

*Of Two Spirits:  
American Indian  
and African American  
Oral Histories*



Edited by Mike Tosee and Carmaletta M. Williams



*Of Two Spirits:  
American Indian and African American Oral Histories*

Copyright 2007 by the University of Kansas, Hall Center for the Humanities

This e-book is a product of the "The Shifting Borders of Race and Identity: A Research and Teaching Project on the Native American and African American Experience." Its publication is supported by a grant from the Ford Foundation.

Designed and produced by K LW Webwork <http://www.klw-webwork.com/>

Title page design: Lynne Lipsey

Photo credits:

Upper right: William Yellowrobe

Lower left: left to right, Viola Hicks, Maggie Hicks; Cheokee Nation sisters. Maggie is Virgil and Vernell Horn's grandmother. Photo taken about 1908, courtesy of Rev. Virgil Horn.

Lower right: back row, Ella Mae Horn (daughter of Maggie Hicks); middle row, Virgil O. Horn Sr.; front row, Virgil O. Horn Jr.; Vernell R. Horn. Photo taken at Easter, 1953; courtesy of Rev. Virgil Horn.

All rights reserved. This e-book may be downloaded and printed under fair-use principles. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any electronic or mechanical means, including information storage and retrieval systems, without permission in writing from the publisher, except by a reviewer who may quote brief passages in a review.

*Of Two Spirits:  
American Indian and African American Oral Histories*

**Coeditors**

iii

**Introduction**

---

|                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
| Mike Tosee             | 1 |
| Carmaletta M. Williams | 7 |

**Interviews by Mike Tosee**

---

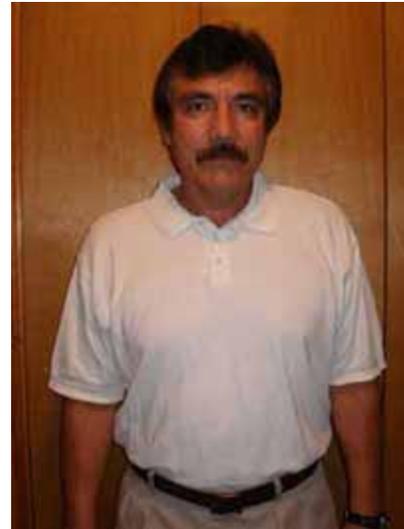
|                     |     |
|---------------------|-----|
| Errol Crowghost     | 11  |
| Bernadine Eastman   | 16  |
| Ron Eastman         | 26  |
| Shelby Exum         | 35  |
| Scott Harjo         | 44  |
| Cecil Harry         | 50  |
| Archie Hawkins      | 57  |
| James Jones         | 66  |
| Moses Jumper        | 77  |
| Bernard Kahrahrah   | 84  |
| Curtis Kekahbah     | 88  |
| Leroy Kelly         | 92  |
| Stacy Leeds         | 97  |
| Rubin Littlehead    | 105 |
| Celia Moria         | 115 |
| Benny Smith         | 126 |
| Rodney Stanley      | 137 |
| Wayne Thompson      | 143 |
| George Tiger        | 148 |
| Mike Tosee          | 154 |
| Jerry Tuckwin       | 164 |
| Delores Two-Hatchet | 172 |
| Ronald Two-Hatchet  | 177 |
| Toma Ella Yeahquo   | 190 |
| William Yellowrobe  | 193 |

**Interviews by Carmaletta M. Williams**

---

|                            |     |
|----------------------------|-----|
| Rachel A. Allen            | 204 |
| Iris Anderson (Starr)      | 207 |
| Linda Calvert              | 211 |
| Ethel L. Hardridge Colbert | 217 |
| E. W. Collins              | 220 |
| Bill Davis                 | 234 |
| Janet M. Ford              | 236 |
| Ron Graham                 | 242 |
| Rosie Elnora Brown Green   | 247 |
| Paulette R. Horn           | 252 |
| Virgil O. Horn             | 261 |
| Laura Partridge            | 268 |
| Jason Rozelle              | 276 |
| Verlean Tidwell            | 280 |
| Leona May Williams         | 289 |

**Michael D. Tosee** is an enrolled member of the Comanche Nation of Oklahoma. He has been a faculty member in the American Indian Studies Program at Haskell Indian Nations University, Lawrence, Kansas, since 1990. Along with teaching two lower-level introductory courses, United States History since the Civil War and Introduction to Sociology, Mr. Tosee also teaches two upper-level courses offered by Haskell's Indian Studies Program—Biography of American Indian Leaders: Past and Present and The American Indian Experience in the 20th Century. In an effort to preserve tribal history, since 1995 he has conducted nearly 250 individual interviews with tribal elders from thirty-five tribal nations.



**Carmaletta M. Williams** is a professor of writing, literature, media communications, and African American studies at Johnson County Community College (JCCC) in Overland Park, Kansas. She has made numerous presentations and conducted workshops for middle- and high schools, colleges and universities, and community groups, largely through the auspices of the Kansas Humanities Council. Williams earned bachelor and master of arts degrees in English from the University of Missouri-Kansas City and a doctorate in English from the University of Kansas. She has won a number of distinguished teaching awards including the Burlington Northern-Sante Fe Faculty Achievement Award, four Distinguished Service Awards from JCCC, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and Council for Advancement and Support of Education's Kansas Professor of the Year, the League for Innovation's Innovation of the Year award for her videotape "Sankofa: My Journey Home," about her Fulbright-Hays Award study in Ghana, West Africa. She also traveled to Guinea, West Africa, where, as a guest of the government, she established a faculty exchange between L'Ecole Nationale de Poste et Telecommunications and JCCC. She was an invited scholar to South Africa, where she interviewed citizens about their experiences during and post-apartheid. Williams has published extensively, including a study guide on Langston Hughes for the National Council of Teachers of English High School Literature Series. Williams was awarded JCCC's first "Diversity Award" in September 2005.

My project focused specifically on developing a new approach to the study of American history by creating an historical emphasis for a Native American/African American binary rather than the traditional focus on European/Native American or European/African American history that is presently emphasized. This research aimed to determine to what extent my interviewees perceived the existence of historical relationships between African Americans and Native Americans, explore how they personally recall their parents and elders interacting with or thinking about African Americans, as well as their own current perceptions and interactions, and come to conclusions as to how much in the historical context each group included or excluded the other and how much the history of these two groups could have paralleled the other with similar considerations for historical reflection.

My students and I video-recorded interview sessions with thirty male and fifteen female Native American participants whose ages ranged from twenty-five to eighty-six years of age. Forty-five interviews were conducted with tribal members representing eighteen tribal nations. Questions were designed to help pinpoint those moments when a historical connection between Native Americans and African Americans existed. The interviewees were asked to consider questions that centered around personal and tribal cultural beliefs and interactions, political standing, marriage, gender issues, religion, legal standing (segregation/integration), assimilation, education, economics, and views regarding individual and group identity.

In analyzing when, how much, and how often the historical relationship between Native Americans and African Americans intersected or clearly diverged within the context of American history, the interviews revealed four main considerations—culture, age, tribal affiliation, and the demographic location of each of the tribal interviewees. Subjects who were fifty years of age or older were typically more likely to have been influenced by an upbringing directed toward an awareness of cultural or tribal (Native American) values and belief considerations. This cultural awareness generated respect and regard for people from an egalitarian perspective that discouraged disparagement or discrimination

toward other people based merely on skin color. For example, several interviewees pointed out that tribal languages do not provide a negative connotation but refer to the color of an individual's skin only as a way to identify whom one is speaking about. Negative connotations seemed to have entered some of these languages when Native people learned to communicate in English. For example, through interactions that specific groups of Native people had with European Americans they came to use the word "nigger." It was the term they heard used in reference to African Americans. Elder tribal members recalled they heard and used the term most often in communication with members of the majority culture. The research indicated that when Native people used the word in the early to mid-twentieth century, they were largely unaware of the meanings European Americans and African Americans associated with the term and did not intend it to carry the demeaning and disparaging provocation intended by European Americans who used it.

Although older (fifty or above) and a few younger interviewees expressed that living according to traditional Native values did not make people immune from characterizing or perceiving others in a negative way, they said such judgments were based on the actions of the individual—how a person, whether European American or African American, behaved and treated other people—rather than on stereotypical assumptions associated with skin color. Responses by younger subjects (twenties and thirties), however, indicated that as Native people move farther from the influences and values taught by tribal elders, who are passing on in greater numbers, the notion of acceptance and tolerance is losing ground to influences outside Native traditions. The tone of the racial descriptions expressed by younger Native interviewees invoked forms of racial discrimination that did not exist for the older subjects. There was a clear indication that the influence of Native American tribal cultures in more traditional teachings plays a role in influencing individual Native peoples' historical perspectives toward African Americans and, just as important, the lack of training or understanding of these cultural values and customs is creating among younger Native Americans a less racially tolerant sentiment.

Tribal identity and demographics play a significant role in reviewing the level and standards of historical and racial inclusion and exclusion between Native Americans and African Americans. The Five Civilized Tribes—Muscogee, Creeks, Cherokees, Seminoles, Choctaws, and Chickasaws—were all noted for their agricultural pursuits and provide examples of significant inclusion in their historical relationships with African Americans. For several of these tribes, particularly the Seminole, there are historical examples of African Americans helping tribal members fight against what the tribes perceived as unprovoked and unwarranted European American transgressions against them, and some tribal communities became places of refuge for runaway slaves fleeing southern plantations. These former slaves were allowed to live as free people—sometimes as part of tribal communities and sometimes on the fringes. Other tribal entities, such as the Cherokees, Creeks, and Choctaws, however, retained African Americans as slaves. One of the interview subjects noted that the largest slaveholder in Oklahoma Territory before statehood in 1907 was a Choctaw.

Among the Plains tribal groups, including Sioux, Kiowa, Comanche, Cheyenne, and some Apache, the first notable contact with African Americans was based on conflict. Unlike the Five Civilized Tribes, who were, for the most part, actively engaged in agricultural pursuits, the Plains tribes stood in contrast as hunters and gatherers. The largely nomadic hunter-gatherer lifestyle did not lend itself to the creation of a workforce beyond the needs of the immediate tribe. Interviewees from the Plains tribes noted that in their cultural memory, the stories told to them by their parents and grandparents, their initial and most notable historical interactions with African Americans began in conflict. The Buffalo Soldiers, the all-African American infantry and cavalry units formed in 1869, fought against the Plains tribes, particularly the Apache in the later part of the nineteenth century, throughout the period of tribal resistance to broken treaties and reservation life. When the wars ended, the Buffalo Soldiers were used to ensure that Native Americans remained confined on reservations. Some Plains tribal members still view this period in their history as a very dark time and

associate the Buffalo Soldiers with their tribe's forced relocation, confinement, or imprisonment.

One of the more surprising findings in this research was that some of the tribal members from northern Plains states, in this case, South Dakota, and from sections of what is now the state of Oklahoma, lacked any real connection or interaction with African Americans or African American society. Historically, there has not been a significant African American population in the northern Plains states. One older interviewee indicated he did not see an African American person until he went to school at Haskell in the early 1950s. He said he had heard about African Americans but did not formulate a personal opinion about them until he noticed the segregation practices (movie houses, transportation systems, and stores) that existed in Lawrence and wondered why people were being treated in such a manner. The interviewee said he later came to accept the treatment of African Americans, at that time, as a pattern of life that he was unable to change and described similarities he saw between the treatment African Americans were receiving in Kansas to the treatment Natives were receiving in South Dakota.

Oklahoma represents the state in the Union most populated by Native Americans. Over the course of the nineteenth century, sixty-three tribes were removed to the area. Before statehood the western part of the state was known as "Indian Territory," with settlement exclusive to Native tribes, mostly plains tribes. The establishment of reservations to confine tribal groups took place in this area and, as noted by several interviewees, was maintained at times by Buffalo Soldiers. In the eastern portion of the state resided members of the Five Civilized Tribes. After the Civil War, as punishment for siding with the South, they were asked to relinquish land in Oklahoma to which they had earlier been removed for the purpose of settling western Plains tribes, who were then being removed from their own homelands. Once they relinquished the land, the Five Civilized Tribes were required to incorporate their former slaves as members of their respective tribes and refer to them as "freedmen." Though this process created an initial level of cooperation, in both the short and long term, it created

serious divisiveness among tribal groups who incorporated African Americans into the tribe as “freedmen” and those that did not.

As recently as the mid-1970s Native American and African American interactions were limited in the southwest part of Oklahoma. This was due in large measure to the fact that, after forcing tribal members to quit their claims to the land, Oklahoma legislatures were quick to pass strong segregationist laws when Oklahoma became a state in 1907. In the small rural farming communities in the western portion of the state, African Americans owned no farms and filtered through some of these communities occasionally as itinerate farm hands. Interviewees indicated that Native families sometimes provided lodging on their allotments and often shared their meals with the African American farmhands. This would not have been common among European American farmers during this segregationist era. In the southwest part of Oklahoma, the interactions Natives had with African Americans were even more limited in number and typically only in passing. The segregationist attitudes of the majority population in the state did not prevent Native perspectives regarding African Americans from emerging; however, stereotypical images began to be formed based on how African Americans were portrayed by the radio and television programming of the 1950s and 1960s. An interviewee offered “Amos and Andy” as an example.

The Native American perspective(s) that emerged through this research cannot be confined to an analysis that speaks in one voice. Each of the 162 recognized tribes has its own history and culture, and each has more than likely shared at least a moment and most cases many moments with an African American historical connection. The interactions represent a hugely complex and complicated story that can be understood only when viewed under both congruent and conflicting themes, such as tolerance/intolerance, rivalry/cooperation, war/peace, oppression/freedom, greed/generosity, acceptance/rejection. A prime example of these contrasting elements is the dichotomy between 1) African Americans after the Civil War who were just as aggressive in claiming Native Americans’ land as were European Americans—eventually establishing twenty-seven all-African American towns on what had

been formerly Native land—and 2) Buffalo Soldiers and Native American cavalry units who worked together to escort trespassing European American settlers from Native land. How this history plays out with reference to the theme of this research and how it illustrates both inclusion and exclusionary examples of racial existence, is intriguing. Analysis of the interviews identified prime examples of both conflict (Buffalo Soldiers and African American acquisition of Native land) and cooperation (acceptance of freedmen, shared experiences of discrimination, and joint efforts as part of the military service) between the two groups.

Video-recorded Interviews Compiled for the Shifting Borders Grant and Tribal Identifications:

|  |              |              |  |
|--|--------------|--------------|--|
| Sioux – 2  | Oneida – 1   | Crow – 1     | Paiute – 1   |
| Sioux – 2  | Creek – 7    | Choctaw – 1  | Kiowa – 1  |
| Pottawatomie – 2   | Arapaho – 1  | Hidatsa – 2  | Cheyenne – 2   |
| Seminole – 6   | Apache – 2   | Uchee – 1    | Pawnee – 3   |
| Cherokee – 4   | Onondaga – 1 | Comanche – 7 | One African American male who is married to a Native woman was also interviewed. |
| A total of 46 interviews were conducted as part of the Shifting Borders grant.<br>A total of 18 tribal nations were represented. |              |              |  |

When I began this oral history study for “The Shifting Borders of Race and Identity: A Research and Teaching Project on the Native American and African American Experience,” my initial goal was to document and record the stories of African Americans as they remembered interactions with Native Americans. This would complement Mike Tosee’s study, which was approaching the same topic from the American Indian viewpoint. However, as I began the interviews, I came to realize that, to many of the people I talked with, the “intersections” were the defining point in their lives. They were the places and spaces where the lives of African Americans and Native Americans met, collided, and sometimes came together. Nowhere was that clearer than in the children of those mergers. With this new information, I then shifted the primary focus of my study. The research product was the interviews to study the racial identification of mixed-race people.

This study was not as easy as I had originally thought it would be. The intricacies in these lives were as varied as the names they took for themselves. There was no way to be politically correct. Their racial identification codes were too dissimilar to draw an essentialist argument about them and their tribal identifications. Some preferred “black Indians,” others insisted that they be called by their tribal names, which, by the way, I had no way of knowing until they told me. An often comic moment for me was when an interviewee seemed astonished that I couldn’t tell he was Cherokee or Seminole or Creek or Choctaw. To avoid this awkward moment, after asking the interviewee to identify him/herself, my second question was always “How do you identify yourself racially?”. Many interviewees insisted they be called “black Chickasaw,” or “Afro Seminole,” for example. Even folk with comparable heritages did not refer to themselves in the same manner. One male interviewee insisted that he identified himself, and therefore I must do the same, as “Choctaw,” with no mention of his black heritage. For consistency and, hopefully, clarity, I refer to the mixed-race people in this study as “black Indians.”

The same problem with racial identification was prevalent with the Native peoples. Even within the confines of this project, there was disparity. One of our codirectors insisted that we use only “indigenous” when referring to her people.

Others identified themselves as American Indian and still others as Native Americans. I will refer to them as “Native American” since that is the name on this project.

The lives and stories of these people proved as varied as the cultures of the tribes to which they attached their personal heritages. Some of the interviewees had grown up with both their African American and Native American heritages intact. Their lives and their racial identities, which they carried in their psyches, had been validated by cards from their tribes and/or the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) confirming that they were, indeed, who they felt they were. Most of these interviewees were born to Native American women. In most of the indigenous groups to which this segment of interviewees belonged, as is the case historically of black slavery, the child’s racial status followed that of the mother. If the mother were Native American, the child could then claim and name that heritage as his/her own. As in European/black slavery, the same was true in Native/black slavery--the majority of the progeny were usually the offspring of black women and their masters. Therefore, the children of African American mothers and Native American fathers had different stories to tell. These black Indians described difficulties they were experiencing in receiving official recognition for that part of them that was Native American.

Most of these interviews were conducted in Oklahoma and southeastern Kansas, where many agrarian Native American tribes, known as the Five Civilized Tribes, lived and owned slaves. Others were conducted in Minnesota with a man who identified himself as three-quarters Indian but was forced by society to “legally” identify himself as “African American.” Another in western Kansas was of a man who was raised “white” then came to learn that he was half Cherokee. The stories are rooted in historical imperative. Children of the slave master and his female slaves were a common “product” of slavery, so there has long been mixed-race people.

What these interviews highlighted, however, was that many black Indians with a patrilineal mixing were first and second generation, not many generations removed from their Native American heritage. A significant number of these

mixed-race people were well aware of their indigenous personal histories and told stories of participating in Native American rituals with their fathers and grandparents. A few had some functional literacy in their Native languages, and most described vivid memories of a life shared with their Native American and African American kin.

These interviewees told stories of grandmothers who were slaves to Native Americans, and they revealed family secrets, such as a Native American mother who stole away from her parents by hiding in a secret compartment in a wagon because they would not allow her to marry a freedman. They told of colonies established in southeast Kansas by African American and Native Americans, so their mixed-blood children could be close to both their indigenous grandparents in Oklahoma and their African American grandparents in Kansas. Many of these black Indians have been fighting tribal councils and civil courts for years for the right to have the Native aspect of their racial identifications acknowledged and respected. As one interviewee stated, “I simply want to be recognized for all that I am.”

Those who were most politically active were members of the Descendants of Freedmen of the Five Civilized Tribes. This nonprofit organization works to educate other descendants of freedmen on their rights to claim their complete heritage and on the grueling process of doing so. Attending their meetings provided a keen insight into their struggles to reach a simple goal: to have their racial identity publicly acknowledged. The intensity with which the members of this group worked to have their Native heritage formally acknowledged was particularly illuminating.

America is a country whose European settlers identified themselves racially since the first importation of Africans as slaves in the sixteenth century. The forced miscegenation during slavery, which yielded children of all hues and colors, led to the adoption of the “one-drop rule”—if a person had one drop of African blood that person was identified racially as African. A similar rule applied in the case of black Indians. There was no consideration of “blood quantum.” The decision of whether to claim mixed-race progeny was gender based. If the

mother were Native, the child would be recognized by its tribal affiliation. The reverse was not true. If the father was Native American and the mother African American, the child was not recognized. In defining a person as being a black Native, the mother's blood counted. The father's did not. Those people describe their struggles to have the lives of both their Native American and African American family members acknowledged and respected.

Recording the stories of these mixed-race people captures a small, but extremely significant, part of American life and culture and offers important insights into a rarely acknowledged or studied group of Americans. However they identified themselves--black Indian, Afro Cherokee, or one of a myriad of other combinations--both their black and their Indian racial heritages are important to mixed-blood people, inherent in their personal racial identification, and significant to the way they view themselves. These discussions evoked emotional reactions in the interviewee. Some were angry. Others cried. All were determined that they should and would have legal acknowledgment of their whole being.

**Errol Crowghost**

Tribe: Sioux (Hunkpapa)  
Residence: Lawrence, Kansas  
Education: High School, Standing Rock, South Dakota  
Occupation: Facilities, Haskell Indian Nations University  
Military Service: United States Army – Vietnam era (2 tours)

MIKE: A part of this project is about what Indian people think of blacks and blacks think of Indians, and it's about discrimination. When you were growing up, did you ever experience personally discrimination as an Indian person in the community?

MR. CROWGHOST: Yeah, our teachers. We couldn't talk our language and I don't know where they got that from. Every time we'd speak our language, they might have hit our hands or they'd pull our ears. I think the principal was a white, but, as a whole, I think the government was trying to not let everybody, or the children speak their language. That was back in the 1950s.

MIKE: How about your experience with blacks or African Americans?

MR. CROWGHOST: I've never had any experience with blacks. I grew up on a reservation until I came to Lawrence, where I went to school. When I really got into it with blacks was when I went into military. They were surprised to see me. They asked me, "How did you get out? Why did they let you out? They couldn't understand why the Indians were off the reservation, that's what they asked me (laughter). But they weren't mad at me or anything. They just were really surprised—especially with a name like Crowghost.

MIKE: Yeah. Do you remember the first time you saw a black person?

MR. CROWGHOST: Yeah. On our reservation. One of the guys I grew up with. His name was Homer Redbuffalo. We grew up together, all of us. He was a good athlete later on. But he was part black. His mom was married to a black from some place in Winner, South Dakota, or something like that. So we used to make fun of him. We said, as Indians, "Watch out, there's a black guy coming." And we'd take off running. Shoot! He would pass us up (laughter). Stuff like that.

MIKE: You got along pretty with him?

MR. CROWGHOST: He and I was good friends now, or later on. He went to McIntosh High School, and I went to Ft. Yates. But he was all-state, I think it was

1965, he made all-state for South Dakota. They played against Pine Ridge in the state championship.

MIKE: Basketball or football?

MR. CROWGHOST: Basketball.

MIKE: Is he still back on the rez?

MR. CROWGHOST: No, I think he lives up there at Mandarin, North Dakota. He was some kind of special officer. But I seen him about three or four years ago. I ran into him. But he's retired.

MIKE: On the reservation, did you ever have a lot of interaction between blacks and tribal members?

MR. CROWGHOST: No.

MIKE: So that was one of the only few instances then? Did you view him as different, because he was part black?

MR. CROWGHOST: We all did, everybody. The whole community did.

MIKE: Was it a negative way or?

MR. CROWGHOST: It was negative. We'd tease him a lot, everybody would tease him (laughter). But he talked Sioux fluently. But somebody would get mad at him. They'd start calling him names and stuff like that.

MIKE: He had to be thick-skinned to live there, I guess, to survive.

MR. CROWGHOST: Yep.

MIKE: He caught it a lot then, huh? A lot of times, people say we judge other people based on race, and sometimes we don't even like somebody because they're black.

It's my contention that, based on my own experience, our elders and my parents, your parents, didn't teach intolerance because somebody was black.

Do you feel the same way? You can dislike somebody if they're black or if they're white or if they're red or whatever, if they do something to you. But they didn't prejudge them and say that you're not good because you're black or because you're Hispanic, or whatever.

MR. CROWGHOST: Yeah.

MIKE: And I don't think I learned that from my grandparents.

MR. CROWGHOST: I didn't either.

MIKE: They seemed to be more tolerant of other races.

MR. CROWGHOST: Yeah. I didn't learn anything like that from my grandparents or my parents.

MIKE: In our Comanche and Kiowa language there is no reference to anything derogatory that relates to race.

The Kiowa word is "Kon-gi-own." It just means black. And the Comanche word is "Tu-Taibo," which means black.

MR. CROWGHOST: (Laughter). How about "Stalusty"?

MIKE: "Stalusty" is Creek. It just means black.

MR. CROWGHOST: Yeah, I know.

MIKE: There was an interesting thing. Archie Hawkins said "Wa-she-chu" was a term in Sioux or Lakota that meant "one who takes." And it became "Wa-she-chu," which means "white man." But the original meaning was "one who takes." A Pottawatomie interviewee indicated that the word for a white man means "one who stabs you in the back." It's interesting that people would draw those conclusions about a race of people. But that was a term that was applied to a whole group of people.

What's the worst form of discrimination that you've ever seen—whether it was growing up, or in the military, or in your time here in Lawrence? What do you think stood out in your mind as a form of discrimination against either black or Indian?

MR. CROWGHOST: Probably of blacks, how they were discriminated in the South. That's what stands out in my mind when I hear that word discrimination.

MIKE: I remember when I worked in South Dakota. I worked there from 1976 to '77.

MR. CROWGHOST: Where about?

MIKE: In Mitchell. I taught at the Mitchell Dakota Westland.

MIKE: And there were signs. This is like during American Indian Movement (AIM) period in the early '70s. But they said they were there before these signs.

It said, "NO DOGS OR INDIANS ALLOWED." Did you ever have any experience with those kinds of signs on your reservation or near your reservation?

MR. CROWGHOST: Not on our reservation. We had a little town like McIntosh we'd go over to, but right off the reservation there's a place called Mobridge, South Dakota. I think there's a lot of discrimination there right now. Of course, they don't put signs up or anything like that. But you can feel it in the grocery stores or something like that. Indians are still being discriminated.

MIKE: What does it make you feel like when you see discrimination against any minority? How do you feel if you were to see it sometime?

MR. CROWGHOST: It makes me angry, but what could we do about it? What can I do about it? Just can't do nothing about it.

MIKE: It is frustrating. One of the interviewees said, "We've become accustomed to that." "We've almost accepted the second-class citizenship that we've been given, and we don't fight it." We just kind of say, "Who do you fight? What do you fight?" There's too much there to fight.

MR. CROWGHOST: Yeah.

MIKE: So you just kind of accept it. And he said that he believes that sometimes we've accepted those, and we get frustrated or angry, but we've accepted our role in a diminished state, as far as equality goes.

How do you deal with that with your kids? I hope to teach my kid to be able to stand up for himself and to be able to question it verbally if he can.

How do you address that the same way with your children?

MR. CROWGHOST: To tell you the truth, I don't remember (laughter) ever telling them. I don't think I ever tell them what to do if they get discriminated against. Corey and I never talked about anything like that. I think what we figured is just learn what to do, I guess.

MIKE: How about here in Lawrence? Do you believe that the Lawrence community accepts the Indian population here?

MR. CROWGHOST: After being here fifteen years, I haven't never experienced any discrimination. But I've heard about some places where they're discriminated.

MIKE: One of the things that's interesting is that the Southern tribes, particularly the Creeks, Cherokees, Seminoles, Choctaws, Chickasaws—the so-called Five

Civilized Tribes—have a history with blacks. The blacks, former slaves, used to run off and live among or around them.

During removal, there was a history of interaction. And in the removal they brought them here. But I found with the Northern Plains tribes and most of the Plains tribes, they had no understanding of blacks because they never seen them except during the late nineteenth century, when the Buffalo Soldiers were in the military. But that's the only connection that they have. Most Plains tribes had no interaction.

MR. CROWGHOST: That's right.

MIKE: Even into the twentieth century you got areas that are so remote that most tribal members in the North never saw blacks. The interaction there is very limited.

MR. CROWGHOST: Yeah. Of course, you got those air force bases in North Dakota. That's where a lot of blacks are, like Rapid City, if you go downtown you see, once in a while, blacks. You know right away they're from the air force base, or the Grand Forks, or Minot was another. We know that the blacks were stationed there, or the Indian people probably, or the general population know they're from the Air Force base if they do see a black.

MIKE: You know of all the different negative stereotypes that are applied to black people and the African Americans. When you begin to interact in the military with blacks, did those stereotypes influence you, or were you cautious? Were you a little wary, or did you find a black colleague or an Army buddy who happened to be black? Did you find it easy to accept him and be involved and interact?

MR. CROWGHOST: When we're going through the basic training, the blacks trained just as hard as everybody else. So I think everybody accepted them. I don't know if I ever seen anybody, any fights or anything involving whites or blacks that was in the military. Never.

MIKE: How about you personally? Did you interact with blacks easily?

MR. CROWGHOST: Oh, yeah. Definitely. I interacted with anybody when I was in service. With Spanish guys, Hispanics, blacks, whites. I got along with everybody. I sure did.

MIKE: All right. That's it.

**Bernadine Eastman**

Tribe: Onondaga  
Residence: Lawrence, Kansas  
Education: Syracuse University, Syracuse, New York (BA)  
Occupation: Retired elementary school teacher

MIKE: If you would start with your name and your tribal affiliation and your birth date, then I'd like to ask you a question. How important is your culture is to you? How do you learn values? The values that you learned from your relationship with your grandparents, parents, how important they were in your life and things like that. So if we can start with your name and your tribal affiliation and birth date.

MRS. EASTMAN: My name is Bernadine Eastman. I'm an Onondaga Indian from upstate New York, just outside Syracuse. We have a very small reservation, five square miles. People laugh when they hear that. I lived on the reservation until I was in my mid-30s, had my family, and as our kids started to grow up, we saw some things coming onto the reservation that we weren't comfortable with: drugs. Since my husband is not an Onondaga and our line is carried through the women, he could never own property on the reservation, and our kids were enrolled in his tribe, so nobody else could. At that point, we moved off the reservation. We stayed in the area because my family still lived there, but that was our reason for moving off the reservation.

We kept our children in the district that educated the Native American kids from the rez, because we wanted to have that as part of their experiences. We didn't want to lose that. They went to the school on the reservation. It was a K-6 school, and now it's a K-8. It is a totally Native population there, and we enjoyed that for our kids. But things started to creep into the environment. A lot of political things were going on, so we moved off, but kept them in the school district.

I was a before-the-war baby. My mom went to work in a factory, my father was in the service, so my mom and I stayed with my grandparents, with my mother's mother and father. My memories of being with them and spending time with them, when I think back, are so different from the memories that my kids have, because they had a farm.

They ran a farm, very small, but it was a working farm. They had cows that were milked. I don't remember what they planted. But my grandfather used to load up the horses, two horses, and take them up in the back fields to plow. I can remember I used to ride on the backs of the horses when he'd take them up there. It was what I think is a typical farm life. My grandmother would prepare the noon meal and it was always biscuits. I remember she cooked on a wood stove and I can remember that kitchen being so hot. My grandfather had these huge

hands, and he had a tea cup that he used. He always used the same cup, and it was white with iridescent colors in it. I don't know where it came from, and he always drank his tea in that cup. To me, it was the biggest cup in the world. I can remember sharing the meals with them.

I can remember going up in the fields when it was time for him to eat. My grandmother would send me up, and I'd find him and bring him back. Maybe that's when I rode the horses. I can remember churning butter with my grandmother. We'd sit out on the back porch and she'd have a churn and we'd churn it, and then she'd get--I call them crackers, what must have been hard tack or something like it, and she'd put butter on it that we had just churned. It was about an inch thick, and that's where I started my love of butter, which I haven't lost.

But my memories of them are just a part of my life. I just learned so much from them that I didn't even realize, because it would just happen. They were just there. I found out later that I could be kind of a temperamental child. They had a back room that I used to get sent to when I'd get on my grandfather's nerves. But I don't remember that.

I do remember when both of them passed away. My grandfather died from falling from a second story in the barn and broke his back. In those days, you didn't survive. And then my grandmother had cancer. I didn't know it at the time, but there was a front porch and there was a swing on there that we could lie down on. In the afternoon, I can remember lying down with her when I was supposed to take my nap, and I didn't realize that she was suffering then, dying of cancer. That was when she rested, and she passed away in the fall, because I had started school. Their loss didn't impact me that much at the time, because I had my mother and by then I had brothers and sisters. Being apart of a big family, her sisters and her brothers were around, so my aunts and my uncles were there. So the family just kind of went on.

The farm wasn't a working farm anymore after they both passed away, but the house was still there. My aunts and my uncles were a big part of my family, and I didn't realize at the time how much Native culture was being passed on, just through osmosis.

I never did learn to speak the language. My mother could understand, but she couldn't speak it, because her parents would use the language when they didn't want them to understand what they were talking about. Of course, that's how she picked it up, by trying to understand what they didn't want her to know. In my adult years, I tried to learn, took lessons many times. But with the language, if you don't use it, you lose it. So I've never been able to learn it, and that's a sad part for me, because I probably never will.

There aren't that many people now that teach it or talk it. It's still taught at the reservation school. I went back and did my teaching career, teaching at the high school that educated the kids from the rez. Now that reservation school goes to eighth grade, and the kids that go through that get the Native language for eight years. Still, they don't recall it once they get in high school. I wanted a word of somebody who wanted to name their dog "Brown," and they wanted the Native word for "brown." I had to go through all the kids, and for a long time before I found somebody who could even tell me that. So it's being lost.

MIKE: One of the things about tribal members and tribal people all over the country is that, when there was pressure to give up land and there was expansion going on, one of the things to rationalize, to say Indian people needed to assimilate, to change their way of living or way of thinking, was that they weren't Christian. But, when I think about Indian people, they are more spiritually inclined than even people who claim to be Christian. In your relationship with your grandparents, did you see that kind of relationship?

MRS. EASTMAN: They had a wonderful way to deal with that. We have an Episcopal Church on our reservation. The church is almost 200 years old. The building is now almost 200 years ago, because it was 150 way back when I was living there. My grandmother was one of the pillars of the church. My grandfather was the Wampum Keeper for the Six Nation Confederacy. You have to be an Oneida to do that. He was an Oneida.

I can remember in my youth going to the long house for ceremonies and they go all night long. I can remember my grandmother cooking and taking baskets of food, and then coming home in the morning and changing clothes and putting on our frilly dresses and our hats and going to church for Easter service. They had a way of bringing the two cultures together without any problem. But, as I was growing up and as we were raising our kids, that changed drastically on our reservation. The feeling got to be that you had to be one or the other, you couldn't be both.

I, myself, feel that there is a Creator. It doesn't matter what you call him. If you live a good life, then you're a good person, no matter who you pray to. That was one of the reasons we left the reservation, because people got to be in charge who said you had to be one or the other. It was very sad to see that passed down to generations after that when their parents knew how to walk the line. They knew how to walk in both cultures, but their kids didn't. The kids—I wouldn't call it pro-Indian as much as anti-white. There was a time when there were kids that just had hate. Sometimes it was directed at me because I was a Christian, because I went to church. I think that's changing now. I think it's evolving back to being able to accept different ideas.

On our reservation, they maintain a traditional form of government, which was an ideal form of government. It was a clan system, where the clan mothers chose

the chiefs to be clans. The chief that was chosen by the clans represented the ideas of that family or that clan. Since many men didn't keep their traditions, a clan wouldn't have a person who was fit to be a chief or a sub-chief. That clan would adopt or borrow somebody from another clan, so they came in and they were now the chief for that clan. That broke down the system of truly representing the clans. On our reservation, they even borrowed from the tribe from other reservations in New York.

The system was no longer strong and unified. It became very disjointed, because you had people who were technically Onondaga chiefs who weren't even Onondagas. That really caused a lot of problems on our reservation. I left the reservation school and, the year after I left, the school centralized. Before, all the students used to go into Syracuse to go to high school. The year after I left the reservation school, the students went to another town that was just on the borders of the reservation. I always called it a farmer town. So they centralized with that, and there was an awful lot of animosity.

Looking back, if you could pick a class that would be the worst class for going into a new district, it would have been those kids that I went to school with. They were hell raisers from the get-go, and that was the first class that went up to this other school system, to Lafayette, and there were many problems with integration, just getting those kids moved in. I said, "I would never go to that farmer's school," because I had the option of going there or staying in the city, and I stayed in the city. But, as time evolved, that's the school that we sent our kids to and that's the school that I wanted to get back to teach in. I did spend my last years of teaching there.

MIKE: When you were growing up, were there racial differences with people? Is there something that you were taught by your grandparents or your parents that distinguished others, one from the other?

MRS. EASTMAN: I don't recall noticing that they were different, because I grew up on the rez and went to school on the rez until I was in seventh grade. That's the first time I came in the city and was integrated. In doing that, I think I always felt inferior. I don't know why, but I always felt that the white kids were smarter, dressed better, had nicer homes. I was probably the only one in my high school who didn't have electricity or running water in my house. When I got into high school, I was asked to join a sorority, and my mother was mortified. She said, "You cannot do that, because they would have to come to the house and have their meetings, and there's no way they could come out here and do that."

My mother went to tenth grade. I would say she was a self-taught woman. She did a lot of reading. She and my father divorced just after I got out of high school. I have four younger brothers and sisters. But she had a drive in her for her children to become educated, because she knew that was the way to achieve what you want in life. The older I get, the more I have respect for her ideas. A

single mom coming from a very dysfunctional family. She raised five children, who are now functioning adults in society. Three of us have college educations. One brother works for UPS and makes more money than my sisters and I together and another brother.

