold. So, there was some kind of connection there.

**MS:**

I see. Yeah, there was no other way. Yeah.

**JM:**

Yeah, well, identity. Yes. And, of course, you know, back then, if you've looked at this movie 13<sup>th</sup>... Or if you know anything about the 13th Amendment, you were subjected to being imprisoned, if you are walking

these roads without an address. Loitering could get you in the chain gang. And you being leased back to the same plantation owner that you just got free from.

**MS:**

And this is this is pre-Civil War, then,

**JM:**

No, this is Post- Civil War. Right. So, if you get a chance to look at that, if you haven't seen it, Netflix, 13th amendment.

**MS:**

I'm going to write that down.

**JM:**

Directed by Ava DuVernay.

**MS:**

And so, you had siblings?

**JM:**

Yes, I have five siblings. I was born on 54 highway and Fayette County by a midwife, same midwife that delivered me, delivered my mother. And this was during Jim Crow time and a very terrorizing period for my family. Because we were sharecroppers. Yeah. And so, we were subjected to really the laws of Jim Crow, you know, very segregated. My grandfather worked for \$5 a week to plow and cultivate the fields for the landowner. And my grandfather died at the age of 52. From alcoholism because that was his way of anesthetizing himself against the inhuman, almost, uh, well dehumanizing practices of that time.

**MS:**

That's your grandfather?

**JM:**

Yes. My grandfather John Henry Arnold.

**MS:**

Do you remember him?

**JM:**

Oh, of course I do. Yeah, he was a manly man, in so many ways. Great farmer. Mechanical. He was, he was a hunter gatherer of all of those things that probably Davy Crockett would do. That's right. Yeah.

**MS:**

And that Fayette County for our researchers is, where is that, according to Atlanta?

**JM:**

That's about 30 minutes. Less than now, of course, but just about 30 minutes south of Atlanta... right there, you know, that now is considered Fayette County... part of Metropolitan Atlanta. But back then it was like a world away. I have so many stories from my grandparents about how my granddaddy would come to Atlanta to get certain supplies and whatnot. But it was like a weekend trip. Yeah. Because they had you know, buggies... well, wagons and a mule that they traveled. Yeah.

**MS:**

Sure. So that was a n- So that's the context in which your parents then...grew up on a on a farm. Yes, yes. With your grandparents being sharecroppers.

**JM:**

Yes. And may I say this?

**MS:**

Absolutely.

**JM:**

Um, my father grew up in Henry County.

**MS:**

Okay.

**JM:**

And his situation was similar but dissimilar in that his parents were landowners. They owned their little land that their house was on. So, the sharecropping situation was much different from my father's situation, which he seemed to have had more opportunity, as a result of not being in this sharecropping kind of thing.

**MS:**

And it kind of speaks to the fact that it was, you know, it's so complicated. Everybody's individual, where they come from, right?

**JM:**

Yeah.

**MS:**

It's not-

**JM:**

Yeah.

**MS:**

It's not all sharecropper, all landowner. There's so many backgrounds. There's not one story. There's... there's a common thread in Jim Crow.

**JM:**

That's right. That's right for my, my paternal grandfather, who I never met, by the way. He died a couple of years before I was born. But he would catch a train and come to Atlanta and worked in the state building, the state capitol as a janitor. So, he made money that way. Yeah, he was able to take care of his family that way. And my great grandmother on- well, no, my grandmother. No, she was my great grandmother. My great grandmother was a teacher, and the school was next door to their house. And so, she went to Spelman before Spelman became Spelman College. Yeah. So, you know, there was a big, a great contrast. My grandma, great mother on my mother's side, my maternal grandmother. She went as far as eighth grade. But that's where schools stopped for them. Sure, in that county at eighth grade.

**MS:**

Yeah. And that kind of... that theme of stopping at eighth grade went well into the 20th century too. We've seen from our archive, particularly with Black schools where Black students had to find transportation into Atlanta if they wanted, if they lived in rural part of Fulton County. There were- there were no, like you said grades past eight, so had to find their way to run a part of their education.

**JM:**

Yeah. And I'm sure you are familiar with the Rosenwald systems. Well, the school that my great grandmother taught in was a Rosenwald school and the street that she lived on is called Rosenwald Drive. Even now, in Hampton.

**MS:**

We had one East Point school, which eventually became South Fulton was started as a Rosenwald. It didn't start as a Rosenwald it started as a community school that the Black community had built. But then they got a building through the Rosenwald program, which as you know, was a shared expense... shared kind of endeavor to build one. Yeah, so East Point, which became South Fulton, was one.

**JM:**

I did not realize that.

**MS:**

It's cool, because, you probably know, this Fisk University has a database where you can go look at all the Rosenwald school pictures.

**JM:**

No, I didn't. Okay, I will. I will do that just as the same as... my grandma's hang out.

**MS:**

She taught there?

**JM:**

Yes. Yes.

**MS:**

That's really cool.

**JM:**

Yeah.

**MS:**

So, you must have an appreciation for all this broad spectrum of experience.

**JM:**

Even now. Yes, yes, of course. And just sitting here, having this conversation with you, Mike, I'm realizing why I, who I am, you know, in that I'm... a river, the earth and my connection with it. And that's as a result of being on that sharecropping farm and being able to escape the terror. When we would go deep into the woods to play with my great granddaddy, when he goes fishing, you know, in the swamp, we would... he would take us with him, and we could be anything we wanted to be in the woods. I could be a princess there. I could be a pirate. Anything I wanted to be in those woods while I was playing and escape, uh, you know, the terror of, you know, are we going to have a cross burned in our yard? You know, is the owner going to open up the door to the house anytime he wants to while I'm sitting there in the tin tub, you know, taking a bath? It was not just the obvious, but even the stuff that came across TV, you know, was not pleasurable, or conducive to African existence, the African Americans' existence, if that makes any sense. So, it was... it was- yeah.

**MS:**

One of the questions that I was that I've tried to ask everybody is at what point, you know, and usually I'm in elem- we're talking about elementary school at this point... about when you had a realization of that context of, you know, racism and segregation. It sounds like that you were almost born into...

**JM:**

I was. I realized it. Yeah. From the very moment that I went to the Sunday school class. And even though I love those beautiful cards, they used to give us cards in Sunday school class, beautiful colors on it, but it had the white Jesus.

