

UNIFIED COMMITTEE FOR AFRO-AMERICAN CONTRIBUTIONS  
Oral History Project

Eva Cecilia Smith Statesman

Interviewed by Alma Jordon

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1 hour, 14 minutes, 35 seconds

Alma Jordon ([00:00](#)):

Good afternoon.

Eva Statesman ([00:04](#)):

Good afternoon.

Alma Jordon ([00:07](#)):

Can you tell me your name and where you were born? Your full name?

Eva Statesman ([00:12](#)):

My full name is Eva Cecilia Smith Statesman.

Alma Jordon ([00:20](#)):

And you were born in?

Eva Statesman ([00:22](#)):

Ridge, Maryland.

Alma Jordon ([00:23](#)):

Okay. Can you tell me about your family and your earliest memory?

Eva Statesman ([00:34](#)):

Yes, I can. There are three boys. There were seven of us, three girls and four boys. And I guess I can remember probably back to... I think it's around four years old. I can remember when my brother Frank was a baby and he was born in '38. So, I can remember that. I can remember that. And so, I was the type of person that never wanted to do anything that was wrong because I didn't like confusion. So, I always tried to keep peace, I was the peacemaker, but we had a lovely family, and when I say lovely, seven children, I think you can be happy. You have somebody to play with. You're not lonely like children now, one or two children.

([01:57](#)):

But if you have a group of children, four or five, three, it's better. Children, we get bored today, but we didn't have time to get bored because somebody was always messing with the other one, in a good way.

The neighborhood was so friendly and you live close to each other and everyone interacted with one another. And it was just good. Family life was very good back then. Very good.

Alma Jordon ([02:29](#)):

Can you tell me the names of your sisters and brothers, your siblings?

Eva Statesman ([02:33](#)):

Yes. My oldest was Sarah B. And John, we called him Junior. His name is John Walter Jr., Smith Jr. Then it's me, Eva, and my sister, Mary, Mary Smith Moore. Then, it was Frank McKinley Smith, Leonard Calvin Smith. And then, it was Elmira Smith Davis. That's the order.

Alma Jordon ([03:24](#)):

And when you were children, you were talking about your playing and how you played together and how you got along. Do you remember the types of games you played together?

Eva Statesman ([03:37](#)):

Yes. We played a lot of outdoor games, same games that we played, the dodgeball, the volleyball, the softball. I can remember in the softball, my mother would hit and we would do the running. But if one family came out to play, then the next one came out. I think there were four families. We lived near a little park, and we'd all end up playing together in the summertime whenever we played, or end up playing together. But they played board games inside, Checkers and Dominoes, Bingo inside. Mostly Mama was in charge of that.

Alma Jordon ([04:22](#)):

As a child, and I know you talked about playing, but what type of chores did you have growing up as a child in a house with seven siblings?

Eva Statesman ([04:40](#)):

Well we had-. Girls, my oldest sister-. We were scheduled. They had a schedule that they went by. Mondays was wash day. I don't know what we did on Tuesdays. I really don't remember. I know Wednesday, they ironed, but everyone had something to do, hanging their clothes on the line. And I was a helper. I was not a leader in doing that. I wasn't keen on housework because I guess everyone else was doing it. I always did what I was supposed to do, but that was it. But in other words, my sister, my oldest sister, oh, I just loved her because she did everything in order and she had a certain way to hang her clothes. She had a certain way to do everything. She had a certain time to do everything, and we followed. But if I were to hang something up, I didn't hang it up exactly right... If I did it wrong too many times she said, "Go on, you don't have to do it." [both laugh]

([05:53](#)):

But as I got older, even after I got married, she would tell me, "Okay, you have to wash the dishes," or, "You have to do this," or, "You have to do that." But it was nice, and we were taught to respect the older person in charge. So we respected her. We called her Mamale. We respected her. We respected each other. But that was orders from Daddy. He would spot two of us in charge, and that's what we did.

Alma Jordon ([06:24](#)):

Now, what type of occupation did your parents have?

Eva Statesman ([06:29](#)):

My mother was a housewife. My father worked on the state road. He was working on the state road when I knew him, and that's where he retired from. His father before him also worked on a state road.

Alma Jordon ([06:43](#)):

Oh, I see. Now, we talked about your family playing games and doing things like that. Tell me about the types of food that you ate and did you have a farm or?