I don't know how she did it, but we all respect education. A few years back, when I was still teaching up there, I look back at the school on the reservation. They tried to hire Native teachers and, of the teachers that they had there, about twenty-five percent were my relatives. I stood back and I looked and I thought, "Where did that come from? Did it come from my grandparents? Did they instill this idea?" We were all from different families. None of us were brothers and sisters, but cousins, and that really amazed me that there were so many from my family that were teaching there. I can't say where that came from.

MIKE: Do you remember when you first saw a black person or African American?

MRS. EASTMAN: I can't really remember.

MIKE: How about your parents talking about a group of people or referencing that?

MRS. EASTMAN: My father made reference to being in the service with people from all over, with Indians and blacks and whites. I can't recall if he would consider a black person a buddy or not. I'm so old that we've gone through the years of what you'd call black people. Negroes is what I think it was at that time.

MIKE: At any point in your life, did you ever learn anything that was considered derogatory or demeaning from Indian people? Did your relatives say, "Stay away from those people because?"

MRS. EASTMAN: Yeah, but I don't know specifically when. I know there was the feeling that you don't hang around with somebody who's black. There weren't any black people in my high school. But there was a feeling and I don't know where it came from. I don't think I ever had the opportunity to spend time with any black people when I was in school, not until I went to college.

MIKE: So you didn't really form any opinions until you went to college actually?

MRS. EASTMAN: I just don't judge people by race. I respect people and, in order for me to have bad feelings about you, you have to do something to me to earn that disrespect. You have to disrespect me in some way.

MIKE: That nonjudgmental feeling that you had, do you think that came from your upbringing?

MRS. EASTMAN: I think it came from my mother, who was very open and loving and would help anybody. I guess she taught through her actions, not her words.

MIKE: Did you ever think at any time, that some of the oppression blacks were feeling is some of the same oppression that Indian people had to go through as well?

MRS. EASTMAN: Yes. But I'm a very optimistic person, and you almost have to hit me over the head to make me realize that you're treating me differently because of my skin color. It was not until my adult years that I believe that happened. I'm a special education teacher and I have always felt that people who are different have the same rights as anybody else, including putting a severely handicapped child into a regular classroom.

When I first started working in the field, I worked with adults and I found that people of color, whether they were black, Puerto Rican, or a person of color, they would always gravitate to me.

I remember there was a gentleman that worked in a developmental center. This was for adults, and everybody was kind of terrified of him. He was kind of big, and he had a face that looked scary. He had one eye that was kind of white and he smoked, and he would go around demanding cigarettes from people. He was just a scary guy. He had free roam of the center. I got on the elevator one day and he got on the elevator with me, and I was nervous. Not because of his color, just because of his size. I said hello to him and he asked me for a cigarette, and I told him, "No." I said, "Cigarettes are bad for you." He looked at me, and then he came and he stood next to me, and he pointed to his arm and he pointed to my arm, and he went like this: "You and I." And we were buddies after that.

It's just people. He identified with me. He knew he didn't intimidate me. He really did, but he didn't think he did. He was a person. Once you got past that scary part, he was a person just like everybody else.

MIKE: Warren Lyons, I heard him speak one time and he said that we're all members of once race, and he said "The human race." And I have a sense, based on the talks or discussions I've had with people in these interviews or any discussions I had with Indian people, is that there is a sense that you don't really demean people, people have just as much right as you have because they're members of the human race. I don't think my grandparents saw color, they saw people. And it's like what you just said, is that if you do something to them, then they might react. But, in the meantime until you do, they're going to see you on equal terms, no matter what color you are. Do you find that something that's attributable to your tribe as well? In the old days?

MRS. EASTMAN: Yeah. In the old days, I've never seen any difference. I think it's different now. It's very different now. But the work that my grandmother and

my mother did, they were domestics. They went into peoples' houses and cleaned. That's what put us through college and that's what my grandmother did. So, I don't know where they developed feelings that the white people were better than them, because those were the people that they worked for.

This is kind of funny. My mother, who was a very loving person, had her levels of respect for white people. The rich people, she gave them a lot of respect. But, if she met a white person that she thought was beneath her level, she could be pretty rude to them (laughter). But I never saw her be cross or disrespectful to somebody who was black because they were black. I think that was pretty true back then.

MIKE: Do you think something is missing with our young Indian youth? Because they begin to emulate a totally different way of dressing, speaking, there's a lack of regard for maybe individuals. What do you attribute that to, where the young people now speak—I don't know how you would describe it—but in the language of rappers and things like that?

MRS. EASTMAN: My own personal opinion, I think it's a breakdown of the family and I blame everything on TV.

MIKE: And not the culture, not losing our culture?

MRS. EASTMAN: I think that if you keep your family strong, you maintain your culture. Kids that break away from their culture, that try to dress differently and talk differently, I think there's probably a breakdown in the family some way so that that culture isn't sustained.

I know some young kids who wear the baggy pants and wear the baggy shirts and the flashy jewelry, but their family is strong and it's intact. When he goes to do a gourd dance, he has on jeans, he has on a shirt, he has on shoes. He's dressed appropriately. I think if you have a strong family, the kids can be allowed to explore different kinds of lifestyles, but you still have your family intact. Mother and father are there, and the culture just carries on because it's lived. You know that phrase, "Do as I say, not as I do," and kids are very smart. You can tell them anything, but they watch your reactions and your behaviors, and that's what they will emulate.

MIKE: Did you ever see anyone really act out or express some derogatory or demeaning language toward a black person? Have you ever heard anything that would be attributed to racism in your experience of living? That you clearly identified as racist?

MRS. EASTMAN: I can't. I keep saying, "I'm sixty-four years old," but I've really had a very sheltered life. So many experiences that I know are out there, either I'm so naive or that I always look for the positive things in any situation. But I

don't think I've ever been involved in a situation where somebody was really looked down because they were black. My son had a friend in high school, we had one black family in the school, and he was good friends, and the daughter was involved in the plays and things and my daughter was. Even in that situation, only one family, I'm not aware of them being treated differently.

MIKE: How about during the strong civil rights period, where there was voter registration and things like that, and you seeing that on the news or read in the newspapers. Did you feel like that kind of treatment was not quite right?

MRS. EASTMAN: Of course, I felt it wasn't quite right. But watching it on TV, it's going on and that's terrible, but you don't really realize what's happening until you experience some of it. I can tell you my first real experience with understanding the difference. I went to college in Oklahoma in 1959. My girlfriend and I traveled from upstate New York to Tulsa, Oklahoma, on a Greyhound bus. We knew nothing about separate bathrooms or anything. I don't know where we were, we were getting pretty close to here and we had a stop. So we got off and went into the first bathroom that we saw. It was kind of dingy, but we didn't know what to expect. We had never traveled before. We must have had a few hours there and we got something to eat. Then, we saw this other bathroom. So went in there and it was pink tile and pretty chairs and pretty mirrors, and nobody ever said anything to us in either bathroom. That other bathroom must have been for the blacks and this is for the whites. Nobody ever said anything to us. I mean, that's how naive we were. I guess it brought everything into focus of how differently black people are treated in the South.

Now that I'm thinking this, now in my adult life, when I meet a black person or spend time with a black person, in my mind I can tell they're from the South or they're from the North, because the Northern black people are pushier. The black people from the South are calmer and not as pushy. So I see a difference there.

MIKE: You spent some of your college years in Oklahoma then?

MRS. EASTMAN: Bacone College, Muskogee, Oklahoma.

MIKE: Okay. Muskogee.

MRS. EASTMAN: I don't mention that too much around Haskell (laughter).

MIKE: I know Oklahoma was considered a Southern state and it was a segregationist state and, so, it was rather obvious probably. You probably saw the segregation. I know in Muskogee they had an all-black school, Manual Training I believe it was called.

MRS. EASTMAN: Like I said, my life was very sheltered. I went to Bacone. The first time I had been away from home ever, and I was pretty close to the campus.

I did all of the things through the campus and many of my friends were blacks. I always said I wouldn't have made it through chemistry if it wasn't for one of the black basketball players, because I knew nothing about chemistry and he was real smart, so we were a team. I'd take the notes and he'd tell me what to write down. He was a nice guy. I didn't think of him as a nice black guy, he was a nice guy who was a basketball player, who knew a lot more about chemistry than I did. On the campus, I'm not aware of any problems.

MIKE: Have you ever interacted or met any mixed-race Indian people? Mixed black-Indian?

MRS. EASTMAN: Yeah. In the East, a lot of the tribes from Massachusetts or Connecticut are all mixed blood. I can tell you one experience. I was at a pow-wow back there--I don't know where it was--and there was a man who was dancing, and you could tell he was mixed blood. I felt so sorry for him because his outfit was things that were put together. It was like, he didn't have his culture, and he was pulling this style from here and this style from there, and putting it together. I felt so sad that he lost his culture and he was trying to get it back. It was obvious. He was out there dancing, but the way he dressed was just like he didn't know, and I guess that made me sad. To me, he's an Indian. He's an Indian with more black features, but he was an Indian and he really wanted his culture, and it's probably lost forever because if they don't have the language, they're not going to be able to regain much.

MIKE: Is there a word that Onondaga use to describe black people? Like in Comanche, it's "To-ti-wo". It just means black man or black person.

MRS. EASTMAN: The word that we use is "Ga-hoon-gi." Translated, I don't know what it means, but if you saw a black person, that's how you would refer to him. Everybody would know what that was.

MIKE: One of the things that I was always told was that, if you were going to get married, marry an Indian person. In my interviews, nearly everyone said that that's what they were told as well. But I don't think that's a racist understanding. I think a lot of non-Indians who hear these interviews will say, "Indians were just as racist as anybody else." But I attribute that to Indian people wanting to maintain their cultures and their tribal identities.

MRS. EASTMAN: I think I would have to agree with that. I know my mother didn't say, "You have to," but it was kind of understood that you would marry an Indian. I have two brothers and two sisters. One of my sister's husbands was an Indian, but my brothers have both married non-Indians. One of the brothers has finally ended up with an Indian after two blondes.

MIKE: One of the things that people don't understand is Indian people were driven to the brink of extinction. We had 250,000 people in the entire United

States at the turn of the century. People don't understand they were just trying to maintain themselves as tribal people.

The Kiowas went down to about 2,000 people and Comanches were down to 2,000 as well, from populations around 15,000. They diminished to that level. Now they want to make sure that they can maintain their identities, and that's a very strong trait among Indian people is to keep their culture. There was always that push. But people misidentify that push as being racist and I don't think it is.

MRS. EASTMAN: I don't think it is either. On my reservation we no longer have any full-blooded Onondaga Indians. About 40 years ago, the last man who was full-blooded Onondaga passed away. So we have all mixed blood now, and it's kind of unique with the tribes in New York, because we're all part of the Iroquois Confederacy that unifies us, although the languages are all different from the different tribes. Onondaga, I don't know which one it is, I wouldn't even take a guess. There's one tribe where the languages are very similar, but the other tribes, they are dissimilar.

MIKE: I don't know about the Onondaga, but you can answer this for me. Kiowas, Comanches would take people in. They'd go grab captives. I know that some of the Eastern tribes, whenever they lost a family member, they would go nab somebody and then they would be adopted into the family. It didn't matter if they were white or whatever. Did Onondagas have stories like that?

MRS. EASTMAN: I couldn't speak to that in the history, but they adopt them now.

MIKE: It doesn't matter what racial group? They do adopt members into their clans?

MRS. EASTMAN: They do adopt. I can't think of any mixed who have been adopted, but we have mixed who are chiefs because they're mixed by marriage.

MIKE: I appreciate your time.

MRS. EASTMAN: Thank you.

MIKE: We went quite a ways. That was a really good interview.

**Ron Eastman**  
**Interviewed by Jessica James and Jason Lewis**

Tribe: Crow  
Residence: Lawrence, Kansas  
Education: High School – Crow Agency, Montana  
Occupation: Retired Greyhound bus service  
Military: United States Marines

JESSICA: I was raised in Fort Hall, Idaho, on Fort Hall, Idaho, Indian Reservation with my mom. I graduated from Haskell in 2004 and got my American Indian studies degree. Now, currently, I'm attending graduate school at the University of Kansas in the Indigenous Nations Studies Department. I'm just helping out to learn more about the oral history process, and trying to gain as much information as I can, so that I can go back and hopefully utilize it and help my tribe in some way in respect of cultural preservation purposes. I want to learn how to do interviews and talk with elders on issues that may have been lost. Basically, that's my background and who I am, and this is why I was wanting to participate in the "Shifting Borders" interview process.

We can just go over some background information on you, to say your name, your birth date, where you're from, where'd you grow up, how you were raised, any kind of belief system that was influenced on you in growing up, and we can go from there.

RON: My name is Ron Eastman. I was born May 24, 1942, at Lame Deer, Montana, in a public health hospital. My father was Northern Cheyenne and my mom was Crow. I'm sixty-four years old now. I kind of moved off of the Crow Reservation at an early age. I went to college at Bakeland College in Muskogee, Oklahoma. From there, met my wife and moved up to New York, and spent my whole working career in New York State and Boston, Massachusetts.

But I've tried to keep my cultural identity with myself, living and working out east and only going home to Montana on vacations. I've attempted to keep that culture alive and raise my children with that culture. My childhood was spent on the Crow Indian Reservation. My father passed away when I was a very young boy, I was twelve years old. I was the youngest of nine brothers and one sister, and the only one in the family to formally graduate out of high school and attend college.

My uncle played a big role with me when it came to identifying culture or identifying the Indian ways. I spent a lot of time with him, and he basically took over and was my father figure growing up. I attribute a lot to my mom and my auntie and my uncle for the person that I am today. As I look back at myself and I look back at my wife and my children, I'm satisfied. I'm satisfied. I'm pleased with

the way everything turned out. Would I have anything different? Yeah. If I could spend more time with my family, because now my family is all gone. They're all dead. So, I would have loved to spend more time with my mom and my aunts and my uncles, just to learn more. There's just so much culture there.

You don't realize what you're taught as a youngster until you grow up and become an adult, and become a father. You start teaching your children. You learn quite a bit when you're growing up in the culture and practicing the culture.

JESSICA: Did you go to boarding schools?

RON: No. I went to a public school, right there in Lodge Grass, Montana. Elementary school in Wyola, Montana. It was a mixture of white and Indian. The same in high school was probably white and Indian.

JESSICA: Were there any blacks or African Americans in your school system?

RON: Not in my school system, but in the town there was. There was one man that I don't know where he came from, but he moved into Lodge Grass. He said his name was Springfield, or his name was Springfield. He said his name was Spring in the Field, and he married a Crow woman and they had children. That was probably my first exposure to a black person.

My second exposure to a black person was in a basketball tournament in high school. I was guarding this black basketball player and, all through the first half of the game, I was very curious about his hair. And, at half-time, we were walking off the floor and my curiosity got the best of me, and tried to touch his hair. Because it was so curly. And he took offense to it. Which I don't blame him. If somebody wanted to touch me that I didn't know, I would have probably reacted in a stronger fashion than he did. But that was my only exposures until I got into college.

JESSICA: What were your feelings about it? Were you raised to think any differently about African Americans?

RON: There were some unfavorable feelings that my older brothers, who all went into the service. And why they had these feelings, I have no idea. But there were some prejudice feelings against black people with my brothers. I don't know. I don't like to treat people on hearsay, treat people badly. I wait for them to do something to me and then it's. I find it kind of stupid to dislike somebody just because of who they are. Do something to me to cause me to dislike you, and then I'll dislike you. But, until then, you're just another person just like me.

JESSICA: Do you think that American Indians are racist toward other groups of people in general?

RON: Yes. With good reason. With very good reasons. First of all, look at the way the government has treated the Indians and who represents the government basically. I mean, there's a lot of Indians that work for the government on the reservations, but there's always a white person that's basically your chief or your CEO running it. He's a guy that makes all the decisions, and the decisions come out of Washington, DC, with all the politicians. Those orders come right down from the President of the United States. So, if you're somewhat paying attention to the affairs of this country, as an Indian, how could not feel discriminated against by the white people. And, in some circles, there is open discrimination against Native Americans. I've seen it. I've experienced it.

JESSICA: Do you want to tell about an experience in which, that affected you personally?

RON: Sure.

In my working career, I was one of three Native Americans that worked for the New York state government. These other two Indians didn't really come out and admit they were Indians until after I got there, and because I said I was Native American and I was proud to be Native American and told everybody I was a Native American, it wasn't until after I did that and basically proved myself, that these other two guys come out and said, "Yeah, we're Indians. We're part Indian." Until that, they were part Indian on paper, but they didn't act it.

So, we bought a house in Oneida, New York, and we planned on retiring there. But the United Indians built a casino and they started buying a lot of property around Oneida County. For good reason, because their reservation had dwindled right down to where their territory, as they describe it, dwindled right down to a forty-five-acre plot and they were trying to get their land back. So, with that, all the land that they purchased went back into trust and had become nontaxable real-estate. And, because of the casino, there was a group of Indians that worked very hard and were trying to get their property back that they once had, that was stolen from them by the government. That property comes off the tax roles, and there was open discrimination against all Indians in the village of Oneida, New York. And basically in Oneida County. I mean, there's groups fighting, going to court, trying to get the Oneidas to pay taxes.

A lot of rumors come out of these things. Lies. A prime example: My wife called. I was on my way home from work. She said, "Could you stop and get some bread and milk?" "Sure." So, I'm standing in line at the checkout counter and this elderly lady turned around and started crying. She says, "Why do you want to do this to me?" It puzzled me. I said, "Lady, what are you talking about?" And she said, "Why are you trying to kick me out of my house and take my church away from me?" And I said, "Lady, I'm not trying to take anything away from you." She said, "Well, I heard you're buying up property and you're going to be kicking us all off of our property after you buy it. And you're going to kick us out of our church

and tear our church down." I said, "Lady, I don't even know you. Secondly, I'm not even Oneida. I'm a Northern Cheyenne and Crow from Montana originally. I live in Oneida. I have a house, I pay taxes on it."

But, because you're Indian, they just put you in the whole bag of hatred that they have. But there was some open confrontational issues with non-Indians, whites out there, that I experienced also. So, we moved. We sold our house and we moved out of the area. We now live in Lawrence, Kansas.

JESSICA: So, in terms of racism living here in Lawrence, do you feel any kind of tension?

RON: None whatsoever.

JESSICA: Is it pretty much friendly then?

RON: It's much friendlier and the Native population is much larger, in racial to non-Indians, more so than it is in New York State.

JESSICA: Earlier you were talking about your experiences of going to college and seeing African American people. What were some instances where you? Were they prejudiced toward Indian people? To Native people?

RON: No. We don't have the numbers of black people in Montana. And my buddy and I that went to school together, we were just flabbergasted as to the numbers of black people that we saw. And, on our way down, we changed trains in some place in Nebraska. Or was it St. Louis? And we come off the train and into this vast, huge lobby area, and we just stood there in awe because that was the first time in our lives we ever saw so many black people. But, in the city of Muskogee, there's a large number. The population of black people is big.

But, with regards to ill feelings against each other, I didn't experience that.

JESSICA: So, coming from the reservation up in Montana and going to where there's a predominantly black population, how did it make you feel in general? Was it shocking?

RON: No. It was shocking to see the numbers. Other than that, back in those days, Bacone was basically totally Indian. Somewhat similar to Haskell, but I think there was only one black girl and only one black guy that lived on campus. But, basically, you were still affiliated with Native Americans. So, no, that didn't bother me. Matter of fact, both people were very nice people. I personally got along with them very well. I could say they were my friends.

JESSICA: All right. So, regarding the Civil Rights Movement and the American Indian Movement in the 1960s, what did you think about the whole Civil Rights Movement?

RON: (Laughter) That's a big question. At the time, I was driving a bus for Greyhound lines. And, with all of the demonstrations that were going on in Washington, there were many, many charters. And a lot of demonstrations in Washington against the Viet Nam War. So, we would take these demonstrators down to Washington.

What did I feel? My basic feelings were probably with them, because I was against the war to begin with. I looked at Viet Nam, probably very similar to the way I look at this present war we're having today. It's a political thing, and you ask yourself, "Why are we over there?" And the answer, the reason is, is for oil. But the politicians won't say that. We have people dying over there. We have a lot of Native Americans died in the armed services, and they're fighting over them.

So, yeah, I've got some feelings. The government doesn't have the guts to say, "We're over there for the oil." I've been watching the news quite closely, and so far they haven't said anything.

But, what did I personally feel back in the 1960s? I was probably with the people I was carrying on the bus. The only thing I couldn't take with regard to that whole era was I remember the putrid marijuana smell that was on the bus all the time (laughter). That got me sick. I just wasn't ever turned on by marijuana.

JESSICA: Do you think in terms of the American Indian Movement that was happening that the American Indian people benefited from the movement?

RON: You bet!

JESSICA: In what ways?

RON: It told America that Native Americans are still alive and Native Americans have issues with the government. Native Americans are experiencing things that on the reservations that they don't like, that the Department of the Interior, the Bureau of Indian Affairs are doing to them.

For what AIM did, sure, maybe there was a lot of bad publicity that come out of it, but I look at that whole movement as one thing that brought Native Americans to the forefront. It brought them to the news. And sometimes you have to do negative things to get positiveness out in life.

If you want to get your ideas across, if you can't get your idea across on a positive nature, then flip the coin. Look at the coin on the other side and come

across in a negative way and in a challenging way. Sure, you're going to get somebody upset, but you got their attention. And that's basically what Native Americans did, and the American Indian Movement did to America.

These people out east, there's no exposure to Native Americans, because the populations out there were so small. Out here in the West, it's a lot different. The population is larger.

But I was living in the East at the time and I had a lot of people come up to me and say, "Are you Native American?" Previous to that, they would have asked me if I was of some other nationality, maybe Hispanic, Portuguese, Puerto Rican, Mediterranean, Italian, whatever. They didn't know what I was and, before that, they didn't care or maybe they still didn't care, but they were curious about Native Americans.

JESSICA: In terms of government relations, what do you think about the way the federal government has treated African Americans?

RON: Probably the same way they've treated Native Americans. The same way they're treating Mexicans today. There's no difference. Prejudice is prejudice, no matter which way you turn it. No matter which way you roll it around, it's still going to come out prejudice.

JESSICA: Have you heard about the Buffalo Soldiers who worked for the military?

RON: Yes.

JESSICA: What did you think about their role in American Indian history?

RON: My adopted grandfather was a scout for Custer. You're asking basically the same kind of question.

What do I personally feel about it today? I disagree with it. But the way it was explained to me by my elders is that it was a job back in those days. Just as we accept jobs today that we don't like, it was a job, and it meant taking care of his family. I look at it in that way, and I feel better about the whole situation. I mean, you've got to support your family.

JESSICA: For the interpersonal relationships, have African Americans been a part of your tribe in the past or currently?

RON: Probably just that one gentleman that I spoke about earlier. And, other than getting married to a Crow woman and having children and those children being of mixed race I have no real feelings one way or another. Meaning that he feels no prejudice against blacks.

JESSICA: In your tribe, have other races been adopted members of the tribe or involved in other ways?

RON: Oh, yeah. Way back. It's our culture. I'm talking years and years. A long time ago. We would go out and we'd capture women, children, and eventually these people that we captured were adopted into the tribe.

I have an aunt. She's gone now, but I she was like that. She came from Canada, but she was adopted into the Crow tribe. The way we looked at her, she was a Crow woman and I didn't even know what her history was until after I became a grownup. But, as a child, that was my auntie. That's all that mattered.

JESSICA: Do you recall your parents or grandparents or relatives making references to any experiences that they've had with African American people?

RON: Hum! No, I can't really honestly say that. There was nothing like that. In all honesty giving you an answer to that, there were probably the gossipy things that people talk about—that black guy that married the Crow woman. Probably just the idle gossip stuff. In some circles on the reservation, that wasn't looked on favorably because it was mixed. But that's nothing irregular, because I married a girl from New York. My mother was encouraging me to marry a Crow. So, in all honesty, what is the difference?

JESSICA: So what has shaped your views and perspectives about African American people?

RON: Some of my best friends out east are black. They'd probably lay their lives on the line for me just as I would for them.

Maybe years ago there would have been racial problems that my brothers brought back from being in the service. In today's world, the feelings are totally different. I have many black friends, and I've been to their houses, they've been to mine. Give me something to dislike you, and I'll dislike you. But, until then, you're a human, and breathe, and eat just like me.

JESSICA: That was my last question, unless you have any other questions, Jason?

JASON: I just have one question. One of the questions that we were talking about, your tribe adopting other people, and one thing I've noticed after reading some of these interviews is that, in a lot of places, black people have married into the tribe or have become a mixed part of the tribe. For a black person that's mixed, I think it's much easier to distinguish their blackness than maybe for a white person that's mixed. I've gotten the opinion that black people sometimes

aren't as accepted when they're mixed blood as white people are when they're mixed blood. And I've heard this especially up in New York with the Pequots.

RON: Yes.

JASON: You know there are so many tribal members that look black or they're really Indian?

RON: Right.

JASON: Even with the Seminoles down south. So I wonder if you had an opinion about that? Why you think that happens?

RON: I went to school with a tribe that comes out of Virginia. They were the Chickahominy, right near Richmond, and they're features were light-complexioned black people. I had no feelings one way or another. They were nice guys. I had one guy that was a friend down there. My whole outlook is probably a lot different than maybe other people. But they never did anything to me to cause me not to like them, and they were nice people. They treated me nice and they befriended me, so I was nice to them in return.

I did experience at a powwow where there were Pequots. Are they the ones from Long Island?

JASON: I don't know if it's Long Island?

RON: The Passamaquoddy from Long Island were there, and there was just so much animosity against them that they left. Maybe it was because the way they danced. It wasn't looked on as dancing like Indians. Their costumes were totally different than anything that I've ever seen.

What did I basically feel? I felt sorry for the way they were being treated. There were open remarks made to them. Rather than cause a problem, they just got up and left.

But that was out east. I really don't know what would happen out here in the Midwest or in the West if that same situation should occur today. I couldn't give you an answer.

You asked about discrimination against black people. Have I ever seen it? Sure, I've seen it. I saw it working for New York state government, and it's not supposed to happen. There are state and federal laws against discrimination.

But I saw open discrimination against blacks. I saw whites talking about blacks in a very negative way. But, in that situation, you're looking at working in a total white environment. If you get one or two blacks into a total white environment,

there was open discrimination. And, as a supervisor, why didn't I do something about it? When his direct supervisor walks away from it and I'm sort of like a supervisor, but I'm a guy from the outside looking in, realistically speaking, what could I have done? I went back and made a report and talked about it. I felt I did my share to address it. But, sure, I saw it.

JESSICA: Do you have any other closing remarks that you would like to share?

RON: No, I don't.

JESSICA: I really appreciate you taking your time and doing this interview. Thank you very much.

RON: You bet. My answers were probably a lot totally different than everyone else.

**Shelby Exum**  
**Interviewed by Jessica James and Mike Tosee**

Tribe: Pawnee/Kiowa  
Residence: Lawrence, Kansas  
Education: Haskell Indian Nations University (BA)  
Occupation: Insurance adjuster, Farmers Insurance Company

SHELBY: My name is Shelby Exum. I am from Pawnee, Oklahoma, born in Ponca City, Oklahoma. I grew up in Pawnee, Oklahoma, and I'm half Caucasian and half Native American—Pawnee, Kiowa, and Osage.

I was raised Catholic. I would go to the church with my grandparents, but we didn't go every week and just practice the whole Catholic religion. It was a little confusing growing up. My family wasn't really into going to church. I'm still searching for a belief system. It's a little hard now in my relationship, because my husband was not raised Catholic. We're trying to figure out what's going to work for us, and we're exploring other options.

JESSICA: Tell me about your interracial relationship. How did your family perceive your relationship?

SHELBY: It's kind of interesting. Growing up, my best friend was African American, from fourth grade on up. When I was younger, one of my mom's good friends was African American. I really didn't even notice that they were African American and I was an American Indian until I got older. When I started dating, I first dated other American Indians, and somehow I branched off to African Americans. I remember worrying the first time.

When I told my family about it, I was more concerned about my Caucasian side, but it was a shocker because my mom and my family on that side they did not mind at all. It wasn't a problem. My American Indian side had a problem with when my grandparents first found out. I was really close with my grandfather, and he didn't talk to me for four months when he found out. It was really hurtful for him to just not talk to me about it, because I didn't understand and we were really close. It was all because he asked if he was my boyfriend, and I said no, because he really wasn't my boyfriend. He said I lied to him. His excuse was I lied to him. So it was hurtful when I first introduced them to it. It was just surprising that it was my American Indian side that had a problem with it, and my Caucasian side didn't mind at all. It was a struggle, and my grandfather actually doesn't talk to his niece to this day because she had an interracial relationship. So I'm lucky that we have made amends and that we are close again. But it was interesting.

I talked to them about it, and my grandparents explained to me why they had a problem with it. She (grandmother) told me—and she was uncomfortable telling me—that the way they were brought up, they didn't have much interaction with African Americans. They were looked down on and that's just the way they were brought up. They were underclass and dirt. I explained to her that I wasn't brought up that way, and that it shouldn't matter what color anybody is, as long as I'm happy.

In the next serious relationship I had, he was African American and part American Indian, so they accepted that. I remember the first time my grandfather shook his hand. This wasn't my husband. It was the next boyfriend. And it made me feel a little better. My grandma said she struggled with it. They were brought up Catholic also, and she said she's been reading the *Bible* and she said, "It's real hard, but they're trying to change and realize that that's not the way that they need to be." How can she go to church every week and at the same time turn her nose up and be racist like she was doing? She even admitted to me they were learning and trying to change.

I ended up marrying someone who was full African American and not even Native, and it's going good. They've accepted it into their hearts. It's just kind of weird, because it's like I was brought up in a whole other world.

JESSICA: How have your belief systems influenced how you feel about other groups of people and other races?

SHELBY: I feel like we're all just a melting pot, like all the races are a part of each other. We're all people. My son is a mixture of African American, American Indian, and Caucasian. He's going to grow up, and I wish that everyone would stop looking at color so much, and just realize that we're all alike. We all have the same struggles in a lot of ways.

JESSICA: As far as discrimination goes, what does your tribe teach about how to treat other groups of people?

SHELBY: I really haven't noticed. My mother is Caucasian. She raised me more than anyone else, and so I wasn't really brought up in a tribal way. I didn't notice going to school with other students who were of my same tribe, mainly Pawnee. I noticed they had some tendencies to say little racial remarks, the 'N' word, and things like that. But I don't know if that's just something that they're brought up with, in their home. But I haven't noticed anything firsthand.

JESSICA: Have you experienced racism yourself?

SHELBY: In a different way I have. I've experienced racism indirectly, not outright. Something I would consider racism is when I'm walking in the store and people are following me, or the looks that I get from other African American

women who see that I am married to an African American man. Going to school at an American Indian college and walking around with my African American husband or boyfriend, I do get looks. I haven't heard anything, and no one has ever told me that anyone has ever made any comments about me. I've learned to ignore the looks. That's just going to happen, and some people are ignorant about things. I've just learned to brush it off. But I know it exists. I don't let it bother me.

JESSICA: How does it make you feel when you get the looks?

SHELBY: I expect it, but it is kind of hard. I've actually been that. My best friend was half Caucasian and half African American, and we would give other full Caucasian people looks when they were with an American Indian guy or an African American. It's just being immature. So I don't even let it affect me. It's going to happen. Some people are like that, and I'm not going to live my life worried about what they're thinking about me. I know it's there. Fine. Just stay away from me. I'm happy, my husband is happy, and we have a family. So that's all that matters.

JESSICA: What are your feelings now that you're older and mature? What do you feel when you see interracial couples? Say there was a nice-looking Indian man and he was with the Caucasian girl or something? What are your feelings towards that?

SHELBY: It doesn't bother me now. Maybe that person makes him happy. Maybe they're seeing past the whole color barrier. I look at me, look at my mom. She's Caucasian, she married my dad who was American Indian. So I grew up thinking that that was normal. To me, it is normal. As long as that makes them happy, then that's who they're going to be with, and that's good for them. I'm doing my thing, everybody else is doing their thing. It just doesn't bother me at all.

JESSICA: Have you witnessed racism towards American Indians or African Americans frequently?

SHELBY: Yes and no. I have. But, I think I've learned to somehow ignore it. I try not to pay attention to it. I'm trying to think of a time other than going into the store. When you go into the store, you are followed around a lot. I'm trying to think of a particular time when something had happened. I can't think of anything, but I know I have.

JESSICA: Have you experienced any kind of racism living here in Lawrence, Kansas?

SHELBY: I think I have, but it's one of those things where you can't tell if that's what it is. You think it is. Sometimes I feel like when I go for job interviews, I'm looked at differently, like I had one at Lawrence Memorial Hospital. Sometimes

when I put down Haskell University as my college, which it is, I wonder if it has a reputation for some people. They don't like the school, they think we're all the same just because one or two incidents may happen, and sometimes I'm a little paranoid when I walk in for a job interview.

I just had one recently at LMH and I was sitting there for over thirty minutes waiting on my interview. The lady said, "She's in there with someone." I seen the person come, the other lady goes in there, and they're just sitting there chit chatting, like they don't have a schedule. It just made me feel like I was unimportant, and I was just wondering if it was because they saw me sitting out there. They took one look at me, took one look at my resume. I wonder about that. I felt like I was disrespected a little bit. I don't know if it's that's just the way they treat all their applicants. But it is always in the back of my mind with certain situations like that. When I finally had my interview, she would answer the phone and everything else in the middle of my job interview, which I thought was disrespectful. You don't know if that's what's going on. But it's always in the back of your mind, especially here in Lawrence.

JESSICA: If you were in a more multicultural populated area and you were applying for a job, do you think there would be a difference in the way you were treated in job interviewing?

SHELBY: I think so. In the last interview I went to, I was excited, because, when I did some of my research on the internet, they were talking about diversity and how they contribute to different scholarships for Hispanics, and how they're all about diversifying. When I went in there, it was a weird interview. I went in there with about seven other applicants, and we were all in there at one time. There was myself and an African American. I felt kind of confident. I felt it maybe it was going to work in my favor, and it did, because I got the job. I'm a lot more confident going somewhere where I know that it's multicultural. I feel like I have a better shot. I'm a little less paranoid.

JESSICA: What are your feelings about the Civil Rights Movement?

SHELBY: To be honest, I haven't really given it much thought. I don't know if it's because I'm not a big history person. Growing up, I really didn't pay attention and I guess I don't look at things from that point of view. I know it's something that happened, but it wasn't brought to my attention about how it affected me. I didn't research or look into it or really haven't given much thought about. I'm just being honest.

JESSICA: It's good to be honest. What do you think about the American Indian people, how the movement has benefited them in any way? Do you think there have been benefits?

SHELBY: I don't know if it's just something I don't know, or that I just haven't really given much thought about. It's something I would really have to think about. Sometimes I tend to avoid things that I have to think a lot about, and I don't have much of an opinion.

JESSICA: Do you think that it's important for our youth to know about these issues?

SHELBY: I think it would be. Growing up I wasn't taught anything about it at all in school. Not from my family, not from anyone. Growing up, we had one little history course, I couldn't even tell you what we studied, because, like I said, history is not one of my things. But I think it's something we need to focus on a little more, because even today, I do feel a little lost. It was probably mainly my fault. Just because something is not taught to me in school, doesn't mean that I can't go look it up myself. I think it needs to be brought back to our attention, especially when we're younger. Because they don't teach you that in school. If they do, it's just for a brief moment, and you don't even remember it, like me.

JESSICA: Regarding government relations, assimilation and citizenships, what do you think about the way the federal government has treated American Indian people?

SHELBY: Again, it is something I don't really think about. I do read a little bit about things. I read about what's going on right now, especially when there's little articles in our newspaper here in Lawrence. This is what I like to do. Every time there is an article about something having to do with Haskell, I like to look it up on the Internet, because I want to see these people's comments, like "Native Americans need to quit being dependent on the government." "They're always wanting handouts." And I just read what people write and I think about it a little bit, and then I just don't even want to mess with it anymore, it just gets me mad.

JESSICA: What do you think about the way the federal government has treated African Americans? Do you think that they favor them more than Native Americans?

SHELBY: No. I think that it's the same. They got shafted as well. I noticed from some of the courses I took at Haskell how it affected us more than them. Growing up, me and my best friend would be in the lunch line and get our free lunches. I would get free lunches, but she wouldn't get free lunches. She wanted to know why, and they'd say, because they stole our land. And she'd say, "We were treated wrong too."

Maybe they learn about that at their schools. But I didn't learn a lot about it besides slavery. I don't think they were treated very well either. I think it's up to us to make that change though. We can't depend on the government for everything.

JESSICA: So as far as the treatment by the government, do you view it basically the same or different the way they treated American Indians and African Americans?

SHELBY: Because I don't know much about how they treated African Americans, I would just say the same. I'm ignorant to that.

JESSICA: Have African Americans been a part of your tribe in the past or currently?

SHELBY: Not to my knowledge.

JESSICA: In your tribe, have other races been adopted members of the tribe or involved in other ways?

SHELBY: Not to my knowledge. In my Pawnee tribe, we have other races. We don't really have a reservation. Everyone gets along. I did notice that, when I was working down there for my tribe, our tribal police work with our city police, so they work together and they have a relationship. We have a gymnasium, like a sports complex, and they have a relationship with our public school. So they work together. Our tribe's working with other races. The Pawnees let them use the gym, and they split the bills. They know they need to work with each other to benefit from what the other has.