**MS:**

Right.

**JM:**

Okay.

**MS:**

Right.

**JM:**

God is white. And me, as I exist, and the contrast was, just like I said, an eye opener even for a child. Yeah. Yeah, Amos and Andy on television, when everybody you wants to run to look at Amos and Andy... and this is what? They're representing me?

**MS:**

That's what we get.

**JM:**

Yeah. Yeah. And, um, oh, even though I didn't have a contrast regarding books, and what was being represented in the library. And what I mean by that, is that, you know, all we had was whites, I didn't have a contrast to see that there were... it was even the potential of having some books that represented who I am as an African American and in the things that we've achieved and contributed to this culture, to this country. I kept reading hoping that there was something in there and I read every book that... and this is a back to the other side of my family. Okay, well, my paternal side, I have such a great love for intellect and more education 'to a certain degree.' [JM uses air quotes]

**MS:**

What do you mean by that?

**JM:**

I guess what that means is that, uh, I like to read. Okay. Okay, I love to read. [laughs] But the other stuff, you know, it was like, I'm still you know... well, they call it a Pythagorean theory. I would never learn that.

**MS:**

You're preaching to this choir. For me, it's history reading too. I mean. So, I don't try math. I have a son, who's a scientist.

**JM:**

Yeah. How wonderful. Yeah, that's great. Yeah, we want our children to be better than us.

**MS:**

For sure.

**JM:**

That's right. Good, good. Yeah. But oh, but when I was saying about that, is that, you know, I had this thirst for finding something that would validate who I am. And it became real apparent, you know, what the Tom Dick, or Tom? ...(I was) nowhere in there. No where.

**MS:**

So, there was... So-

**JM:**

No representation.

**MS:**

Where did you find this material? Where were you looking? Was this like the public library or just your school? Or?

**JM:**

You mean, which material?

**MS:**

Well, whatever books you were combing through?

**JM:**

Oh, no. Everywhere... Yeah. Yeah. Everywhere. Right.... Yeah. And, unfortunately, and this is, you know, aside from what we're talking about right now, but we're being fed some stuff now through media that is working against us in pretty much the same way, you know, in terms of our humanity.

**MS:**

Yeah, well, I mean, hold that thought. We don't need to stray too far from that. Maybe we'll talk about that before we're done. So, you had brothers and sisters.

**JM:**

I have brothers and sisters. I have one sister, who, when the era came for us to choose desegregation in the schools, and I forget what they call that you might remember. It was where you could, you could choose... All right, you could choose to go to the white school or stay in your Black school.

**MS:**

Freedom of choice plan.

**JM:**

Something like that okay. And she chose to go to the white school. Yeah. And it was like, You, you, you traitor.

**MS:**

Well, right?

**JM:**

Yeah. Yeah, we did. Yeah. And she did, in a sense, give off the air of superiority because she went to the white school and we chose to stay.

**MS:**

Was she older than you?

**JM:**

No younger. I'm the oldest of my, my clan.

**MS:**

How big your clan?

**JM:**

No, I... oh, how big is my clan?

**MS:**

How many siblings?

**JM:**

I have... five siblings by my mother. My father has more children. And there's another branch of us. And I'm the oldest female in the clan.

**MS:**

So, when you were when you were a child, your name was Jessica Allen.

**JM:**

That's correct.

**MS:**

That's for our researchers that may be looking at other material. Jessica, Jessica Muhammad will be referred to in that material as Jessica Allen.

**JM:**

That's correct.

**MS:**

When it comes to the Eva Thomas story.

**JM:**

That's correct.

**MS:**

I wanted to make sure to state that you, early on. Okay, so what was your sister's experience going to the white school? Did she share that every day on a daily basis?

**JM:**

Not really, and you know, there's something that we'll have to talk about, and love for you to be able to talk with her. Her memory's probably a lot better than mine. And she may... may be able to contribute a lot

more than I'll be able to. And yeah, and mostly because of her personality and you know... who she is in the sibling pool and whatnot. She's you know, she did well, she's done well in life. Yeah.

**MS:**

So, you would have been going to school the time we're... time period we're talking about that would have been in the 1950s?

**JM:**

Yes, for Elementary School.

**MS:**

And you did not... you were in elementary school in Fayette.

**JM:**

Yes. I had a brief moment where I was in Atlanta Public Schools for kindergarten.

**MS:**

Okay.

**JM:**

Because my... Yeah, I guess I need to give you a little bit of a timeline here. Born in Fayette County, 1953. Did kindergarten in Anderson Park Elementary School city of Atlanta. Did first grade at East Point Elementary. And I don't know if it was East Point Elementary or South Fulton Elementary at that time, but it was segregated... [inaudible]. Yeah. A year there. A lot of that has faded out of my memory because it was also a traumatic time, my parents broke up. And yeah, and it was my mother searching to figure out what she was going to do next. And so, we ended up there for a year. And then back to Fayette County, where I was born... with my grandparents.

**MS:**

Oh, I see. So, you're living with your grandparents?

**JM:**

That's right.

**MS:**

For most of your elementary school.

**JM:**

That's right. Yeah.

**MS:**

And so, what was what were some memories from your early elementary school there? Do you have a particular teacher or maybe a friend... or anything stick out?

**JM:**

At South Fulton?

**MS:**

No, in Fayette.

**JM:**

Oh.

**MS:**

Yeah. I guess, in general... you're elementary school age.

**JM:**

Yes.

**MS:**

And I understand your parents... breaking up would have been a major memory.

**JM:**

Yeah.

**MS:**

Anything else?

**JM:**

Yeah. Let me let me share this with you, Mike. I'm glad you have the personality that you do. And you're easy to talk to. Yeah. And, um-

**MS:**

Well, you're... you're interesting to listen to.

**JM:**

Thank you. Okay, so there was a big, big deal about having long hair as a Black person. In those days.

**MS:**

Really?

**JM:**

Oh, yeah. Just like [inaudible].

**MS:**

Even female?

**JM:**

Yeah. Yeah, a positive big deal. Okay... um, I don't know if you've heard of colorism?

**MS:**

Actually no.

**JM:**

Okay, what colorism is where it is this thing in Black America where Black people prefer light skinned people.

**MS:**

Okay.

