

Unified Committee for Afro-American Contributions
Oral History Documentation Project

Joan Groves Briscoe

Interviewed by Merideth Taylor, Janice Walthour, and Christopher Groce

April 10, 2004

At her home

Logged by Tania Jordon on December 31, 2005

A verbatim transcript is available

Original format is two cassette tapes

1 hour, 22 minutes, 20 seconds

DISK 1 OF 2

TRACK 01

- 0:00 introduction by Meredith; main purpose of interview
- 1:50 the tragedy that caused family to move to St. Mary's County - brother stabbed by disgruntled teenager; father was licensed electrician
- 4:36 residences; schools attended (Phyllis Wheatley, Jarboesville, Cardinal Gibbons, Great Mills; father built home in sections starting with three walls - "three-sided house"

TRACK 02

- 6:30 work in the Court to enroll in the white school; difference in educational systems (New York vs. Maryland)/ getting into white school, registered at Great Mills High School, NAACP attorneys handled the case and won - then the Jarboesville school bus (all black children) picked them up and dropped them at Jarboesville School where an empty bus took them to Great Mills High School - could not ride the regular Great Mills High School bus; brother, Conrad, enrolled in ninth grade and Joan enrolled in twelfth grade

TRACK 03

- 9:37 integration policy - Board of Education wanted integration to take place slowly so they started with the early grades - kindergarten; this way it would take twelve years before a black student graduated from an integrated school
- 10:39 court proceeding, local court ruled in favor of Groves and then the Board of Education appealed to the Appeals Court where they lost again;

11:30 Miss Jane Mattingly was principal of Great Mills High School - "indoctrinated in the local ways" and was opposed to integration; newcomers (teachers and students) didn't necessarily feel same way - English teacher was nice and told her he would help in any way he could

13:16 other students reaction to them - looking for Jim Crow stereotypes; had some white friends

TRACK 04

15:12 first day at Great Mills High School; first day was limited to a half day; how she felt the night before - what to wear, hairstyle, etc.; had already attended integrated school in New York; moved to St. Mary's County at about eight or nine years of age

17:26 parents very dedicated to integration; always wanted to go and worked hard; transition from St. Mary's public black schools to public white school; graduated from twelfth grade at age sixteen (just before 17th birthday) in 1959

19:25 Conrad had more problems at Great Mills – transferred to Ryken; cannot remember Conrad having any problems at Ryken and he graduated from there

TRACK 05

20:33 parents were involved in their schooling, help with homework, involved in PTA, father looked white and mother looked black; always encouraged them even in after school activities - attending social functions at Great Mills; attended school dance with future husband who felt quite out-of-place at Great Mills High School

23:34 Conrad was made to feel uncomfortable - physical and mental abuse; kicking, shoving, name calling, etc.

TRACK 06

26:19 how others interpreted the Groves family experiences - slurs on the front lawn; did not let it bother her; parents prepared her for these issues

28:07 how their experiences helped her later in life, especially with her mission work; experiences were important in husband's successes; employment: mortgage banking, real estate, planning, Archdiocese of Greater Washington, and the mission for the past twenty years

TRACK 07

31:43 her marriage and family life; husband grew up poor in Tall Timbers; God's leadership in pursuing child welfare through the mission

33:15 family economics - getting out of debt; children - three natural and two adopted; excess size of current homes; adopted children came from dysfunctional homes and brought challenges with them

TRACK 08

37:26 description of a typical present day at Great Mills; number of black teachers; principal, Dr. Linda Lymas, is black

39:06 her treatment compared to other national race events; violence towards other student who came after she graduated; stereotypical hate attacks

TRACK 09

41:02 police escorts for her and Conrad's protection; proactive protection plans;

42:34 NAACP's involvement in court proceedings; attorneys were Clarence Mitchell and his wife Wanita;

44:09 no involvement in school activities, clubs, etc.; does not remember being invited to join any extracurricular activities;

45:16 Ryken environment more friendly for Conrad; Conrad graduated from Ryken and then went to Texas Western University; Joan left St. Mary's County right after graduation from Great Mills High School; parents stayed on in St. Mary's County

END OF DISK 2 of 2

DISK 2 of 2

TRACK 01

0:00 father's desire to live in other countries: Liberia, Cayman Islands; father knew and socialized with the president of Monrovia; after children grew up, parents went to Liberia and had a home there - then to Cayman Islands

2:40 father's business - licensed electrician; worked for both black and white people; hired black employees; built home and efficiency apartments - a place for black people to move into when first coming to segregated St. Mary's County

TRACK 02

6:02 lack of social outlets for young people here today

6:21 father was an activist for change; father was on the Board of Education; Clarence Young (black) served on the Board of Education during the time of the Groves' legal action (1955 on)

8:46 importance of education; need to be a part of community beyond race lines

11:21 school suspension and other problems associated with her year at Great Mills High School; white friends may have been targets due to their association with Joan

TRACK 03

12:39 achievement gap, segregation, and other accepted methods to keep minorities inferior; need for improving self esteem, personal expectations, etc

14:52 segregation's impact on black people; black people are behind and need help in every area; "segregation is so dangerous", continues through generations - inferiority is heard over and over

TRACK 04

18:14 mother's role in the family - "a super mom"; mother died very old - maybe 95 to 100 years old; mother grew up in St. Mary's County - maiden name Bankins

TRACK 05

21:00 acceptable activities and places to go for the young people; church and school activities; church dinners and dances - brought a dish and dressed up; Immaculate Heart of Mary; involved in everything that went on at church

24:37 churches institutionalized segregation (renting/buying pew); attended St. John's when they lived in Hollywood; Immaculate Heart of Mary not as segregated as most of the churches

TRACK 06

27:15 St. Mary's College of Maryland

28:30 Mother's influence; teaching etiquette

31:01 some negative influences in her life: experiences in St. Mary's and church leaders who do damage