Eva Statesman ([07:07](#)):

No. Garden. But it was a big garden. Very big garden. And we all had things to do. Whatever we were told to do, to do. And you were told, "Okay, we have to pick beans," or whatever today. And that meant everybody got up early in the morning and did it before the sun came out. And of course, we had to wash jars for parents to can and it was done in order, and it didn't take long for seven children to do that. Everybody knew. And the one thing, in that day, parents only had to tell you something at one time, and you knew what to do. They didn't tell you every day wash dishes. We knew to get up from the table, you wash the dishes. We were assigned a place at the table, and that was our place until we got married.

Alma Jordon ([08:04](#)):

Tell me about your school days. Tell me about your school and where you went.

Eva Statesman ([08:12](#)):

We went to Scotland School, and when I started to school, they had... I don't know if you've been to St. Luke's Church at Scotland, but St. Luke's Church has a hall, and that's where I first went to elementary school, was a hall there. And then also if you've heard of... You're probably too young. I don't think you would've heard of Mr. Raymond Hewlett. He had a little store down there in Scotland, and I think the first, second, third grades went there first. Then, we came to the hall. After we couldn't use that, we came to the hall. And then, we went to Scotland School. That was for fourth, fifth and sixth, seventh grade. Evidently, we probably had too many children to get in that one building for seven grades, so we used other schools.

Alma Jordon ([09:18](#)):

So all the children went to a one-room school.

Eva Statesman ([09:25](#)):

And when we started out... No, when we started out, we started out in a store building. It was used for a store, but it was also used for a school in the day. That's me. See, I'm 82. That's me. And after the use of that... If you know where Scotland School was, right next to Scotland School is St. Luke's Church, and they had a fellowship hall that was not attached to the church. So then after they used that for first, second, and third, Mr. Hewitt's place, then they came and used the church hall for first, second, or third. Then afterwards, we all went into the one-room schoolhouse.

Alma Jordon ([10:21](#)):

Was that Scotland School?

Eva Statesman ([10:23](#)):

School. That was Scotland School. It was Scotland School. And it was one room. It wasn't two. It was one-room school.

Alma Jordon ([10:33](#)):

Well, tell me about going to school in a one-room schoolhouse and your teacher.

Eva Statesman ([10:39](#)):

Oh, they were...

Alma Jordon ([10:39](#)):

What do you remember about that?

Eva Statesman ([10:41](#)):

They were good. It was nice because everything was orderly. There was nothing out of place. What was there, the same thing from Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday. Everything was done in order. And when you were spoken to, it was order. Everything. And you couldn't get distracted. You really couldn't. You couldn't get distracted. Well, I guess it was because of the homes that we come from because that's the way it was done in the homes. Everything was done in order. It was done in order.

([11:27](#)):

And you see, if I did something wrong at school or I was at church, the person there had the privilege to correct me, and it was told to my parents, and that's okay. If they corrected me, it was fine. But they got the report. They got the report, how she was acting or whatever, if you acted out of order, and you could help each other. You don't get that today. You are afraid. You're afraid. We don't have that privilege to do that now.

Alma Jordon ([12:14](#)):

Do you remember your teacher when you went to school?

Eva Statesman ([12:17](#)):

Oh, yes. I remember my teachers. They were good. Beulah, Mrs. Beulah Bennett, Dorothy Somerville, Miss Hudson. Those are the ones that I remember. There was one named Miss Lanton, but I didn't get her because I was younger. But the teachers, they were so fair. They were just like parents. The teachers were like parents too, but they were loving. And of course, I really think that the food that we had, I guess it came from the government, because we used to have soup every day and hot chocolate in the morning.

([13:00](#)):

I'd forgotten hot chocolate till I could see it. But the hot chocolate, we had it at our school too. The teachers were very good, very good teachers. Concerned. They were concerned. They were very concerned, and they would teach us. They would teach us the facts of life, what you have to do. They would prepare us and they would tell us, "It's not always going to be like this. You're going to need

college education. You do all right with high school now, but you need college." And I can remember Ms. Dorothy Somerville telling us that just about every day. She told us that. It was really nice.

Alma Jordon ([13:46](#)):

What was your relationship with your parents when you were growing up?

Eva Statesman ([13:50](#)):

Oh, it was good. It was good. I always tell, and my sisters and brothers tell me this too, but I know I got a spank and I had to because I'm not perfect. I'm not perfect. But I don't remember. So this is what I'm saying. So, the fact that it wasn't anything that was weird or hard or whatever, because I really don't remember. I know I did. They used to kid me, but I know I did. But we got spankings and things, but they weren't anything that I could remember that upset or anything like that. It was just good. I do remember the children, our girls, the oldest one took scare of the younger ones. I remember that much. And it was good. And I can remember back to even taking care of my sister Mary. I can remember that. I remember that. But it was good. I think all the children that I knew had good relationships in our day. We never heard anything that anyone would come and tell us, "The parents did stuff and some to us." Never, never. But that was in that day. I didn't hear that.