**JM:**

Again, back to the brainwashing in the whole acculturation around the European look, you know, and being white is right. Is God-like.

**MS:**

Almost like the doll experiment.

**JM:**

Yes. Right. Exactly. Exactly. Exactly. And so, the hair was kind of connected to that... if you could straighten your hair out, have it long and looking like white people. Then you're in, baby. And so, my mother made sure, uh, even though we weren't living with her at this time, because she sent us back to my grandparents. My grandmother made sure that every week we had our hair straightening and plaid it up beautifully. And we had crisp dresses that we wore. And so even though we lived in a shack, pretty much what I thought was a mansion in a way, because it was so full of love. And because all the grandchildren came there on Sunday, or actually Saturday night, and spent the night with us all. There was a lot of grandchildren too. Yeah, a lot of fun. And so that experience of being admired for- and because I had lived in Atlanta, in the city. I was like, you know, a popular crisp kid, right? Yeah. So that was one of the things. The other thing is that I had the same third grade teacher that my mother had had. My mother had a teacher. We had this woman as a teacher. But it was several grades for my mother because back in her day, they clump them in groups versus grades. You did first, second and third... one teacher, maybe. Third, fourth, and fifth, another teacher, right?

**MS:**

And so, all those grades were in the same room?

**JM:**

Well, probably. Her school was bigger than my grandmother's one room class. I mean, one room school. I think her school might have had five, six rooms. But my point is, that my teacher was old.

**MS:**

Yeah.

**JM:**

So, she slept most of the time. [inaudible]... And one of the things that I know about myself is that I went to school to prove the teachers wrong, from as early as I can remember. I would... I was looking to make the teachers wrong.

**MS:**

Give us an example. Tell me what you mean.

**JM:**

Yes. Here's one that I would get a whooping for... at school. She would beat your back with the with-

**MS:**

The old teacher.

**JM:**

Yeah. "Miss Irene. Miss Irene. Mary and Tara can draw better than you. Miss Irene. There, is not a horse. That's a pony." [laughing]

**MS:**

You were *that* kid... you must've- you must have been sent home a lot.

**JM:**

Are you kidding? From that long bus drive? No. If you missed that bus? Man. We have no cars to go pick you up. Nobody's going. We didn't have a taxi. I didn't even have a telephone in the house.

**MS:**

Wow.

**JM:**

Yeah.

**MS:**

Was this- so you went there by... was it a school bus? Or was it a public-

**JM:**

A school bus that turned around in our yard, which was, you know, a barn yard. And so, all the children who live within, say half mile or so, we would sit on our front porch in the morning to be collected by that bus that came through.

**MS:**

So basically, it made one stop.

**JM:**  
Yeah.

**MS:**  
At least in your place.

**JM:**  
That's right. Yeah. But that was always fun, too. You know? Yeah.

**MS:**  
Were there other... were there other schools for Black students in your county at the time?

**JM:**  
No. And it was elementary, I mean, first through 12<sup>th</sup>.

**MS:**  
All the way through 12th?

**JM:**  
Yeah.

**MS:**  
In Fayette.

**JM:**  
Yes.

**MS:**  
And, and so you had a sense when you were young? That there were also white schools?

**JM:**  
Yeah, I knew that. And they were elementary. They had an elementary school. Over there and a high school over here.

**MS:**  
Did you see their schools?

**JM:**  
Yeah.

**MS:**  
I mean, were they nearby? You can pass by them?

**JM:**  
Yeah.

**MS:**  
And they look different, I imagine than your school did.

**JM:**  
And we got their hand me downs. Their school stamp would be inside of our books.

**MS:**  
I heard that from both Ursel and the Dudley's (who) were in here the other day.<sup>1</sup>

**JM:**  
Oh, how sweet. Yeah, Miss- Ms. Emma? We always knew Mr. Dudley only as Mr. Dudley, but Emma Dudley is... but- is actually a distant relative of mine too.

**MS:**  
Is that right?

**JM:**  
Yeah.

**MS:**  
Yeah, there's this overwhelming sense of... community that I'm seeing from talking to everybody.

**JM:**  
That's right. Yeah. And she was the math teacher for me and thank God.

**MS:**  
She was, yeah. She did kind of boast a little of her math. Her abilities to teach math.

**JM:**  
Oh, yeah.

**MS:**  
She must have been something.

**JM:**  
Yeah. Well, I don't... I can't attest. I was too busy.

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<sup>1</sup> Ursel Brown, Eva Thomas High School alum, Class of 1970 and Emma Dudley, Mathematics Department Head and teacher at Eva Thomas High School.

**MS:**

You're too busy arguing with her?

**JM:**

She just passed me. That's why I said, "Thank God."

**MS:**

You're the reader. Not the...

**JM:**

There you go.

**MS:**

Well, so... we've already touched on this a little bit. So, put us from that time where you left Fayette and you came... did you come straight to College Park? From when you finally... okay, first, let me ask you this: how old were you when you came to College Park?

**JM:**

I think I was 13. I think so.

**MS:**

So, sort of middle school age.

**JM:**

Yeah. And we came before school started. So, my... birthday comes in September. So, I think I turned 14. Is it 14-year-old for ninth graders? You don't know either?

**MS:**

I'm a little passed that too.

**JM:**

So okay, so that was... but here we are. As I said earlier, pretty well read. Because when I go to my aunt's house, I would read all the true romance, [laughs] all of that stuff. Ebony, Jet. They would be old, but I read them. And the Civil Rights Movement is blossoming. And I'm seeing now in these- in the Ebony Magazine- afros and commercials for Afro sheen and, and all the Nambi advertisement. That's for skin tone and whatever. And so, when I come to College Park, I'm kind of ahead of the game on the look. And so, I'm... I'm playing around with an afro every other weekend. And but I have no clothes. No, none of the stuff that the other girls are wearing. So, I found a bag of stuff in the basement of my aunt's house that we moved into from the country, and we pretty much had to move because it had gotten so bad for us there in Fayette County. My- my grandfather died. My grandmother moved to College Park earlier and was living with her sister and she got a job at JFB Elementary School<sup>2</sup> as a... as a cook.