JESSICA: What was your first interaction with an African American person?

SHELBY: Probably when I was little. I have a picture of me kissing a little African American boy. Our birthdays were on the same date and we were neighbors, and my mom was really good friends with his mom. I tease my mom to this day, "So that's why, if anyone wants to get mad, they can get mad at you because there's a picture of me kissing him" (laughter). Because when I was little, that was going to be my life.

JESSICA: Have you ever had any personal experiences with African American people that you would like to share?

SHELBY: Growing up, I would hear people, like in Pawnee, my grandparents. Grandmother gave me the whole story about how African Americans were looked on as lower class, dirt, not good enough, and this and that. There are people like that in every race. In my experience with my best friend and her family and being around her family, they're some of the cleanest people that I know. A lot of people think their houses are dirty. They were a lot cleaner than my mom's house or any of my American Indian friends' houses. They're just people like everyone else. I've had nothing but good experiences with them. Growing up sometimes, I had to tell myself that I wasn't African American, I was just so used to being with my best friend and we were like this. It's just that we're all people.

JESSICA: In what ways do you think hip hop and the hip-hop culture has maybe influenced the youth of our Native kids? Is it bad or good, or what are your thoughts?

SHELBY: I know some people blame crime and violence on hip hop. But I listen to the same music. I've listened to the same music that other people are listening to, like Tu Pac. People are blaming everything on the violence and the gangs and the crime. I'm listening to the same music, but you don't see me going out there doing everything. I think people need to realize that it's entertainment. It's not something that you're supposed to take literally and start doing just because the rapper says they're doing this. That doesn't mean that that's what you need to do. I don't think that people need to blame hip hop at all, because I'm one of those people listening to the same thing, and you don't see me doing the same thing. I think that's a copout in some ways. They're just looking for something to blame.

MIKE: Can I take that to a different level? Do you think the people who are influenced don't have a strong cultural tribal background?

SHELBY: The ones that are influenced in that negative way probably don't have a strong background and they're probably just trying to find a way to belong. So they're thinking, "If I go do this, then I'm doing like what they're doing, and so I'm fitting in." So I would think so. I never really thought about it that way. But they probably are people that are a little bit weaker minded that aren't able to define the difference.

JESSICA: And having identity issues? Wanting to belong? Do you have any other family members who are married or related to African Americans?

SHELBY: Yes. My first cousin was married to an African American. They have two kids, but he had passed away. When we joke around in my family, we say we have the melting pot, because I have another cousin who's married to a Mexican, and these are all on my Caucasian side. I was all proud of my grandma, because she told my mom at a dinner that she had a little mixed grandbaby, black and Indian. I was proud because this is the same grandmother who had a problem with it at first. But now she's learning to accept it and realize that it doesn't matter. So we definitely have other ties in our family.

MIKE: In years past, a real derogatory term for the offspring of either a mixed relationship, either white and Indian, black and Indian, was half-breed. Do you think your child will have to confront special things because of this?

SHELBY: I've thought about that. I've talked about that to my husband. I brought this up not too long ago, about how I'm a little concerned. I hope that he doesn't have to deal with anything like that, because he's going to grow up and he's going to wonder where he belongs. I had the same problem myself being half Caucasian too. Now he's got three different races that he's got to try to identify

with. I hope by when he gets older, that everyone is a little more educated about everything. I do want to raise him in a community where there are different backgrounds and races. I want him to be able to go to school with the different cultures, so he's not just like myself, where I've never even been around any Asian people or anything like that. I want him to be around all kinds of different cultures and races. I want him to know all his sides and everything.

JESSICA: Do you want to explain more about the religion conflicts that you're having?

SHELBY: I was brought up Catholic, but I wouldn't say that I'm Catholic, I would say I'm still exploring. I'm trying to find a religion that I can identify with. My husband's family were brought up Christian, but recently his mom has switched to Hebrew Israelite. I was open about it and I went a couple of times, but I kind of got intimidated. First of all, everyone in there was African American but myself and another person, and I would ask, "How do I identify with this because I'm American Indian? You keep bringing up everything back to African Americans. We all came from African Americans. We all came from this. How do myself and my people fit into this?" They told me something about the ten tribes, the lost tribes, that you have to go back and research. "Yes, we all are American Indians."

They told me I'd have to research my part of it. I got thrown off about it and turned off about it, because every time I would hear stuff about African American this and African American that. I didn't know how to relate to that. All of them could relate to it but me. Part of it is my fault because I haven't opened enough to do the research with my husband, which he is willing to do. I've just kind of made up my mind that that's not for me.

It is a problem right now in our relationship. We argue about this. But I just try to ignore it, because it's something I just don't want to deal with right now. I think it's going to be a problem because this is something he feels strongly about, and I don't know how to identify with it. I don't know how to explain that to him. Because neither one of us know enough about this, we don't know where to start. If I knew another American Indian person who was Hebrew Israelite or studied this and practiced this, then I think it would be a little easier, so I could get their view. But, because I don't, it's going to be a problem.

I've even tried to ask him to go to a Native American church with me, and he wouldn't do it. Because I'm willing to, I'm just looking for a belief system where I can fit in, where I can trust it and really identify with it, which I haven't found yet. And, with the Hebrew Israelite, at first I thought, "Oh, this is okay," until they turned into this whole African American thing and they kept bringing it back to race, and I had a problem with that. I don't know what else you want to know about that, but it's kind of a sensitive subject between myself and my husband.

JESSICA: I don't have any other questions.

SHELBY: You're welcome.

JESSICA: Thank you so much.

**Scotty Harjo**

Scotty Harjo, a member of the Seminole Tribe, was born January 15, 1928, in Bowlegs, OK. He graduated from Bacone High School in Muskogee, OK, and attended Bacone College and Northeast State University in Tahlequah, OK. He served in the US Army in the Korean War and later worked at Haskell Indian Nations University from 1957 to 1994 as a residential assistant. He also did student counseling and maintenance. Harjo coached Haskell's baseball, basketball, football, and softball teams and started its wrestling team. He also served as a football scout.

Mr. Harjo was instrumental in the All-Indian Fast-Pitch Softball 'Tourney in Oklahoma City Ok and was voted all-time MVP at its fiftieth anniversary. He was a member of the First Southern Baptist church. He and his wife, Esther, were parents of two sons and a daughter. Scotty Harjo died Feb. 22, 2006.

MIKE: How did blacks and Indians get along, and what was it within the culture that allowed Indian people and blacks to interact. Do you think in tribal traditions, in your Seminole tradition, was there more acceptance of other people than as we live today in a majority culture? In the old days, when you saw blacks, did you see a distinction? Did you see what we call racism?

MR. HARJO: We are all taught to love everyone, because there's a reason why we should be like that. And they told me, especially the Negro people, and we call them "Stalusty." I was taught that early in life as far as I can remember. So, I've always believed that. The second reason was they said that they went to Florida with our tribe and other tribes to get away from slavery. The plantation owners wanted Indians and Negro people to be slaves for them. I feel so helpless sometimes that I can't do anything to help. So, I made an effort from my teenage years to tell all blacks why I love them and I explain to them that our elders told us to love all people regardless of color or race or whatever different tribes, but especially the Negro people. Thy told us to respect them and to let them know that you love them. In my daily life, if I see a black, I'll make a point to go talk to him and shake hands with him and tell him my name, and that I have something to tell you. I say, "It's been passed down to me, and I want to pass it on to you so you'll know that all the Indians love the Negro people, and I want you to know that." I tell him how that became a big issue with us, the Indians. Here in Lawrence, Kansas, where I live, every black I see--most of them I know anyway by now—I know all the ministers of the churches and some of the women leaders. I know most of them, and I'm always about to go to church.

How that come about is that my mother is a Christian and my stepfather was a traditional, and so I was raised both ways. My mother encouraged me to join a church here in Lawrence, and I told her I would. So about a month passed by, and she said, "You haven't said anything about joining a church." I told her, "I promise you that." So I walked down Barker Street here in Lawrence, Kansas. It's a street that goes towards downtown. I told myself that the first church I come to, I'm going to join it. To my surprise, it was a Negro church (laughter), so I

joined it and I belonged to that church for about five years. And I got to know all the Negro people in that area or that went to that church, and I was accepted.

They asked me to do a little speech, and I told them about how Indians and all the students at Haskell School at that time liked Negro people. I said, "Some are kind of a little slow, or they're not very forward; most of the tribe members are not. But, I said, "I was taught to come forward and say what you want to say." I said, "That's why I'm saying in this time at the church. It seemed like the word got out that the Indians do love Negro people. So, as of today, 2004, I can go any place in Lawrence and I know people. Or I just say, "My father knows you, or my grandmother knows you," and it really has an effect. It really makes my day to know that the word gets around like that and that just amazes me that little things that you do come back a hundred fold. It's like when you do it one time, it comes back to you maybe fifty to a hundred times, you be blessed.

MIKE: Where you grew up, in Oklahoma, there was pretty obvious discrimination.

MR. HARJO: True.

MIKE: Separation of races, segregation. How did you feel about that when you were growing up?

MR. HARJO: Not only I, but my cousins and friends, Indian friends—we felt like outsiders. We know we wasn't accepted and we was always three or four levels down than they were. They was always better than we were. They were smarter than we were. But, as far as being physical, they wasn't strong as we were, because we worked hard. We was always chopping wood, carrying water, and doing all kinds of farm work and things like that. So I thought we were stronger in the physical abilities. But, [not] as far as being accepted at schools—grade school and junior high and high school.

MIKE: Did you think blacks had more discrimination than Indians?

MR. HARJO: I certainly do. When we went movies in town, there in Seminole, we sat up in the balcony with the Negroes. When we would want to get a drink of water, they had a fountain that says, "FOR WHITES ONLY," so you knew that other one was for us. When we was wanting to get hamburgers, we had to go in the back of the kitchen to get hamburgers. We couldn't eat on those little stools they had in these little hamburger places. Restaurants—we didn't even think about trying to go in there. So we went through that stage of discrimination. Finally, I think in 1934, they passed a law, Oklahoma did. They picked up all the Indian kids and Negro kids and Jewish kids. We all had to go to school. The school I went to is called Good Hope. It was just a little ways between Seminole and where we lived. I remember that I kind of knew English a little bit, because of my white friends. They were poor, poor whites. I mean they were poor, poor, like us. But the teacher we had, he said, "Now, if you want anything or you're asking

a question, raise your hand." So, if my cousin had to go to use the outdoor toilet, I always raised my hand and I'd point towards the outdoor toilet direction. He say, "Yeah, you can go." So, instead of my cousin, maybe about three or four would go just to get out of the classroom. But I could tell about discrimination, even back there then. Even the teachers showed it. They had meals for the students back there then, and we brought our own biscuits and mustard sandwiches and stuff like that. So, we survived it.

MIKE: You've lived in Lawrence how long?

MR. HARJO: Since 1957.

MIKE: Did you notice any racial differences or discrimination when you first moved here, between the white community and the black community?

MR. HARJO: Very much.

MIKE: Can you give examples of that?

MR. HARJO: I joined the church here in Lawrence and I said I only get paid twice a week and I can't make it. Even though I lived on the campus, in one of the dormitories, I'd say, "I need some money." So I asked one of my Negro friends at the church, he said, "Go to Douglas County Bank." He said, "They'll loan it to you." But he'd resided here longer than I have, so I went to the bank and tried it. I couldn't. They said I needed something to support my loan. All I had was just a salary coming in from the government. I was turned down. So, immediately I knew that I had to do everything on my own.

MIKE: How about the white community and the Haskell community? Was there tension or discrimination when you first got here? Have things changed any?

MR. HARJO: I see a lot of the community using Haskell as a source. Like the football stadium. They use it every Friday night to play football, Lawrence High football, junior high football. They always use Haskell stadium. They would say, "We need to use this field, and we'll pay for the lights or whatever it takes to operate night games." So I could see that relationship. As an employee here at Haskell, I notice that. If KU wanted something from Haskell, why they would butter it up and present it to you? And I always notice that in the community here. And I was so amazed that it still goes on, no matter how much we try to be educated and know about things like that.

MIKE: Did the segregation here in Lawrence, did it go as far as segregating seating in the theater back in 1957?

MR. HARJO: No, it was more opened. I knew that when the students here at Haskell would go to town, they had to stay on Mass. Street. They had to walk

clear down on Mass. Street, and they couldn't go off on Eighth Street or Ninth Street, they had to stay on Mass., because that's where all the theaters and stores and Kress and all that was centrally located.

MIKE: Do you remember the first time you saw a black person? The very first time as a youth?

MR. HARJO: My mother and stepfather had Negroes living with us. They knew how to talk the tribal language, and they talked fluently. They knew the ways and so forth. So that was my first encounter. One of the men taught me how to fight. He said not to fight like a girl, "but you fight like a young man." So I learned a lot of things from the black people as I was growing up.

MIKE: So did they help around the house?

MR. HARJO: Yes, sir. They had responsibility just like my uncles. They all had. And they slept out in another part of the building we had. We call it servant quarters, but they weren't servants. They were just part of our family. So they lived out there.

MIKE: And they ate with you at the table and sat down?

MR. HARJO: They sat and ate with us. Of course, we only had two meals. My mother was a real outstanding person, and there was no one lower than us or higher than us. We treated everybody just the same.

MIKE: When I grew up, I never heard my grandparents say anything disparaging about blacks or any other race of people. They didn't have any terms that they used that meant things bad. I think in Comanche and Kiowa language, the worse thing you could call somebody is basically a reference to a story that goes with the owl. The owl is kind of bad medicine.

The worse thing you could call somebody is that. There was no connotation, nothing that says that race is bad. It just says the way you behave sometimes is not good. So I always came away thinking my grandparents must not have looked at color. They must not ever saw color.

MR. HARJO: That's right.

MIKE: They just saw people.

MR. HARJO: That's right.

MIKE: So, I was just wondering what your take on that is?

MR. HARJO: Like I was saying, we were taught back there to respect all people. Older people, the elders. Respect them, regardless if they scoff at you or yell at you or use profanity against you, just take it and go on. That's what we were taught. And the black people the same way. I keep talking about Jewish people, but they was pretty much involved as I was growing up too. They was kind of an outcast there in our town. One of my best friends, he and I played high school football together. His name is Charley Joseph there at Seminole, and he was all-stater. But it seemed like the school never really accepted him, because he was Jewish. But he'd come to our home and, boy, he was just one of us. We accepted him. But, here in Lawrence, it shows. One time I had on a dirty t-shirt and some cut-off shorts and I had on some Converse shoes. I didn't have no socks on, and I didn't have no cap or nothing, and my hair was kind of long, and I went to this place to get some tea, and I was refused service. I was amazed. I was shocked, I guess. Here I'm an employee at Haskell and that's the first time I'd ever been turned down. There was another man that was with me, his name is Wayne Postoak. He was surprised. He was wanting to get a lawsuit or something with that restaurant, but we just laughed about, talked about it and not doing nothing. I said, "Just accept it." I said, "That's the way it is here in Lawrence."

MIKE: Huh. That was an actual experience in Lawrence?

MR. HARJO: Yeah.

MIKE: Wow! About what year was that?

MR. HARJO: Let's see. He came in 1972, I think.

MIKE: So as recent as '72?

MR. HARJO: I can even name the place where we got turned out. No, they'll turn around and sue us about something.

MIKE: What are your views regarding interracial marriages? Black-Indian, let's say?

MR. HARJO: In early history of our tribe and Negroes, "Sta-lusty" is the Seminole term for someone who is black. Of course, we intermarried and you can see some of that in Florida as of today, 2004. They're not all "Stalusty" looking or not all Indian. You can see the half and half there.

The way my mother raised me, she was wanting me to marry someone within our tribe. So I told her that I tried to go with girls from our tribe, but they say you're my cousin or, we go to the same church or something. So, anyway, there was always some kind of excuse. So I told Mom, I said, "What if I go with a white girl or a black girl, Mom?" I said, "Will that be all right?" And she said, "NO!" (Laughter). So that was my encounter with dating.

MIKE: I believe based on my own experience that our elders saw a human being and not a person of color, so they didn't discriminate. Now, through assimilation, we've accepted new values of the dominant society, and sometimes I'm believing that we are now more racists and discriminatory because of this new way of thinking that's contrary to our culture. Would you agree with that? We judge people now more harshly.

MR. HARJO: It seems like that generation gap began in the 1970s. I could begin to see the changes in the political and local politics, you could see quite a difference. You could see the changes. Now in 2000-2002, you could see a wide gap in generations, what they believed and they're not too much about a constitution that was for freedom for all people. The Seminole have a tribal constitution that incorporated blacks into their social and cultural development since the late 1860s. Seminoles today have lost sight or ignore their written document that provided incorporation of blacks into their political and social systems. I'm talking about Indian tribes.

And they have to go through a lot of sources to get, in the mainstream, to get financial help. Like this college here at Lawrence, Kansas. They need tremendous help, beneficial help. It seems like they do get a little raise, but it goes in different directions. It really hurts us as Indian people. It really affects us. The older people don't understand it. They just know there's quite a difference in the people now. But, getting back to your question: I had a young friend after the football game there at Seminole. We'd be coming off the field and this boy would come running up to me, and he'd say, "Can I carry your helmet?" I'd say, "Sure." So he did that for about three-four years. And that boy turned out to be governor of Oklahoma. Now he's the president at Oklahoma University, named Dave Boren.

MIKE: I remember that story.

MR. HARJO: So I'm just amazed. If he sees me, he always says, "Scotty, if you need any thing, now let me know." I never say, "I want this or I want that." But I just want his friendship. That's kind of letting you know the difference of the two races. One will take advantage of you, but the Indian people, they just let it go, let it slide, because that's the way they were taught—not to take advantage of your friend or relationship.

MIKE: Yeah. That's good. Thank you.

MR. HARJO: Okay.

**Cecil Harry**

Tribe: Creek/Uchee  
Residence: Liberty Mounds, Oklahoma  
Education: Haskell Junior College, Central State University, Edmund  
Occupation: Security guard, Muscogee Creek Casino, Duck Creek, Oklahoma, and tribal representative for the Duck Creek District, Muscogee Creek Tribal Council

MIKE: What we're looking at, as part of an educational research project, is Indian/African American, or Indian/black relations. And one of the questions we'll start off with is, do you think the culture of American Indians, in a more traditional setting, allows for more tolerance? Do you think we as a culture, or American Indian culture, allowed for more tolerance of other races of people? If you really followed the culture, believed in the culture, or followed traditions of your tribe, were you less inclined to be prejudiced or discriminatory, do you think?

MR. HARRY: I would think we would be more prejudiced. Because, as far as the intermarriage of other races. you see that you lose that traditional part of it. Your people are beginning to go back down to halves, quarters. It's not a pure tradition is what I'm trying to say. It's more prejudiced now. The way I look at it, is that I'm inclined to be more traditional and hold those beliefs that traditions have. It's kind of a touchy subject. I think that it's not really a tradition if the culture is broken down.

MIKE: You know there's a distinction between prejudice and racism. Prejudice is being partial toward, and what you're saying is keeping our culture or tribal groups intact culturally. But do you think our elders or people who believe in tradition strongly exude or live in a racist way, or are racists? I mean, racism is hatred, and what you said of prejudice is more of an inclination to keep the culture intact. Do you think our elders or our traditions allow us to be racists? To feel hatred toward another group?

MR. HARRY: I think that it does. When you say racists and hatred, I can still remember my grandmother's talk about this particular white man. They would say, "Don't trust that white man." They had that hatred for that white man because of what he'd done to them. Or, for instance, my grandmother said there was a prominent senator in Creek County. At the time he was a lawyer and they went to court, and it was over a land dispute. This individual called my grandmother a nigger, and that stuck with her. And, from then on, she had this attitude that you can't trust white men because they treat you like you're dirt. So, I guess it can go both ways. It's how you treat it. It can be like that racism in people.

MIKE: Do you think Indian people saw a similarity in the manner that they had been treated and the treatment that was directed toward African Americans?

MR. HARRY: Pretty much. I think there is a parallel seemingly in that.

MIKE: Do you think our elders, people today, understood there was sympathy with African American populations because there might be similarities in the discrimination shown each group?

MR. HARRY: Yeah. There are some areas where I've been around all my life was black people, growing up with them. We would talk about things like that in interaction, how the majority were looking down on us as minority. We basically had the same feelings that went through all the prejudice and, and . . . I just feel like we had the same common . . . how can I say it?

MIKE: Treatment? Has there ever been an African American who has played a major role within your tribe? Or within the context of your family experiences?

MR. HARRY: No.

MIKE: Has there been an occasion, like your tribe has adopted other races, including African Americans?

MR. HARRY: Yes. In our tribal towns there's a setup extended from the Southeast where the freedmen, the slaves, back then they took them in and considered them as citizens of the Creek Nation. There were tribal towns that were nothing but just blacks, freedmen.

MIKE: Were they accepted by the majority of the tribe?

MR. HARRY: I would say yes.

MIKE: Do you think the African American adoptees had basically the same kind of discrimination outside the tribe within the majority culture? Or do you think that intensified? Because a lot of times American Indians are any degree of Indian blood, sometimes a person is called half-breed and they're looked down upon. In this case, would that intensify or increase the amount of dislike for the person if they were also black, and then also considered a member of a tribe? Would you look at that as a double fault? Do you think they faced more crises in their life?

MR. HARRY: I think they probably faced more even within the tribe itself from what I've seen and what I've heard. The so-called half-breeds had a hard time regardless of whether they were half black or half white. I know of a couple of guys that went to Haskell. They had a hard time coming from the reservation because they were half. Just by seeing it and hearing different things toward children. When you're growing up like that, it's a hardship on them kids.

MIKE: Have you ever had any personal experiences with blacks growing up or later in life as an adult?

MR. HARRY: Yeah. I grew up with a lot of them where I come from and some of my family members are half black. Or half white. It's either way you want to look at it. For instance, I had a cousin that was running track. He was good, and we entered a track meet. Just soon as he walked on the track, everybody asked, "Where's his papers?" Even his own cousins wanted to see his papers. He couldn't stand that. Even the family members had a hard time dealing with him because he was half. And I just kind of felt sorry for him. They have a hardship, even at a young adult age and all the way to their adult age. You see it, but there's not really much you can do about it. Just stand by them and help them, defend them.

MIKE: You played at a level in college, a very high level of college football. You participated in sports and in this particular case, at a four-year school, and you were involved with and you interacted with other black athletes, and you also were involved with white athletes. Did you find a distinction there? How did you feel? Where did you feel most comfortable, if you did feel uncomfortable?

MR. HARRY: I felt comfortable with the black players just by the fact growing up with them. And being around them and then in enjoying the music and conversations. I got along with the black players. I only had one incidence where I thought I was being singled out. I felt like I was more comfortable around blacks because I had been around them all my life. I had been around both races, but I was more comfortable with them. Of course, I had my Indians friends too on campus. I got along basically with everybody.

MIKE: So do you think there are similarities then in your feeling more comfortable with the black population or with your black teammates? Do you think that there are more similarities in the makeup of how you perceive life? In what you view as important? Or is it economics? Perhaps having the sense that economically you're on the same level? What can you explain about that?

MR. HARRY: A lot of my friends were all in the same boat. We was on a scholarship, but no money. In that aspect, we had similarities. We was all there to play football, and to win. We shared something in a common goal in that direction.

MIKE: You mentioned—and perhaps this may have had an influence—your grandmother said, "Don't trust white people." Do you think that was a subconscious thing that you always carried with you, and that perhaps you were more comfortable with others because of your sense of history?

MR. HARRY: Yeah. I've always carried in back of my mind what she was telling us as we were growing up because of her experience. But then, again, it's a new age—new ideas, new feelings. Things change. As I've gotten older and I've learned more about myself in dealing with people, and after while you learn.

"Well, maybe this person is not as bad as I think he is." So you kind of let your guard down a little bit, and accept people for the way they are.

MIKE: You mentioned the experience that your grandmother had with, with non-Indians, whites. Did your parents or grandparents make any reference to their experiences with blacks or African Americans that would show a feeling one way or the other?

MR. HARRY: Yeah. I can remember my mother saying when she was little there was a family of blacks that lived across the row, the property. Once my grandma got sick, and the kids were young. So this lady, her name was Miss Rose, come over and took care of my grandmother, and fed the kids and her kids while she got better. They took care of each other. They had to. All they had was each other.

MIKE: What do you think of African Americans from your personal view? A lot of times people rely on stereotypes, and they say, "I judge this person based on what I see on TV or what I see in movies." Have your perceptions of African Americans been shaped by that or by your personal experiences?

MR. HARRY: It's by my personal experience. I learned in every society you're going to have a few bad apples, and you just can't judge the whole group by a few of them. The same with Indians. I had an experience with the Indians. They had a few bad apples, and it's just how you perceive people, how you deal with them, and how you treat them. If you treat people the way you want to be treated, you go ask who they are, and then you're going to get that good response from them. So that's how I look at it.

MIKE: Do you remember your first reaction when you first saw a black person? Or did you even make that distinction?

MR. HARRY: I never did make that distinction.

MIKE: What did you see? Just another life form, another human being? When did you learn that blacks may be different? Who did you learn that from?

MR. HARRY: I really didn't learn that they were different. They bleed red. I can't remember if I ever had to think about things like that. Like I said, some of my family members are half. My mother's half brother was black. And on my other side, my dad's cousins are half black. I played with them and didn't know my uncle was half until we got older. So it didn't really faze me one way or the other.

MIKE: Have you ever had a case or an instance where an African American disparaged or ridiculed an Indian?

MR. HARRY: I can remember an instance. My cousins, the one I was talking about, had lost his aunt and they come back with him. He had some brothers and sisters that lived out in Detroit, and they came down for the funeral. So we was at the funeral and in our traditional way, we washed up after the funeral with the herb medicine. And my father was the man in charge of that. So I was with him. My cousin's brother-in-law come down from Detroit, and the first thing he said was, "Where's the peace pipe?" My cousin told him, "Well, you've been watching too much TV. There's no peace pipe here." And told him to shut up. That's the only thing I can ever remember. Blacks being around Indians—even though they were married to a cousin—and the cousin didn't really know, because she had been out of the state practically all of her life and didn't know about the Indian culture. But her brother did, because he had stuck around and knew what he had to do as far as getting along with the other family members who were full bloods.

MIKE: How about an Indian showing some reaction to an African American that's disparaging or denigrating?

MR. HARRY: I haven't. I'm sure that this has probably happened. But, just like I said, you get a few knuckleheads in every group that's going to say something out of spite.

MIKE: Historically there's been use by the federal government of blacks as soldiers in the late nineteenth century to subjugate and to round up and guard Indian people on reservations. Do you have a feeling about that aspect of history, regarding tribal members? It may not have been your tribe, but I'm sure that you've heard of or aware that Buffalo Soldiers, the so-called Buffalo Soldiers, were used to control or subjugate tribes. Has that changed your perspective? Did it affect your perspective on blacks?

MR. HARRY: No, because the way I looked at it, they had a job to do and they did it. It's nothing towards them just because they're black. They could have had had different Indian police who did the same thing—go out and catch the ones that took off the reservation, and brought them back and or scouted for the Army. There's no difference. I don't hold it against them. It was just something that they did.

MIKE: It's been said that the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and the '60s created a movement that other groups began to emulate and began to really strike out and ask for their rights. Equal opportunities and things like that. Do you think Indian people used that moment to begin to push for their own rights?

MR. HARRY: Yeah. I think they did. In the 1970s. I can remember when AIM was going pretty strong then. They had marches on the reservations and government offices and stuff like that, protesting even up in Washington. They even had the Indians that were trying to make them quit fishing on the rivers. They saw that as

a way to get their point across, so they did it. It's like the blacks marching. In the South, they did their marching for what they were trying to fight for.

MIKE: It's been said by many spokespersons for tribes, that the tribal spirituality or the tribal religions by the practices that exist, don't really promote racism or discrimination. Then you compare it to Christianity, where Christianity and the concept of brotherly love and things like that are espoused, and yet we find that there's discrimination. If you had to judge both, which one would you view as being more tolerant or teaching more tolerance toward other races?

MR. HARRY: The tribal way, because of my experience and from what I understood about the Christianity, it was a downfall for the Indian tribes, as far as their ceremonies and stuff. They wanted to take that out of the tribe, their ceremonies, and then input Christianity so we all could go to heaven. The Indians always had a god, a creator, and so we knew that there was a supreme being. The way Christianity tried to instill their religion on our people was to take that away and to say "They're heathens. They worship pagan gods and all that kind of stuff." Whereas our ceremonies are for everybody who wants to partake in the ceremonies. Everybody is a brother who wants to participate, who wants to purify themselves that particular day. We're all brothers. That's what was taught to us. Everybody is a brother that participates in our ceremonies, no matter what color they are. We had all kinds up there.

MIKE: The government's reason for assimilation was that we would become better people. That we would be more adaptable to society, a society that is going to offer more benefit and make us more productive and make us more civilized. But in the process of assimilation, do you think we learned to be more or less tolerant? Do you think the process of assimilation made us take allotments and hang on to those allotments? They said, "You farm and you sell this, and then you become individually wealthy." As a result of this, we thought of our individual self more than we did of our extended family. Do you think assimilation became more of means to invest in our self-interest rather than investing in community and being more generous, and less tolerant of other people? Do you think it made us more selfish? The assimilation policy was supposed to help make us better.

MR. HARRY: I believe it made us more selfish. Because eventually the allotments were supposed to make us self-sufficient. Go out and farm. And raise cattle, crops. After a while, they started selling them off, or they were taken by under-handed people taking their allotments. So in that aspect, I think it was selfish. It didn't really serve a purpose.

MIKE: Not the purpose it was supposed to serve.

MR. HARRY: Not the purpose it was meant to be.

MIKE: Do you think it led us to look at groups or individuals as more threatening, as opposed to more cooperation? If you have an allotment, a lot of times people were inclined to protect that allotment and look at other people or groups of people as being threatening. And, as a result, our character or personality becomes one that becomes more enclosed, and it doesn't allow us to become more generous or more open. As a consequence, we become more discriminatory and more racist. So the civilizing effect of this seems to generate less tolerance or more individual awareness for profit that that leads to.

MR. HARRY: Yeah. I would think that would be more about individual profit. I think that's just what has come about. If that was the case, then why aren't there more allotments now? The reason why is because either people sold them for profit, selfishness, not thinking ahead of time, about their grandkids and their great-grandkids on down the line. Whereas, if that was true, there would be more allotments, but there's not that many left. Then there was some who took it underhanded. They tell stories about, "My great-great-grandfather had a hundred and eighty acres. They got him drunk and he signed the paper, over a pint of whiskey." There was a lot of underhanded things that went on back in them days. People were selfish and not holding on to the allotments.

MIKE: At one point in tribal societies was a history. We have been considered and sometimes still are considered the poorest people in the country. Because of that poverty, do you think we've become more discriminatory, or rather less tolerant of other people? They say, "Poverty breeds crime. Poverty breeds intolerance." We want somebody to be less than we are. This is a capitalistic system that rewards and provides status for those who achieve much. But when you deprive other people, then you actually are condemning. Do you think we're condemning people who are deprived of economic opportunity to a life of discrimination toward other people because we see life as being unfair?

MR. HARRY: Want to blame everybody else? Yeah. I believe that's a true statement. Native American people were supposed to be the first Americans, but it seem like they're the last Americans. The Indians, the Chinese, and the Mexicans are the last ones on the totem pole. You got your blacks, and you got your Chinese Americans, or your Asians, and you got your Latinos, and then next is your Native Americans. Since you're the last ones, you want to blame somebody, so you're looking at who's above you. You drag them down with you.

**Archie Hawkins**

Tribe: Sioux (Oglala)  
Residence: Lawrence, Kansas  
Education: Haskell Institute, Lawrence, Kansas  
Occupation: Retired instructor, sheet metal and refrigeration repair, Haskell Institute, Lawrence, Kansas  
Military Service: World War II veteran

Mike: You could start with your name, and your tribal affiliation, and your birth date.

MR. HAWKINS: I'm Archie Hawkins, from South Dakota. I'm an Oglala and Yankton Sioux. My dad was a Lakota (Oglala), and my mother was Yankton. We grew up in both areas, and I'm kind of familiar with both sections—the one in east South Dakota, the other one is western South Dakota. We traveled by wagon one time over there, and the other time I don't know how we went, but I've remember going across the Missouri River on a train. That was some time ago.

Mike: What is your birth date?

MR. HAWKINS: April 24, 1919. So, that makes me 85 now.

Mike: Uh huh. When you grew up, were you aware of other races of people?

MR. HAWKINS: Not really. Thinking about it, they had a name for black people, but it's "Hasapa," which meant black skin, although I had never seen one. And they had a name for Mexicans and they had a name for whites. Whites generally are known as "Wa-she-cho." I asked my mentor, Mrs. Ashes, about that one time, "What does that mean?" She said, "Well, they pronounce it different now from it originally was. It used to be "Wa-se-a-cho," which translates 'takes everything.'" They changed it somehow to "Waseecho," which didn't have any meaning at all to most people, except it's a reference.

Mike: That's an interesting name. "Takes everything."

MR. HAWKINS: Yeah. That was their observation that they did. But their own tribal people, they called them "Ec-cha-a-wich-hash," which means "common man" or "ordinary man." That's the way they referred to themselves. And they had names and allies with other tribes. Some were mostly over territory and hunting privileges. Otherwise, you didn't own the land. Nobody could take the land, it was there for everybody. They just used it for hunting.

Mike: In your youth, did you hear stories about the Buffalo Soldiers?

MR. HAWKINS: No, not in my youth, I didn't hear anything about Buffalo Soldiers. But I did hear later that they were named after the buffalo because of their hair, which was similar to the hair on a buffalo. That's why they called them Buffalo Soldiers. That was my understanding of it.

Mike: Did you ever hear or were you ever taught to reference other groups of people in a way that showed a sign of dislike? Like by your grandparents or parents?

MR. HAWKINS: No. My dad was a real easy-going person, so he got along with most everybody. And my grandpa had never been to school, so all the people he knew were Indians, and I don't think he had any prejudice toward anybody.

Mike: Do you know or have any historical recollection, or were you ever told that blacks ever had an involvement with your tribe?

MR. HAWKINS: Well, I read about one of the blacks. He used to be an interpreter. He lived with the Sioux. They took him in somewhere and raised him, and he knew the language and their customs and their travels. Later he joined up with the Army and was their scout and directed them toward the Sioux in their fighting. When they found him on the battlefield, he was dead and they recognized him. They mutilated him from what I heard. That was his reward.

Mike: That was a pretty gruesome reward.

MR. HAWKINS: Yeah. Other than that, I don't think I ever heard about blacks with the Lakotas.

Mike: Can you reference or indicate the first time you saw a black person?

MR. HAWKINS: When I came to Haskell, we went to town. We rode a bus and I begin to get on the back seat, but my friend said, "No, you don't ride back, that's reserved for the Negroes." He said, "We ride up front here some place." So, we went to town and later on we went to a movie house. It cost us only a nickel to go in there, and I started for the balcony. He said, "No, you don't go up there. We stay down here. That's reserved for the Negroes." Later on, I noticed that the restrooms and the drinking fountains had a sign on it said, "For Whites Only." I thought that was terrible. In my own mind, I always kind of empathized with the blacks because of the way they were treated as a people, not as individuals. But that was my first experience, I saw some there at the theater.

Mike: What year was that?

MR. HAWKINS: 1938.

Mike: Lawrence was pretty heavily segregated then?

MR. HAWKINS: I think so. Although we only traveled to Massachusetts Street, we never went off. We were told to stay on Massachusetts Street, so we did. We might have got into other trouble, I guess, if we wandered off.

MR. HAWKINS: But, in a way, it limited our education about the community. We didn't learn anything about it.

Mike: Did you notice that the people within the Lawrence community treated the Indian students different, or did you get a sense of segregation?

MR. HAWKINS: Not really. I know when my dad and mother went to Haskell school in 1908 to 1911, in summer time they went looking for work with the farmers and lived with those families through the summer. Generally they taught them what they needed to know about living off the reservation. I lived with a white family after I graduated from Haskell. Later on, when they got a car, everywhere they went, they took me with them. I was just part of the family, and I met all the relatives all around McLouth, Perry, or Clinton. I knew a lot of those people and they knew me. But they treated me pretty good, so I didn't notice anything.

Mike: So, personally, you never really experienced any discrimination?

MR. HAWKINS: No, I can't say that I did. The only time I experienced any kind of discrimination—and it wasn't direct—was when I was in the Army Air Corps. Our unit was sent to India from Italy. While there, I was in town on R&R to Calcutta. I happened to be in a store and I noticed a machine there which says, "Weigh yourself today." So, I went up there and I found a coin, and I put it in there. There was no scale on it, and a little card dropped out. On that card it says, "You weigh ten stone." And I thought, "Stone?" I never heard of a stone before. And I had to look it up eventually to find out what a stone weighed. Do you know what it is?

Mike: I used to know.

MR. HAWKINS: I never studied that in the weights and measures. I didn't know. It's fourteen pounds. I weighed ten stone or 140 pounds. I thought I was getting pretty thin, because the temperature would get up to 120 degrees. Everyday you'd sweat. So, while I was in that store, I took that card up to a couple of British men that were standing there talking. So, I stood there and waited, and finally they looked at me and one said, "Yes?" I said, "Excuse me. Can you tell me what this means?" And they looked me up and down, and one of them said, "Get away from us, you old Yank." And I immediately felt this little bit of a tinge. I thought, "Well, I don't know if he's directing to me or to Americans in general." They walked off, and I had the card with me. I took it back to camp. Nobody there knew what it was. Eventually I found out.