Alma Jordon ([15:13](#)):

Tell me about health concerns back in those days. Were there any health problems during that time?

Eva Statesman ([15:22](#)):

I would imagine there were there, because I know my brother, still living now, Calvin Leonard Calvin, the asthma, chickenpox, the regular normal things really. The chickenpox and the mumps. And I was one of the persons that got all of them, the chickenpox and the mumps and things of that nature. Just the regular childhood diseases that they normally had. And they had clinics for that in... I can't remember. We went to St. Peter's once because they used to have a clinic there. That's where we used to go, by the way, and get a shot for Diphtheria or whatever. We had to get it at St. Peter's, Claver's Church. That's where we would go during the day as children. That's where we went.

Alma Jordon ([16:13](#)):

Did you remember any home remedies that you had during that time?

Eva Statesman ([16:19](#)):

Oh, don't I remember? I wish I could remember now. Yes, because they worked. Oh, I don't know if it was that that worked, or if it was the faith that we had into it. But you'd rub your chest with mutton tallow. That much I remember. And the cough syrup made from onions, that worked. But I didn't like onions, so I don't know how good it did me, because that's one thing I made up my mind that I'm not going to take when I get older. But a lot of children liked it. A lot of children liked it. Yes. Whatever their home remedies were, they worked because we did not go to doctors like we go now. Now, maybe it was healthier or something, but it really worked.

Alma Jordon ([17:16](#)):

Tell me about your teenage years. How was it growing up in your community? Did you court when you were younger?

Eva Statesman ([17:26](#)):

No. Really, I tell you, I was timid. Really, this is how it really was. No kidding. Of course, you were attracted to the guys and things, but I came under very strict parents. They told us the do's and the don'ts, and what you're supposed to do and what you're not supposed to do. And in looking at the lifestyle around me for recreation, the only thing I saw after you got 17, if you go out on your own, the only thing that I saw... I'm sure there was much more. There was much more. But I didn't have any rhythm. I couldn't dance and I didn't like the fast life. I'd much rather read. I would read.

([18:33](#)):

And really, I was sort of dead, really. Let me tell you, this is what I wanted to be, and I'm going to tell you why I was the way I am. I wanted to be a nun. That's what I wanted to be. I used to see the nuns come to the store right in the front of our house. They were the nicest, the friendliest, the smiliest people that I ever saw. And I said, "I want to be like them." But I was Protestant. I was Protestant. And I say, "I dare not ask my parents," but that's what I dreamed of being, was a nun. And I talk about it to this day. But I'm happy with the life that I have. Very happy with it. But I did want to be a nun.

([19:33](#)):

And what's so funny about this is that my daughter, my baby daughter, she got to work with nuns for 15 years. She got to work with them. But yes, that's what I wanted to be, just because I saw them. I liked the outfit, but I liked their manner. And they just seemed like they didn't worry about anything. And they were good people. And I said, "I want to be like that." They didn't look like they had trouble or anything. I didn't have any either. But I know once you leave your family, you got to look out for yourself. And I just wasn't into that.

Alma Jordon ([20:15](#)):

So what was it like when you went out on your own?

Eva Statesman ([20:18](#)):

Oh, it was fine because I went over to Preacher. I went over to Preacher, and he's right. I often ask him, "Do you remember me in school?" He says, "No. I just remember the girl who had plaits sitting up on her head." But I don't remember him saying anything in school. I didn't say much either, but it wasn't until he came to date me.

Alma Jordon ([20:51](#)):

Well, what was high school like?

Eva Statesman ([20:53](#)):

Oh, high school was good. High school was nice. It was very nice. We didn't have the privileges that they have and the beautiful high schools that they have today. You just went to lunch and more like you didn't play that much, because we didn't have the games that the children have now to play. But it was nice. One thing about the people, the teachers were nice, and so were the children. But we didn't have such a long time anyway, by the time you cooked lunch, they prepared the lunch, and you ate it. It was good. It was okay, but nothing compared to what they have now. Because we didn't have any recreation. We didn't have any equipment. We didn't have that. And we didn't have physical ed teachers. Nope, we didn't have that.