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<sup>2</sup> Jefferson Franklin Beavers Elementary School, College Park, Ga

**MS:**

Okay. Yeah

**JM:**

And so, she would send us food. Leftover food that she had. And to the country. Every week we would get these number 10 cans. Is that what you call it? Those big cans? Mike, I'm getting emotional here because I'm remembering how we lived off of that food. Leftover food from the elementary school.

**MS:**

And they would send it to you... and she would send it to you...

**JM:**

Yeah.

**MS:**

What was her name?

**JM:**

My grandmother's name was Mamie Arnold.

**MS:**

Oh, you already... that's your grandmother.

**JM:**

And um, and her sister that she lived with. I'm- this is just for you. The sister that she lived with, was Dr. Shirley Phillips's mother.<sup>3</sup>

**MS:**

Wow, this world is getting smaller as we talk.

**JM:**

Yes.

**MS:**

Her sister.

**JM:**

Her sister's name is Lily Miles M I L E S. That's my grandmother's sister. And Shirley Phillips mother. Dr. Shirley Phillips.

**MS:**

Yeah, that's incredible. That's incredible.

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<sup>3</sup> Dr. Shirley Phillips, teacher at Eva Thomas and Fulton County Schools Administrator (Head of Affirmative Action)

**JM:**

We lived across the street on Harvard Hill... Harvard Avenue, in my Aunt Lillian's basement that moved us up, because we had started in the wintertime. It got so bad that we started tearing the planks off the side of the house to burn them. And we started with the kitchen because we didn't have food. So, we'd just take the planks off the side of the house and burn that for firewood.

**MS:**

Do you remember the day, the night, the time when it was like, "Okay, we're going, we're leaving."

**JM:**

My sister does. And she talks about it. I don't remember it so well, but she said that our cousin, Thomas, came and got us. It was like, enough.

**MS:**

Yeah, for sure. And so, you- but you, you already had family in College Park.

**JM:**

Yes. And we had a pretty deep base in College Park. My great grandparents had lived in College Park. And, and that's how their children, Lily. I mean, yeah... Lizzie, did I say Lily? I meant Lizzie Miles. Excuse me.

**MS:**

Your grandmother's sister.

**JM:**

Yes. Lizzie Miles.

**MS:**

Lizzie.

**JM:**

And across the street was her sister, Lillian. And. And so I had an uncle who had moved up. My mother had two siblings. So, one of them was there already. And so, um now we're living in my aunt's basement, which had one bedroom, a family room and a little kitchenette. And a... one bathroom. There were six children and his cousin, Thomas, my mother and my grandma. All of us in that one-bedroom apartment down in, um...

**MS:**

It must have been a crazy morning, every morning, getting up and getting yourself together.

**JM:**

Yeah, yeah, yeah. And on top of that, I had a cousin who lived right up the street. Because we were who we are. She insisted on living with us too.

**MS:**

Sure. Why not? The more the merrier.

**JM:**

That's right... So, yeah. So, that was where we're at (with) Eva Thomas now coming up towards September.

**MS:**

I'll ask you something else first.

**JM:**

Yes.

**MS:**

Just real quick, inserted in there. So, you're just moved to College Park. A lot of people who will, who will hear your voice, later on when they're doing their research about this wonderful story. They're going to be like, "Well, what's College Park like, in the 50s? In the 1960s?" For the person who doesn't know anything about it. What it was. Maybe you could describe it for a couple minutes.

**JM:**

Yes. Well, the, the area of town that I lived in really was College Park, in that all of the streets were named after colleges and universities. I lived on Harvard Avenue.

**MS:**

We know there's a Princeton.

**JM:**

That's right and Yale and Rhodes, which was another street we moved to after my mother qualified for federal housing. We ended up in an apartment on Rhodes Street. Yeah. And so, for... for me, it was like a liberation moving from Fayette County to College Park. Now, everything is bigger for me, and you can walk to places. When I was in rural Fayette County, you didn't walk places much. And my mother did not have a car initially when we got to College Park. So, it was good that we could walk to where we needed... where we needed to go. There was an A&P grocery store, who knows what an A&P grocery store is now, right? How about a Colonial store, right? Okay.

**MS:**

We may not have had them in West Virginia.

**JM:**

Right. Well, these places weren't segregated.

**MS:**

They were not.

**JM:**

They were not. You could go to the grocery store. And you could go to the dime store, which was on Main Street in College Park. It was a 10-cent store. I don't know what the name of it was, but we called it the 10-cent store, right? And that was where I learned to shoplift.

**MS:**

The plot thickens.

**JM:**

Yeah, I used to- I told you I didn't have anything when I moved from the country. And it was now time to wear lipstick, man. I'm 13, 14 years old. Okay, so I got to get some eyeshadow and some lipstick and some earrings. So that's where I got my stuff from. And because I was so hip, when I moved from the country now, you know, it's usually the other way around. If somebody is hip, they come from the north, you know, but... in this case, I was hip coming from the south, from Fayette County to College Park.

**MS:**

You just needed the stuff.

**JM:**

That's right. That's right. And why was I hip? Because I know how to drive straight shift cars. All the girls were claiming that they knew how to drive but they didn't know how to drive a straight shift. Three on the column.

**MS:**

How about that.

**JM:**

Yeah. And, well, whose car were you driving? I would drive my uncle's car and my cousin's car.

**MS:**

And you would drive your friends around?

**JM:**

Yes. I got caught driving without (a) license at the age of 14, by our Black officers. Now in College Park, you had a segregated Police Department. And so, Booker, Captain Booker was... I don't know if it was Captain Booker... but Booker was like the number one police officer. Then you had Creflo Dollar. Yep. And you had Theodore... I don't know what Theodore's last name was. And then there was another one. Okay. And I was so confident, and this is after my mother got her car, that I would drive my brother to school... and sisters to school at Beavers Elementary School and wave at the police officer every morning when they were doing traffic. You know, cross guard.

**MS:**

How old were you?

**JM:**

13 or 14 years old, right. And it's...

**MS:**

Bold.

**JM:**

Very. But eventually I got caught. Yeah. And that's, that's another story all together. These... police officers believed in tough love. And so, when they finally caught me, which I wouldn't stop on the street for them. I took them all the way back to our house... apartment. And they put me in the car... and the cruiser, in the back seat, and took me to all of the fantastic places where Black kids were hanging out to see... so they could see me riding in the backseat of the car. They took me to Brady Gym, which was where... that was our hangout. Everybody hung out at Brady gym, unless there was a baseball game. And so there was both that night and they took me to the baseball field... and had me in the backseat of the car at the baseball field.