Mike: A hundred and forty pounds. That was quite a weight.

MR. HAWKINS: Yeah. That's the only time I thought I felt any embarrassment.

Mike: You grew up with your grandparents. You knew your grandparents and your parents. This goes back to the nineteenth century, and they actually lived through part of the nineteenth century. Culturally, traditionally, I mean, Indian people did war against each other, but that wasn't so much to conquer somebody, but it was more as a status kind of thing for your males. Did what you learned about other people ever leave you with a sense that other people were less than you? Not in a traditional way that you could have been in your growing up years?

MR. HAWKINS: Yeah. Maybe it was against the Pawnees. They lived in Nebraska, and that bordered on the Dakota Lakota territories. But the Siouxs would raid the Pawnees, because they were farmers and they gathered crops and they built these earth houses, and they lived in there. And they dug and made little cellars and stored their food in there. The Lakotas used to raid them and steal their food. It was strange in the movie *Dances with Wolves*, the Pawnees were the ones that were the aggressors. So, it was kind of a switch. But that's the only one that I think that they really pounced on that didn't fight back.

But they weren't a warring nation. They were more peaceful, and they still are today. My wife was a Pawnee. I knew all of her family, and they were all real nice people. They all laughed at me because I was a Sioux. They called me a cut throat. The first time I met her grandma, she told her who I was, and that I was a Sioux. She just gave me this sign—two fingers across the throat making the motion of a knife across the throat.

Mike: You still remember it, huh?

MR. HAWKINS: Yeah. And, every time I met her, whether it be three or four years apart, she'd just give me that sign. She knew who I was.

Mike: When you came to Lawrence and you eventually went to World War II and then came home, have you ever had relationships with African Americans that had been formulated as friendships?

MR. HAWKINS: I have a real good friend today that lived on our street, and the hospital bought his land, so he moved away. He's black, but he has the features of an Indian, and he grew up in Oklahoma. His grandparents were Indian, and his grandpa finally bought a farm up here somewhere along the Kaw River, and so he inherited that today. Whenever he goes to the hospital once a month for his treatment, he stops by to see me. He invited me to come out to his place, but I

never have figured out where it was, so I'll have to follow him over there some day.

We had a teacher here when Haskell was a junior college. He taught technical drafting. I saw him downtown one time. I was driving over on the east side, and there was a drinking place there. He was sitting outside, so I stopped there and just talked to him. He said, "I like this town except for one thing." He said, "I'm not black, I'm not white. I don't know where I belong. I can't go down to white places and drink, and I don't feel welcome inside there, so I sit out here."

I couldn't quite relate to that, but in a way I did. Growing up in high school, we try to do our studying and get our lessons, somebody was always saying, "You're trying to be a white man." My dad didn't like it too much when I left home up there to come to Haskell, but he knew I'd never go back. But I always felt a pull to the Indian side. Still, I knew I had to learn the white way to survive, so you walk right in the middle. Like somebody said, "You're just walking on the razor's edge." It's hard to keep your balance. You don't know which side that you'll fall off on.

Mike: You mentioned a little earlier that you felt some sympathy for the black population here in this community, because it was segregated. How did you feel? Did you feel that segregation was unfair or not—given the sense of what this country stands for, it's supposed to be equality for all?

MR. HAWKINS: I didn't think of it so much as equality for all, but I just thought that was a bad thing to do. They preach the Golden Rule, and some people are not living up to it, even nationwide. Supposedly this country was established with the respect for God, yet they treated the black people terrible. Sometimes the Indian too. Since the Indians had suffered so much and the blacks were suffering, I sided with them. I felt like they deserved my sympathy.

Mike: When you saw things like that occur and you also know your own tribal history, what prompted you to join the military or fight for this country?

MR. HAWKINS: When the Japanese attacked the United States, I was already married. After that summer, I decided that it was time for me to join something, and I wanted to join the Navy. I thought that would be a good place to be, I wouldn't have to be in the slip trenches, tromping in mud. So, I talked to my wife about it and I said, "I was thinking about joining the Navy. You had a job up in Michigan last summer. You think you can go up there and work?" She said, "Yeah, I can." That was what we decided. So, she left and I went to Topeka to join the Navy, and I couldn't pass. Went back two weeks later and I passed. I went to Kansas City and I failed over there, and they said, "We can't take you." I said, "What's wrong." They said, "You have flat feet." So, I said, "Well, if that's the way they feel about it, I'll just wait until I get drafted." I did get drafted eventually. But, as far as fighting for the country, I just always felt like this is our

land, we need to defend it. So, other than that, I had no question about it. It was the thing to do.

Mike: You mentioned your wife. She left and went to another part of the country to work? Was it in war industry?

MR. HAWKINS: No. It was a summer resort there in Michigan. They got a lot of trade from Chicago that went across the Michigan, Lake Michigan, and pretty high clientele. When I failed to join the Navy, I went up there just to see her, and the boss wanted to put me to work. So, I stayed there all summer. He had a resort in Florida, and he said, "We're going to close this place in the end of September. We'd like for you two to go with us, and go down to Florida. We got a place to stay and no worries about getting in trouble." But then I got drafted, so that didn't happen. Meanwhile, she came back and did work in Sunflower Ordinance Works outside De Soto.

Mike: That was a big business here, wasn't it?

MR. HAWKINS: Oh, it was huge. Yeah.

Mike: And she worked there while you were overseas?

MR. HAWKINS: Yeah. She said they made rockets. Later on, when I was working here at Haskell in 1950, we got into war with Korea and they reopened that plant. So, she applied over there and she was hired, making more rockets. I made her a belt that she could use because the rockets were on a little table and they would pinch her as she was assembling them. I made her a belt with a big piece of leather on her, and they liked it so well over there that they wanted to patent it. But I don't know whatever happened to it. It was just for her benefit as far as I was concerned.

Mike: Have you found the Lawrence community for the better since it no longer has segregation? When the segregation laws changed, were you aware that they changed, and blacks could then integrate and have equal access to public places and things like that?

MR. HAWKINS: There was no big change, as far as I know. It was rather subtle, I think. It just gradually happened, and people changed and accepted it. That reminds me that when I was working here at Haskell, we had a black that worked on our campus. He was a cook. In 1960, I think it was, he made the newspaper because they had his picture in the paper. He went to the white swimming pool, where blacks weren't allowed, and he jumped in there. So he was arrested, and eventually he was let go from Haskell. I don't know if that was voluntary, but he didn't stay very long.

Mike: I am amazed sometimes when I hear stories like that, that you could be arrested for something as simple as that.

MR. HAWKINS: Yeah. He contaminated the water, I guess.

Mike: People felt that way, I guess. How people could go so far beyond what's reasonable now and treat people that way, it's really something. What is your personal perspective: do you think things have improved in the Lawrence community in terms of race and integration?

MR. HAWKINS: Yeah, I think that they have, and probably one of the ways is through the newspaper. Whenever Haskell gets a write-up in there, I think people read that and they begin to realize that maybe these Indians have something in common with the other people too, that they're not that much different. And, lately, they had good write-ups about the athletic events out there. I thought that was real good. I have a lot of friends that play golf with them. They relate to their dads telling about the great football teams they used to have at Haskell, and they always had a respect for the Indians that way, that they were good athletes. They had proper training. When I was in the Army, in our phys. ed. classes, sometimes we had to play touch football, and our team wasn't doing too good and one of the guys said, "Hawkins," he said, "you get out there and be quarterback." I said, "I don't know how to quarterback." He said, "Well, you went to Haskell didn't you?" They immediately associated Haskell with being a great place. I got up and threw a few touchdowns, accidentally I guess (laughter). But they thought that I just naturally knew how to do that. They didn't know that I used to throw a football just for the heck of it, but not in a game.

Mike: Yeah. Do you think that Indian people have changed from the time that you grew up, and the values you learned, that they now have become more discriminatory, show more discrimination and prejudice and racism? Do our young people today identify behavior with race and say, "They're bad because they are of that particular race?" Do you think we're different today as Indian people than we were in your youth?

MR. HAWKINS: I don't know, I can't relate to that too well, except they're better educated. But, if they get into trouble, I don't know if it has anything to do with race. I really don't know.

Mike: Regarding the assimilation process, we've been ingrained to accept the values of the majority culture, and taking those values, we begin to look at getting ahead as being much more important. Money becomes much more important, and then we begin to judge and begin to judge people in a way that if they're going to restrict us or inhibit us from getting what we want, sometimes we then denigrate or we make fun.

MR. HAWKINS: I don't know. I may be out of touch, but it doesn't seem to do anything for me.

Mike: You've lived in the Lawrence community a long, long time and you've seen a lot of changes. What do you think is the best change as far as community goes?

MR. HAWKINS: Maybe relating back to the early days at Haskell before, when my parents were in school here, when the students went downtown, and they lived in families and they taught them household chores and such as that. Later on, some people looked at them as probably being just maids, that they're working for free, and it's a little bit of negativity there. I think AIM (American Indian Movement) might have been the people that brought that up. Otherwise, I don't know that the people thought too much about it if they went to live with the whites. They were just there to learn how to live. That's the way I look at it.

Mike: Do you have an opinion about what seems to be a difference in how people judge Indians and blacks? Do Indian people seem to be more acceptable in society than blacks? Is there any reason why you think that seems to be the case? Like, you could go to a home and nobody seemed to bother you. You might even go to that city pool and jump in, and then there was no one there to reprimand you or discipline you or anything like that. But a black person couldn't do that. You could go sit on the floor level with whites in a movie theater, yet you were also a minority, you were acceptable. Do you have any thoughts on that?

MR. HAWKINS: I don't know why that comes about, because in the early days they were so suspicious of Indians that they were cutthroats and that they couldn't be trusted. They would steal from you. But today that seems to be all pushed under the rug as far as I could see, that it doesn't reflect on how people treat Indians or talk about them. Maybe that might be the actions of the Indians themselves, that they had to get along with the people, so there was no reason to steal from them and murder them. Although, in their own mind, they might have thought they were fighting for their land, but the way that turned out, why they don't have any land, so that's kind of a thing of the past as far as I know. I don't have any land—except what I own in that little plot where I live.

Mike: Yeah. How about interracial relationships? What's your view on that? Black and Indian?

MR. HAWKINS: I haven't had a lot of association with blacks. I mentioned just that one friend that I have. But I didn't grow up with any blacks. Some of the people I knew here at Haskell said they grew up with blacks, they played with them, they swam with them, and they just grew up with them. They had more association. Maybe the blacks realized that the Indians were more friendly to them than some whites.

Mike: There could be some history tied to that. Like you mentioned earlier, there's the way Indian people had been treated in the history and then the way blacks had been treated in history. There seems to be more of a connection there, something in common I suppose you could say?

MR. HAWKINS: Yeah, I think they have something there in common. They feel like if they'd band together, they'll at least have empathy for each other about certain things.

Mike: That's about everything that I have in terms of just trying to learn about the community and your perspective. How long were you aware that segregation existed in this city? Did it carry over through even the war years, after the war years?

MR. HAWKINS: There's only one thing comes to mind that when this Bread boy was killed. The police couldn't seem to make any headway with it. Yet, I felt that all those people down there on that east side knew who did that. But they wouldn't tell. They were protecting their own, rather than incriminate them. I thought there was just a little bit of segregation there or bad feelings that carried over from something. I don't know what. It kind of makes me think about some of the early guys talking about when they went to Haskell. This was before I ever came here. They said that sometimes they'd get together, and they'd go down on the east side and beat up on some blacks. I said, "Oh. Why?" "Ah, just beat them up." That was way back in the 1920s.

Mike: Did that come from the white population?

MR. HAWKINS: From Indians.

Mike: Indians were doing it?

MR. HAWKINS: Yeah, Indians were doing it.

Mike: Wow! So maybe there was bad blood there as well and a sense of discrimination?

MR. HAWKINS: It could have been. I don't know what prompted it, but they just said that they would do that. I guess some whites would feel like they'd go down and beat up on some Indians once in a while.

Mike: So you heard of that occurring as well?

MR. HAWKINS: Yeah, I think that happened.

Mike: All right. I think I've covered about everything that I needed to cover. I appreciate everything. Thank you.

**James Jones**

Tribe: Seminole Tribe of Oklahoma  
Residence: Lawrence, Kansas  
Education: Oklahoma State University (BA)  
Occupation: Library technician, Haskell Indian Nations University  
Military Service: United States Marines, Vietnam era

Mike: What is your name, tribal affiliation, and birth date?

MR. JONES: My name is James Jones, and I was born in 1948 in Seminole, Oklahoma. I'm Seminole.

Mike: This project centers on African American and American Indian relations, or interactions. Knowing how you grew up during the 1950s and knowing who influenced you—your parents, and probably your grandparents who were born at the turn of the century in a more traditional way that you learned things—do you think if you had lived like that, there would be less or more racism? Do you think there is an indication of racism in our traditional ways of doing things?

MR. JONES: In our culture, the Seminole culture, it was influenced by my grandfather. He was one of the first Seminole leaders of our nation in Oklahoma, and he set the example as a leader. We were taught the traditional ways. I have three sisters, and I had one brother who is deceased now, but we were all raised traditionally in our culture. We weren't aware of any racism at that age. I was born in 1948 and I never heard racism. As a matter of fact, I didn't know what that word meant until I was way into high school. There were several families that were close, including my grandfather.

At that time of abolishing slavery when he was the chief of the Seminole Nation, rather than, in our lay terms, freeing the slaves, he didn't look at it that way. They were, as a matter of fact, a part of the family. I don't know whether that was because of the freedman treaty. To him, he never really had slaves. They were just people that lived with him, but they were black, of course.

I can remember my sisters always had clean, starched dresses, and it was because of Willie Mae. Willie Mae was my grandfather's maid, so to speak, and she was our nanny. Rather than going somewhere to be an indentured servant or anything, she stayed with my grandfather because she was so dedicated. And, so, we never did learn any type of racism. As a matter of fact, when my dad and my mom first got together, they used to go into stores. Once we were born they would see the same people that they saw in the stores and this one guy in particular—his name was L.C. Phillips, but they called him "Cuno" in our language, which means skunk—would greet my dad and my mom in our language. That didn't surprise me. That's why I said I never knew racism. It just seemed natural because we were raised in that culture to respect one another,

and our traditional values was to respect other people. I guess we learned that, like I said, from my grandfather and my dad, and it was passed on down to us.

The black people in Seminole, Oklahoma, used to live on the south side of town, and no one lived far north or on the north side. It was always separated by railroad tracks. They even had their own schools on that side of the town. It was called Booker T. Washington, as a matter of fact. They had their own basketball teams, baseball, and their own swimming pool on that side of town. And you would very seldom see them at the main part of the town, except in a shoeshine corner or something like that. I never really thought of racism back in that era, when I was growing up in the 1950s.

Mike: You grew accustomed to that treatment, and you didn't view it as discriminatory, but you knew that people were separated and that segregation existed. Did you ever ask why that segregation existed?

MR. JONES: No. I never questioned it. It was just always acceptable to us, mainly because we did have Willie Mae that lived in our house, or lived out in the back, and attended to our every need. People didn't use to make fun of us, but they would always say, "Oh, you dress so nice and your shirts are always pressed." That was because of Willie Mae. She was like our nanny.

Mike: A lot of non-Indian historians, when they talk about the so-called Civilized Tribes, indicated that they had slaves, which gives them reason to say, "These groups actually began to emulate the dominant culture or dominant society." But you characterized the way that the blacks, when they lived with Indian families, there was a distinction. They didn't totally control their lives from what it sounds like.

MR. JONES: I guess you could say they didn't, but they could have. Willie Mae and her family were free to do as they pleased. They could have left. They could have done anything, but they would rather stay there. Like I said, my grandfather paid them. He didn't just treat them like, "You do this" and "We need this done." They just did everything on their own, because they were so used to living there, and they were like part of an extended family.

Mike: Did you ever sense any discrimination against Indian families in Seminole, Oklahoma?

MR. JONES: Yeah, I did. That was because the non-black and the non-Indian would treat us differently. There wasn't a whole lot, but sometimes I did see that action. They would kind of look down on us whenever we were in the department stores or something like that. We'd always have to buy our own school books, of course. We'd go in there, and sometimes they would wait on us last. That's what offended me. Sometimes, that's why I guess I'm so outspoken, because I remember those days. When I'm in a department store now and someone tries to

ignore me like that, then I make sure I'm heard. I guess that is from old feelings of being treated that way. But my mom, of course, never said anything. She was a gentle woman and so was my dad, and they never pressed it. That's their tradition and culture too, that they didn't speak out. They weren't weak people; they were just kind. They answered when they were spoken to, and they didn't go out and try to have conversations with different people. I saw that when I growing up, and I guess that was a little changed between that generation, my mom and dad, to my generation. I was getting a little more outspoken.

Mike: You got to integrate in the public schools though, right?

MR. JONES: Yes.

Mike: So, Indian people were actually integrated into the non-Indian schools or Anglo schools, public schools, but the blacks weren't?

MR. JONES: Right.

Mike: Did you see a distinction there, or did you sense that there was a difference in the way that people treated Indians, as opposed to blacks?

MR. JONES: Not that much. When I was growing up in the public school, of course, the BIA at first was trying to send most of our Indian students to boarding schools. But my parents didn't want that; they wanted us in the public schools. Two of my sisters were real good athletes, and my oldest sister was kind of a scholar. She was just really bright. They integrated real well with the mainstream non-Indian society. And, of course, me and my brother played sports, and I guess we kind of excelled in sports in our school. We blended together real well. Most of us Indian students, Seminole tribe members, integrated real well into the student society. There was one black person that came to our school, and he came from a little community called Wolf, which is south of Bowlegs, where I went to school, which is south of Seminole. He was part black, and we didn't view him as being black. To us, he was Indian. But, once he came to the school, that was kind of a big deal to the white students. They were saying, "Oh, we have one black." The Indians didn't view him as being black. I don't know whether that's why they let him in or they could have let a lot of blacks in, or they just didn't come. It wasn't unheard of, but they just didn't come to our school.

Mike: How about relationships? Any Indian-white relations? Any Indian-black relations? These are two separate questions. What was your take, and what was viewed during that period of time when it came to Indian-black relations?

MR. JONES: Yeah, there were. For instance, like the guy Johnny Alfred, and his dad, a Seminole Native preacher. His mom's last name was Wood, and they were half black. How they met, I don't know the history of that. But, you know how word of mouth goes? It's not a rumor or anything because you could tell that

he was black. And there was a lot of integration. I don't know whether it was because of our relationship with the freedmen, who incidentally are not Seminole tribal members. They're freedmen. They're their own clan, but they're not Seminole.

Mike: You might explain that a little bit. They came during the removal period, right?

MR. JONES: Yes. They came with the Seminole Nation when they were removed from Florida from their original tribal lands. Whenever they did have slaves in the Southern states, they sought asylum with the Seminole Nation in Florida and they just stayed with them. That's how that relationship developed with my grandfather, I think, because they treated them as equal.

Mike: Sometimes almost a family member?

MR. JONES: Yeah. When they were removed to Oklahoma, then the black slaves just came with them as freedmen. That's how they got the name "freedmen," because they were free from slavery and they just traveled with the Seminole Nation. Once they did get here, they were included in the treaty along with the Seminole Nation. They considered them part of the Seminole Nation, but in effect they were not tribal members. Still to this day, I don't know how to explain their close relationship. They're not our slaves. They're their own band, and they've always been part of the Seminole Nation. But they are not Seminole tribal members.

Mike: In some ways that's similar to the Comanches, for example. There have been a number of occasions that they took Mexican captives or they took white captives, and on occasion these people chose to stay with the tribe and live with the tribe.

When there was an allotment of tribal land (tribal members were forced to take 160-acre plots with the remainder provided to others for settlement) during the early part of the twentieth century, a lot of these people who were adopted into the tribe weren't Comanche. They were Mexican or they were Anglo. But they grew up with the tribe and they got allotments as a tribal member. There's some similarity there, in essence. They basically were accepted as tribal members or respected for their belonging to or accepting the values of the tribe.

That's kind of what I think you're saying, but not exactly. It's a little bit similar to that. Has there ever been a time that an African American has ever played a role in the history of the tribe?

MR. JONES: Yeah. That was part of what I just told you. There was also a band way back in the 1800s of Seminoles that left Florida under the leadership of a black warrior. Like I said, he wasn't a true Seminole, but they considered him a

Seminole. He took his group of people, which did include some Seminole tribal members. He was black, but he was considered a Seminole leader. He took them out of Florida into New Mexico, or Old Mexico. To this day I think there might still be a band of Seminoles there that was led by a black Seminole member.

Mike: That wasn't Cawakagee, was it?

MR. JONES: I believe that was his name. Cawakagee means something like a wildcat.

Mike: That was a white interpretation. His white name was Wildcat.

MR. JONES: Cawakagee means little wild cat.

Mike: Have you ever had any personal experiences with African Americans?

MR. JONES: Just, the few that I did have was during sports. And my uncle used to drive a bus for a neighboring town called Butler. That was predominantly a black community. Whenever we would go over to visit my uncle, naturally we'd go to the neighbors who were black, and we saw no difference. He was just another little kid to play with.

Mike: Yeah. It's like my sense of a strong belief in the tribal system, or culture, or traditions, I really believe a strong traditional person who's culturally tied in the Indian way does not see color. He sees a human being.

MR. JONES: I guess that's who I am without realizing it. No one has ever put it in that sense to me, but that may be my feeling, too. I was born in a culture where our traditional ties are really strong and it was learned from my father and grandfather. They didn't distinguish between colors, so naturally it didn't even occur to me.

Mike: How do you personally view African Americans at this point in your life?

MR. JONES: To this day, I still have a few good friends that are African American. Sometimes we keep in contact, and they'll send me a birthday card every once in a while. I don't know whether it's because of my last name. My last name is Jones, and that's not traditionally a Native name. I guess that gives them a stronger feeling toward me. I don't know whether I'm their token Indian. You know? It could work both ways. But I've always remained their friend.

Mike: Do you think you have been influenced by some of the stereotypes that are in the movies? Remember the "Step-and-Fetch-It" man who used to say, "Yes, boss"? Do you think you've been influenced by the perspective that there's a

certain way that society today looks at blacks? Have you been influenced to look at blacks in kind of a slanted way?

MR. JONES: Not really. Because, like I said, I was more sports minded. And, if I looked at a black in any slanted way, it would say, "Well, they're a better athlete than most people I know." That's how it would influence me, rather than being the Uncle Tom and yes-man. I would look at it more from a sports-minded view.

Mike: I remember when we played softball, we called these fluke hits off the end of the bat that goes out and just barely pass somebody sta-lusty( black) hits. I don't think it's a racist thing, but it's the way Indian people tease when they tease each other. It wasn't meant to be derogatory, but it's a way to express humor and to describe something.

MR. JONES: Yeah. I think that that's the way it always is, especially in our family, too. Even my cousins—if we'd even get angry—we'd call each other the 'N' word. We wouldn't say that to anybody else, it would just be between family members. We'd call them that and, of course, my dad and my mom would say, "Hey, don't be using that word." I guess they were afraid someone else might hear us.

Mike: Do you know when you learned that word, and that it meant something negative?

MR. JONES: No, I don't. And I think that once I did hear it from our nanny that was talking to her own kids. I didn't know what that word meant. I think that she's the first person I heard it from, calling her own children that. It just stuck with me. Whenever I did get angry, I would call my sisters that name, too.

Mike: You actually learned it was a negative term from the black lady who was addressing her children?

MR. JONES: Yeah. She was just using it in anger, and I guess that's where I picked it up.

Mike: That's interesting. Have you ever seen anybody exhibit—growing up or even to this present day—a real extreme or blatant discrimination toward any blacks or Indians that offended you?

MR. JONES: Not in small towns. Especially in Seminole. In the larger cities I've seen that rampant. For instance, I was in California and that's where I saw most of it. Mexicans were included in some racial remarks. When I was traveling through, going to California from Oklahoma, I used to see that occasionally and they would say, "Well, what are they doing in here?" That really was hurtful when I first heard it. I guess that's when I started hearing "blacks" used in a derogatory manner.

Mike: Have you heard Indians use derogatory expressions to show discrimination toward blacks?

MR. JONES: Oh, yeah. Yeah. Especially in the Texas panhandle. That was probably around Shamrock. That's when I first started hearing that term. Why, I don't know, because there were no Indians that lived in that area. Why would anyone hate another race when there was no race around? That's what always puzzled me.

Mike: How do you feel about interracial relationships? And interracial marriages?

MR. JONES: I guess I agree with it because my family is all mixed. For instance, my great-nephew is married to a white girl, and now they have a little biracial baby, who's just as cute as can be. My other niece in Oklahoma had a black baby, so they're biracial, half black and half Indian. We're just kind of like Heinz 57 (laughter); we have all types. We have even Mexican relatives in our family, so it doesn't bother me. We don't look at it as being a race. For instance, my little nephew's name is Jason, and he has an Indian last name. His name is Littleax. Jason Littleax. But, when you look at him, he's just as dark as can be, and you know he has to be black, but we never did view him as being any other race. He was just my nephew.

And race played no part in that to me. I mean, we never really thought of it. When he's growing up, when he was a teenager, he started listening to hip hop and started wearing his jeans way down to his thighs and stuff like that. And his mom used to say, "Oh, quit trying to be black." And he'd say, "I am, Mom." And it dawned on me, "Well, he is," and I never thought of it that way (laughter).

Mike: You have a military background. You entered the United States Marines. In your experience in the military, did you see discrimination there?

MR. JONES: No, I guess because, when you're first going into the service, they treat you all the same. Race has no bearing on it. In my platoon, I had a Filipino drill instructor, I had a black, and I had a Mexican and, of course, a white gunnery sergeant, and they were mixed. They treated us all the same. You were a recruit. They would always call us by our racial names, like, "You dirty Red Skin." That was just to break you down. I didn't realize that until after my recruit training. That was just one of their methods of trying to break you, and then they rebuild you. That's what I know now. But, at that time there wasn't really any racial discrimination. I used to have a drill instructor that I thought was picking on me. He would call me all kinds of names and racial slurs. I guess at the end he was trying to get me to fire expert on the rifle range, which I did. I fired expert, and after that the names quit.

Mike: How about here in Lawrence? You've lived in Lawrence how long?

MR. JONES: I've been here since 1991.

Mike: About fourteen years?

MR. JONES: Yeah.

Mike: In those fourteen years, how do you view Lawrence as a community and its relationships, its racial relationships?

MR. JONES: When I went to school here in the 1960s, I left here in '69; it was kind of bad then. We'd walk downtown, because the only transportation we had was walking, and some of the neighbors would say, "Hey, get out of my yard." And sometimes they'd call us Indian or something, or they would say, "Do not cross the grass." They would, of course, say Haskell students or something like that on their signs. That's what I ran into and, then, as the years went by and I came back, I don't hear it so much. But there is a little racial tension. It's probably attributed to the partiers that are here. Like anyone else, they associate one with the rest of them, saying, "You're all like that."

But, of course, that's ignorance too. They don't know enough about Indian people to really make that discernation. Because they say, "I guess it goes back for a long time again. They say, "One Indian's just as good as next. Or, they're all alike," or something like that. Without that education, we'll never outgrow that.

In Lawrence I see it every once in a while. I don't know whether it's profiling. My nephew's wife and I were in Dillon's one time, and it seemed like the person in security was just following us around. I don't know why. It just seemed really weird to be put in that situation. She had gotten a roll deodorant bar and was looking at it, and she was going to purchase it. Instead, she said, "No. I really don't need." So, she put it back on the shelf—not in the same place where she got it. We were walking around, then all of a sudden we were getting ready to leave, and the security ran up to her and really humiliated her and said, "What did you do with that?" He took her in the back office and searched her. Then, she took him to the spot where she put the deodorant back. They were not apologetic. I know that they were profiling us, and that was racially motivated.

Mike: Do you see a difference from the 1960s? You were in school from '67 to '69 here at Haskell? And, then, you came back in '90-91. It doesn't seem to be as open discrimination as it used to be? Like with the signs on the sidewalk? Like "Indians stay off" or "Haskell students stay off?" So, you don't see that?

MR. JONES: I don't see that anymore. But to me, that feeling is still there.

Mike: From the '60s did you see a difference in the way blacks have been treated from then to now?

MR. JONES: No, I haven't. Of course, that was during the Civil Rights Movement. They really didn't cause alarm, I guess, because they were afraid of Martin Luther King coming to their city or something like that. But I didn't see that as much. It wasn't really that open with Indians either, but it was there.

Mike: Do you think Indians benefited from the Civil Rights Movement?

MR. JONES: No, not really. We tried our own movement and it seemed like it made it worse for the Indians. It didn't affect the Indians the same way it did the blacks.

Mike: Here is my last question on this racial issue. We've been assimilated. That was a process. We were processed through a system that was supposed to make us more like the dominant society—through education, change of language, style of clothes, and other things. Do you think in that process we lost some of our traditions? And, by way of losing our traditions, have we become more racist?

MR. JONES: Yeah. I kind of thought along those lines before. It seems like it started with kind of an interracialism first—some of the Indians that went to college versus the ones that didn't go to college. There's some that went to the vo-tech side, and they'll say, "Well, you weren't smart enough to go to college, that's why you're in vo-tech." So, that started within, I think. The ones that are in college kind of looked down on the ones that didn't go to college. It started being hatred, and then all of a sudden it just went in another direction.

Mike: It was in the tribe itself or the tribal groups themselves. They actually began to become divided?

MR. JONES: Yeah, right.

Mike: But here's another part of that. Would you say that we learned to distinguish African Americans and began to call them names and discriminate against them, because we were assimilated to show and understand that there are distinctions between those who do have something and those that don't? We've done it within our own tribes. We disparage each other, we have a difficult time sometimes and, then, we differentiate between educated and noneducated, and so on. But, did we look outward also and say, "Well, blacks are this; the stereotype, they're lazy, they're drug dealers." So, we begin to show more discrimination. Because, as we got assimilated, we began to take on the same values of the dominant culture, and that has always separated people.

MR. JONES: Yeah. I think that's a learned behavior, too. We learned that from the blacks. Going back to my nephew again, who's half-black—because he's been around and he's even told me a couple of times that blacks view Indians as

being lazy, and drawing welfare, go to school free, and all of that stuff. So, they, in turn, said that about the blacks.

Mike: And we flip flop it toward the blacks.

MR. JONES: Yeah. So, I think that's kind of a learned behavior. If no one ever talked that way in the first place, I'm sure nobody would say anything.

Mike: So, that's part of our assimilation?

MR. JONES: Yeah.

Mike: What we've become as a result of being channeled into this direction that says, "This is the way that you can be successful: "Get an education and speak English, and change your style of your clothes." We also may have become more racist or discriminatory?

MR. JONES: Yeah. When we were talking about racism and how it is in Lawrence, I think the media has a lot to do with that too. For instance, the SLT (South Lawrence Trafficway). Getting that road built. They blame it on the Indians for not having it completed. My view on that is they should have asked the Indians to be involved a long time ago. That road probably could have been built by now if they had said, "Okay, we respect you, but this is what we want to do." Instead, they just did what they wanted to do. And, now, it's being perpetuated—at least in my view—in the *Lawrence Journal World*, because they're saying, "What are your views? Should government apologize to the Indians?" They're just building that issue, trying to separate the races. I blame that on the media. In turn, that causes the Lawrence community to kind of dislike the Haskell community. Eventually I hope it changes, but it'll be a long time, I think.

Mike: I have one last question. Were you aware of Abe Lemmons and his use of Indian ball players? Did you know that he used a lot of Indians during the period of time 1959 to 1973?

MR. JONES: No, I didn't.

QUESTIONER: "Do you remember separate toilets and things like that?"

MR. JONES: In the courthouse, especially when I was just getting out of high school. The county courthouse was in Wewoka and my hometown in Seminole, and we'd go over there, and use the restrooms for the mainstream, even Indians included. We could use the same restroom as the white people on the first floor, but the restrooms for the black people were downstairs. You had to go around back and then go down to use their restroom.

Mike: Could Indians eat in restaurants?

MR. JONES: Yeah. But you very seldom saw blacks eating the restaurants. As a matter of fact, I saw hardly any when I was growing up.

QUESTIONER: Did you see buses that had Negroes sitting in the rear?

MR. JONES: We didn't have buses (laughter) in our community, in our small town.

Mike: What kind of jobs did you see blacks have?

MR. JONES: Basically labor. Either working in car repair, shoeshining, or cooks. They were always in the back; you never saw them in the front.

Mike: How about movie theaters? When I went to movies, we liked to sit in the balcony. Later I came to learn that the balcony was actually built for blacks.

MR. JONES: As a matter of fact, we used to have this theater called Chief Theater, and they wouldn't let blacks on the main floor. They were always upstairs.

Mike: Yeah. And, they couldn't leave until the movie until everybody else left, and then they could leave. Or they left by separate entrances.

MR. JONES: A side entrance. Yeah, that was always interesting.

**Moses Jumper**

Tribe: Seminole Tribe of Florida, Hollywood, Florida  
Residence: Big Cypress Reservation  
Education: Panhandle State College, Goodwell, Oklahoma (BA)  
Occupation: Recreation director, Seminole Tribe of Florida, Hollywood, Florida

MIKE: Mr. Jumper, will you just give us your name and your clan for identification purposes?

MR. JUMPER: My name is Moses Jumper. I'm a Seminole tribal member. I'm a member of the Snake Clan.

Mike: This is an attempt to do a new history. It's a new way of doing Indian-black history. What the people who are going to develop this want to know is what did Indian people think of blacks, what kind of relationships did Indian people have with blacks. So, it's a new way of trying to address and create a new history.

MR. JUMPER: There's probably an old tribe that has more affiliation with the blacks. That was one of the causes of the Seminole wars. I wrote a little book on that with the group with *Roots*.

MIKE: Alex Haley?

MR. JUMPER: Alex Haley. They had a little group there that I cowrote a book about Seminoles, and the reason Alex Haley did it is because it was for minorities, and how the blacks were a part of the Seminole traditions and things.

MIKE: You indicated that there was a strong relationship between blacks and Seminoles.

MR. JUMPER: Over the years, I've done a lot of studying on the Seminole history. Alex Haley and the *Roots* people asked me to cowrite a book for young people to see how the relationship was between blacks and Seminoles. So, I said, "Yeah, I'll be glad to do it." It got me into reading a little bit more and studying it and kind of looking at some of the things that we did with them.

Back in the 1800s-1900s, we had a lot of civil unrest, where we were having a lot of problems with a lot of the slaves. Of course, there were a lot of the problems that we were having with Georgia and Alabama and northern Florida, where some of the bigger slave plantations were. A lot of the slaves were running south. Who lived down south? It was the Seminoles. So, there was a lot of intermingling, a lot of relationships that revolved around that period of time because there was a lot of unrest that was going on.

The Creeks were coming down from Alabama and Georgia in that area, from Jackson's area there. So, there was a lot of racial unrest. A lot of the blacks were leaving a lot of those plantations and running away and finding a better life down among the Native peoples in Florida. So, a lot of relationships developed. The blacks found a little bit better life in the villages there of the Seminoles. Most of them were treated more like the humans that they were than the way the slave plantation owners were treating them.

There was a lot of involvement with that. Even among our people now, there are some black blood lines that date back to that earlier time period. It was a time that a lot of the plantation owners were putting pressure on the government. They wanted their slaves back. That was a part of the reason of some of the Seminole warriors that began to develop later on in the 1800s. A lot of reason for that was that the Seminoles didn't want to give up the slaves that they had. A lot of them became family members; some of them were very attached to the tribal members at that period.

Many of the slaves that came down began to live among the Seminoles and became instrumental in interpreting the treaties and the things that were going on. One of the well known was Abraham, and he was a former slave that began to learn the Miccosukee language and the Creek language. He was probably trilingual. He spoke the English language as well. He was an important person in the treaties that were beginning to take place. There were a lot of the Seminoles and the blacks that were right there during the different battles and things that began to happen as the government began to want to get the slaves back.

There was also the process of lands, with the cattle that different Seminoles had. A lot of cattle, a lot of horses at that time from the Spanish, as well as with the prospect of the United States government wanting more land, wanting to seize Florida and take it over. These were a lot of things that brought about the involvement of the Seminole wars. So, there was a very close relationship there between the blacks because they fought right along side of the Seminoles in the wars. They played an important factor in the Seminole wars.

MIKE: That first war, 1817 to 1819, was a slave war actually. That's when Jackson invaded Florida. He had the plantation owners who wanted their slaves returned, and that was one of the shortest of the wars. But it was the one where he violated it. It's like the United States invasion of Iraq today, where Jackson had violated the sovereignty of Spain to get the slaves back. There are some similarities in that—whether it was undeclared war.

MR. JUMPER: He also hung a couple of the leaders there. I don't know if it was the British. He hung a couple of their leaders because of the fact that they were still involved with the process of holding back the slaves and not letting Jackson do the things that he wanted to do there in the state of Florida. There was a lot of unrest there. I think the Seminoles were in the thick of that as far as them

wanting their slaves back, wanting to get involved with taking land, and sending the Seminoles into the Arkansas and Oklahoma Territory—the Seminole Trail of Tears.

MIKE: If the traditions of the Seminole were to accept the former slaves in this period, is there any difference now in how the Seminoles view blacks today compared to if you looked at the ability to accept a group of people, and is that acceptance still prevalent today?