Alma Jordon ([21:47](#)):

So when you left high school, what was it like preparing for marriage, and how did you meet your spouse?

Eva Statesman ([21:55](#)):

Same way he told. I met him in school, really. I met him in school, but we just met. We just knew each other in school. And really, when he came to date me, and I laid my laws down, and I was really glad to get out though. I looked forward to going to movies and things like that. And he was on his same level as I was, just movies or going to eat or something of that nature. And by the time that we went out, integration was coming in. We came in in a good time. Integration was coming in, so we had the privileges to go to good restaurants and things. When we first started, no, but later on, we did. Later on, of course, we had the movies when we first started, up the back steps, down, up. That was the movie.

Alma Jordon ([22:56](#)):

So tell me more about life when there was integration. You mentioned going up the back steps.

Eva Statesman ([23:04](#)):

Yes.

Alma Jordon ([23:05](#)):

Tell me more about that.

Eva Statesman ([23:07](#)):

Well, you couldn't go in the front way. We were not. Because of our color, we could not go in the front door, and you just automatically knew you went up the back steps, and you just did that. There wasn't confrontation. We were not confronted. We were not people like this generation that is today. We just went along with the norm. Whatever it was, you went along with it. That came about later after we got out of high school that people started marching and things of that nature. But otherwise, you went along with the norm of things.

Alma Jordon ([23:45](#)):

So you mentioned going in the back door and going up the steps.

Eva Statesman ([23:50](#)):

Yes, yes. In the movie theaters. That was in Leonardtown, because there wasn't one down at Lexington Park at that time. When Lexington Park came along, we could go in the front door.

Alma Jordon ([24:00](#)):

Oh, okay. What part did religion play in your life, Ms. Smith?

Eva Statesman ([24:08](#)):

Most important part.

Alma Jordon ([24:10](#)):

I mean, Ms. Statesman.

Eva Statesman ([24:12](#)):

Very important part. Most of what I learned was from... My parents were Christians, and we stayed in church, but it was church then... It was not like it is now. The one thing that I liked about church then is that the children were not excluded. They were included. And that day, you worked alongside your grown folk, and you learned from them, and things were interesting. The life that they told you about. It was what I wanted because I'm not a rebel.

([24:50](#)):

I wasn't a rebel, and I wanted that type. But as I grew older, older, older, I learned that it was more to it than just going to church. I learned that it had to get on the inside of you and really believe. But what I learned was very good because they worked and they taught you and they explained things to you, the facts of life. They really did. Today, we sort of think that our children are not interested in that, but if we take the time to teach them, they would be interested. But we leave our children out a lot of things. We leave them out a lot of things.

([25:41](#)):

And then when you get a certain age, after an age, you try to tell, it's much too late. It's much too late. Much too late.

Alma Jordon ([25:56](#)):

So when you got married, did you live in the area? Tell me about your life after getting married.

Eva Statesman ([26:07](#)):

Oh, I'm going to say my life was good. I was not excited about getting married. Let me tell you that. No, because as I looked around me, I thought you get married, you have two or three children or whatever, and that's it. Because people in my time became married, you weren't working right then. Lots of people were housewives. But it's during my generation, after I got married, that people started to work in jobs on the Base and whatnot. Most of the things was housewife or you worked in somebody else's home. And as I told you, I am not that crazy about working in a house.

([27:00](#)):

So that's why I was not excited about getting married. But after I got married, I didn't have children right away. So I went out to work. And it was nice because integration had come in, and it was altogether different than what I had grown up with. So we were privileged, people at that time. And that's where we could enjoy ourselves, go to college. I did not go to college. I have taken courses and things on different things. After Africa, I got into the ministry. Then I went to ministerial school for evangelism. But college per se, right out of school, no I didn't. I did this on my own, taking classes, class on this and a class on that. That's what I did, and that's what I do now when there's a class. So there's a class. But at the time I came on, that's when things began to open up for the Black person.

([28:17](#)):

Things began to open up for us. And it was nice. Very good. It was very good. And see, that meant that I could do more than be a housewife. Since I didn't go to college, I could do more than be a housewife. So I did. And what I really loved doing is working in the public eye. I love selling. Selling is a ministry to me. I will sell anything if it's of a benefit because I feel like, if I can help you with this... What I'm selling can help you, and I want you to have it.