**MS:**

They paraded you.

**JM:**

Yes. Yeah. And I went to juvenile court. My cousin went to jail for letting me drive his car. That was my cousin's car in that situation.

**MS:**

Oh, wow.

**JM:**

Yeah.

**MS:**

That's so interesting. I didn't know we were in for this. Shoplifting and driving underage.

**JM:**

Well, you want the truth, don't you?

**MS:**

That's true, I want the truth. For sure.

**JM:**

Yeah. So yeah, September comes along, right? School opens. Ninth grade. I run for office. And I think I won. I'm pretty sure I did, as representative of the student council for ninth grade, right. You know, a hick just came in town, but she's so hip. Because she's made her own outfits. And she's got an afro. And yeah.

**MS:**

So, you- I mean, it's obvious that as we get toward where they're getting ready to close the school, you've become a student leader.

**JM:**

Yes.

**MS:**

And this... obviously also has... goes back, you know... you've come into this brand new town, and you've immediately kind of asserted yourself is what I'm gathering.

**JM:**

Mm hmm. Yes.

**MS:**

And I know that just speaking with everybody else, there was this sense... there was this overwhelming sense of community that whether you were at school, whether you were walking the street, whether there was... it was like a you know, the village raised the kids, right? Was that your experience?

**JM:**

Yes, yes, very much so. And at this time, I'll insert that there were village mamas, especially who stand out. I mentioned Creflo Dollar a moment ago. And he, he's passed on, Officer Dollar. However, he has a son who's very popular in the religious, Christian world who has the same name, Creflo Dollar. But Creflo Dollar's mother was... I mean she was the OG, okay? She was... oh, yes Miss Maddie Dollar who worked for the... I think she worked for the EOA, Equal Opportunity Atlanta. Is that what EOA stood for? And she was an organizer. And she was... you didn't do anything politically without coming to Maddie dollar. Okay, so she stands out.... Ursel Miller's mother. Miss Lottie Miller.

**MS:**

L O T T I E?

**JM:**

Yes. This woman... and I know I shouldn't say this publicly, but I'm going to say it. For a long time, I thought maybe Ursel didn't like me because... I took up so much of her mother's time. I mean, I really did. I stuck onto that woman. She was... the leader for me. Along with Miss Geraldine Lewis, who is still living, I don't know if you've talked with her. But there's another gem, who is still with us.

**MS:**

Why Miss Miller so much? Obviously, you looked up to her but...

**JM:**

Miss Miller had- She was in your face. Fearless. Smoked cigarettes. Yeah, you know? ... I really can't tell you other than she, um, she was bold, but at the same time, she knew when to pull it back. Yeah. And so yeah. That's why I love Miss Miller so much.

**MS:**

Well, you learned from some top-notch leaders on how to be a leader then.

**JM:**

I did. I did. Yes, yes.

**MS:**

Gilbert?<sup>4</sup> (looking at a yearbook, Eva Thomas, 1966)

**JM:**

He was-

**MS:**

Did they spell his name, Gaber? They did they misspell it.

**JM:**

Oh, wow. They sure did. Yeah. Mr. Gilbert. Another connection. He was our, our school principal, of course. And he did his best to contain me. But it was really difficult. But what made it easier for him was that he was my great- my- my great Aunt's neighbor.

**MS:**

Okay.

**JM:**

And he, he knew how to pull that... that card.

**MS:**

Sure. So, you get- I mean, am I- am I stretching to say you may have gotten under the skin of some teachers and administrators in your day?

**JM:**

Especially-

**MS:**

Especially Gilbert?

**JM:**

Yes.

**MS:**

Yeah.

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<sup>4</sup> William Gilbert, Principal at Eva Thomas High School.

**JM:**

Yes.

**MS:**

Was this kind of breaking the rules kind of stuff or just being vocal? Or-

**JM:**

I would say primarily vocal. And then breaking the rules too, because I did some pretty adolescent kind of stuff like... bring alcohol to school, you know? Bullied a little bit. Fight a little bit. Yeah. But at the same time, I was always the one who was the chosen one by the student body to represent our sentiments about certain things. And even if I wasn't chosen, I would go.

**MS:**

You were fearless. I think probably it sounds like that. They could rally behind you because you were kind of fearless.

**JM:**

Yeah.

**MS:**

Not kind of...

**JM:**

Yeah. Yeah. I got put off the basketball team.

**MS:**

Did you?

**JM:**

Yeah. For being an instigator. And it was the first time I'd even heard that name and that word: instigate.

**MS:**

That would come up later too, that word.

**JM:**

Yeah.

**MS:**

It would be used... thrown around.

**JM:**

Yeah.

**MS:**

So, okay. Eva Thomas (High) School. What did you think of the school... your first day there? I mean, it's, this is a brand-new facility.

**JM:**

Right. It was-

**MS:**

I've seen pictures. We're talking state of the art.

**JM:**

Yes, it was. Yes. And it was brand new because we weren't allowed to go to the other schools. Sure, okay... we weren't allowed to go to... College Park High School. Nor Russell. Yeah.

**MS:**

When you see that after Brown vs. Board, you see money invested in Black schools to try to maintain Plessy vs. Ferguson.

**JM:**

Yeah, yeah.

**MS:**

Separate but equal.

**JM:**

Yes, there you go.

**MS:**

Let's spend money and throw money at the issue.

**JM:**

That's right. That's right. Yeah. And it was okay with us and that... Eva Thomas was there when I got there. Let me say that. And excellence was there. We had outstanding scholars. Women who went on to Spelman College, which I ended up going to Spelman as well. Morris Brown, all the HBCUs were filled by these students. An outstanding band led by Mr. James Patterson, who is still I believe... he may be still over the jazz band of Clark Atlanta University.

**MS:**

Dudleys told me about it.

**JM:**

Okay, very good... We used to have a football team, but because we didn't have enough students, I believe that's why we ended up not continuing with the football program because, you know, it takes a lot of a lot of...

**MS:**

...resources, for sure.

**JM:**

That's, right, for football. But basketball, we were a powerhouse.

**MS:**

Yeah, we know that.

**JM:**

We got state championship, you know, and regionals for the women. And um, like I said...