MR. JUMPER: It's hard for me to speak on behalf of a lot of them, because, in my family going back to my people that are part of the Snake Clan, my mother raised me because she was half-white herself. So, she raised me under that type of atmosphere not to hold any prejudice toward people because of their color. But I know sometimes there are some tribal members that still hold a little animosity or prejudice towards blacks. But I think overall today, especially on some of our different reservations, there are a lot of Indian-black relationships that are prevalent today among our people.

I don't think there's a lot of prejudice towards that. Whether they know about our history or not, because of the fact that I think they understand a lot of the hardships they've gone through, as well as the things that we have as Native peoples, I think that in some instances maybe they share the same type of ideas about human life.

MIKE: Growing up, did you ever learn any prejudicial remarks or statements, or anything that would be considered racist statements when you were growing up about how you would refer to a black person?

MR. JUMPER: No, I don't really think so. Because my father, in the time after he got out of the war, he really got into alcohol a lot and really there was always people of color around our house. He hung around with probably a lot of the lower-class whites, but there were always blacks that were good friends of his. He always went over to the town of Dania, and he never hung around the white section. It was mostly there in the black section of town that he hung out and they always brought him back, or they would call us to come pick him up.

So, in my personal relationship, there was no prejudice there. I've never had any animosity toward blacks, and I have never heard with the peer group that I had, the guys that I grew up with my age, I never heard them say a lot of racial remarks toward them. Of course, I heard it in high school when we played football. I'd hear it from the nontribal members and things that would put them down a lot. I think sometimes a couple of the guys would kind of laugh with it, but I've never really heard any of ours, and I played with about five or six other guys that were kind of relatives of mine. We grew up all the way through high school. We always played with the black football players or black baseball players.

When I played semi-pro baseball, I was the only nonblack on the team, so that was a good experience for me. But I think they've always understood that I've never had any problems. I'd go to the games and they'd go to the lounges and bars after the games, and I never had problems with it. They just basically accepted me with that. I just think over the years that a lot that we see over TV and the racial things that happen now, I think those are the things that have instilled that racism maybe in some of our younger people today.

But I'd have to say, overall, I don't see a whole lot of racial prejudice here among our people on the reservation.

MIKE: What do you think about racial intermarriage?

MR. JUMPER: Interracial marriages? You mean with the blacks and Indians?

MIKE: Yes.

MR. JUMPER: There's a lot of it that goes on. You can go all the way back into the early times of the 1900s and 1800s. There was a time period after the war years and with the slaves that I think there was a process where it stopped there for a while. But, over the years at the turn of the century, the interracial marriages began to come back into effect again.

But I know that our traditional people—my mother will tell you this—that they were very opposed to interracial marriages. So much to the point that they would destroy the baby if it was other than through the Seminole blood line. So, it's always been a factor, I think, as far as going back into families. But I don't see that now as a big influence as far as if that person is black or if that person is Seminole. They seem to get along. I don't think there's that prejudice there anymore.

MIKE: You grew up during the time period where there was segregation.

MR. JUMPER: Yeah.

MIKE: You guys were breaking the segregation barrier, you were integrating more, but blacks were still segregated.

MR. JUMPER: Yep.

MIKE: But you knew that you had been segregated as well. Did that influence how you viewed blacks at that time? There were similarities in the way that white society treated both groups.

MR. JUMPER: I had an experience one time when I went to New York. One of my cousins had some money and they wanted to go see the New York World's

Fair. This is a true story. The New York World's Fair, I think, in 1962 was in New York City. Bill Osceola is one of the former presidents, and his mom is kind of like my aunt there from the Snake Clan. My mother and Charlotte were first cousins and I was a family member, and they asked me if I wanted to go with them to see the New York World's Fair. I thought, "Wow! That would be something to go see."

So, I must have been about eleven or twelve, somewhere around there. That was real special thing for me to do. Because when I was growing up, there was just not a whole lot of racism on our reservation. I really didn't understand what prejudice was. I didn't understand what racism was. Like I said, my dad brought a lot of black men to the house and they drank together, and I never saw them any different than who they were as far as people were. My mother always taught me. Being half breed herself, as far as being half white and half Seminole, she had to go through a lot of prejudice herself. She had to face a lot of that, so that's one of the things that she taught her children was not to hold any prejudice toward people of different colors.

So, when they asked me to go to New York, I said, "Yeah, I'd like to go." We went up there. Matter of fact, Bill was a preacher and that's how he got to meet a couple of the blacks that came down, the Christian blacks that came and spoke at his church. I believe they invited him to come, they said they'd have a place to stay. So, we stayed right there in Harlem. They didn't have much of a yard there, but we stayed in the backyard. Then we went to the World's Fair and had a good time, and came back.

We were coming back. We drove up, and I remember stopping in a place in Alabama. We walked in there. Of course, he worked and he was the former president of the tribe, so he had a nice car. He drove us up there with a nice car and he dressed good. It wasn't like we were looking like lower class or bums or anything like that. We came in there and stopped at a store in Alabama, at a restaurant, and we sat down to eat. I guess we sat there for about twenty or thirty minutes. Finally, Charlotte asked the waitress, she said "Can we go ahead and order something to eat?" The white waitress came and I could see the expression on her face today. She just kind of looked around like she was a little embarrassed to say what she did. But she said, "I'm sorry, but the management told me we can't serve you." She's like my mom; she got a little hot and a little mad about it. She was wanting to know why. She said, "I just can't. The management told me I'm just not allowed to serve you." She was going to really say something, I'm sure she was going to. But Bill told her, "Just don't say anything. We'll just leave."

So, I remember we got up and walked out of that restaurant. I didn't understand it, being a kid ten or eleven years old. I didn't know why all that was until a little bit later on. But they just didn't want to serve us because we were Indians. So, that had a big effect on me, even today, seeing what happened. I don't raise my sons to hold any prejudice towards anybody. That's just the way that I was

raised. When I saw that for the first time, I realized how much one human would treat another person like that because of his color.

MIKE: We were talking about this earlier. Why do we see more Indian women who seem to get involved with black men, as opposed to Indian men getting involved with black women? Is there any theory in all that?

MR. JUMPER: That's a pretty tough question. I don't know. I mean, as far as what they would see, I've always said I thought we had enough guys around for the Indian women. Maybe it could be how they treat them if they come from the same type of environment—maybe not in an upper-class area of town and maybe there's a lot of racial tension that they may feel around the white race.

I know there was always a sense of insecurity about myself, that I just never felt comfortable around white girls. That was just something I just was never comfortable around. That's why I always knew that I would always one day marry a Native American girl. I just never felt comfortable in that situation, and that may be a situation that they may not be comfortable around white guys, I guess.

It's a hard question. That's probably something where some of the girls could answer that.

MIKE: Sociologists?

MR. JUMPER: Yeah. They have their theories, I'm sure of that. I know, too, that a lot of the black sections of town are sometimes closer to the reservations. You go to Immokolee Reservation, they're closer to the Mexicans and the migrants, so a lot of them have taken up more so with the blacks there on that reservation. They're more involved with the Spanish people, so a lot of the women marry the Spanish people there. Then, you go into Brighton, a lot of them have married the local cowboys. Then, you come here, there's a mixed type of people here. So, we do have a lot of blacks here and we have some Latins that are involved with some of our people. So, there are a lot of interracial marriages here.

MIKE: There's a certain popular culture, they call it, we find a lot of our Indian youth now imitating that popular culture and they say it's more of a black - influence popular culture. The language, the dress, and things like that. Do you think we're losing our culture because of that? Because the Indian kids don't have the sense of culture and have began to dress and imitate and be a certain way?

MR. JUMPER: I think that's the big influence all over our young people. It's the same with the basketball, the dress, the music. There's a lot of that now that has an effect on our young people today. I see that even around our kids today here. It's not a sense of wanting to be more like the way we used to dress. But then, again, it has an effect on the different reservations here. When you go to

Brighton, it's more of a western atmosphere, so you see a lot more in jeans and Wranglers and things like that. If you come to this area here, it's involved with the looser clothing and geared toward the music and stuff. So, you go to the Brighton area, you've got a lot of western music.

**Bernard Kahrahrah**

Tribe: Comanche  
Residence: Elgin, Oklahoma  
Education: Oklahoma State University (BA)  
Occupation: Retired computer systems analyst  
Military Service: United States Air Force (Korean War era)

MR. KAHRAHRAH: My name is Bernard Kahrahrah, Comanche, enrolled four-fourths Comanche. My birth date is November 4, 1938.

MIKE: Haskell and Kansas University are doing a new curriculum. They're trying to put a curriculum together that is a black/Indian history, instead of a white/Indian history or white/black history. We're trying to put something together that students at Haskell and KU can study that approaches the history of how Indian people thought of blacks or how they treated blacks. A group of people, black teachers, are talking to blacks about what they think of Indians. They're all going to bring all this back together to create a curriculum that can teach from a different perspective that is more, without white history, but just black/Indian history. I'm going to ask you a few questions about growing up.

American Indians were not treated fairly in many ways by the United States government. And blacks weren't either. Does that perspective give you a sense of understanding why blacks do what they do? And then there's another question about the Civil Rights Movement, where blacks got all these things with the protests and the United States government signed the Voting Rights Act of 1964, the 1964 Civil Rights Act, and then other groups of people, minorities, started getting some of those rights too, because they started recognizing why we treated blacks terribly, and we've treated Indians terribly, we treat Hispanics terribly. Lyndon Johnson in 1968 had an Indian Civil Rights Bill that he brought in. That's the kind of thing that I'd like to ask you about, in terms of how Indian people view black people from a historical perspective?

MR. KAHRAHRAH: Indian people, Comanche people, I don't know about other tribes, but I do know about growing up. I got some ancestors on the wall. My grandmother is on one of these pictures, my dad's mother and her father. On my dad's mother's side, they would call him the Old Man. He was located around Raton, New Mexico, in that area where Ted Turner bought all that land and fenced it in for his buffalo ranch. It's at Cimarron, New Mexico. That's the entrance that you take in that pass that goes into Taos. That was a traditional route for Comanches to go into Taos for trading. From that time my family has had contact with the Spanish, they've had contact with the Mexican, and they have had, in other words, people of different color, because the Spanish were more light skinned than the Mexican people. That Old Man was also in contact with French people. He had had an escort, who took him back to Natchez, Louisiana, to sign a peacekeeping treaty. Where this is all going is that he's

brought over these generations an appreciation for other people. On my father's side, that has come through to me in his teachings, that we are all equal. We have different lifestyles, we come from different places, we have different languages, and we have to respect one another. This is not the teaching of the Bible; this is the teaching of us as human beings. I was always taught never to look down at people, because people are of value. They have a place in this world just like we do. Some people are oppressed, some people are the ones who are the oppressors. Myself and my family, we've grown up realizing that we are a people of color. I've heard people calling the blacks Buffalo Soldiers. However they handle it, that's up to them, not up to me. But they had a choice in what they were doing. But, at that time, the choice was pretty much emancipation. That's what they were pursuing, because at that time they were not emancipated. They had to be where they were at. They even had some ancestors who were scouts for the Army. This was a long, long time ago. But they were chosen because of what they were capable of doing, not because of their color. They were able to communicate with other people on the Plains. Because Comanche was the primary language used throughout all of this country. Therefore, they always sought Comanches to be the people who are going to go out in the frontier. We already knew where we were anyway (laughter). So, it was easy to take them wherever they needed to go.

Historically, you learn your value system. I have been raised to honor and respect people regardless of what color they are. Even though I know there's been an Indian Civil Rights that was passed, we Indian people practice it. We don't have to have it in writing. But it's always the United States government who, because they are in the dominant capacity, they have to have it in writing to assure that, that if it ever comes back to haunt them, at least they've got it in law and they've got the Supreme Court that can back it up and say, "Okay, you're right, you're wrong." So it's black and white. And I use that analogy because now you have two dominant societies. It seems like they're always competing against one another. But the brown people, us Indian people, we're in a capacity where, I think, many of us are the keepers of way of life and folklore traditions. As long as we keep that, we keep centered and we're not going to condemn people because of who they are. If I were to be asked, "What do you think about what's going on over there in the Middle East?", they have a life there, and however they handle their environment, it may be against the human rights. Just like whatever may happen to us in our Indian civil rights, it may not be right, but there's always going to be somebody there to say you're right or you're wrong. So it gets back to a value system of how we've been able to exist and coexist within the society. I've grown up knowing many people who are black, because of my father and who he worked with. During the segregation era and once integration came about on the football team at Lawton High School, we finally got our first two blacks to come onto the football team. I befriended both of them, and I was probably the only one that would talk to them. But that was because I felt like no one else wanted to talk to them. But once they became football stars, everybody wanted to talk to them. So the change occurs. Ebb and tide. I guess I have to say that my growing up,

our Comanche people that I know, we have the adaptability to our environment and we've been capable of doing that over all these years, which is why we're still here.

MIKE: I'm curious about a lot of of the black culture, the language, the fashions and things like that affect the Indian students at Haskell. There's the style of language that the black rappers use that Indian students have incorporated into their behavior. Do you think it's a lack of older people trying to convey to our Indian students, "You have a very powerful, influential, significant history, and maybe you need to look at that." Do you think we've failed in a way?

MR. KAHRAHRAH: I think looking at some of the students I know that had gone to Haskell, they are looking for security first of all. When you know where your meals are coming from, three squares a day, you become comfortable. Whoever is providing for you, it's very easy for you to adapt to that environment. We've had some people back, let's say in the 1940s and the '50s, who did go to Haskell, and the environment here was not good for growth. A number of young men and women that I know who went to Haskell have become very successful in going through Haskell and going on into college, and some I know who have degrees, and some are PhDs. It has been a very good environment for them. At the time that we were growing up, we had our culture to rely on. When I felt down, I always jumped in the car and went to a powwow, because, at that time, I was young enough, I was fancy dancing. So I went to a powwow and I got my spirits uplifted and I felt very comfortable in recognizing that, Yes, I belong and I fit in my society, and I'm very proud of who we are as Indian people. Because there's not many people can say they can go off to a powwow and have a real good time, and knowing that when you're going to go in there, somebody's going to pray for you and somebody's going to pray when you end. That way, they pray for your safe journey. When you go to a rap concert, are they going to pray? No. Are they going to pray for you to go home safely? No. There's such a divergence in the culture that, if you're somewhere in between and you don't get it enforced from our Indian people, you vacillate or you migrate to something else that you can instantaneously pick up. That's something I believe in that has prevailed and has made some major changes over these years.

MIKE: This is the last question: do you think that there is a commonality that can bring the two minority groups together, the blacks and Indians, to have a common sense of history?

MR. KAHRAHRAH: A common sense of history, I think one of the binding or cementing our relationships would be, between the two, is the sharing of oppression by the same entity. I think therein lies that we have something in common. Beyond that, I'm not sure how much we have in common. But we seem to be going in the same direction as far as what we seem to want to prevail in tribal government as well as the blacks in gaining and attaining positions in the United States Congress. We have not attained that yet, but we have our own

domain. We have our own tribal governments. We're here with tribal governments because of our treaties. We're a conquered nation, therefore, we are wards of the government and we transcended from wards of the government into self-determination, into self-governance, and now we are a separate government, but we are considered to be equal because of the new laws of government. Though we have made some changes, the changes that I recognize are probably equal to what the blacks are trying to attain in gaining their black caucuses in the Congress.

MIKE: Thank you. I appreciate it.

**Curtis Kekahbah**

Tribe: Kansa and Citizen Band Potawatomi  
Residence: Lawrence, Kansas  
Education: Haskell Junior College, Lawrence, Kansas AAS degree in electronics  
Occupation: Custodian, Haskell Indian Nations University, Lawrence, Kansas  
Military Service: United States Navy, Operation Desert Shield

MIKE: Since you've been working here at Haskell for a while now, I want to ask you about the community, and what you think of its treatment of Indian people. Have you ever seen Indian people discriminate against blacks?

MR. KEHKAHBAH: I can't really think of anything off the top of my head where Indian people have discriminated against blacks. Recently, with the young culture that is here now, I think that they have taken on some of the terminology that maybe ten or fifteen years ago would have been considered a racial slur or statement. Other than that, I can't really remember specifically where Indian people have discriminated against blacks in a face-to-face situation. I have heard some comments made about blacks from Indians, but that was never in the vicinity of black people. That was just in a group of Indian people together.

MIKE: Do you think black culture has influenced the Indian society?

MR. KEHKAHBAH: I'm still trying to determine, at least for my own understanding, what black culture is. I understand culture as something that is rooted in a traditional kind of way of doing things. That's not to say that blacks don't have culture. If their culture, for example is music and a lifestyle and dress and those kinds of things, then, yes, I would say that Indians definitely have been affected by black culture, a youthful kind of black culture. But as far as culture dealing with tribal identity and maybe a spiritual philosophy, I'm not aware of anything like that.

MIKE: Why do you think young Indian people have been influenced in the dress and the language and the music and things like that of a more contemporary black culture?

MR. KEHKAHBAH: I've thought about that a lot also. I don't have an experience of growing up on a reservation. My only experience has been pretty much growing up in the western society, with regular elementary schools and towns. One thing that I notice also is that not only are Native Americans being influenced by the young black culture, as they call it today, but I think that all young people are in some way influenced by that. I think that it's all part of youth trying to find a way to express themselves—kind of an antiestablishment thing. It's a way to say that we have a voice and that we want to be heard. I think that every youthful culture at some point wants to say that they don't care. It's throwing off authority and saying, "This what we believe in, this is what we are.

Listen to me, or something of that nature.” But I do know also—I got this from my niece and nephew—that a lot of the things that were popular back when I was in school in the 1970s are coming back. So I am curious as to what is going to be the dominant influence on young people ten or fifteen years down the line. Maybe the things that are influencing today may seem like old rock and roll to the youth of tomorrow—something to be laughed at and sneered at. The tattoos are faded, but you can still remember the good old days.

MIKE: Yeah. Sometimes when I take a look at pictures from the '70s and bell bottoms and people had tie-dye shirts on and extremely long hair, I think, "goodness."

MR. KEHKAHBAH: Scary.

MIKE: I wonder about some of these young people today when they look at themselves and their pants are half way down their butt. When they have kids and look at those pictures, I wonder what they'll think. Maybe it's like you said. It's just a phase.

MR. KEHKAHBAH: Absolutely.

MIKE: Do you think, in relationships with blacks, there are sometimes more comfort or tolerance for, and connection with black society, due to historical happenings? To blacks being subjugated? Indians being subjugated on reservations? Blacks moving from slavery, not having a lot of civil liberties before federal legislation? Do you think that is an avenue by which Indians and blacks do connect?

MR. KEHKAHBAH: When blacks were brought over here to be slaves, they lost their families and everything, because they were torn from that. I'm not saying that they lost their tribal identity or lost their identity of the people that they came from. An analogy is that Native American people were also removed. I've heard stories from my grandmother and also my uncles of being taken from the reservation and being forced into boarding schools. I think that there is some commonality there of traumatic experience of the history of the people and not being white and everything. I still think, though, that when you read between the lines, there's a lot of differences between Native Americans and blacks, even though they both shared this oppression by a dominant society, I think that there are definite huge differences between the two. In our history of a hundred and fifty years, as generations keep folding on top of each other, it becomes a little more homogenous. Before, there was still some separation. Each individual group was trying to find their own place and to adjust and everything else. It's still that way in a lot of different places, but I think that now influences on each other are affecting both.

MIKE: I talked to a person who came to school at Haskell in the early 1960s, and he said he faced a lot of issues that I thought only existed today. He's half white, and he said his first year at Haskell was very difficult. He was in a lot of fist fights, and I hear a lot of people talk about people who are half-degree—either too light or too dark. There seems to be some discrimination among our own people when it comes to that. Have you ever seen that or experienced that?

MR. KEHKAHBAH: Yeah. The discrimination between Native Americans who feel that another Native American is not dark enough or not from the reservation and don't know what's going on. That's kind of what I have not only personally experienced, but also have been a witness to with other groups of people. There is definitely some discrimination between Native American people depending on tribal affiliation—whether it's half, quarter, none, or whatever. That's definitely something that exists.

MIKE: That's always been difficult for me to understand. There seems to be more of a tolerance toward outside groups and sometimes within our own group.

MR. KEHKAHBAH: Yes.

MIKE: It seems to exist that way.

MR. KEHKAHBAH: Absolutely.

MIKE: That's one of the real problems with us in coming together and facing problems or issues and confronting those, and maybe resolving those issues when we can't, ourselves, get along as a group.

MR. KEHKAHBAH: Sure.

MIKE: What role do you think your parents played in developing your ability to either be more tolerant, or maybe less tolerant, of other races? Do you think you became more aware or more understanding of others based on your parental guidance?

MR. KEHKAHBAH: Because my mom is German and people that have never met her before know that she's different even though she's Caucasian. Because of her accent and her mannerisms and the way that she does things, she does things in a kind of what I call "old school" German kind of way. My father, being in the military and traveling a lot—at least when I think back on my younger days—didn't want to talk about it. But there was never much that was discussed as far as tribal affiliations or clans or anything of that nature. Maybe also it's because I never asked. I think that my best experiences from my father's family, the Indian side of my family, have been my grandmother and her brothers and sisters. They were all living together pretty much as a family group, all within maybe five or ten miles of each other. That was my best experience of an Indian

family living together, supporting each other, taking care of each other, and still to this day it's like I can hear their laughter still. They had the most incredible senses of humor of anybody. And I kind of miss that.

MIKE: You mentioned something about your father not saying much. My grandfather was kind of like that. But if you asked him a question about the culture, about the history, he'd sit down and talk to you at length. They had to wait for you to ask in order to judge whether you were interested enough, and they never put themselves in place to force this information on me. It was only if I asked, then they would sit down and explain. I guess that indicated to them I was more receptive and would learn. When you were talking about your father, you reminded me of my grandfather. He was very distant in some cases when it came to talking about the culture, but he never pushed it on me. But if I asked him, he would talk about anything that had to do with the culture. I wonder if that's a cultural characteristic.

MR. KEHKAHBAH: I can't really say. With my father, I do know that both of his parents, my grandmother and my grandfather, were both brought up in boarding schools and were punished for speaking their language or having anything to do with their culture.

MIKE: Yeah.

MR. KEHKAHBAH: As a matter of fact, my grandmother told me that when she was of an age to learn the Pottawatomie language fluently or to learn English, she said that her parents didn't want her to learn Pottawatomie, because they thought that it was a hindrance to her growing up in white society. I thought that was a shame, especially now since she's ninety-seven years old, and she's the only one left out of her family. So, unfortunately, sometimes I regret not asking my aunts and uncles more about their culture and their family and how they grew up and their language—to sit down and talk with them and maybe record them or take more pictures of them. But, at the time I was young and just didn't know.

MIKE: Yeah.

MR. KEHKAHBAH: And that was part of the way that I was brought up. I was kind of being a good kid and when the grownups are together, you be quiet and don't make any noise. Regrettably, I wish that maybe things were a little bit different. But it's up to me now to change that with my daughter and also with my family.

MIKE: All right. Very good. Thank you.

MR. KEHKAHBAH: Thank you.

**Leroy Kelly**

Tribe: Muscogee Creek  
Residence: Lawrence, Kansas  
Education: Haskell Institute, Lawrence, Kansas—Electrical Wiring and Service  
Occupation: Maintenance mechanic, Facilities Operations, Haskell Indian Nations  
University  
Military Service: United States Navy

MIKE: We're looking at how American Indians or Native Americans view African Americans or blacks, and it's a perspective as to how the community here in Lawrence views Indians, and what your perception is of how the white community here looks at blacks and Indians. My sense of it is that in the traditional way Indian people were more tolerant of other races of people. We've changed over the years. What's your take? Do you think Indian people who are closer to their traditional ways are less likely to show racism as opposed to those who are moving away from their traditions and culture?

MR. KELLY: I don't know. I can't really say that as far as somebody that has a strong traditional type of environment or upbringing, and I can't really speak for them or say how that they would view different races. I can only say that the way I was brought up—my family, my dad, and my mother—taught me. They didn't sit me down and say, "Don't like this person because of this; or don't like this person because of that." But I've learned from them through their actions and the way they treated other people, and I knew that's the way I should do it too. If you're not exposed to racism, then it's not going to be there.

I mean you have to be exposed to it and you have to see it. If you're not told any different, then that's the way you feel like it should be. The way I was brought up was not that way. We had white friends, or my family had white friends and black friends, and we interacted. We went to their homes. We sat down at their table and ate with them. When I grew up, got out of that home, that family, and was exposed to the real world, I took that with me and I would welcome anybody that wanted to talk with me. I sat down and talked to them with no problems—black, white, whatever race. Even in the different countries that I had gone to during my military service, the same thing. I accepted them. There were very few incidents where I saw this is not a very nice person. But I did see that too.

MIKE: Was there ever a case where anyone showed discrimination towards you?

MR. KELLY: Yeah. I had a first-class petty officer that was in charge of our squad. I didn't have to wonder about discrimination because it was. He really was strong. He didn't know I was Native American; he never took the time to say, "Who are you? Where are you from?" He just saw me, just like I said. He thought I was Filipino. He didn't like Filipinos. And he showed it. The only outstanding

incident that I remember during the service time was him having those feelings. He never took the time to say, "Who are you?" Everybody else knew who I was.

MIKE: Do you know what I found out in talking to other tribes? Plains tribes, particularly the Northern Plains tribes, did not seem to interact very often or, in fact, sometimes just totally never interacted with blacks. But in the Oklahoma tribes, particularly the Creeks, Seminoles, Cherokees, Choctaws, there seems to be a lot of interaction and acceptance. Did you ever find that?

MR. KELLY: In Oklahoma, there's a large population of black people. Also there are whole communities that are nothing but black, and Oklahoma is really bad about not interacting with the black people—the white people, that is. I know that the Indian people interacted with the blacks. I think they accepted them more readily than the white people in that community. Over the years my parents told me, "There was a time that, at dusk, the people of Henrietta had an ordinance, that if you're black, you need to go home. You cannot be here after 6 or 7 o'clock." I couldn't understand that.

I think they tolerated the Indians more readily than the blacks. But I know the Native Americans there, the Indians, the Creeks, tolerated them. We would go to dinner with them, and they'd come over our house and have dinner with us.

MIKE: Growing up with segregation particularly in the area I came from too, in Oklahoma, there was only one black family, and they weren't allowed to go to public school. But the three boys became very good football players, so they ended up putting them in school because they could play football. They didn't allow the oldest of the three boys to come to school until he was fourteen years old. Then they accelerated his movement through school. But that kind of thing wasn't tolerated.

Did it ever enter your mind when you went to defend this country, to know that there was inequality like that? One veteran said, "We just kind of come to accept our status in life."

MR. KELLY: I never really thought about it. But you could see the interactions with the white people and the black people that were in the service at the time. You could see that there was a little tension there. They were accepted, but they weren't totally accepted.

There was a Panamanian, and he was dark. He had the features of black people. He was a squad leader, and some of his people in that squad were saying that he was black and they were calling him that, and he got really irate. He says, "No. I am not black." I mean, he was black. He said, "I am Panamanian." And so he took real offense to that. I said to myself, "Why or what difference does it make?" The guy was knowledgeable. And he knew what he was doing. He was a good leader. But there's people that brought it to his attention that they felt like he

was black. He was, I guess, more aware of the racism and stuff because of the way he reacted to it.

MIKE: Did you ever feel sympathy for the situations that affected black people because of your own status as a minority?

MR. KELLY: I couldn't understand the situation that the black people were in because I felt like they had the same opportunities. But I didn't realize that maybe they didn't. Maybe they weren't given the opportunities to pursue what they really wanted to. I couldn't understand why, because the opportunities were there. I mean they were there for me. I took advantage of the ones that I was aware of. And I came out not richer—real prosperous or something, but I made a living for myself.

When I graduated from high school, Dad said the same night, "When you going to go to work? When are you going to be out on your own?" So Dad pushed me on out. And I'm better for it.

Somebody told me a long time ago when I was working, about the blacks. There was this construction guy that was looking for some labor and he got a couple of black guys out of poor homes. He went looking for them and found them, put them to work, and he went and picked this guy up every day, 6:30 in the morning, go to his home. If he was still in bed, he'd roust him out of bed and say, "It's time to go to work. Let's go." The guy wasn't aware of the responsibilities of having a job.

That is what the whole thing is about. He kept working with this guy and teaching him the responsibilities of having a job. He was just pushing a broom there for a while. But, the guy learned. And now he's upper management simply because the guy gave him the opportunity to learn. He felt like, if you're not exposed to work, how to work. And that was his whole point. He said, "These people didn't know how to work." They didn't know what a job was. So he taught him what it was all about. And the guy progressed. After he saw what was going on, he became upper management.

MIKE: But do you think part of that opportunity came with the time? Because you were in service, there was a big push for civil rights and the voting rights act came in and the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Voting Rights Act of '65, and then the black population in this country became very insistent and demanding of their rights.

MR. KELLY: We're token Indian and token black because companies at the time were required to hire minorities, a percentage. Is that what you're talking about?

MIKE: Yeah.

MR. KELLY: I think some of those opportunities arose out of that. That's why I say token Indian. Whenever I would go to work for a company, usually I was the only Indian there. There was only one company, a small company, run by a man that did a lot of business and everybody worked there was Indian. I don't think that had anything to do with that. I don't think he hired these people because of the minority issue, I think he hired them because he knew what they could do. These people were really skilled in what they did.

MIKE: Did you agree at the time with the demands that the black population were making? And, at the same time, Indian people began to demand a better opportunity as well.

MR. KELLY: Are you asking, do I feel like it was owed to me?

MIKE: Did you agree with the black attitude: "Give me my chance." Black Power was in. And the change of terms: "I'm not a Negro, I'm a black." As an Indian person, how did you perceive that?

MR. KELLY: I felt like if anybody needed those opportunities, the Native American needed it more than the black.

MIKE: Did it affect how you looked at black populations?

MR. KELLY: Not as a whole. Everybody makes their own way. It's individuals that make the group stand out. It depends on how strong the individuals are—how good the group is or how bad it is. The outcomes depend on the individuals' characters. If you got a strong character, then you can make things happen.

MIKE: What do you think of the Lawrence community and its relationship with the minority?

MR. KELLY: I think there's still some racism here. Not the whole community, but I think the small portion of the community makes it bad. But, on the whole, most people that I talk with are really interested in Native American. But I don't know what the hold up is, why they don't interact with the school out here better. There is a few people that do. I don't know what their goal is or what drives them to be active with school. I don't know what their motivation is. Whether it just makes them feel good, which is not real good motivation. I don't see the motivation. I don't understand what's driving them to help. I'm not putting those people down or anything.

MIKE: What kind of motive?

MR. KELLY: It's like there's a motive behind it. It's not, do I want to say honest?

MIKE: It's how they could benefit. Not so much how, but the school or the populations can benefit.

MR. KELLY: Yeah, that's kind of the way I look at it.

MIKE: In these interviews, Archie Hawkins made a comment that the term for a white person was—they say it “Wa-see-chu” now—but he said it was a different pronunciation at one time and it meant “one who takes.” And then Coach Tuckwin mentioned that the term for the Anglo or the white person in his language is—I can't remember how it's used in Pottawatomie—but it's “one who stabs you in the back.”

MR. KELLY: It's the same interpretation, I guess.

MIKE: Yeah. And how Indian people came to view non-Indians.

MR. KELLY: From everything that I've ever heard, Native Americans were open-minded. “How can I help you?” Whereas, the white people just used that against us, because we were not that way. Everybody helps everybody. If you need help, then I'm there.

MIKE: It sounds like in our discussion that you feel some mistrust from the people who want to come in here, and it's like you want to check out their motivations, or you want to understand their motivations better. It's almost like it's still like a replay of the past, not on such a large scale, but it's like, “What do they want?” It's not out of their kindness or, or it's not out of benevolence or a sense of wanting to really help. It's like you still have that sense about yourself. So it's interesting that mistrust is still there.

MR. KELLY: Yeah, it's there. I don't deny that. I wonder what peoples' motivations are. I can't pinpoint where that comes from.

MIKE: It's not historical, but it's just your own experiences?

MR. KELLY: Yeah. It makes me wonder sometimes. “Why are you helping me?” And sometimes I find out that there is a motive behind it. It's just an automatic response anymore, because somewhere along the line, I've been taken advantage of.

MIKE: That's true. I appreciate it. That's a good job.

MR. KELLY: Thank you.

**Stacey Leeds**

Tribe: Cherokee  
Residence: Tahlequah, Oklahoma  
Education: University of Oklahoma Law School  
Occupation: Cherokee Nation tribal judge and professor, University of Kansas Center for Indigenous Native Studies

MIKE: Stacey, how do you spell your last name?

STACEY: Leeds, L-E-E-D-S

MIKE: Please introduce yourself—your background, and your birth date.

STACEY: I'm Stacey Leeds, Cherokee Nation. My birth date is December 1, 1971. I grew up here in Oklahoma on the confluence of the Cherokee and Creek Nation boundaries in Muskogee, Oklahoma.

MIKE: Can you talk a little bit about your perception of what the historical interaction between blacks and Cherokees has been?

STACEY: Between blacks and Cherokees it's pretty similar to the history of the American South. A lot of Cherokee families had a significant amount of money before removal and adopting institutionalized slavery. Although it wasn't a large number of people who were slaveholders, some of our most prominent leaders and wealthier individuals in the tribe had slaves prior to what is known as the Trail of Tears. Then, when we were removed to Oklahoma, probably for about a thirty to forty-year period there, that type of institution was legal within our own tribal laws. So, that continued through the Civil War here in the Cherokee Nation.

MIKE: What may have been different or similar to how the Southern plantation owners enforced slavery as opposed to how the Cherokee enforced slavery? Is there a difference or some similarities in enforcement?

STACEY: I think that there are some stereotypes that you read that Cherokee people who were slave owners were nicer to their slaves than Southerners, but I don't know how much truth that has to it. One thing that I think is interesting is that, as far as language and culture, a lot of slaves, because they were living with Cherokee people as opposed to the frontier folks in this area, learned to speak the language and participated in some of the ceremonies. Although it's not pervasive today, there are still a few of the freedmen, which is the classification of today of the freed-slave descendants, who still speak the language and participate in ceremonies. That legacy continues and that makes, I think, the story of the slaves that were within the Cherokee Nation a lot different than what you see in the South.

MIKE: I think there is a misperception, too, because people now have heard that Cherokees and some of the other so-called Five Civilized Tribes had slaves, but it wasn't pervasive. In my understanding of it, it did not run throughout the tribe.

STACEY: Right. I think that that might be the same thing in the South, too. If you look at the number of people who actually were wealthy enough to own slaves, it was probably a minority in both situations. From what I understand in the Cherokee Nation, there were a few families that had large holdings of slaves, but the typical Cherokee person wouldn't have had enough money or wouldn't have participated in that institution.

MIKE: In your own personal life, had you had any interaction with blacks, or were there perceptions that you carried into some of these interactions?

STACEY: Where I grew up was in Muskogee, which is one of the cities that have similar concentrations of Indian and African Americans. So, in my lifetime, living in Muskogee and going to public schools there, I was constantly around people from different backgrounds. But, if you go out into other parts of the Cherokee Nation that are less urban than Muskogee, that would not be the typical interaction. For instance, if you were to go to Stillwell, probably one or two percent of the people, as opposed to thirty percent of the people, are of African ancestry. Growing up in Muskogee is a much different situation than a lot of Cherokees have in this area. It's just demographics.

MIKE: Do you think there's something in the traditional culture or tribal background that allows tribal members to see race differently?

STACEY: I think that a lot of the attitudes in the Cherokee Nation are not necessarily based on the culture of Cherokee culture, but on more assimilated practices of some of the Southern influence. I don't see that as culturally relevant. It's more assimilation. When I see prejudice and that type of thing, I don't think that there's any cultural basis in Cherokee tradition for racism per se.

MIKE: How about your personal affiliation with members of black communities? Have you ever had any personal relationships that allowed you to have friends?

STACEY: Yeah. Growing up in Muskogee and having different demographics. I was an athlete growing up and I played basketball, and a lot of my teammates were black. I think that I had access to really get to know people on a level that a lot of Cherokee people that lived in the smaller towns don't. That's just a result of circumstance.

MIKE: I spoke to Mr. Daugherty just a bit ago. In his performing in athletic fields, he said he felt more comfortable associating with blacks as opposed to Anglos.

STACEY: I think that that's very true. This tells me, from a cultural standpoint, there is no racism associated there. It's more like a comfort level with people who are also of color or other minorities. I found that to be the case in college and in high school. It was very easy to make friends.

MIKE: Why do you think that comfort level exists?

STACEY: I don't know if it's just a shared history of feeling like you're a minority or feeling that you're not part of the mainstream or something along those lines. But I've seen that from the time I first started playing basketball when I was in the third grade. Most third graders in other communities are not going to have that type of interaction, but I very easily made friends with my black teammates.

MIKE: Did you ever experience, personally, any racial discrimination? Did you ever see any black friends experience it? When was the first time you actually recognized that blacks were treated differently as well?

STACEY: It wouldn't have been in the grade school setting, but probably at the junior high level, around thirteen or fourteen years old. Because I'm so light skinned and I'm mixed race, non-Indian people—Caucasians—tend to have some comfort level that they can say things in front of me and assume that it's okay to say. At that point, maybe thirteen or fourteen, I would hear people make derogatory comments, and I was floored that they thought that they could say it around me (laughter). But that's when it started happening, but never in early childhood.