[\(28:58\)](#):

And that's what I sell. I'm a career girl. I'm really not a housewife, but now I am. That's what I was, a career girl instead of a... to be a home wife. But now, listen to this. If I had it to do over again and if I had children, I would stay home with my children first, and then I'd go to work, if I had it to do over again, because I don't like babysitting, putting children into babysitting. But if I had to do it again, that's what I would do. But I had a mother, very rarely, that she had to take care of them because Alfred worked at night, I worked in the daytime. So, I didn't need a babysitter.

Alma Jordon [\(29:51\)](#):

What type of work did you do?

Eva Statesman [\(29:52\)](#):

I always worked as a salesperson. I worked at Sears. I worked at Lexington Park Cleaners for years. I worked at Lexington Park Cleaners for about 15 years, a long time. But I was never happy there. And the moment that I could change... But I loved to iron and I didn't want anyone do it for me. But I'm a salesperson. Salesperson is what I am. And even when I speak as an evangelist, I want you to know how good it is for you. And that's what I like. I like to speak. Public speaking. I don't do much of this, but I just like you to know what good it would do for you, whatever it is, what good it would do for you.

Alma Jordon [\(30:46\)](#):

You mentioned that you worked at Sears. How was it working out in the community in a type of job like that, as far as race relations?

Eva Statesman [\(31:00\)](#):

It was wonderful. Personally, this is how my mother always taught us. You are always as good as anybody else, and you can do anything that you want to do, you set your mind to. You can do it. And she kept that for us because she wanted us to win contests. She wanted us to be head in anything. I was not the type of person who wanted to be head, but she had to push me for that. She pushed me. She had to push me because I figured if I know something, I don't have to be head. But she would push me in that thing and that's what she did to us. She would always push us. So, it really didn't matter to me what nationality. I never looked at that. I always knew that I can do anything that I want to do, as long as it's lawful. That's how I look at life. That's me. So it doesn't bother me what anybody else says. I say I can do it.

Alma Jordon [\(32:09\)](#):

Do you feel that things are different now than it used to be?

Eva Statesman [\(32:13\)](#):

Much, much, much. Somewhere along the line, we have fallen backwards, and I don't think we know it much because we have to take time for our children and teach them the way we were taught. I don't know if we can, so. There are lots of things we can do for ourselves that we don't, and I don't think the children know the value. They were not taught the values that we were taught. Because one thing, they're busy, and grandmothers are working now. They're out. Everybody's working. But children need to be nurtured. They need to be nurtured. We are not nurturing. We are not nurturing our children. Give

them a toy, everything they want, but they're not nurtured. They want love. That's what they're asking for, love. And we got to take time to love them.

Alma Jordon ([33:47](#)):

So you feel that the county and the communities are all different now than they used to be?

Eva Statesman ([33:58](#)):

This is what I think. I think we depend too much on county and government, this thing and the other thing. I think we can help. A lot of us can help ourselves. And I don't know if I should say that, but we can do a lot to help ourselves. And when we help ourselves, we're helping other people, and other people see you helping, then they're going to push you. I think we should push. Everybody should push everybody else, but I don't think I should be sitting here waiting to receive everything and not do nothing.

Alma Jordon ([34:35](#)):

So do you feel that your life has turned out the way you've planned, or the way-

Eva Statesman ([34:42](#)):

Yes, more than what I expected because I did not expect to leave St. Mary's County. That's one thing I did not expect to do. I did not expect to be married to a pastor, but I am, and much, much more. But because by me leaving the county, I had to leave my friends and things, and I had to start on my own. And so, I had to depend on the Lord. I had to depend on him, and that's what we did. And I have a chance to minister to so many people. I learned that we're supposed to minister and help people. We're supposed to. You don't have to wait for family, friends. I have to do what I can do.

Alma Jordon ([35:47](#)):

Is there anything else that you'd like to share with us today?

Eva Statesman ([35:50](#)):

No. No. No. It's nice. One thing that I think, that God had a purpose for making everybody. We just weren't put here. And God, every child that, no matter who they are, what they are, everybody, this whole wide world needs love, and we have the love to give. Instead of trying to take everybody out, let's pour in and help each other and show love. Love. That's what we're looking for, is love. And love is what's going to change the world. Love. That's what was shown to me by everybody. When I say everybody, I mean everybody. Love was shown to me. And love will save this world.

Alma Jordon ([37:04](#)):

Well, thank you for sharing Ms. Statesman. Thank you very much.

Eva Statesman ([37:07](#)):

You're welcome.

Speaker 3 ([37:07](#)):

Thank you.

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Speaker 4 ([37:07](#)):

Thank you.