**MS:**

You got kicked off the basketball team.

**JM:**

Yeah. But she let me come back on. Yeah.

**MS:**

So, was that the only extracurricular that you were into? Or was there other...

**JM:**

There was nothing else, and band. Yeah. Band and... and basketball. Basketball was everything. Because we would leave school, go home and get a bite to eat and go to Brady Gym and play until the gym closed... at night. Pick up ball.

**MS:**

This is... okay... Not because Eva Thomas didn't have a gym.

**JM:**

Yes.

**MS:**

But this is where you all went after school.

**JM:**

That's right. That was our hangout.

**MS:**

How far away was that from your... was it in the neighborhood?

**JM:**

Yeah, yeah. Walking distance. Yeah. I mean, you... would leave Yale and walk over to... I don't know the name of the street now. But that's where Brady was, over there.

**MS:**

I'm assuming it's not there anymore.

**JM:**

Brady is!

**MS:**

Oh, is it?

**JM:**

Yes, sir. And you have to go there. Yeah.

**MS:**

Do you remember how many students you graduated with?

**JM:**

I didn't graduate from-

**MS:**

You didn't graduate from Eva Thomas?

**JM:**

No, I didn't.

**MS:**

Tell us about that.

**JM:**

My class was actually Ursel's class... was the last class to graduate from Eva Thomas.

**MS:**

That would have been '69?

**JM:**

Yeah. That was- Was it? '70? I graduated in '71. From Turner high.

**MS:**

Yes. It would have been '70 because they kept the school open for that year after the sit-ins, right?

**JM:**

A year as a high school and then it became an eighth-grade school.

**MS:**

Right? Yes. And then it became Beavers-Thomas.

**JM:**

That's Right.

**MS:**

And for those of you who are researching, this site is now College Park Elementary.

**JM:**

That's correct.

**MS:**

So now I want to talk about how they- the closing of the school...

**JM:**

Yeah, look at that.

**MS:**

We okay on time?

**JM:**

Yeah.

**MS:**

Okay. So, when did you find out they were closing it?

**JM:**

I believe it may have been at the end of sixty... the end of the school year for '69, maybe?

**MS:**

Yeah. Well, and so it would have been that summer after the term.

**JM:**

Yes. Yes... that we actually had the demonstrations.

**MS:**

Yeah.

**JM:**

Okay. And please correct me with the records, because a lot of this, again, is stuff that I have not thought a lot about lately, because I've wanted to get away from the thoughts of the things that were painful.

**MS:**

Well, thank you for sharing. I mean, I know that it's difficult.

**JM:**

Yeah, yeah. It was very painful. That school did represent to me, like you said earlier, or I said earlier, freedom. It represented excellence. Yeah.

**MS:**

Yeah.

**JM:**

Yeah.

**MS:**

Did the name- I mean, were you aware of the- of what was going on with regards to why the school was closing? The name Paul West,<sup>5</sup> the name Fletcher Thompson.<sup>6</sup> This thing is being played out in newspapers and even on the news reels. I know you've seen the old WSB film clips. Not watched them?

**JM:**

No, I would love to see them. But maybe it's something that I can come to the Teaching Museum<sup>7</sup> to see at some point.

**MS:**

Well, I mean, you know... they're available online.

**JM:**

Oh, good.

**MS:**

I'll send you a link.

**JM:**

Oh, thank you, Mike. That would be great. My children don't know this.

**MS:**

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<sup>5</sup> Paul D. West, Superintendent of Fulton County Schools, 1947-1971.

<sup>6</sup> Fletcher Thompson, US House of Representatives, Georgia, 5<sup>th</sup> District, 1967-1973.

<sup>7</sup> Fulton County Schools Teaching Museum South, Hapeville, Ga.

They don't know this story? ...So, in talking with... as I'm reading some of the old *Atlanta Constitution* articles that are reporting as this sit-in is happening, your name comes up several times. And I believe in another conversation I had with another person who was in high school with you. You were part of a leadership group that... that also included Morris Dillard, NAACP. Who else, that you can remember?

**JM:**

Well, of course, Lonnie King was the president of the NAACP at the time,

**MS:**

NEACP? NAACP.

**JM:**

Yes. National Association of Advancement of Colored People. Lonnie and Morris were the leaders of the Atlanta University student movement. And they were responsible for the opening of Atlanta in terms of desegregation. They were the ones who were sitting at the counters and getting locked up-

**MS:**

Yeah.

**JM:**

Over and over again. So, they were the leaders of the NAACP, at the time that we had our demonstrations. So, they had all of this hands-on experience that helped us in having a successful demonstration. And, or... they helped us without organizing, okay, which were just like in the old Civil Rights days of... where you... you had mass meetings in churches. And so, Friendship Baptist Church, which was on Harvard Avenue, was our gathering place to... galvanize the community. Okay, so I would say that the NAACP, which also had (a) legal team, headed by Howard Moore. Howard Moore was our representation in court. Howard Moore was also Angela Davis's attorney.

**MS:**

Okay.

**JM:**

Okay?

**MS:**

Yeah.

**JM:**

So, this was like, huge, major. Even the Black Panther Party came down, sent representatives to protect us when we took over the school and stayed inside the school. Yeah. I mentioned our local leaders. Miss Dollar, especially, Lottie Miller and Geraldine Lewis.

**MS:**

How would they support you?

**JM:**

They were there. They were there. We had a march from College Park to downtown where the Fulton County Board of Education's Office was at that time. I think that was Paul West's office that we went to down there.

**MS:**

Yeah, there's um- The newspapers chronicle that. And I think that is... where the whole demonstration kind of started was... was a march with a petition?

**JM:**

I think so.

**MS:**

Don't close our school.

**JM:**

Yeah. I think so, again, in terms of the details of it all...

**MS:**

Yeah. Well... that's fine. It's not so much as verifying dates to... I think me or anybody, who wants to hear your voice, but your experience is what's important to them. And your memories will... you know, they'll kind of put it in that context. So, you have this March and then obviously, they're going to continue with the plan to shut down the school.

**JM:**

Yes. And let's not fail to mention that we had Lester Maddox as the governor.

**MS:**

Sure. Yeah. To kind of...

**JM:**

Who's... who sent in the forces to bring us out of school.