MIKE: How did you come to terms with that or understanding in yourself how people can be separated or shown a level of discrimination?

STACEY: I can't imagine that it's something organic that someone would have to themselves. It has to be a taught behavior. It has to come from their family acting that way towards people. I don't think that it's ever an innate thing that someone would automatically do. But they're following or mimicking what they see the adults do.

MIKE: How about the situation that's becoming controversial with the other members of the Cherokee Nation, that people who are looking from outside would perceive the Cherokee as being racist? Can you explain what that situation is and how people could come to that decision or that feeling?

STACEY: Stereotypically speaking, when the outside from other Indian communities or the outside in general look at the people in the Cherokee Nation, there's a lot of people in Cherokee Nation who are mixed blood and they look like me. There's a hard time understanding that you would have a Cherokee-by-blood requirement for citizenship, where you will allow people who are mixed race and look white to be Indians, but you won't allow other people to be Indians. I think

the discrepancy comes from the way the enrollment process historically took place.

The Dawes Rolls, where we base our citizenship now, separated freedmen on one list, Cherokee by blood on one list, Delawares and Shawnees on a separate list, and for the freedmen, even if they happened to be Cherokee by blood, if they looked black, most of the time they got put on this other list.

Many of the people who support the freedmen would say that a lot of the freedmen could prove ancestries similar to what I have—an eighth, a quarter, or something like that—and they're not allowed to do so because it wasn't listed on the Dawes Rolls at that time. The people who want to use those Dawes Rolls just to prove Cherokee by blood are not necessarily taking into consideration that some of the freedmen can prove Cherokee blood, but not by that document. So, it's partially an outgrowth of how that was historically put down on the list that causes some of the confusion, I think.

The other problem that I think maybe outside observers would have without knowing the history is that Cherokee Nation has other Indians of other tribes that are citizens of our nation. The Delaware and the Shawnee were settled inside our territory and became citizens of our nation. It seems that the movement to exclude the freedmen was not accompanied by an exclusion of Delaware or Shawnee. There's really a distinction between Indian versus other, and that's where the perception of racism from the outside comes. We were okay with that camp that wants to exclude the freedmen, and we're okay keeping Indians of other tribes, but some level of Indian blood needing to be required for citizenship.

MIKE: How about your personal feelings on that?

STACEY: It's difficult for me to speak about my personal feelings, because I sat on this court, and I just was one of the judges who wrote the decision. So, I'd rather not.

MIKE: Do you think that this could lead to an internal tribal situation that could divide the tribe?

STACEY: I think that we're starting to see some of that play out a little bit right now. I understand that there's some movement to have some petitions to put this on an early ballot. Our tribal council has, within the last month, passed a resolution where, during the next general election, it will be placed on the ballot of whether a by-blood requirement will be necessary. So, that issue is very squarely before us right now, and being it a political season and we're within one year of an election, there will be people out campaigning one way or the other to include or exclude the freedmen.

MIKE: Do you think that could lead to some division or maybe even animosity toward blacks within the tribe?

STACEY: I think that it could. I think that it raises an issue that people just haven't thought about for a while—out of sight, out of mind. Now that it's in the forefront, I think that some of the arguments that are being made to exclude them could have some potential spillover effect. If the freedmen remain part of our tribe, then health-care dollars and things like that will be diminished. Not that those arguments, themselves, are racist, but it starts to pit people against others for terms of resources.

MIKE: That would be very prominent. One of my questions was, Have blacks played prominent roles within the tribe? This is playing a prominent role, but in a way it's a little divisive.

STACEY: In the short term, there haven't been prominent recognized leaders from the freedmen, because, prior to that decision that the court just entered in March, they were effectively disenfranchised for about twenty-three years. So, during that time period, they couldn't have really participated in the political process. But, in the 1890s, there were three or four freedmen who sat on the tribal council. So, at one time, they were elected officials of the tribe.

MIKE: And they could vote?

STACEY: And they could vote. Under our new constitution, they would never be able to sit on the tribal council, nor would a Shawnee and a Delaware, because the new constitutions in this century all require that a person be Cherokee by blood to sit on the tribal council. So, they could vote, exercise other political ways, but just not sit in office.

MIKE: I asked Judge Moore about the historical connection that freedmen had with the Creeks, and his reaction was that this division or these decisions really emanate from the federal government. It's trying to distinguish certain races of people and maintaining certain roles, and then actually forcing the Creeks and the Cherokees and others to create freedman rolls.

STACEY: Right.

MIKE: It was like what occurred after the Civil War in franchising and, also, as punishment, too, to the tribes who supported the Confederacy. How do you feel about that?

STACEY: I don't know. Because the federal government did step in and play a role, we didn't get to see how our own government would have handled that. In, I think, 1863 our tribal council did abolish slavery as a tribal law. Whether that

would have been followed with citizenship, we'll never know because we were never given that opportunity.

One of the arguments that's made for the disenfranchisement of freedmen now is that that treaty that mentions that they will get citizenship within the nation was forced on the Cherokee people, and the Cherokee people didn't get to decide. But we amended our own constitution to put the citizenship provision in there, and probably there was some political pressure. But, out of the five tribes, the Chickasaws never did that. They signed the treaty and then they never amended their own tribal law or made it part of their body of law.

There were some affirmative actions by our government and our people to include them; it wasn't just a unilateral federal action. But clearly there were some political pressures there in the same way that there would have been with the Southern states.

MIKE: What do you think created the historical cooperation between the two races, two groups of people, and then all of a sudden it changes? To what do you attribute that change of attitude? You mentioned that twenty-three years ago, they were disenfranchised. Why allow them participation and then disenfranchise them?

STACEY: I don't know. I don't know that it's accurate to say that it was an immediate reaction. The Cherokee Nation government, although we existed in name, didn't really function for about thirty or forty years, well into the 1950s, due to federal circumstances. There wasn't much of a government to have participated in during that time.

Then there were several lawsuits dealing with judgment funds, where a group of freedmen had sued to get a court-of-claims settlement, their percentage of it. At that time, in the 1960s, the Cherokee Nation officials fought their inclusion.

There had been strings of resistance consistently, but there had also been efforts by other people to include them. Perhaps instead of just a change of circumstance, maybe this is something that has never fully been resolved in our community since day one.

MIKE: I guess I saw it as more of an abrupt change caused by maybe generational influences.

STACEY: I think that it has more to do with the changes as a tribal government that we've gone through during this time period. It wasn't until the 1970s, '80s and '90s that we came to our own as a government again. So, those issues of citizenship and sovereignty are bound to come back up again.

It's interesting because there's the racial dynamic of black, white, Indian, but it's not dissimilar to what a lot of other tribes go through when they have debates about blood quantum. I think it's just part of the natural progression of deciding who we are as a people.

MIKE: Can you see any similarities between the relationship that blacks have had with the larger society and the relationship that Indian people have had? Some people say there are similarities in the way they were treated, but you can also say that there is an elemental difference of sovereignty and the idea of a nation? Can you say are there similarities and that the tribal nations, then, have a special status as opposed to blacks?

STACEY: Right. I think the thing that makes it more difficult with the Cherokee situation is that most tribes are sovereign that are truly made up of people that have a common ancestry. Their debates are about just how much of that common ancestry does one need to maintain to claim tribal membership.

With our history of slavery and with our history of having other tribes as enrolled members, we also had legal citizens who were intermarried whites in our nation, and there's a Dawes Roll's list of intermarried whites as well. Very early on, unlike other Indian nations, we were more of a confederacy or republic of different people, not just Indians. And, yes, our basis in law and sovereignty come from the fact that we're an Indian nation.

But, at least since the 1830s, we've been very different than any Indian nation per se, because we have embraced other groups of people. And we made it legal in, I think, the early 1850s that we recognize as legal citizens the spouses who intermarry. Where we still have a defined territory, I think we viewed ourselves in the same way that the state of Oklahoma or Arkansas would view themselves, as a sovereign, not just as a collection of families. So, there's something very different between who is culturally or racially Cherokee versus who is legally Cherokee.

I don't know if that really gets to the heart of your question, but it's a difficult one.

MIKE: You mentioned intermarriage, but can you be more specific in terms of how you perceive intermarriage, Cherokee-black intermarriage situations if you were to take a look at those today?

STACEY: That's a good point and I visited with other people about this in the past. You can talk about whether people are racists or not, or whether they get along. But the real tell-tale sign is who intermarries with each other. That really tells the truth. Although there is some intermarriage, I don't see a lot of intermarriage with black spouses in this community. I don't think that it's frowned on per se, the way that it might have been in the 1930s or '20s, but it's not

frequent in my experience. But it's very frequent that Indians marry other Indians or white people.

MIKE: Today, our young people have gotten away from the language, ceremonies, and following some of the values that our elders have taught us and that are related to the cultural integrity of a nation or a tribal group. It seems that young people are gravitating toward influences that are more related to the black community. Do you think our tribal cultures are weakening, and that the young people are looking for something to identify with?

STACEY: I think that that might be it. The other thing is our young people are not isolated in tribal communities the way that their grandparents were. They're in public schools, and they're going to school with people from all different types of backgrounds. Earlier, I said that I got along with my black teammates quicker than I did other people. Maybe they identify with people in their class and then they take on other types of cultures because there's more of a comfort level than there is in other parts of society.

My pet theory is that in some way they know that some of the rap music and clothes upset the mainstream. For some of our youngsters, that's their way of making a statement, and they can identify with that as being something either cooler than or different than what they're supposed to be.

I think it's just more clashing of a bunch of cultures together, and people are growing up in a more multicultural society. If you look at our grandparents or people of that age, they tended to go to a smaller school and there were more Indians, mostly just Indians, and maybe a few white people. They went to more rural schools where they didn't have exposure to different cultures except for their own and maybe their neighbors.

MIKE: Thank you.

**Ruben Littlehead**  
**Interviewed by Anna Sarcia and Mike Tosee**

Tribe: Northern Cheyenne  
Residence: Lawrence, Kansas  
Education: master's degree student, University of Kansas Center for Indigenous Studies Program  
Occupation: Graduate student, University of Kansas

ANNA: My name is Anna Sarcia, and the person we're interviewing is Ruben Littlehead. We are in Haskell Library in Lawrence, Kansas, and it is the 11th of October, 2005. Please state your name.

RUBEN: My name is Ruben Littlehead.

ANNA: And your birth date?

RUBEN: 12/20/74. Lame Deer, Montana.

ANNA: Where did you grow up?

RUBEN: I grew up both in Ashland and Lame Deer. Mostly Lame Deer though.

ANNA: What belief system were you raised with and what belief system do you use now?

RUBEN: I was raised traditional through my grandma in the early years, and then my dad and mom split up and I moved with my dad. He raised me, not really traditional. He taught me a lot of my language. But my grandma was real traditional, and that's who I learned a lot of stuff from, too, over in Ashland.

But I went to a public school, off-reservation school, so I had both off-reservation education and on.

ANNA: What do you practice now?

RUBEN: Practice now? What do I believe in?

ANNA: Yes.

RUBEN: I practice traditional beliefs. I'm part of the Native American Church, too.

ANNA: How has your belief system influenced how you feel about other groups of people or other races?

RUBEN: By traditional beliefs, I mean just being traditional and being Northern Cheyenne, you're open. You respect others. You're not judgmental or anything, you're open and you have to respect it.

ANNA: What do you think of the federal government's policy for boarding schools?

RUBEN: When it first started, I think it must have been hard on the families to let go of their little ones and then for the little ones to be away from their families for a long time. It must have been very hard. But I think the children that went to boarding schools, a lot of them still retained their language, maybe secretly or they sneaked out and did their own ceremonies, from what I've read about.

My mom went to boarding school in high school. She went to Flandreau. But she came back with a different attitude. It wasn't like a long time ago, but she met a lot of friends, she met a lot of people there. She had a lot of opportunities, probably more than on the rez. She did a lot of things, I know, and she wanted to send me to a boarding school if things would have worked out, if I would have stayed with her. But I went with my dad and stayed there on the rez.

But, in general, I think the boarding-school era really hurt a lot of tribes as far as losing part of their cultural identity, losing a lot of their language mainly, and a lot of ceremonial knowledge because there was a whole generation there that might have been skipped.

ANNA: Do you think that the boarding-school experience affected the Native Americans' view of other races or other groups of people?

RUBEN: I think that of what you read about—stuff that's not in the history books, in the mainstream classroom, stuff that you read about in college—that certain professors are able to research and find out some information. In a lot of those boarding schools, there was abuse done to the kids such as physical abuse, like mental abuse, and often sexual abuse. So, I think it gave a really different perspective on what they were trying to do. But some of the teachers and priests and different people, what they've done, there are stories that are now coming out. They're now surfacing and I think it gives a mixed feeling towards the superiors.

ANNA: What does your tribe specifically teach about the treatment of other groups of people? Or is it just basically what your belief system says?

RUBEN: I'm not sure I understand your question.

ANNA: What does your tribe believe about other groups of people? How to treat other races?

RUBEN: Very open, very respectful. Cheyenne people are always at peace. We're a peace tribe and we've always sought peace. But if it came down to it, you know we've always fought for what we believed in as well.

But I know there are a lot of other races. There's a lot of other intertribal marriages on our rez now. We have a real small rez, so it's hard not to keep it all within the tribe. But we're always very open, very respectful to other tribes. Like the Sioux, we're very closely allied with the Sioux, Oglala Sioux, and different bands of the Sioux, and also the Arapaho from Wyoming. We understand that you've got to get along and you've got to work together to do things to get things done.

ANNA: How do you feel personally about interracial marriage? I know that you said that is on your reservation.

RUBEN: Yeah. I come from a small tribe, and you know somewhere along the lineage everybody is related. There was different ways they either traded or they stole women or whatever.

But, yeah, our rez is small. When I came down here to Haskell, I met my wife here and she's a Navajo. Now our children are half Navajo and half Cheyenne. But I know back home there's a lot of interracial marriages with the Sioux, and there's a lot of Cheyennes that live down in Pine Ridge area. There's a lot of Cheyennes that live in Wyoming, and vice versa.

ANNA: Do you think that American Indians are racist toward other groups of people?

RUBEN: I don't think they are. When they feel racism toward them, I don't think Indian people can help but be just neutral and happy, because they can sense it. Like if they walk into a store or somebody is giving them a different treatment. People can pick up vibes. So, I think if it's happening to Indian people, then I think it's just kind of natural that they know it's there. But, for the most part, I think Indian people just keep it to themselves—unless it's forced on them, unless it's physically or directly toward them, spoken out loud. Then I think Indian people can come back pretty loud, too.

ANNA: Have you experienced racism?

RUBEN: Yes, I have I've experienced it. When I first went to Coal Strip. I came from LaBrea, which was an Indian school there in Ashland, and then when I first went to Coal Strip—it's about twenty miles off the reservation, I was in sixth grade. There were already Indians there, but when I first got there, the first couple of weeks, there were some older guys saying a lot of racist stuff towards me. But I didn't really let it bother me.

And, then, playing basketball. When we're up there, we played such teams as Miles City, Forsythe, different teams there that are all-white schools, and we'd always get a lot of racist remarks from their crowd. So, I grew up with it. But I've learned it doesn't really gain anything to come back at it. The best thing you can do is to just try not to lower your level and just try to be a better person.

ANNA: Have you ever experienced racism towards African Americans from Native Americans, or vice versa?

RUBEN: Like Indians towards blacks? Yeah, I guess there's been some times. I don't know if I should go that personal.

ANNA: (Laughter).

RUBEN: Playing ball a lot of times, there's some black boys back home there, but they're half Cheyenne and they're mixed, and there's always little remarks coming across. Maybe they're not racist remarks, but like stereotypes or something that lead into teasing. That kind of leads into a little racial teasing. But I don't think it's ever harmful, though. I don't think it's really bad. But, if you take a step back and look at it, they're kind of racial remarks. But I think it's all in good humor.

ANNA: If you came home with an African American girlfriend, what would your family or the elders in your family, what would they say?

RUBEN: If I came home with Halle Berry, they probably wouldn't say anything.

ANNA: (Laughter).

RUBEN: Because she's rich, Hey! If I did, I don't think it would really matter. That's a good question.

ANNA: What if your daughter, if you had a daughter, if she came home with an African American boyfriend?

RUBEN: I'd probably have to find out what kind of values they have, and what do they believe in as far as that. If he's going to be with my daughter, then I'd have to find out what kind of person they are. If they needed some values, I would probably teach them where I come from and I was raised. Hey, you're putting some years on me here.

ANNA: (Laughter).

RUBEN: Making me think I have a daughter.

ANNA: Okay, I'll go back to the questions. What do you think of the Civil Rights Movement and its effect on America?

RUBEN: I think it helped out a little bit. It brought some awareness out on some racial issues, but I don't think it ended it all. There's always going to be racism there, and there's always going to be discrimination—even if everybody says it's ended, it's there.

ANNA: Do you think that American Indian people benefited from the Civil Rights Movement?

RUBEN: Yes and no. I think they benefited a lot when AIM started, and I think that was a little bit after the Civil Rights. I think the more awareness and pride of being Native American really benefited with the AIM era. Civil Rights was there, but that was a lot more political. With this Civil Rights era, I think they benefited somewhat, but not as much.

ANNA: How do you feel about the way the federal government has treated American Indians?

RUBEN: From day one? Not good. I think the federal government used the Indian. I think they took advantage of the American Indian, and I don't think they've ever apologized. I don't think they've ever really compensated. We got our reservations and we got some treaties that are still in effect. There are different programs, IHS, stuff like that. But I think, in general, what the federal government did with the American Indian is really bad, just from what I've learned through classes and reading. And that side of history is never taught in the mainstream public. They don't really understand that.

But I'm very proud to be American Indian, because we survived for so long and we're still here. We're still living in America, under this federal government, though. I mean, there's so much we can do and say. But I would rate it bad, the condition of what American Indians got.

ANNA: How about the way the federal government has treated African Americans?

RUBEN: In the beginning, they were slaves when they first came over here and that was pretty harsh. There was a lot of racial tension there with blacks and whites. Since then, after they became free, I think they've treated them more equally than Indians. Probably because Indians have always fought back and they've always fought hard. And I think the black race was easier to adjust to the white society, and I don't think the blacks got it as hard as the Indians.

But I think that the federal government treated them probably the same. The black people learned a lot more from the white race and adjusted to it faster.

ANNA: Have you ever heard of the Buffalo Soldiers who worked for the military?

RUBEN: Yeah.

ANNA: What do you think of their role in American Indian history?

RUBEN: I think they probably really didn't understand Indian people or Indian culture either. At that point they were just probably trying to earn some kind of respect from the government and all the armies. I think their role was to go out and get Indian people, too, and basically help the federal government. Maybe they didn't understand our history or what was going on. But being a person of color, too, maybe if they would have understood more of what the Indian stood for and what was really going on, maybe they would have helped out the other side rather than what they were working for.

ANNA: Do you think that the treatment of American Indians by the federal government has affected the way the general public feels about Indians?

RUBEN: Yeah. I just think there's a lot of history untold. The only stuff was told led to the American Indians being the bad guy, the villains. I think a lot of the other side of the story wasn't told, so the general public only heard half the story. And the part that they do hear, it's all negativity. There's more to it, and the general public don't get to hear that.

ANNA: Have African Americans been a part of your tribe in the past?

RUBEN: There's a couple; maybe I don't know number-wise. But I know there's a few on our rez that are half, but there's not very many.

ANNA: In your tribe have other races been adopted members?

RUBEN: Native people or other tribes, other Indian tribes? I know there was a Japanese doctor that worked for IHS, Indian Health Service. He was in Lame Deer and he married a Cheyenne woman, and they have four boys and they're all half-Japanese, half-Cheyenne. But other than that I don't think, adopted-wise, I think just maybe other Indian tribes, different people from different tribes, got adopted in.

ANNA: Do you recall your first encounter with an African American? Your first interaction?

RUBEN: No, I don't know. Maybe when I went to Coal Strip. There was a black family that lived there. Their dad worked at the coal plant there I went to school with them.

ANNA: Have you had any personal experiences with African Americans?

RUBEN: What do you mean?

ANNA: Well, dating? Friends? Friends of the family?

RUBEN: Oh, yeah. I've got a lot of friends. I've got a lot of friends that are African Americans. Never dated one. Maybe just like the movie stars now, the hot-looking movie stars it's just different. You know the singers? Beyonce, different people like that. They're pretty, but I never really had an encounter. I've never been with a black person, but I have a lot of friends. I play a lot of ball, especially when I play ball here at Haskell, and I went out to St. Mary, I played with a lot of blacks. They're cool. They really are curious about Indian culture. They ask a lot of questions and, for the most part, they're real respectful. They just kind of want to know things; they're kind of nosy. Not really nosy, but just curious, I guess. But they're good ball players.

ANNA: Do you recall your parents or grandparents or relatives making reference to any experiences that they've had with African Americans?

RUBEN: I do and, for this interview, I was thinking about it. My grandma, the one that I grew up with in early years when I was younger, her name is Thelma, she always said there was a time where somebody was saying, either it was my mom or maybe my older brother, somebody was talking about blacks and how they were the same as Indian people. "They're the same," but my grandma stepped in and said, "No, they're not the same. They're not the same." And I think she was referring to the blacks getting a lot of hard treatment, too. But so did the Indians. But, as far as being the same, I think Indians fought for different reasons and Indians have our own culture, our own language, traditions, and what we believe in. Our values are different. So, I think she meant different by that.

ANNA: What do you feel has shaped your views in perspectives about African Americans?

RUBEN: I would say black people have their own identity, too. And, then over the course of the years, they get much stronger in the media. In the past decade or so, or the last two decades, they've taken over a lot. I think they've taken over a lot of the music. Sports. There's just a lot out there.

But, then again, there's a lot in urban settings, too, that are real poor, too. But I think they have their own way that appeals to the younger generation. Those that really don't know their own identity can grasp onto a black culture I don't even think it's a culture, but it's just kind of a personality. The way they dress, the way they talk, the way that today's music influences a lot of people. But I respect what they're doing. I think there are a lot of other negative influences out there and it's hard to identify them.

But I think that they're growing fast. There are a lot of interracial couples now, blacks and whites, blacks and Indians. But now, being American Indian is growing, too. I think a lot more Indian people are grasping on to Indian culture and trying to learn their Indian ways. I think we're coming behind them. We're still struggling, but we're coming slowly along.

I think black people and Indian people will always be different. The only thing that really shaped my views about them was probably playing sports with them. Being athletic, playing basketball and traveling, I think that really introduced me to a lot of black people and learning bits and pieces from them here and there.

MIKE: I have a couple of questions. What are some stereotypes that you think you hold for blacks—something that would be like the Indian stereotype: we drink too much, we're lazy. Do you think you hold any stereotypical views of blacks that you could attribute, say when you mentioned athletics?

RUBEN: Growing up on the rez, I always wanted to dunk. I always wanted to dunk and slam. I filled out later on. But, in high school, I always tried hard and I could never really get up. I don't know if it's a stereotype, it might be a proven fact, because black people can jump. They could jump and they really didn't have to work out much. But, man, they can jump and they can dunk. So, I always thought maybe they just had a natural gift or extra muscle or extra bone. People talk about that. But I think all it led me to do was just to work harder. And I said, "Man, I'm going to prove it wrong," and I practiced and I trained myself. And, then, one day I could dunk. But I always had that stereotype that black people are just natural flyers. A lot of times it's true, but a lot of times it's not. There's a lot out there that can't jump either.

Another stereotype? The only one I can think of was just the way they play ball and stuff. But there are Indian boys back home that just have natural talent, too, and a lot of them are high flyers, too. When we first started traveling out of state and going to different open tournaments, we'd all play. I had an older cousin named Steven and we were in this tournament in Pendleton, Oregon, and there were some brothers out there playing. That was my first really hard competition with them and, man, they were talking smack out there, pushing me around and stuff. It really kind of froze me up. Then, Steven called me over, he said, "Hey, man, play your game." I remember thinking, "Man, these guys are just way better athletes than me." They're way better athletes, but I think Indian people are just as good or maybe even better.

MIKE: In interracial relationships between blacks and Indians, why do you think that there are more female and black male relationships as opposed to Indian and black female relationships? You see more Indian females with black males. Why do you think that exists?

RUBEN: I think it has to do a lot with Indian people or Indian men. I think a lot of Indian men were raised to be more respectful and more kind of quiet, and they weren't as aggressive. I think Indian men are more shy, even the loud ones. But, when it comes down to date or court an Indian woman, they're more held back. A black guy or a black person, I know they're real aggressive. They're aggressive and they're outspoken. They ain't scared to say certain stuff. And, Indian women want to be approached, too, but an Indian man won't really approach an Indian woman. Either they'll wait for a while or they'll try to time it just right. Whereas a black guy can get in there and just be aggressive and just be out for it and doesn't really have to hide behind anything, I think he's able to go after her, whereas the Indian man is kind of laid back. He might be all that with his friends, but when it gets down to one on one, I think Indian men are raised like that.

MIKE: So, a black male can snag quicker than an Indian male because of approach?

RUBEN: I think so. Unless there's alcohol involved. Alcohol helps out Indian men as far as giving them that courage, whereas if they were sober, they wouldn't have that courage there. The black guy has that courage or that mentality and that openness and aggressiveness that he could go out and do it

MIKE: Which approach are you going to teach your son, Xavier? To be aggressive or to be subdued?

RUBEN: I would say I'm going to teach him to be aggressive about everything. Not only concerning women. I want him to be aggressive when he studies, in his athletics, and doing anything he does. If it's a foot race or a spelling-bee contest, I want him to be aggressive and do the best he can.

MIKE: Anna posed this question, but I'd like to reverse it because you can relate, you have a son. What if your son brought a black woman home? What if Xavier brought a black woman home one day? How would Papa Ruben look at it?

RUBEN: How would I look at it? I don't know. I'd probably get to know her and get to know him, and see and try to find out if they're happy together. I think I would encourage him when he was younger to be with an Indian person, and I think the more education he knows as a younger person, I don't think it would happen. But, if it did happen, maybe as long as she was enrolled in the Mashintucket Pequot tribe, if she gets those big per capita going, it might be all right (laughter). I'd probably just look at the happiness of my boy, if that's what he wanted.

MIKE: You think your hesitation is caused by maybe an element of racism?

RUBEN: Maybe. I don't know. I'm just trying to visualize it and how would I put myself. He's seven years old now, so you figure another maybe nine, ten years

from now, he might start bringing women home. And, so, I'm thinking I got now until then to just let him know that Indian people are small in numbers. But he's his own self and makes his own choices, too. I really can't step in and say who or what he's supposed to do or who or what he's supposed to be with. So, I don't think it's a hesitation of racism. I was trying to visualize it, I guess.

MIKE: A very good interview.

ANNA: Thank you.

RUBEN: All right.

**Celia Mora**  
**Interviewed by Jana Vannoy, Anna Sarcia, and Mike Tosee**

Tribe: Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa  
Residence: Lawrence, Kansas  
Education: Haskell Indian Nations University student working toward completion of an associate of arts degree.  
Occupation: Student and part-time employment NSC Pearson

JANA: My name is Jana Vannoy. It is October 11, 2005, and we are interviewing Celia Mora at the Haskell Library.

Can you please state your name and tell me a little bit about yourself?

CELIA: My name is Celia Mora. I was born in California, but raised in North Dakota on the Turtle Mountain Indian Reservation.

JANA: When were you born? What's your birth date?

CELIA: Can I lie? I will be twenty-nine on October 23rd.

JANA: You were born in California and grew up in North Dakota? When did you move to North Dakota?

CELIA: Right after I was born.

JANA: So, you really didn't spend any time in California?

CELIA: No. My grandparents raised me.

JANA: What type of belief system were you raised with and what belief system do you currently practice?

CELIA: I was raised in Assembly of God Church. Pentecostal. Right now, I'm basically not practicing anything, just working and school. That's about it.

JANA: Do you still feel ties to the Assembly of God community?

CELIA: Yeah, I do. It's kind of strange. Every once in a while, when my parents are back, I'll go to church with them. My mom kind of pressures us to go, and I fight it (laughter). I fight it all the time, but I end up giving in some times and going. Sometimes I actually even miss it, because sometimes there's a peace there that you find that you need every once in a while.

JANA: How long have you lived in Lawrence?

CELIA: Which times? I think I came here in 2002. My sister, Anna, moved down here and she cried for me to come down.

JANA: Do you ever go to church with her?

CELIA: Only if my nephew is singing or she's singing. Then, yeah, I'll go. She'll con me into it. She's pretty much like that (laughter).

JANA: How have your belief systems influenced you and how you feel about other groups of people, other races?

CELIA: You're talking religious-wise?

JANA: The belief and values and morals that you were raised with. But religion is also an influence in that.

CELIA: My grandparents raised me. We didn't really look towards race as a thing. But, of course, I grew up on a reservation where there was nothing but Native Americans, and so I never really thought about race in any other ways until I left the reservation and experienced stuff outside the reservation. But we had a youth group leader who was black, and it wasn't like race was a pretty big thing on the reservation. We never really encountered it too much. My grandparents taught us to respect everybody as equals.

JANA: What reservation did you grow up on?

CELIA: Turtle Mountain Indian Reservation, Belcourt.

JANA: Were there a lot of African Americans on your reservations? You said the youth director was black?

CELIA: Yeah. He came from Washington, DC. He and his wife were going to our church and then he moved down to be with her. He was our youth-group leader for a couple of years. Also, we had a teacher, Mr. Dixon, who was black. He was the wrestling coach, as well as the band leader and music teacher. But, there wasn't really too many African American people living on the reservation that we encountered.

JANA: Was there very much intermarrying of African Americans and American Indians?

CELIA: The only intermarriage that I've seen on the reservation was Mr. Dixon and Mrs. Dixon. Other than that, I didn't really see too many intermarriages on the reservation.

JANA: How do you feel about intermarriage?

CELIA: I'm all for it (laughter). I guess you could say intermarriages, if you're speaking regarding black and Native or white and Native, because I was married to a white man living on the reservation for a while. I don't see it as a big thing at all.

JANA: How long were you married?

CELIA: Three horrible years (laughter). The marriage wasn't too good, not at all.

JANA: Was it somebody that you met in North Dakota on the reservation?

CELIA: Not on the reservation. I grew up kind of wild and running around. I dropped out of school, and so I decided to go to Job Corp. My grandfather gave me the option to go to Job Corps and, when I got there, I started dating a guy. I dated Mexicans, whites, blacks, and then I left with my ex-husband. Then, probably a year later we got married, or were living together.

JANA: Do you think that this experience has influenced your views of other groups of people?

CELIA: My marriage?

JANA: Your experience with your husband?

CELIA: Yeah, because it wasn't a very good marriage. He used to hit me a lot and a lot of mental abuse that I took from him. So, it played a big part in my views. But I try not to get that as a focus. I try to get to know the person as an individual themselves, and not judge what has happened to me. But, sometimes, it does kind of play a factor. I'm not going to lie about it. That's another reason why I probably tend to stick to dating black men (laughter).

JANA: Do you think that this experience has affected any stereotypes that you have of white men as opposed to black men?

CELIA: No, not really, because I've dated quite different white men, and they're their own individual-type personalities. Because my ex-husband and my first boyfriend were totally different, just absolutely different. So, I can't really just base a guy on my ex-husband. Sometimes there's that thought of him thinking lower of me because I'm Native, and that's a lot of times what my ex-husband put into my mind. But I try not to let that pre-judge my way of thinking about others. I just have this thing that all men are liars—it doesn't matter what race (laughter).

JANA: Have you experienced discrimination yourself?

CELIA: Yeah, I have when I was growing up. I grew up kind of wild, so I was in and out of foster homes, and once they took me off the reservation and down to Missouri. I lived with a foster family there for about seven or eight months. I'd been away from the reservation, so this was my first experience of being off the reservation. I didn't quite understand the full impact of it when it happened.

When I went to class, I never really paid attention to how they separated people. But one day, I went into the gym and we were having pep rally, I went to go sit with the juniors. A teacher stopped me and said, "No. Your kind sits over there." I said, "What do you mean?" I looked over and I saw blacks, Mexicans, Asians, all sitting in one group over in the corner, and it shocked me. I just went and sat over there. I didn't really know what to say; I'd never experienced it. I was hurt, really hurt. When I got back to the house, I tried to talk with my stepfamily about it, but they were, "Oh, don't let it get to you. Don't let it bother you." Then, a lot of people at the school when I went back, they sat down at the table with me and they said, "Don't let them get to you, because they're going to try you over and over again in here. But I couldn't take it, so I left.

I went back to the reservation and it was a pretty big shock, because then I started to notice everything around me. I started to notice how they did separate people and I couldn't understand it. I grew up on a reservation that didn't separate someone because they're a lighter or darker color from you.

JANA: How does your tribe feel about other racial groups? Have they adopted any into the tribe?

CELIA: I see that they do very well. Because, like Mr. Dixon, he's very well known on the reservation and they love him. His kids are mixed and they are very well accepted into the tribe. So, I don't see that there is a problem not accepting of African Americans or any other race. Me and my sister were Philipino Asian. We've never had a problem with someone calling us bad names because we're Asian on the rez. They're pretty accepting.

JANA: So, this segregation that you experienced at the school was your first experience like that?

CELIA: Yeah. But it helped me understand, because I knew I was not going to be staying on the reservation the rest of my life. I didn't want to. I wanted to go out and do other things. So, it gave me an opportunity to prepare myself to go out in case something was to happen like that again. I wasn't in such shock since it happened before. I get very offended when people talk about different races. That really gets on me, and it doesn't even matter what race it is. It's just something you shouldn't say. To me, it's ignorant when it comes out of their mouth and it frustrates me.

JANA: How old were you when that happened?

CELIA: I think I'd just turned seventeen.

JANA: Have you had any experiences like that since?

CELIA: If I did, it probably never stood out as much as that one has. There are times where people get upset and they just say stupid things, individuals one on one. But it's never really played a big impact since that shocked me so much.

On the reservation, we look to our adults for guidance and wisdom. And, for a teacher to tell me that I'm not the type of person that should be allowed to sit over in this area, it blew me away. Because our elders are our special people on the reservation. They're there to guide us and help us grow. But, I guess stepping off the rez, there are different experiences out there at times that you run into, different circumstances, and I think it was good for me to experience. It was a very bad experience. It prepared me for a lot of different things.

JANA: I wanted to go back to something you said a little bit earlier. You talked about you only stick to dating black men now. Why is that?

CELIA: I don't know. I think it's their personality. Sometimes I like outgoing individuals and someone that can make me laugh and just to have fun. A lot of guys I date are like that. They're pretty crazy guys. I like, as I would say, thugs (laughter), because I think I like the protectiveness of a guy. I'm not saying it's mine (laughter), and a lot of times that's his. But I just basically like their personality, their outgoingness, have a lot of fun. I, for some reason, communicate with them a whole lot better than I did with my ex-husband. My ex-husband would just kind of shut me out and didn't really want to talk about anything, just stayed constantly at the Playstation (laughter).

But, I don't really have a specific reason why I like to date them. They're just more fun to hang out with. A lot of my girlfriends are black and a lot of my really close guy friends are black, too, and we just get crazy (laughter). We like to have fun.

JANA: Would you consider dating a man that's another race besides black?

CELIA: I don't know. I am pretty much familiar to dating black men and it's like a taste that I just have. I don't know why. I love Native guys, but I'm just not attracted to that. I'm not going to say anything else (laughter). I just like black men.

JANA: So, what type of stereotypes do you have, or do you have any about black men or African Americans, in general?

CELIA: I don't really have too many stereotypes. I did at first, when I first started dating black men. Black men are good at basketball, and black men are good at dancing, but I've dated so many black guys (laughter). The guy that I was with for three years is totally different from any black man that I've ever dated. Yeah, he played basketball, but he wasn't very good at it. He didn't like to dance. He just like to sit and drink and work; that was basically about it. But we had fun. We could talk. We could go out and chill, even though he just doesn't like to dance, we always had fun. We found some way of having fun. The last guy that I was dating, he's just a roundabout, he's always on the go. He likes to play basketball, he likes to do all different kinds of things just about. So, in the very beginning, yeah, I had that mindset "all black guys like to play basketball, and cookouts and everything else." So, he definitely changed my mind.

I'm twenty-nine years old, and started dating black guys when I was seventeen years old. You got a long way from stereotyping, but you still hear though a lot of different females say, "Well, he's black, right?" "Yeah, he's black, but what does that have to do with anything?" That's one thing that frustrates me is stereotypes, because it doesn't apply to everybody. Each person is their own individual. So, you just can't base it on f a few people, saying, "All black men love to play sports," because it's not really true.

JANA: Do you have any family members who are married to African Americans?

CELIA: My sister is married to an African American man. But she's got problems (laughter). My sister was raised in a foster home as well, and I think she tries to seek out love wherever it's given to her. She's got two kids by a white man and, then, two black kids by two different black men. I think it's just her acceptance, trying to be accepted by someone. Because when she moved down to North Dakota with us, she noticed a lot of my friends are black and Native, and she wanted to be a part of that group. So, she started hanging out with a lot of my friends who are dating, and it just kind of spiraled from there. She's always just tried to find acceptance wherever someone would just love her. She got married within a week to him, so you know how crazy that is (laughter).

JANA: You talk about being in foster homes. How do you think that experience has shaped your views of other races?