**MS:**

At what point did you all decide, you know, we need to take over our school and sit-in. Was this after that march or...

**JM:**

Yeah.

**MS:**

Do you remember? Okay.

**JM:**

I think- I'm pretty sure it was after.

**MS:**

And so, I would imagine you as a leader, were one of the first ones on the scene in there. And then there is, in one of these newsreel clips, it shows a bunch of students on bleachers in a gymnasium. And I think it's Sheriff Leroy Stynchcombe...

**JM:**

Yes.

**MS:**

...comes in with a court order, right?

**JM:**

That's right.

**MS:**

Do you remember what happened next?

**JM:**

That may have been when we took over the school.

**MS:**

Yeah. Okay.

**JM:**

Yeah. And that was when the sheriffs came in and pulled... and lifted us out. And yeah, and we did the... what do you call it when you? Well, of course, it's nonviolent, but there's a... there's a name for it, but you just lay there. And they have to carry you. And we had several older women with us who were overweight. And it was just beautiful watching them.

**MS:**

Trying to get them out.

**JM:**

And then, what after... after they got all of us out. They thought they had us all out?

**MS:**

No.

**JM:**

They didn't. We opened it back up. Then we went back in again.

**MS:**

That's what I remember from reading the papers. And so, I actually printed out this timeline, so I could talk to you about it. I highlighted a few points, but it's like... we've already blown through it. You know, there is... it looks like one point...

**JM:**

And by the way, people came from all over the country to support us.

**MS:**

Did they?

**JM:**

Yes. I'm going to share something with you now (I) probably never shared with anybody, especially publicly. But they were... my first ever friendly encounter with any white person was during that time. And there was a young white girl who came in as an ally to support us. I can't remember her name, but she was friendly. And she offered me a drink that she had drank out of. And I wouldn't drink it.

**MS:**

Wow. Isn't that interesting?

**JM:**

Yeah. Because I didn't I, I didn't drink behind people.

**MS:**

People in general or was it because she was white?

**JM:**

It was probably because she was white, because I drink my... my sister... I used to steal her drink all the time. [laughs]

**MS:**

Course. Of course.

**JM:**

But she... yeah, as a rule, though, we didn't drink behind people that mean... there was just certain things that we were...

**MS:**

Well, she was a stranger.

**JM:**

Yeah, but I remember, like remembering, is this going to be rude? Is this going to hurt her feelings? But I still couldn't do it. But she was very nice.

**MS:**

So, you had people from... obviously, there were people from Atlanta and all over that came out just to show support?

**JM:**

Yes.

**MS:**

And how did they do that? They stood there and clapped and cheer, or how do you...

**JM:**

No, they were in the... some were in the march and bringing food and... yeah.

**MS:**

And I think that after your... after they put the majority of students out, they didn't try to remove you from the school property, right? It was from inside the building, is that correct?

**JM:**

Right. Yeah.

**MS:**

And then there was one account where you actually... there was a picnic or something is that... there was one newspaper article that said Morris Dillard had put on a picnic. And so that doesn't ring a bell with you. That might have been...

**JM:**

No. And you know, Morris just passed. Right?

**MS:**

Yeah, I should mention that. And I did in my interview with Ursel Brown that we are speaking within weeks of losing Morris Dillard, who was instrumental in this whole event that we're talking about.

**JM:**

Yes, very much so.

**MS:**

And I am happy that I got to meet him before.

**JM:**

Yes.

**MS:**

So, I'll say that.

**JM:**

Yeah.

**MS:**

Now I'm going to-

**JM:**

Yeah.

**MS:**

Okay. So um, it looks like Julian Bond...

**JM:**

Yes. I'm telling you... anybody.

**MS:**

Horace Tate?

**JM:**

...anybody who had some influence. And this was there... an opportunity for them to show up and show some support. Because it was, I mean, so blatant that the school was being closed to desegregate the surrounding white schools so that they could get those federal dollars.

**MS:**

Exactly. Yeah, and most of these white schools are overcrowded, right?

**JM:**

I had no idea what was going on up in there because they hadn't... they had not welcomed us prior to the knowledge that they're federal dollars were going to be cut off.

**MS:**

Sure. So, you had knowledge of that as a young person?

**JM:**

I wish I could tell you, yes, but the answer is no.

**MS:**

They were taking 'my' school basically.

**JM:**

That's right.

**MS:**

How long...

**JM:**

I didn't... honestly, I didn't know the meaning of desegregation, the word desegregation.

**MS:**

Wow.

**JM:**

Yeah.

**MS:**

Do you remember how long this kind of event took place, the sit in the- before you found out, "Okay, we're going to get... to keep our school"?

**JM:**

I don't... it just seems like it was just for the summer. Yeah.

**MS:**

Yeah. I don't know this specifically.

**JM:**

Because we got word... Yeah, because we got word that they were going to reopen our school under conditions. And of course, the condition was that, you know, it would be open for one year as a high school and then the eighth-grade schools.

**MS:**

And so, you were you, you were transferred to College Park? Headland?

**JM:**

College Park.

**MS:**

And that's where you ended up getting your...

**JM:**

No.

**MS:**

...high school diploma? No.

**JM:**

No. Because, um I don't know if you know this, but they decided that in... by closing down, Eva Thomas, as a high school, that they would divvy up the leadership. Uh, the principals would be sent to different places to be assistants. And, Mr. Gilbert, I don't... I think he retired out of that. I'm not sure but I think he did. But there was another principal, assistant principal, and I don't think he came from Eva Thomas, but he came from maybe another school; maybe South Fulton or somewhere, who ended up being one of the assistant principals at College Park High School. Because I had gotten so much media attention over that summer. Uh, Mr. D... can't remember the principal's name of College Park. D... Started with... There was a D something.

**MS:**

Oh... Bostardi.

**JM:**

Bostardi!

**MS:**

Yes.

**JM:**

That was it not D, but B. Bostardi, Bostardi. I guess he made it clear that he wasn't having it out of me. That, you know, he had several assistant principals and I wasn't one of them. Because I immediately started coming in on him about the continuous segregation. You got two Black queens, I mean, two queens for the school, the Black Queen and a white queen. For homecoming. You can use our... men, our boys for the football team. But where are the Black majorettes and the Black cheerleaders? Oh, we can be flagbearers, but we can't be up front. Um, you can use us in the band. But no, majorettes. No Black majorettes.