CELIA: It's pretty much shaped my views a lot, because I've been in foster homes where the Native American families were very mean, very bossy, and then other homes where they were really nice. I've been in white families where they were really nice. My foster parents from Missouri were very caring and loving people. They went to the same church as my grandparents did, but they weren't about to let nobody run them over either. But they were very nice. We still talk to this day, and I'm very close with them.

So, it does play a factor in how I was raised. Because jumping from different foster homes and living in youth shelters has made me a lot stronger than probably I would be right now, to keep going even though it seems like things just happen over and over, getting knocked down. But you've got to get right back up and continue. Otherwise, I probably would be on the rez, just sitting at home (laughter), doing nothing.

JANA: Do you have any boarding school experiences?

CELIA: No. Just Job Corps, but I wouldn't call it a boarding school. When I first got there, they saw Job Corps as a place to put misbehaved kids. When I went to Minot, that's what the surrounding community was like, "Oh, we don't want this Job Corps here. All these bad kids are coming here. We don't want it," and that's how a lot of the community looked at us. When we would go out to the mall, they'd be like, "The Job Corps bus is here. Watch for them not to steal things in your shops."

But, there were a few of us that were having hard times, but it's not like we were the worse bunch of group of people out there. Some of them just didn't have any idea what they wanted to do as a career. Some of them just wanted to get their high school diploma, which I wanted to do. My dad brought it to my attention that I needed to do either get my GED or high school diploma, that I needed to do something. My little sister—I can't call her little because she's bigger than me—motivated me to go on, because I couldn't have her graduate, and me not. But she's still ahead of me. I'm playing catch up with my younger sister. Some day we'll be on the same level (laughter).

JANA: Do you think that Job Corp is similar to boarding schools?

CELIA: I would say kind of. One week we go to academic, another week we learn a trade. So, we're preparing ourselves for a career there, to do something once we get outside. Whereas, in a boarding school, they're basically doing academics, trying to get you to get your high school diploma and possibly go on to college or wherever you want to be. Just get your high school diploma. So, I don't see Job Corps as a boarding school—more of a trade school, I would think.

JANA: Do you have any opinions about the government's policy of boarding schools, or what their purpose was?

CELIA: I really don't have too much opinions on the government and, if I did, they wouldn't be very good (laughter). I went through a couple of government classes while I was here at Haskell, and didn't really like the sound of government too much. Let's not talk about government (laughter).

JANA: Are you currently a student at Haskell?

CELIA: Yes, I am.

JANA: What year are you in?

CELIA: I'm a junior.

JANA: What do you think about the American Indian Movement? Do you have any ideas on that?

(CELIA'S SISTER, ANNA): Mom was a part of AIM.

CELIA: Mom wasn't part of AIM. I thought Grandpa was part of AIM. Government issues are not my big topic, and I look towards my sister for that (laughter). Ask me about business, I can tell you about business.

JANA: Do you have any opinions about how the government has treated American Indians over time, in the past and even currently?

CELIA: I've taken a couple of tribal federal government classes, and I really didn't like the views and aspects of the class. It really made me dislike government once I got out of that class. You have to really take a whole lot into consideration with what's going on with the government, because we sit in class and we hear how the government was treating our Native American people and, of course, you're going to get mad. But you literally can't go out and take that aspect out of class and be mad at every white person that you see when you walk out the door.

The government is not something that I like to even think about. I just choose not to, because even though they help us out with this school, I think that they could do a lot more for this school. A lot of people get frustrated because we have certain things, like our clinic and everything else, but if they knew the history behind everything, they would understand why we have a lot of this stuff and why I feel that we are more deserving than just what we have.

On our reservation, my grandfather used to tell me this story many times, where our chief had left for a meeting and he left another guy in charge. He basically sold our land for ten cents an acre because he had gotten drunk, and they had him sign a treaty for ten cents an acre. They fought so hard against it, tried to do so much, but basically it was of no use. They were basically fighting for no reason, because the government was just like, "No, we ain't about to give you the land back, not for anything." That's the story that's been handed down through our whole family. So, we know that we definitely should have been more deserving of what we have.

There are certain rules and regulation on the reservations that the government has put on us, and I see some of them as bad and some of them as good. Where they let us be a sovereign nation but if we step out of line, they're going to spank our hands. But sometimes we do need certain things like that on our reservation, for example, where the councilmen have embezzled a lot of money, somebody needs to step in somewhere. But, as Native American people, we should be the ones to do it as well. That's our reservation, our tribe, and we should be uplifting our own people. That's just my line on that.

JANA: Do you think that your personal experiences growing up on the reservation have shaped your feelings of not wanting anything to do with the government, or just not wanting to think about the government?

CELIA: Basically, the only time I think of government is business. I definitely am trying to be a businesswoman capitalist (laughter). I want to own my own company and make as much money as I can.

JANA: Are you studying business now?

CELIA: Yeah.

JANA: Do you want to take what you learn here back to your reservation?

CELIA: My sister is over there shaking her head, "No, she doesn't." No, because I don't really want to go back to the rez. This is sad to say that I don't want to go back. But every time I do go back, I see my friends and they make me very sad because I don't see them doing anything with their lives. My best friend is sitting at home and she's got five kids, living off welfare, and it just kills me to see that. She could have done so much with her life. There's so much out there for her to, and that's one thing that, every time I go back to the rez, makes me feels sad. Because there are so many people that I've known throughout high school that I thought would do wonderful things and have great success. When I see them, it makes me very sad.

I do want to definitely give back to the tribe, but I just don't want to live there. I guess that's a better way to put it. My sister is going to be tribal chairman and I'm going to be a businesswoman, and we can pass funding from me to her to build up the next businesses on the rez, and our cousins can run them (laughter), and I can keep it all in the family (laughter).

JANA: You talk quite a bit about your sister. Is she really an important part of your life?

CELIA: Yeah, I was raised with her. The only one I was raised with. She's crazy. You all think she's totally innocent. No, no, no. I was raised with her (laughter). My sister, I think, was given to my grandparents at the age of three months from

our biological mother and, ever since then, me and my sister have lived together. It's like, slowly, my other brothers and sisters kind of came into the picture and then slowly disappeared. So, it's always been me and my sister.

It was me and Anna, and then my brothers moved in, I think, when they were probably about eight or something like that, around that age, and we lived with them for a while. They were mischievous guys. But, then, one of our brothers left. He didn't want to stay there, so it was just basically me, my sister, and my younger brother, Sauldy. Us three were basically raised together, and then Santina came along. Then Santina left, and then my other brother, Florentino, came along, and Florentino left. So, it's always just been me, Anna, and Sauldy. Then Sauldy went about his own way into the army. So, it was just me and my sister again. It's always kind of been like that. She's a pain, but I love her (laughter).

MIKE: Tell me if this wasn't asked, I missed the beginning of this, what has been the basic influence in determining your opinions about African Americans? What has influenced you the most to determine what your ideas or feelings are about African Americans: media, sister, parents?

CELIA: I would say, about African Americans, my youth leader played a big part in that. I really looked up to him when I was younger. I think he came to our church when I was around thirteen. You see them on the TV and stuff, and my dad used to get so frustrated. He was like, "Why, they're just show-offs on TV," and stuff like that, and I'd say, "Dad, don't you ever say that again. I can't believe something like that would even come out your mouth." I said, "You put a camera in front of everybody," I said, "They're going to show off."

But Steve, my black boyfriend, and I was going through a lot of troubles as a teenager, and he was there a lot of times to comfort me and to be there to talk to me. He did certain things that would just make me feel at ease, and I looked up to him for it. So, I think he played a big role in me starting to date all black guys, and I just liked his personality. He was crazy. He would make us do crazy things, like sing in the middle of McDonald's and it made us feel good and we laughed. I think that's a big part that he played in my life and I didn't see him, basically when I was younger, as being black. I just saw him as being a really good friend. For some reason, it was like he was Native. He was just Native, just a darker color (laughter). There were only a couple of black men on the reservation, so I guess I just thought of him as Native. I don't know if anybody else really did. He more like our family.

MIKE: How were the other blacks on your reservation viewed by the majority of your tribal members?

CELIA: We didn't really view them as different. Mr. Dixon and Mrs. Dixon have basically been in our lives since we were kids, and we never really viewed them

as different. Maybe the elders, when they first got there, saw a little bit of difference. But, as for me growing up in the high school, it was just Mr. Dixon, we never really thought of him as different, and his kids were going to school there. We never even thought of them as anything else but Native.

**Benny Smith**

Tribe: Cherokee (Kee Too Wah)  
Residence: Lawrence, Kansas  
Education: BA, Northwestern State College, Alva, Oklahoma  
Occupation: Retired counselor and head football coach, Haskell Indian Nations University, Lawrence, Kansas

MIKE: If we just start with your name and your tribal affiliation, and if we could just start with your take on the historical relationship between blacks and Cherokees. You can start now.

MR. SMITH: I'm Benny Smith. I'm from the Cherokee Tribe. But, beyond the Cherokee Tribe, I'm also from a group of Cherokees that carried on the old traditional beliefs and customs. They were known as "Ga'doo'wagie" or, in English, "Kee Too Wah."

In my experience of growing up in eastern Oklahoma—Vian, Sallisaw, Gore—there was a variance of black communities in those places. Gore, Oklahoma, was completely void of any black families. Just right across the river, was Webbers Falls, maybe two miles, and they had a big sampling of community of blacks. Then Vian was nine miles east, and they had a big sampling of black communities as did Sallisaw, Muldrow, and Roland going towards Ft. Smith, Arkansas.

So there were all kinds, I think. You would have to view this from family to family. I can recall, in our family, we were taught to completely be receptive to all people, to all humans. That was our cultural teaching. But some families, I recall, were negative, feelings, view points towards blacks. But, in our particular family and families that were connected to us, we basically were totally receptive.

MIKE: Did the Cherokee have a historical relationship with blacks?

MR. SMITH: I think it was through the Emancipation and through the Civil War, and even back further than that. In legends they talk about the blacks and the community of blacks. One legend has it that three brothers had to go adventuring and they all three came up on this village of blacks, which was a very receptive kind of thing. Then the traditional medicine or core belief of a lot of our people incorporated blacks.

MIKE: When you say incorporated the blacks, these were former slaves?

MR. SMITH: Yeah. They were escapees, and they would come to live with our people or near by our people, and they were treated accordingly. It's really interesting that they were considered as another group of people, in which they've always been able to distinguish from one group of people to the next

people, like tribes. Like Delawares and Shawnees and Senacas. But, then, they had the Germans and then they had the Frenchmen and they had the Spaniards and the Englishmen, and then there were the blacks as well. They were each given a very respectful, honorable human dignity for their existence.

MIKE: In order to make a living, if you talk about some of these escapees, they had lived on these plantations. Did they come into the Cherokee Nation as people willing to work or just be associated with the tribe?

SMITH: There in is the differentiation between the Cherokee Nation proper overall and then the old "Ga'doo'wagie" or the "Kee Too Wah" cultural viewpoint of people. The principle chief of the Cherokee Nation, John Ross, owned a big plantation. He had slaves. But, on the other hand, what you might determine as nonprogressive Indians, Cherokees, rather than to enslave someone when they came, they adopted them (laughter). So there's this wide range of existence that blacks had within the Cherokee Nation.

MIKE: Would you say that there's been some intermarriage between the two?

MR. SMITH: Yes, definitely. I'm almost positive there is self-evidence, and it would be probably substantiated by having DNAs taken. I think that it would prove that there was quite a mixture.

MIKE: Can you attribute that willingness to exist with other races of people, even with non-Caucasians, Anglos, there was intermarriage there, and then there was intermarriage perhaps with blacks and perhaps with other groups, and maybe even intertribal marriage? Do you attribute that to a cultural willingness to accept people for who they are, I mean just as people?

MR. SMITH: As a human. Our teachings in our culture is as a human. For instance, we consider ourselves "O-tsi-yu-wi-ya," which means we are fully human. On the other hand, we'd call the white skin human by its name, "A-yoo-wa-ne-ga," human white. Then they called the oriental human yellow and they called the black human "black."

MIKE: How do you say that in Cherokee?

MR. SMITH: It's "A-gu-na-ge." But the word is not taken from the color context, the word is taken from meaning "very lively." "A-gu-na" means lively, very lively. In our cultural spirituality connotations, we address this person as a grandfather black man or he's addressed as "U-ta-na-ta," which means the big-hearted one who brings us the gift of compassion. And each one of those human complexions brings us a gift of some kind. The yellow brings us the wisdom, the ability to meditate, the ability to collaborate all your strength into one focus. The human white is called "A-ka-na-wa," the knowledgeable one, brings us the traits as curiosity and being analytical, and the intellectual kinds of gifts. Then the brown,

what you called the brown-complected one is the Native American one, and he is called the “E-lo-oct-ti-ya,” world guardian. This is in the spirituality work of our people, they designate each one of those human complexions. I think this existed far before that they actually visually saw another person of a different skin complexion.

MIKE: When you were growing up, do you know when you first became aware that there were racial differences, or the first time you saw a black person?

MR. SMITH: It seems like that I've always been aware because of this spirituality teaching, I guess, cultural teaching, that there were people of different complexions. I became aware early on, having to live between two towns as far as back into the woods, I guess, at the end of the bus route so to speak. From Gore, Oklahoma, where I went to school or town, you didn't see any blacks. But nine miles to the southeast from our home was Vian, and every time you went to town you would see blacks. The terms that they used to designate each other was totally uncontested. It was just accepted.

I remember a man everybody called Nigger Bob—blacks, whites or whoever else. Very jovial, he was very pleasant, and it didn't seem like he ever expected to be called anything except that name.

MIKE: It wasn't looked at as demeaning or derogatory?

MR. SMITH: Never. Never a put-down thing. It was like it was his title.

MIKE: What was his relationship with you?

MR. SMITH: My father and mother would visit with him. I can't ever recall going to town on Saturdays with my parents when they didn't talk or visit with Nigger Bob, as well as the other people around. I remember Beulah, and she was well known. Everybody was well known. However, at Vian, they had a theater, and the balcony was reserved for the blacks and the proper seating area or below seating area was for everybody else. But there were times that I went up to the balcony and sat with friends.

MIKE: Oklahoma was at one time as segregationist as any of the Southern states. Did you know that there was a distinction that was being made?

MR. SMITH: Actually, when I became aware of these feelings that existed in the population was when I went to high school at Vian, Oklahoma. I transferred to Vian in 1957 and we were the first to integrate, I think, of all the schools. We also had the distinction of not ever having any problems racially. But I do recall there were squirmishes and things east of us. Ft. Smith, Roland, Muldrow, and Sallisaw had some current event or news making issues. But I cannot recall Vian ever having any issues.

At Vian, I shared athletic participation with blacks, very good friends. We had fun. I mean, we kidded each other about a lot of things and the people in and around Vian were as traditionally steeped in their belief system as were some of the Native Americans. Like, for instance, traditional medicine. I recall my father was known as the Medicine Man, but I recall him going to see a black woman about medicine and sharing.

MIKE: That's interesting because a person came in yesterday and he said that when African Americans or blacks would filter through the southwest part of Oklahoma, they would work as itinerant farmers, and they would put them up in these small houses or shacks and people would live in these homes. And he said there was one black man who actually knew Comanche as well as any Comanche. Did you ever run into any people?

MR. SMITH: I knew of black people who could speak Cherokee, very much so.

MIKE: Did that come back from the historical relationship?

MR. SMITH: Yes. Other than enslaving. Of course, during the Civil War, my group of people, who were known to be the full-blood types, did not have slaves. In the slavery issue during the Civil War, when they found out the issues, they finally settled on siding with the Union, and it was a bad time in our country. In fact, it was so destructive that they said, after the war, there was not even a chicken house left standing on the ranches in the countryside and the farms.

MIKE: You guys had your own civil war yourself.

MR. SMITH: Oh, it was. It was really terrible. The mixed bloods were notorious. They speak of Quantrill in Lawrence and burning down Lawrence. In Oklahoma, Quantrill rode with Stan Watie, a Cherokee Southern general, supposedly the last Southern general to surrender. They sort of made a hero out of him. But I wouldn't consider Stan Watie a hero or anything like that. I don't think he was a role model, because of the way the traditional people spoke of him. He was really a marauder (laughter).

MIKE: He was one of the original signers of the Treaty of New Echota.

MR. SMITH: Yes. But there's a lot of variances between the Cherokee Nation proper and the old traditional Cherokees that stayed in the back woods. Some of them actually escaped the removal by hiding out into the mountains. Perhaps a thousand of those they couldn't round up. So, finally, they won the right to stay there in North Carolina.

MIKE: Did you ever have any black friends come to your house when you were growing up?

MR. SMITH: Yes. I recall, it had to be my most favorite one, because they could keep up with me (laughter). I remember the little boys would come when the black families would come to my father for various traditional medicines and to get medicine from my father. While that was going on, I would play with the little boys that came with them. I really looked forward to them coming, because running around and doing whatever we were doing around the barn or other places, they could keep up with me (laughter). Even better yet, they were company. They could do things—they could climb, they could jump, they could run, and this was in the characteristic that I remember about them. I was always glad to see them because they could do some of those things.

MIKE: Do you remember ever being definitely told something by your parents or grandparents that indicated that there was no room for discrimination or prejudice, or as always viewing people as human beings and not based on race?

MR. SMITH: Yes. They made a story out of one and they said, "There's just one parable about the Cherokee. It says birds of all different feathers, colors, and so on, can come and share one cherry tree and eat when the fruit is ripe, and be in the same protection of that tree. But, yet, without any external forces, they would never mingle or mix their bloods or mix their genes." When that parable is told in Cherokee, it carries a lot of strength about honoring. One way to actually honor another human of a different race or color was not to destroy what he is in a sense or not to alter what he is, and one way to alter it is to intermarry. It's not prejudice, but yet it's an honor, it's a respect, that you would not destroy what they are or what you are. That was our lesson; discrimination wasn't an accepted thing.

MIKE: Did it ever bother you growing up that so many of the people in Oklahoma didn't abide by that or didn't agree with treating people equally or with respect?

MR. SMITH: Well, there were many things that were disobeyed and that was not going along with the teachings of our ways. Any marriage with anyone. I was told not to choose a life partner that was not an Indian or a Cherokee. But I tell a story about what happened when I did intermarry. When my wife and I got married, it was six months before we went home to meet my folks. When we did meet our folks, we had drove six hundred miles, got there late at night and, when we got there, my parents didn't get up from bed to meet her. They just shook her hands from where they were laying in the bed. They told us that we had a bed in there, we could go to sleep.

Dad throughout his life always did a morning ritual, Ten-Sen, and a start of the day ritual. A Ten-Sen. I told my wife about that. The next morning, it was Thanksgiving. It was a cold Thanksgiving morning, and Dad came in right at sun up or just before and said, "Are you awake?" I said, "Yes." He said, "Well, get up. We're going to go to water." That's what the ritual is called, going-to-water ritual.

At the very same gesture, he walked around and said, "Is she awake?" I said, "I don't think so." So he took his hand and got her by the shoulder and shook her awake and said, "Get up. We're going to go to water." Now that was a gesture of acceptance. He didn't say, "I'm going to take my son to water, and you're not going to go," or something like that. He included us in. That inclusion of all things that you did as a spirituality gesture was always done with all people who were there regardless of who. So he took us to water and gave us a blessing.

MIKE: When you were in college, did your views about interaction with blacks or what you saw change? I would suspect that where you went to college, you didn't have many blacks there?

MR. SMITH: Not only we didn't have any blacks, we only had two Native Americans at Northwestern, Alva, Oklahoma, at that time.

MIKE: Did you ever feel like you were being subjected to any discrimination?:

MR. SMITH: Oh, yeah. I could see misunderstanding all the time. That's what I called it anyway. Like they chose to make those comments or say that to me because they don't understand. Think about a barrier (laughter). It wasn't my barrier. It was their barrier, that they couldn't come into my space.

MIKE: Do you think that your being a Cherokee has enabled you to see or be more empathetic with blacks in terms of the differences and sometimes how they're treated, as opposed to how Indian people sometimes get treated?

MR. SMITH: Not necessarily being a Cherokee, but being a "Ga'doo'wagie," which was the term that our people called themselves before they were given the name Cherokee. But being a "Kee Too Wah," I very much felt that I had a broader, flexible view of people of different races.

MIKE: In terms of interracial relationships, how do you view those today in terms of the possibility of having interracial relationships between Indian and black?

MR. SMITH: Indians and blacks. I can see, I can observe various people that have carried around with them like a phobia or like a fear. Not really a fear, but yet cautiousness about that. As a counselor at Haskell Indian Nations University for so many years, I could hear comments about blacks coming from people that lived on the northern reservations. I could hear comments or mimicking. Like, for instance, I'll give you one comment: "I'm gon' work hard." They would use that "brobe" language, and what they were mimicking was how a black person would say they're going to work hard or they're going to make a commitment. But, in a toying way, some of the people up from the northern regions would say, "I'm gon' work hard," and that comment, or the way it's said, is really pointed at a particular race, and that's the black.

MIKE: There's a question today with our young people, the influence with hip hop, you've got young people who now seem to gravitate toward that with their language, with their style of dress. Do you think that exists and is so predominant now because our tribal young people are losing sight of their culture or losing a connection with the culture, and looking to gain some identity somewhere else?

MR. SMITH: There seems to be a lot of efforts to establish some kind of identity that relates to what supposedly you are on paper (laughter). I don't think there's enough credit given to human evolution. We evolve. All of us evolve into something. When we're completely mixed in our bloods and so on, we can't have a continued, what they call, misadventure with racism. Yeah, there's a great effort. There was a great effort through the 1960s, '70s, and we feel the effects of it now, about pan-Indian existence. We started calling each other brother (laughter). "Hey, brother" (laughter), and things like this. But I don't think we have been enlightened enough to know that we give credit to ourselves. Give credit to the human, that humans are here and whatever they're exposed to, whatever they are influenced by, developing and becoming what they are, they have to evolve. You've got to evolve to the next level of human understanding or what we call humanness.

This, in our culture, started a long time ago when they assigned or they designated clans. Clans were actually designated through animal traits and characteristics, and transformed into human conduct and behavior. Your conduct and behavior would demonstrate this humanness, this specialty. It was a master plan for keeping the strength of our genes and characteristics. A certain clan has strong characteristics in this trait or characteristics, and another clan has this. But, if the same clan were restricted from marrying each other, that kept them from capitalizing on all those characteristics. So you had to marry someone of a different clan, therefore, you're spreading; you're integrating the characteristics and traits of a human.

So it made a lot of sense when you look at those. Our country, the United States, is really a melting pot. But there has been a great misadventure of racism in our country.

MIKE: Can you think of anything where you see Indian-black histories running parallel to each other?

MR. SMITH: No, I don't think they run parallel. There was really an attempt to eradicate the Native American way of life. That eradication attempt really harmed the gene pool of the Native Americans. It set the gene pool back, I think, of the greatest traits, the strong traits of the Native Americans.

Many Native Americans with strong traits were killed, destroying or setting back stronger gene pool. Whereas, in the blacks, they enhanced it. They enhanced the gene pool. Just from that one viewpoint, it tells you that you can't parallel this

experience of being a different race living in the United States of America. Perhaps Northern blacks were treated better than Southern blacks.

Their roots is another thing. Most human people, if they'll go back as far as they can to get to their roots, base something about their future on those roots. Native Americans, now, can take their roots in different places further back than any other race that I know of. If Englishmen or Spaniards started to trace their roots back, there's a place where they just have nothing to tell them. They can go further back. But, in the Native American, if they tell a legend, they can go back and go back and go back. Because, if the ones who have retained their languages, there is no way to carbon test those legends to how old they are. So, those roots go very far back in time, probably much deeper than most races.

MIKE: Can you talk a little bit about the freedman issues?

MR. SMITH: The freedman issue would have a variance between the Cherokee Nation proper and just being a Cherokee or being a "Kee Too Wah." They would have adopted. In our sense, the full-bloods would have adopted those people. Here's people who exist—they have to live, they have to have a home. They have to have something for their families, and there has to be a community connection. So that's how they were viewed by the traditionalists, the full-bloods. On the other hand, this was a corporate thing with the Cherokee Nation. It was like bureaucracy. They didn't take any responsibility after they said, "You can't have a slave," and let them go.

Overall, I would say that the freedmen have a human dignity that should be honored and respected. Therefore, the freedmen have the same right, or autonomy to be a part of what they were a part of. It just can't be severed. And part of not severing the freedman's wishes to be included, in a talk by my great-grandfathers and my grandfather was that no one is to be excluded.

The book Emmet Star's *History of the Cherokees* quotes Redbird Smith. He says, "The mixed bloods and others should not be forgotten." But he wouldn't have said that, he wouldn't have used the word "forgotten," he would have used the word "to include"—not to exclude.

MIKE: When you say adopted, that means they became a relative or family member?

MR. SMITH: Right. They became just as, not any more or less than what any other person was within that group. That's in all cultural teachings and that's what Redbird Smith would have said. He would have said, "I'm not any more or less than you are." It was a total acceptance of another human being. This human-to-human relationship and coexistence.

MIKE: What do you think has created that push today, not only with the Cherokee Nation, but the Creeks and the Seminoles, to sever that tie now? There seems to be more of a desire by the greater number of these tribal members to sever that tie that was created years ago.

MR. SMITH: What causes our thoughts? What causes our people to think that you can put things in its proper spaces? It's influence. It reminds me of the old term "the Great White Father said this." There is a good book that addresses a lot of this. It's by Scott L. Malcolmsen, *One Drop of Blood*.

MIKE: Okay. I've heard of that.

MR. SMITH: It talks about America's misadventure with racism. Writers of early times and intellectual people that wrote about, "What are we going to do with the blacks? We're going to send them back. What are we going to do with the Indians? We're going to send them further West to get them out of the way. Because we are progressed and we need their space." The question on how would we coexist or how would we live with the blacks as an American. It's weird that in our language there's a word for federalism, and it's called "Wa tsi na," and "Wa tsi na" is thinking this way. If we say that, actually the closest interpretation would be "America is thinking this way," and that's where people get their thoughts. That's where they get their influence to make a stand on what they're going to push for. They're influenced by these kinds of things.

MIKE: So do you think we, as a people today in these times, we're moving away from our traditional teachings when we seem to be less tolerant and less receptive of others?

MR. SMITH: Definitely. Our traditional teaching is really a human-to-human value and our traditional teaching is, in one sense, there will be people exist who have mixes and mixes of blood running through their veins. My grandfather says, "Ge-i-ga," which is blood, "Un-nus-ta-nu on-na he-th-i," in the future. This is a prophecy. "In the future, there will be humans that exist who have all assortments of mixtures of blood running through their veins." How do you equate that? How are we going to tell somebody they don't belong here or they belong over there instead of here?

I think this is the strongest part of our cultural teaching, in our way of life anyway, and it's pretty well publicized. Our grandfathers were looked as like a Messiah on the new humanism. It didn't separate people, it brought people together.

MIKE: Does it bother you that we're not adhering to the traditional teachings as we once were?

MR. SMITH: Yes.

MIKE: How do we get back on track?

MR. SMITH: We get back on track, I guess, by honoring some of the old ways of being connected and letting yourself become evolved, an evolved human, and we had to move on. I would say not to forget about the old rituals and customs. For instance, it's weird that this comes to this. In Thomas Mail's book *History of the Cherokees of the Past and Present*, there's a lot of inaccuracies. However, there are some that he took of chants and things that were taken from rituals by the John Howard Payne papers.

John Howard Payne wrote in the late 1700s about his stay with the Cherokees, old traditional Cherokees, and how they got up every morning and they did a complete community ritual in cleansing and the blessing. That's how they started their day. But I took the privilege of learning a chant that John Howard Payne wrote down. I have reason to believe that he was pretty accurate in this, because he heard this chant morning after morning after morning. He wrote the syllables down. He wrote that chant down. In that chant, it's called "The Human Hymn," When you call it "The Human Hymn," you don't exclude any person of human. I took the liberty of learning that chant. I think that chant is interpretable and I learned it, and that's within just the last two years.

MIKE: So it teaches inclusion?

MR. SMITH: Yeah, it teaches inclusion. It teaches togetherness. You can hypothetically look at things in certain situations. Let's just say, for some reason, hypothetically, there's only four people left on earth and they come together, and each one of you know that you're the only ones left. What do we do?

MIKE: You'd get along, I would think, I would hope. You would learn to overlook.

MR. SMITH: I think so.

MIKE: And work with your strength and try to survive.

MR. SMITH: Yeah. I think we evolve. I think all people evolve, and we'll live at a different time. That evolution is moving faster now, and I guess it did during the times that we've experienced. I remember going to town in Vian, Oklahoma, and I was sort of embarrassed that I went to town with my father in a team and wagon to go get groceries. This is when I was a senior in high school. I went to school with all the other people that had modern conveniences, had cars to drive around in and go with theirs. But here we were still in the horse-drawn wagon. I remember going and I just said, "I hope none of my schoolmates see me while I was in town that way."

From that time until five years later, I was riding and flying, and controls turned over to me, riding in an airplane going to South Dakota, flying a private-owned

airplane. When I was doing that, I wasn't the same Benny that was riding in that wagon. I've evolved to another thing. I remembered I cherished that time. Now I wouldn't be afraid of it. I wouldn't be ashamed of doing that. But, at the time, I was.

MIKE: My concern is that we're evolving as a people, as tribal members, as members of so many different tribes. We're evolving into this less tolerant, less receptive group of people, away from the traditional beliefs that allowed us to accept people, and that bothers me like nothing else.

MR. SMITH: If I had to give it a term, I guess I would call it organized humanism, like organized religion. Spirituality has always been with man, and I think people finding their spirituality or some ways to learn spirituality is going to be more of an enhancement to get people to be more receptive and accepting to different races. I can see the similarities. I can see the kinshipness. I can see the likeliness of different things. When I read things about Japan, China, and when I hear things about Iraq and the Mideast people, I can see the human things that are inseparable from any of us, from what they are. There has to be a spirituality existence, and I think that's one of the key things people should learn, to be spiritual. Upon finding spirituality, I think they find their place. I think they find their role in strengthening.

There is one word that we were taught, and they said, "Whoever you meet, wherever you are," they said, "De tsa da-tsa-ni-gi-hi s-do-s-de-a-di." And that means "to strengthen one another." And they say, "Well, that's hard to do." It really isn't that hard to do. If I have an occasion to have a relationship with you and work with you in some way, I still strengthen you, and you ought to strengthen me by the way we treat each other, by knowing the nature of each other. In fact, I think that's one of the key chores in peoples' lives is to know the nature of the other. Because, by knowing the nature of another person, then you have a basis to truly honor and respect that nature. Otherwise, if you don't really know that nature, there may be unknowingly times that you would mistreat them.

MIKE: Very good. Good job. Thank you.

**Rodney Stanley**

Tribe: San Carlos Apache  
Residence: Lawrence, Kansas  
Education: Haskell Indian Nations University  
Occupation: Custodian, Haskell Indian Nations University, Lawrence, Kansas  
Military Service: Marine Corps, four years, 1990-1994

MIKE: We want to talk about discrimination and prejudice between races, for example, the Apaches, fought against the black units, the Ninth and Tenth Cavalry, the Buffalo Soldiers. There's a history there. Most of the conflicts that were fought by the Buffalo Soldiers were actually fought against the Apaches. What we're looking at is the relationship between blacks and Indians, and maybe a connection, too, between whites and, and if you talk about prejudice, if that's been directed toward you as a tribal member. I've learned that several tribes have names for whites, like the Sioux name at one time meant "one who takes" when they described white people.

The Pottawatomie name is "One who stabs you in the back." And I'm not sure if there is an Apache name for whites that means anything. Do you know?

MR. STANLEY: We would say "En da," and it means "the enemy."

MIKE: Oh!

MR. STANLEY: Yeah, it means the enemy. And, if you say a black person, a black person the way you would say in a language is if you're saying a white that is black (laughter). The white is like painted black ("Dada en dada hita").

MIKE: Yeah.

MR. STANLEY: They're both kind of enemies. Other tribes are "En da." It means as human beings, the first human beings. But to whites and Mexicans and blacks, you always put first "da" in there, which means the enemy (laughter).

MIKE: Really?

MR. STANLEY: Yeah. "Da en kia" is the people that walk, because the first Spaniards that came up from South America were walking, and a lot of them were walking on foot. So, they gave them that name "En da kitha."

MIKE: And the Comanche name for a white man is "Taibo." So the name for a black man is "Tu Taibo," which means "black white man."

MR. STANLEY: Yeah. And just like that.

MIKE: So, they saw them as a people, but they just basically described them as colored. My question is, Do you think Indian people were racist? Do you think that they discriminated because of color? Sometimes in US history people were mistreated because they were black or Hispanic—granted the Apaches saw different races as enemies because there was an incursion on land and trying to take that land.

MR. STANLEY: Yeah.

MIKE: But, do you think they actually thought of them as an enemy because of their color or because of the motivations?

MR. STANLEY: One thing that I've known from talking to a lot of elders at home—and I'm just learning from my own—when I was brought up, we were being isolated from the rest of American society. My family and probably other family members always talk like the whites were the intruders. We kind of talk about them as being dumb (laughter) or stupid whites. It was like our way was always the right way, and the other peoples' ways not, especially the whites or blacks, Mexicans. They were kind of not human beings. What you thought was better than what they did. A lot of things reinforced it when they, in the 1980s and '90s, they start coming up with all these things, like swimming with sharks—doing a lot of crazy activities. And those things just kind of reinforced saying, "Ah, these whites are dumb, they're not smart." I remember my dad used to, or my grandpa, said, "When you got out there, be careful for those people. They're not like the 'en da.' So, when you go out there, make sure you take care of yourself." You always had to watch your back, it's never trusting. I got to work with different kinds of people in the military. I got to meet all backgrounds of people, and I made good friends. A lot of good friends. And I don't know I've experienced racism out there. There's mostly whites that were like that. And, even in the military today, when I was in the 1990s, you see the segregation. In the morning, we have morning formation, and the whites hang out together, and the blacks, and Hispanics. I'd usually hang out with the Mexicans or the blacks, because I fit in more with them. It's still like that in the military. I don't know what it is, but it's segregated still and I know that. Just by looking at someone, the way they looked at me, I could tell if someone was racist. You get a lot of stupid questions. A lot of things that the non-Indians asked you out there—you could tell that they were really not educated on Native people. Some non-Indians didn't even know that Indians still existed. They thought a lot of Natives were still like running naked out there and living in tents. I used to get a lot of questions like that, and that really amazed me, because I had grown up doing the same things they'd done: going to high school and going to proms, and driving motorcycle and bikes, growing up the same way they did. But you get a lot of these real weird questions from the non-Indians out there.

MIKE: And that surprised you?

MR. STANLEY: Yeah. I thought that, because of what we were taught, maybe people knew about us too. But it turned out a lot of non-Indians don't even know the real Indian.

MIKE: The stereotype?

MR. STANLEY: Yeah. They say, "Well, he looks more like a real Indian, if someone's wearing beads.

MIKE: Yeah.

MR. STANLEY: Braided hair (laughter), and things like that.

MIKE: Huh. What do you think would have happened if you'd have chosen to associate yourself with whites?

MR. STANLEY: What do you mean?

MIKE: In the military let's say. You said you basically hung out with the blacks and the Hispanics. And let's say you chose to gravitate toward the white group?

MR. STANLEY: I don't know, because there were not a lot of other Indians there. In my unit, there were Natives. There were probably three other guys that were in another unit. We have an Alpha battery, and Charlie, and Delta. And, so, we had some guys in other units. But I don't know how the Mexicans or the blacks would have treated me. I had a lot of white friends too. And I've never known anyone to say anything bad about that.

MIKE: Your tribe has a history of conflict against the black cavalry units that fought in the military from 1866 to 1890. They played a big role in subjugating the Apache in the 1880s, the final subjugation. Does that affect how you view other black people today, that past history?

MR. STANLEY: I don't think so. I don't think a lot of the elders even know the history of that, because you don't hear about that a lot. A lot of Apaches really dislike Hispanics, the Mexicans. I think that's where they focus their anger, and at whites. But Mexicans, I know, are disliked the most. I know that they kind of feel like the blacks are more on their side. Like for me, for instance, whenever I see a minority person, I kind of feel like I know their story. I understand them more than I would a non-Indian, like a white person. Right away, I wonder if he's racist or not. That's the kind of thing I get from a white person. I'm more standoffish toward them than I would be toward a black or a Mexican or maybe a Saudi Arabian or East Asian Indian. I feel more close to them, I guess you would say.

MIKE: Do you feel like there's something in common because of the history?

MR. STANLEY: Yeah. The whites kind of conquered a lot of the indigenous people, all over the world. We have that in common with the blacks and with what happened to them in slavery, and a lot of other indigenous people overseas, too—in Thailand and Viet Nam. How the British and the French took over their areas. So, the colonization affected a lot of the indigenous people. So, I feel like I have more in common with minorities than I would a white.

MIKE: You said the elders don't really pay attention to or have the connection of the old Buffalo Soldier conflicts. They don't have anything to do with how they feel today. But maybe it's because they don't see color as something that people need to be judged by?

MR. STANLEY: Yeah. It could be true. I just I never hear about that. I never hear about the Buffalo Soldier. Maybe it's the White Mountains; the Fort Apache reservation is up north. I bet maybe if I was from that area, I would hear more about that. But, usually, I don't hear anything from down in San Carlos area about that history. I don't know if has something to do with that. Because I know that the Fort Apache still has that museum and they have all the pictures of the Buffalo Soldiers there and they know the history of that more than my people do down in San Carlos.