**MS:**

So really? Yeah.

**JM:**

So. So I was in his ass. Oh! Excuse me. I was in his stuff. [laughs] Immediately. And on top of that, I suffer from hay fever. And the first few days I'm in class... by sitting behind a white girl who's... Y'all can't see that on camera, but she's throwing her hair.

**MS:**

Yes, I'm sorry yes... she's throwing her hair around.

**JM:**

And dust is... I'm allergic to pollen. So, I'm like tears running down my face. And I'm sneezing and it was just it. I quit high school.

**MS:**

Oh, I see.

**JM:**

I quit high school in my senior year.

**MS:**

I could see you having a target on your back.

**JM:**

Yeah, I did. And there was another woman who, I wish I could remember her name. She was... she worked at E(O)A as well, I think she was of Asian descent. But I started dabbling around with these different philosophies, including communism. And so, I had a button that had like Mao Zedong on it and, you know, just fooling around. And she, she saw it on me once. And this was early on before the demonstrations, I think even... and she told me, you know, you don't need to advertise who you are, what you think. And I took her advice for a while, but when I went up to College- College Park, College Park High School, I did not. I had, uh, the Red Book sitting on my desk.

**MS:**

No kidding.

**JM:**

My high school desk. And so, yes, in terms of target, yes.

**MS:**

Yeah, that was a touch point back then, too.

**JM:**

Yeah, that's right. That's right.

**MS:**

Because we all know that communism narrative in the Civil Rights Movement and, yeah, for sure.

**JM:**

Yeah. That's right. And it- I wasn't so sure that I wasn't on... J. Edgar Hoover's, uh...

**MS:**

Watch list?

**JM:**

Yeah... at that time, as well.

**MS:**

(Cellphone rings) If you have to take a call, then feel free.

**JM:**

No, that was just my prayer ... prayer call.

**MS:**

Gotcha.

**JM:**

Yeah.

**MS:**

Okay.

**JM:**

And so, um, anyway, um, the leaders of the NAACP. Morris had moved on. It was another leader at that time. His name was Al McClure. Lonnie was becoming... he was running for Fifth District Congressman, Lonnie King. So, I'm still involved in... now I'm involved in campaigns. Even Andy Young. Actually, that's when... Andrew Young became a Fifth District Congressman, during that election period. You've mentioned Fletcher Thompson a few minutes ago. He was... yeah, the Republican that... was he the Congressman or a Senator?

**MS:**

He was Congressman.

**JM:**

Yeah. So that's who we were running against. You know, trying to get him up out of there.

**MS:**

Yeah.

**JM:**

And, um, so, back to me, though... we were working on getting me early admission into Spelman. But school had already started... wasn't going to happen. So, I was on my own. And my mother worked for the Regency as a salad maker. And so, my aunt, who was the neighbor to Mr. Gilbert, lived in Atlanta. And she said I could use her address, come stay with her and seek the school in her district. So that ended up being Turner High School.

**MS:**

Henry Turner High School.

**JM:**

Yes. I went to... and spoke to I think his name was Mr. Washington who was the principal.

**MS:**

I wonder if there was a Mr. Turner who was at Washington.

**JM:**

Right. And, and so he... he kind of felt like, you know, okay. You really live there? But anyway, he said, "Can you play basketball?" I said, "Yes, sir. I play, I play basketball." So, he said "Okay." Yeah. And so, uh, I ended up...

**MS:**

So, you are a graduate of Turner now?

**JM:**

Yeah.

**MS:**

Okay. And then you went to Spelman.

**JM:**

Yes.

**MS:**

And that's part of, kind of wrapping this thing up, is... and I'll talk all day if you want but be respectful your time... how all that at Eva Thomas. It sounds like you took that.... you took that with you. You've already mentioned that you... you became active in politics.

**JM:**

Even though that defeat with Lonnie. Lonnie did not... in the primaries. He did not make the general election. Andy, Andrew Young did.

**MS:**

He did.

**JM:**

Yeah. And so... Excuse me, when Lonnie was defeated. That was my first time experiencing depression that I knew... knew that it was depression as a young person. I mean, I really, really... that was the lowest point of my life as a young person, as a teenager, when he lost. But I went on over to Andy's camp and worked in phone banks and stuff like that for him... and so he did win.

**MS:**

Did you do that? Did you stay active in politics well into your 20s and into your adult life?

**JM:**

Uh, you know, basically, I guess you would say I did for a short period of time when I became a parent. At the age of 23, my fierceness was redirected into parenting.

**MS:**

Parenting.

**JM:**

Yeah, parenting locally, parenting my children versus the community, right? And... and so that fierceness did involve activism, community activism, but I don't like to call it politics per se. For instance, I've... I've climbed billboards, and painted over billboards to vocalize that we wouldn't have strip clubs advertising, you know, that you can get a \$5 table dance in my neighborhood. I've threatened to paint a billboard for Coors, who had a billboard in my neighborhood that was clearly targeting their marketing to young people. All I had to do is threaten them, though they brought it down.

**MS:**

Did they?

**JM:**

Yeah. And yeah, so things like that being the PTA president. You know, those are the kind of things that I put my energy into as a young mother. Yeah. And making sure that my children were looking at PBS. And eating proper foods.

**MS:**

There you go.

**JM:**

Yeah.

**MS:**

That's full time anyway.

**JM:**

That's right.

**MS:**

Is there... I mean, is there anything, you know... I'm not sure what the question, what question to ask because your experiences go well beyond Eva Thomas. I expected to talk to somebody who became a leader during that. But your leadership has transcended that. I mean, it started before that, and it has gone on beyond the Eva Thomas events. What would you tell somebody... I mean, now that you're looking back... and you said, you haven't spent a whole time looking back at this... As you look back now, how do you think what happened back in the 1960s to you as a teenager... how has it affected or put an impression on your life, as you look back now?

**JM:**

I would say, establish community wherever you are. And if you have someone in your neighborhood who knows what community looks like, from the past, sit at their heels, at their feet. And if you have someone who has a vision for what community, the beloved community, what the beloved community is... can be... please sit with them. That might be a child. Yeah, yeah.

**MS:**

Great. Well, thank you very much.

**JM:**

Thank you.