MIKE: And it's interesting, too, I suppose, in the history of the subjugation of the Apache, the military used Apaches to scout against the people who fled the reservation. Yet at the same time, there was betrayal of those same individuals that fought along side the military.

MR. STANLEY: Yes.

MIKE: They sent them off as well. Is that something you've given any thought to?

MR. STANLEY: It's difficult when you get in that kind of thing, because when you listen to the stories from the past, for all the Indian Nations, there's always the warrior society, there's the men that want to fight, because they've seen their wives, their children butchered, and they want to fight, they want to get that revenge. But, then, there's the other chief that's more there for the elders and for the women and children. And, so, there was that conflict between Geronimo and Cochise and Nache, and all these warriors. They wanted to fight. They didn't want to be locked up on a reservation. So, they kept escaping because they wanted to fight and get back to where they were originally from. But there were the other Apaches that were more concerned, because every time they would do that, the whites or the Mexicans would attack the friendly villages that were mostly of women and children. So, there was this fight between them. "If you're going to go out there and do this, you're going to kill more of us, and eventually we're all going to die. Either you surrender now or we'll come get you. We'll help to stop this, too." I think a lot of families in that time were separated. Some of them needed to feed their wives and children and joined the military. I know a lot

of history about that from home, because I have some relatives that were Apache scouts back in the day. And there are stories of them that I still know from my grandfather. There were a lot of different tribes. Not just San Carlos, but there was the White Mountain, even the Cherokiawas and Hickoria and they called them Tonto Apache. They're Apaches from up north, near Flagstaff. They had the Apache scouts who were a variety of different Apache groups, and they all went out and they helped find Geronimo and all these other bands that were fighting during that time. As soon as Geronimo got caught and was taken away and all these Cherokiawas were taken away, the scouts that helped were shipped off, too. It was really bad.

MIKE: That was betrayal, wasn't it?

MR. STANLEY: Yeah, that's betrayal that we've experienced. Natives, Apaches, have known always to never trust the whites, and that just reinforced it even more. And, after that, I think a lot of people I've met were probably hesitant to help to help the military or the government. But during World War II, I've heard stories where they were forced to join the military. A lot of these guys didn't know how to write and during that time, they were given names. They were just given numbers. Like, my great-great-grandfather was named G8. He didn't even have a name; they just gave him a number. And, so, during that time, they just probably signed them up. They didn't know what was really going on.

MIKE: That would be an interesting thing to research.

MR. STANLEY: Yeah. I'd like to go back and look at that, because I don't know a lot about that. World War I. There are a lot of Apache World War I veterans, too. But I don't know the history of that real well, how they were enlisted and all that.

MIKE: It would be worth looking into.

MIKE: Maybe one day I'll even do a dissertation or something.

MR. STANLEY: Yeah, that'll be good. That'll be something good to follow up on.

MIKE: I'll use that in my class. When I do my U.S. history, you know I talk about Dessert Storm. I got somebody who actually was there and talk about the timetable and hunted out a war. It'll offer some insight into it. Did you agree with the war?

MR. STANLEY: At the time, I wasn't really familiar with all the issues. All I knew was that there was something happening overseas in the gulf. But I thought I was joining in the peace times (laughter). And, as soon as I enlisted, there was more and more talk about the gulf, more and more about Sadaam Hussein. And, then, the next thing you know, I was there. And it seemed like just overnight. It was a 24-hour flight to get there. We're all out there. And I didn't really know a lot about

what was really going on until afterwards. If I knew now a lot of the issues that I know that pertain to Native people, I don't think I probably would have joined the military. Because I feel real strongly about what happened to our people. To me, now, that's more strong. I just see all the chaos that the politics is. It's not good. It's not good for us, and that's why I always think that American Indian studies is where you learn more about the issues.

MIKE: Learning tribal history, all the histories, or as many histories as you can gain knowledge about, I think it helps your self-confidence. It helps you identify who you are. It teaches you to respect your tribe and your history. And it makes you feel responsible for moving or perpetuating that. I don't get angry. I'm amazed that they survived all that kind of stuff. And I really respect them. I'm really proud of who I am. I mean, that's how I work it in my mind.

MR. STANLEY: Yeah. I don't want Natives to be involved in just being bitter.

MR. STANLEY: Or being angry. That ain't going to do nothing for us.

MIKE: No.

MR. STANLEY: And just learning the issues and learning more about who you are and your laws and treaties, that will help us more in the long run, I think.

MR. STANLEY: And society. Because everything is politics nowadays.

MIKE: Yeah.

MR. STANLEY: And we just got to learn those issues.

MIKE: All right.

**Wayne Thompson**

Tribe: Oneida Tribe of Wisconsin  
Residence: Lawrence, Kansas  
Education: Haskell Junior College, Lawrence, Kansas  
Occupation: Facilities maintenance, Haskell Indian Nations University  
Military Service: United States Army

MIKE: Did you see discrimination toward other people of color? Did you, yourself, feel as an Indian person, feel more of a camaraderie or a sense of opposition to blacks because of their skin color?

In trying to give a broader perspective of history, because history is judged by what whites thought of Indians or what whites thought of blacks, we haven't really looked at what Indians think of blacks, or blacks of Indians. And there's a group of people who are doing the angle from the black perspective, what they think of Indians. So some of these questions I'm going to be asking you relate to that since you've grown up here and you've interacted quite a bit with different races of people, not only in the military, but in your formative years growing up. My first question would be, Have you ever seen discrimination displayed or have you ever felt discrimination toward black society? Members of black society?

MR. THOMPSON: Personally, I have seen it. But have I really done it? I say that in the fact that some Indian people just hate blacks all in general—everything from the way they talk, to dress, to walk, to the way they act. If you turn that around, they'd probably say the same thing about us, the way we walk and act and talk. But I have seen that type of thing growing up here in Lawrence. I had grew up with a mixed Indian, white, Mexican, and black. Other than the Indian being in our family, I've had my black friends over to eat dinner or stay at their house, things like that. We did stick together, growing up at Lawrence High School. You were separated at that particular time because the white kids were mainly rich and came from a certain part of town. Even your middle-class whites would hang with other people. On the east side of town where we are now, it was all black, Indian, Mexican. We did keep a better eye out on each other, for our teammates who were minority than we would the white guys. But, I'm sure they had things to say about it too. I always remember this one coach telling us on a Friday night football game at Lawrence High that for three hours on a Friday night, it didn't matter what part of town you came from or what color you were, you're wearing the same uniforms, so just go out and play. And everybody used to put their differences aside, but they'd pick back up again. There's still discrimination out there for us and them too. But I haven't seen being discriminatory to blacks myself. You always say, "My best friends are black." Well, that's true. My best friends are blacks. But they were guys that I put my life in their hand. It didn't matter if they were black at that time. They took care of me and I took care of them, so. I'm sure it's out there and I'm sure some of our people can't stand it. But, personally for me, I don't have any ill will.

MIKE: If you look at the history of Indian people, they seem to have taught or culturally have been able to accept other people of color. Even from the very beginning, you read historical references where Indian people welcomed Europeans, and pretty soon things got kind of difficult, but at that point they were just another human being, and historically you see cases where blacks, for instance, have been lynched for no reason, just because they're black.

How about Indian people? Do you think their ability to be tolerant is culturally related?

MR. THOMPSON: Yeah. It could be. As an Indian, from my point of view, now you can always go to somebody's house to eat or feed whatever they have, take care of whatever they have. I'm sure the black community probably does the same thing. But, maybe us being a little more tolerant has allowed us to care for other people and take care of people who are not our own color. I think maybe it got bad as people got greedy and wanted more, demanded more. But I think we are tolerant of helping other people. I know I would. If they needed my help, I would.

MIKE: You mentioned it could be economics, but at the same time, there was a similarity in history, like blacks being former slaves, and being subjugated, Indian people going to reservations being subjugated. Do you think that draws a parallel to the extent that we can relate?

MR. THOMPSON: Yeah. You hear some of my black friends talk about, "Ah, man, we've been stuck here for four hundred and something years." And I say, "Hey, I've seen a shirt that says "Indian land, fighting homeland security since 1492." So, us being under the same kind of situations does bond us together to look at it and feel a little different, talk about it a little bit different. But, I'm sure they feel some of their aspects the way they look at it are the same as ours along the way.

MIKE: How about parental influences? Parental influence is a major factor here. I mean, you teach your kids to look at life a certain way and your parental influences taught you to look at life a certain way. Did that have a bearing on your ability to interact with any races?

MR. THOMPSON: Yeah, I believe it has, maybe just being around a whole melting pot. But, I've also been on the rez. I've lived down with the Mexico Apaches the young years of my life. You didn't see anybody down there but Apaches. And I'm sure that if there were any black people out there at that time, they would stand out and probably be discriminated at somewhere along the way. I taught my family that it didn't matter. You'll pick and choose who you want. And you don't have to hold a hatred line anywhere like that. But I just personally keep an open ear and keep an open eye. Because you know who you are. You

know where you come from. You know what your people are about. And what you do to open your mind to other things like that. Because you're going to do that no matter where you're at. Where you work. They decide to join the service too. They're going to end up working with Crips or Bloods, or Mexican gang members or Asian gang members, or whatever. But you got to learn how to work together, I guess. That's the way I feel though.

MIKE: I know you're close to your mom and you're also close to Jerry Allen. You and I both know him. How about what you learned from your mom in terms of dealing with other races?

MR. THOMPSON: Maybe my mom, because she worked for the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) all that time, being moved around quite a bit from here to there, maybe she learned how to be more tolerant. But she was in a job where she had to. Being a personnel assistant, she had to learn how to deal with people of all colors and creeds and races and stuff like that. Maybe some of that wore off on me. I've never heard her say a bad word about anybody else or anything like that. But she was in a position where she had to learn how to deal with it. When she was growing up, she grew up in Oneida, Wisconsin. Nothing but Indians all around her. But she went to a high school that was mixed, so maybe she started learning there. But, when you work for any kind of government agency or bureau like she did, you had to learn how to deal with people. Maybe she was more tolerant. She was very welcoming to my friends whenever I brought them home to eat or something like that. Like I'm sure any other mother would. But she never really had to say, "Well, I don't want that boy here because he's this, or I don't like that boy because he's that, or I don't like her coming around because she's this."

MIKE: So color never made any difference?

MR. THOMPSON: I didn't hear anything like that from her all that time. Even my younger brother, Tobin, I don't think he has an ill bone to anybody. Maybe because he got picked on all the time by us, but he could go into a crowd of anybody and know their names in two minutes. And, then, "Where's Toby? Where's Toby?" And that type of thing. But, no, I never heard anything bad though.

MIKE: We tease a lot among ourselves as Indian people.

MR. THOMPSON: (Laughter). Yeah.

MIKE: And we make reference sometimes, like in softball we called those fluke hits "Sta-lusty" hits. But it's not derogatory. It's a way of expressing humor. I don't know how to explain it. I learned that from Jerry.

MR. THOMPSON: As Indian people, if you can't tease, you can't take tease, you're going to be picked on every moment. But those little things like that, I don't make in reference to certain people. They just pop out. It's a generation gap. He grew up in a time where that was probably more common, but probably less tolerable now that he's gotten older.

But it's always joking. If you get a "Sta-lusty" hit, you're looking at every laugh. I don't think the intent is to be mean. Some people won't accept that, and some people will say, "Don't say it all, because, if you're not going to say it correct, then don't say it all." Or, "We know what you mean, just don't . . ." I understand that. When I was just thinking about it, I do remember one time we got into an argument when I was on active duty. A dude did this thing in the army called the Indian Run. There were six Indians in our unit. So, they said we're going to do the Indian Run today. And I remember I had made a reference, "Why don't we call it the White Boy Run for once."

And everybody kind of laughed, except this one white guy who happened to be a sergeant. "Oh, I don't want to hear that or your lip." I said, "I'll tell you what, we'll talk this over when we get back there, Sarge. We'll bring the First Sergeant out. He's black. I bring the other guy out and (Smoke Camacho?), and you guys talk to him, and I'll tell you my side."

So, we had it out like that. We didn't do Indian Run very much, but maybe it hit me that particular day extra hard. But we took it over and talked about it, and said, "You don't understand. You grew up in Cleveland. You didn't grow up around a bunch of Indians. You're just somebody who come over here, and you get offensive. So, we call it the White Boy Run, and you get offensive. So, now you know how I feel." I don't know why it just hit me. That's about the only bad time I ever had the whole time I was there. And we ended up getting it changed. We didn't call it the Indian Run anymore. We called it the Unit Run.

MIKE: How about the Lawrence community? You said that there is still a sense of discrimination, right?

MR. THOMPSON: Yeah. I think Lawrence has gotten bigger. I think the town is more divided now, especially with two high schools. The biggest fear around Haskell that people have about Indians is they're scared to come out here to Haskell. I think of years and years of bad publicity we get. But things have really changed like the past ten years. I think more people are starting to discover now, but I think they're still kind of shy. But, you can still see racism here. We have more Latinos here now. And we're getting more blacks. And more Asians are coming around. Pretty soon, I'm sure the whites will be the minority here in Lawrence. They're still separated, especially with two high schools now. I think they just put the town in half. Because if you look at it now, the new high school is more white and very few minorities. And the old Lawrence High School is all minority. I think that has a lot to do with it. There's still racism in this town. They

don't want to admit it. But you still see it. But I really feel that it'll never go away. It'll just open back up. I think Lawrence has grown big enough now that it's just going to get bigger, and bigger, and bigger. Maybe because we're caught between Topeka and Kansas City, and we're getting more and more people.

MIKE: Thank you.

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you.

**George Tiger**

Tribe: Muscogee Creek  
Residence: Bristow, Oklahoma  
Education: Northeastern State University, Tahlequah, Oklahoma  
Occupation: Speaker of the Muscogee Tribal Council, Okmulgee, Oklahoma

MIKE: All right, George, if we could just start out with your name, your tribal affiliation, and your birth date.

MR. TIGER: Okay. My name is George Tiger. I'm a member of the Muscogee Creek Nation. I was born on March 22, 1950.

MIKE: The basis of the interview is to kind of reverse the assessment of race in the country. We've always looked at whites and how the dominant society, majority culture, has interacted with blacks and has interacted with American Indians. So, now, what this is doing is looking at the relationship between blacks and Indians. We're looking at what your views are historically, culturally in how people have interacted—Indian and black. Traditionally you've got a culture that has a different way of looking at race, and if you could maybe elaborate on that in terms of how you've looked at white or black and Indian relationships.

MR. TIGER: It was a pretty unique situation where I came from, a real small community, southeast of Henrietta, Oklahoma. I didn't see anybody in terms of color. We were taught that everybody is the same. For a couple of years, my first two years of my education, I was at the Indian day school, an all-Indian school in the community. And two miles south of us was the all-black school, Murphy School. We'd go to school and the all the kids would end up meeting somewhere and playing with each other, and having a good time. Historically, in my family anyway, there was never any division of color. We treated each as we were one. My grandma and my grandpa had a number of African American families that worked for them. We shared the same table, in some cases went to the same churches. They were able to speak our language and they could even sing the tribal hymns of our churches. For a long time I thought everybody was on the same level until we ended up having to move from that community. The old cliché of a whole other environment or a culture shock certainly set in with our family, because we were brought up to treat people the same, and then we found that away from what we were used to, in many cases it wasn't the same.

I remember in the third grade that my father was an excellent communicator. He had served as a resolution writer for our council of the tribe, and he attended Haskell and he was pretty educated. He knew how to treat people. We moved to a town south of Tulsa—Okmulgee, Oklahoma, population about 18,000. To us that was like going to New York at the time. One of the first things there he did was he just walked across the street, because that's where the principal of the

grade school was, and just to let him know that he was going to be having to deal with his kids that couldn't really talk English. They were going to go to his school, and he wanted to know if there were ways we could have a smooth transition and allowing us to learn yet still, more importantly learn the language, the majority language that was being spoken at the grade school.

Mr. Davis allowed that to happen. He instructed his teachers to be patient with us and all that. At that school, there wasn't any blacks. There was whites and, other than three family members and probably another Indian family that had two members to go to school. It really was majority white. So the interrelationships of having black families and Indian families playing together, sitting down at the table, even worshipping together at some point was lost when we moved to Okmulgee and having to start all over again. It was a situation where, of course, at that age you don't realize any racism or discrimination, and you just kind of fall in and, as the old saying goes, you kind of go with the flow. But, later on as we grew older, we come to find out that racism certainly does exist, even today. Not necessarily in the town I grew up in, but other places as well.

MIKE: Has there ever been a time that African Americans have played a role in the history of your tribal group?

MR. TIGER: It's pretty predominant really. Throughout the history of our tribe, the blacks were even given their own role numbers on the freedman roles, which today seems to be a controversy. But I always go back to what our elders used to say, "Whenever there's money involved, people are going to always have disagreements," and I think that's where we're at. There were communities that were developed for blacks within the Creek Nation. It's kind of segregated/ integrated. Indians and the African Americans were always getting along. During the period of our history as Creek Nation, it was kind of a unique setup. We've had some communities in the Creek Nation that are African American communities that in some cases are named after tribal leaders of the Creek Nation. So it's kind of a unique situation. I think for a period of time there were families within the Creek Nation, even before the removal on the Trail of Tears, that had African Americans that worked for them. While the majority of society referred to them as slaves, they weren't considered slaves for our people. They were providing work for people that needed work and I think, to a certain degree, the term "sharecroppers" came from the practice that the Creek people used before removal.

MIKE: Historically, sometimes people will say if Indian people talk about this freedom that their tribes were a part of, and allowed a lot of give and take. Then, they say, "How come you had slaves, or some tribes had slaves?" "Slave" wasn't the right term. It was a term that was used as more of an Anglicized term that tribes used to describe the situation.

MIKE: Could you briefly explain that a bit.

MR. TIGER: I think there is a lot of parallel between Indian history and African American history. We were all confronted with the same issues, probably more so with the African American history because of the cruelty that they certainly had to experience. While we probably had the same thing, we were still put on a back burner, as far as the history books are concerned. In contemporary times, you have Martin Luther King, the civil rights leader. His voice certainly said a lot for his people. And you look at the history of our civil rights era, we've never had that really strong voice to bring out the issues and concerns we have to the forefront like Martin Luther King did.

Historically, Indian people have always looked at all races, even though we were confronted with a lot of racism from the major society, we still looked at them as the same color as we were. Historically in Indian history, you look at even some of our best orators of various tribes where they considered all races as one. Our blood is red. There's not a word in our language for being mean to someone. I think we're a unique race because some things that are bad we don't have the words to cover it in our language. Even good-bye—we don't say good-bye to each other in our language. We say, "Until next time." It's filtered down to how we treat people.

We have a lot of interracial marriages. Not until recently was that a big issue. It's never been a big issue with Indian tribes. Again, it goes back to seeing people as one. There's no color. We're all here to work and get along with each other. I heard that so much when I was growing up with our elders. We can talk about history, but one of the most unique things about Indian people and their race is that they didn't have history books. They were taught by word of mouth, and whatever was taught to us wasn't written down, but we knew that it was law. We respected our elders. It worked for our elders, and it was expected to work for us. Some of the things that we hear about slaves, about people using the 'N' word, in describing African Americans, it never happened with our people, whether it's Kiowa, Comanche, or Muscogee Creek, or Choctaw.

MIKE: It's not really making fun. It's a humorous way of, like in softball we say, there's a certain hit that is a fluke hit. A fluke hit is called a "sta-lusty" (black) hit, which means that there is something comical about how it occurred. It wasn't hit solidly. We laugh, but it's not a derogatory thing. It's just part of humor. And I think a lot of people misinterpret or misrepresent that.

MR. TIGER: I think you probably find that even with the African American communities. There's things that they may refer to in terms of even getting a hit that barely goes over. I guess a more popular thing is the Texas leaguer, but who's to say that it might be an Indian hit. From another community. I think there's a big misunderstanding about the African American communities and Indian communities in being humorous. Here we talk about Indian time; we talk about Indian jokes. It's the same way with the African American community. I

grew up with some friends of mine that knew about our history and knew about our traditions. I always liked this line that Billy Mills always uses: "You walk in two worlds with one spirit"—if you're an Indian person. African Americans have to do the same thing.

I always think about the other story he shared with me. When he was at the University of Kansas and they were running in the Texas Relays—this was during a time that civil rights was a big issue. He was going to run against Joe American Horse from the University of Nebraska. Just before they were to run, they were wanting to use the restroom. So they go jogging over to where the restrooms are, and they're standing there looking at the signs: WHITES ONLY, BLACKS ONLY. So they're trying to figure out which restroom do they use. People forget that Indian people were put in a situation where they had to make decisions on the spur of the moment. That's the way it's been throughout the history of Indian people. There's always a black and white line, but what about the Indian? As I said earlier, they're always put on the back burner. Because of what's going on nationally in terms of gaming, Indian gaming, people are wanting to recognize just a bit more of what's going on in Indian country.

MIKE: Do you the camaraderie, or the ability to interact, between blacks and Indians is based on history?

MR. TIGER: I think it's based on history a lot, because of the parallel of what they've been confronted with, in both communities. We've suffered through a lot of the same things, and, it's pretty well understood. So, you share a lot of things. Personally, I do a lot of sports broadcasting, and the first time that I was going to do one for a community in Oklahoma, they had just hired an African American coach, the first African American coach, and I thought it was a unique situation. In my first visit with the new coach, we were talking and he happened to be on the phone. He got off and he looks at me and, again, it gets back to recognizing each other's concerns and historical base. He said, "Hey, what's wrong?" He said, "You kind of got a smile on your face." I said, "Well, I just happen to think, coach. I never thought this community would hire an African American coach." "And to make it worse," I said, "the first time they hire one, they're hiring an American Indian to do their games (laughter)."

He thought it was really neat too. And he said, "What do you think? What does that make you feel like?" I said, "It makes me feel like saying, 'free at last, free at last.'" He started laughing, and we had a good laugh about it. Had it been someone else, like from another community, they would not understand why we would be laughing or why we felt it was so unique at that time. But, because we do understand and because we knew that a lot of things that we do today, someone had to pay the price for it, and we were just enjoying the fruits of someone else's labor. It set foundations for us to do what we do—even doing what we're doing now, being able to talk about these things.

MIKE: I think the most extreme expression of racism that I saw in this area was when I worked in the early 1970s at City Service Gas Company. A foreman asked me to go clean a truck up, and he gave me soap and he told me to wash it down. He gave me a scrubber, and he said, "Wash the seat down, wash everything down, and clean the steering wheel. Then, after I did it, I realized that's the truck that's used by the only black employee there, and he had to use it. He had to have a truck, but he had me scrub it down. I didn't realize it until after I had done it and saw him get in that he just didn't want to sit in a truck that someone of color had sat in. That really hit me pretty hard. That's an extreme form of dislike, I think you would say.

We used to play in Topeka and we interacted best with the Marlin Hornets, which was an all-black team, and our relationship was one of joking together, talking together, and actually a pretty close relationship. And it was also very difficult. It was competitive, but it was difficult to play against them because we became friends.

MR. TIGER: I'm asked that question quite a bit really, and I always have to refer back to what my grandpa told my dad, and my dad shared with me. He said, "During a period of time when you have trouble with races, it's because the majority race that has control is not educated about the culture of the blacks or of the Indians." I think it's really true. They don't understand, or don't want to understand our being, so to speak. I think we, as African Americans or Native Americans, understand each other. I can remember when we'd go to tournaments and we'd see those guys, it was natural for us to get together. And we would joke about a lot of things. We'd joke about how somebody played on either ball club, and it was always a big laugh. But I could not see that with the majority society. They wouldn't understand why we were laughing or anything. They would take it very personal and I think there would be some issues there. But, I always go back to what was said from our elders: that the problems we have about race is because the majority society does not want to understand the cultures of the African American or Native American races, and I think that best fits what you're asking me.

MIKE: One last question. This is something I'm curious about myself. Growing up with my grandparents or being around my grandparents, I never learned to distinguish race. It was people. You had good people and bad people, and it wasn't because they were black, whatever. Now there's a big difference in the way our Indian people, our young Indian people, seem to be distinguishing and actually show racism. Would you disagree or agree with that?

MR. TIGER: I agree with that. A lot of times, as we move on in our life times, the generations that are coming up are not as attentive as you and I were about what is strong in our tradition and what's strong in our culture. We have a lot of things that are offered to our youth today that we weren't having a luxury to be able to enjoy when you and I were growing up. I think that has a lot to do with how our

kids are being raised. I can remember when I was being raised. You respected people. You respected what was taught to you. I think we've lost a lot of respect with some of the younger kids that are coming up now.

I think that even the fathers and the moms are not preaching what was preached to us. I don't mean in terms of church, but I mean in terms of family values and family traditions and family cultures. They're not hearing what you and I heard. I'll show you a good example. I was asked to speak to a childcare group a number of years ago. The question that was asked of me was basically what you're asking. I told them that today it's hard to raise kids, because kids feel like they have a right. Today, if you're punishing a child, that child can take you to court and claim child abuse. I was sharing with the people that, when we were growing up, we took punishment as a means of love. My oldest brother, I could always remember him always being punished. And he used to say, "I was loved an awful lot (laughter)." Because he was punished a lot. But I don't think that the values that we had the opportunity to grow up with are being taught, and there is a lot of disrespect by our youth today toward the elders. They don't realize that the things that they're enjoying now, someone had to pay a price for it. And they don't realize that. I think that until they're taught as their moms and dads were taught, to instill that pride and those things into them, that question you asked will be probably asked a number of times in the future.

MIKE: Good.

MIKE: All right. Thanks, George.

**Mike Tosee**  
**Interviewed by Anna Sarcia**

Tribe: Comanche  
Residence: Lawrence, Kansas  
Education: University of Kansas (MA)  
Occupation: Instructor, American Indian studies, Haskell Indian Nations University,  
Lawrence, Ks.

MIKE: Comanche-Kiowa. Birth date 3/24/51.

ANNA: My name is Anna Sarcia, and I will be interviewing Mr. Tosee.  
Where are you from and where did you grow up?

MIKE: I grew up in Oklahoma as a young person and in Wichita, Kansas, as an adolescent, and then moved back to Oklahoma for my last three years of high school. I spent summers as a young person in Oklahoma with my grandparents.

ANNA: What kind of belief systems were you raised with and what do you currently believe?

MIKE: The philosophy or the belief system, I think, is tribally based. I think it's one where you learn respect for elders, you learn to listen to elders, and you learn to have respect for human life. You learn to respect everything, and to feel like you're part of something and not dominant over something. So, I think that's part of the philosophy that I acquired. Then, I lived in the city when I lived in Wichita, so I was both urban and rural. So, in the city, I got to interact with other races of people.

In Oklahoma, we were out on a farm and Oklahoma is a very strong segregationist state, so I never really got to interact with many blacks. There were some itinerant workers that lived nearby and we used to play with them, but it was never anything that we thought of them as being less than what we were. We just looked at them as people who could laugh, joke, and just be the same as we were.

My grandparents never did talk negatively about anyone in terms of race or anything. So, I never heard any of that while I was influenced by my grandparents. Nor my parents either. They just used the words, the tribal names, like for black is "tu-taibo," and for Mexican is "u-taibo," and then "taibo" is a white man. So, they would refer to the tribal names, but it was never anything disparaging.

ANNA: Have you ever witnessed racism?

MIKE: When I was an adolescent, I knew that the neighborhood we lived in was mostly all black, and we lived right on the fringe. The whole neighborhood area actually was divided in two, whites and then blacks living in one section of this neighborhood. We were right there in between. Our house was the middle between black and whites. If you went to the left, you were in the white neighborhood; if you went to the right, you were in a black neighborhood.

But most of my friends at that time were black, so we were interacting and playing on the playground and things like that. I never went to the left much. I always went to the right and hung out with the black kids. I realized that there was separation and that racism existed. But it didn't really play that important of a role in influencing or making me feel bad, I don't think. Maybe subconsciously it did. But I knew that was there automatically, because the two neighborhoods were separated.

ANNA: Why do you think you automatically associated more with the blacks than more with the whites?

MIKE: Playground, athletics, and basketball, football, baseball. The playground actually was within the black neighborhood and the school itself. So, I just automatically went in that direction. On the playground were mostly black kids, and that was the reason probably why.

ANNA: Do you have any boarding-school experiences?

MIKE: No boarding-school experiences. Catholic school, private school, and public school.

ANNA: How do you feel about the federal government's policy for Native Americans and boarding schools?

MIKE: The policy speaks for itself, because the intent was to destroy culture. So, I can't really agree with a society trying to destroy a culture, a way of life that was in existence. The existence was thousands of years, and then a group of people came in here and tried to extinguish it and eliminate it. That was, in itself, a tragedy to have somebody do that. To eliminate a way of life that people would write about and we'd be reading about. If they were successful, the only thing you would have reference to be books. We're getting that way now. We're losing our culture. But, for a democratic nation to say that it respects the rights of everybody, you could find examples where it didn't show through. A good example is the boarding-school policy or land-acquisition policies of the United States.

ANNA: What kind of impact do you think that the boarding-school era had on the way Native Americans viewed other groups of people or other races?

MIKE: In those boarding schools, from what I understand and what I've read and what I've been told, there was only one side of history that was told, and that's what Indian kids grew up with. They didn't grow up with their own history; they grew up with the majority culture's history. I think that's wrong, because it's part of eliminating the culture when you only teach something from one angle. Not only Indians, but blacks and other minority groups have had to deal with that. Only recently have you got more of the history that's integrated with all these other groups or integrated into the overall history. I think it was a very serious tragedy to have something like that happen.

ANNA: Do you think that American Indians are racist?

MIKE: I think it varies. I think that the present generation shows some elements of racism. I think the younger generation, today's generation, because of the influences of the media, society at large, needs to feel better than someone else. Sociologically, people have always done that to find some way to make themselves feel better. Sometimes, I think, Indian people do judge based on race, so that, in essence, we can make ourselves feel better.

I think the intent of the older generation was to maintain the culture. Personally, I was told to marry an Indian. The reason for that, I understand, is that it was in order to keep the culture strong, keep the tribe intact. So, I think sometimes people misinterpret or can actually misperceive that as a sense of racism or projecting racism when, in reality, I don't think it is. I think it's a need to keep the culture. We have a very limited population, a little over two million. So, I think Indian people realized that—particularly with my grandmother when she was growing up—the population would decline to such an extent, I think that they were worried about the tribal group staying together and maintaining that tribe.

So, I think there was a strong desire to see the tribal members marry within their own tribal group or within other tribal groups. So, it's not racism, I don't think. I think it's just a need to keep the culture going.

ANNA: Would you say that it would have been unacceptable for you if you brought home a black woman?

MIKE: I think it would have been unacceptable from that aspect of it. I think they would have looked at it as saying, "Oh, my gosh. What are we going to do? He's out of the culture, he's out of the tribe, and he's marrying out. Now the tribal member is going to be less than," as far as the degree of Indian blood goes. And they may have even thought that there was going to be a very difficult life ahead, because sometimes what they called breeds—whether they were black, half black, or half white—have a more difficult time within tribes today. I think that wasn't so true years ago, but it is now. So, I think that would have been a concern, from that angle anyway.

ANNA: Historically, have blacks been involved in your tribe?

MIKE: From what I understand, there has been a very limited amount of interaction. Unlike the Seminoles or the Creeks or the Cherokees and others who actually integrated blacks into their society, the Comanches and Kiowas didn't see many blacks. They went out on raids and they took hostages. Sometimes those hostages ended up being black, but more often they were Mexican or Anglo, and these members would either be bartered in exchange for something or they would become members of the tribe. But the interaction was very limited.

Historically, the Buffalo Soldiers were at Fort Sill during the reservation period. The Buffalo Soldiers were used as a means of force to keep tribes on the reservation. I'm still looking into how the tribal members viewed them, whether they resented their being there or if they actually understood the history of the blacks, being former slaves and then having to come into this system. The reason why the Buffalo Soldiers existed was in part because it was a chance to earn some money, be part of society, and there are other aspects to it as well.

But that relationship was based on military confrontation. I have nothing to back this up at this point, but I would suspect that there would have been some animosity at that point. How far that animosity is carried to the present, I don't know. It depends on how much history the tribal members have studied.

ANNA: How do you feel about African Americans looking up to the Buffalo Soldiers as historical idols?

MIKE: From that angle that they do, it was an opportunity right after the Civil War for blacks to become part of the system. So, I can see where they would recognize that as an important part of their history, even though in the military, except in the Southwest, they provided services. They built Fort Sill. The white soldiers didn't; they had the black soldiers build the fort. The black soldiers also maintained cook positions or laundry positions and other things like that. So, in some ways, that continuation of that service wasn't declared slavery, but they were still involved in serving the majority culture.

But I think with blacks recognizing that element, that's part of a movement overall where people are trying to connect to the growth of this country and that was part of that connection and the beginning of further military involvement. Looking at it from the beginning of military involvement to the present, I think it's a way to recognize some advancement, too.

ANNA: What do you think of the Civil Rights Movement, and do you think that Native Americans benefited from that?

MIKE: I really do. The Civil Rights Movement was a very strong movement and there were other groups of people who also got involved. Women jumped on the

coattails of that. Gay rights began a movement back then and other minority groups. But American Indians also began to take hold of that Civil Rights Movement and declared for their own rights, human rights, voting rights.

What really got this going, and I think it's very important, is that it got a lot of young people researching their past. There was a major block, the boarding school caused this. There was a major attempt to blot out Indian history. Then, all these people got involved in this, looking at and researching and finding out the history that we're studying today. So, that movement began during that Civil Rights Movement to research and to establish the foundation for the kinds of things we have today.

A lot of people disagree with the methods of the American Indian Movement but they did create the means to get where we are today, I think. The Civil Rights Movement was important for a lot of groups, and for Indian people too.

If you look at 1964-'65, the Voting Rights Act, the Civil Rights Act, and then in 1968 the American Indian Movement came three years later. Then, in 1969, was the takeover at Alcatraz. So, I think there is a connection to the Civil Rights Movement.

ANNA: What do you think about the way that the federal government has treated American Indians?

MIKE: When you look at it closely, it can make your blood boil. It's detestable. Particularly when we look at what we say this country stands for: democracy, freedom, constitutional rights, speech, and religion. Yet, those were all denied Indian people. Religion, a basic component that we brag about across the world and we say we're bringing this to Iraq, but we've never really provided that and there was a point in history where it was denied, just like it was and is being denied worldwide.

When you really think about it, it's very difficult to look at and say that it's nothing less than totally detestable. It was a terrible period in this history for Indian people, to be denied all the rights that now we say we can provide or we're providing worldwide. If people look at Indian history, I think that's one of the reasons why it's not available or it's not provided in public schools. Because it would raise too many questions and it would provide a lot of misgivings about how things have taken place, and you could also question the motives of the United States.

There was one book that was written several years ago—I can't remember the title of the book—but the supposition was that if you had international law in place like we do today, based on laws regarding warfare and criminal activity like Saddam Hussein is being tried now for crimes against humanity, you could actually take famous people who are on our money or denominations, like

Jackson and Grant, and famous generals, like Sheridan and Sherman, and bring them up on charges of human rights violations if you had international law in place at that time. Custer and people like that, we idolize. So, it's hard to deal with.

I think some of our students sometimes get sidetracked and they can get angry. I tell them that in order to get past this, you have to think about how strong your culture is to have survived that and that you owe it to the people who survived it to learn as much as you can and not get bogged down with this sense of anger. It's outright anger that sometimes students feel. If you do maintain that sense of anger, then it really is harmful, because it doesn't allow you to move forward. But, if you create a sense of opportunity from this, then it allows you to look at your culture and be proud of your culture and, then, teach others about this, because it's important for others to know that.

ANNA: How would you compare that to the treatment of African Americans by the government?

MIKE: I think there are some similarities. The one similarity that stands out in my mind is the restrictions and confinement. Like with reservations, Indian people had no rights. With slavery, blacks had no rights. You have no voice. Even though there was some political involvement earlier than with Indians, black people really didn't have the opportunities that other people had. Indian people are the same. So, I think there's a connection in connection in the inability to be expressive about rights and to maintain rights and things like that.

Try to testify in court. You could take different Indian situations and say, "Look at the Cherokees. They were told that they couldn't testify in court." Look at slavery, a black couldn't testify in court against a white person. So, you can draw similarities that way.

ANNA: Do you think that the way that the government treated Native Americans and African Americans has affected the way the general public views them?

MIKE: Absolutely. I think for the way each was treated, there's some sense of wrongdoing. The perpetuation of stereotypes doesn't allow for people to look at this, because people begin to believe the stereotypes. So, there's no need to want to look at it, because, if you don't like somebody, then why look at it or it's not true. Our government wouldn't do that, given the actual facts of a situation that relates to Indian people because to do so would reverse the stereotype.

The treatment has a lot to do with the perpetuation of stereotypes. The same views that people had of Indian people—drunks, lazy, you're on a dole from the government, and things like that—are still with us today. I think those stereotypes, those views are perpetuated because our state governments and

federal governments don't really create the opportunity to study these more closely.

Blacks have forced the issue because they're more politically powerful than Indian people. There is enough of a contingent in Congress that blacks can create change much quicker than Indian people can. I think we've been harmed in that way and that's part of the reason probably why we don't have a larger contingent in Congress, because we believe what we've been told and I think we believe that we are what society says we are. And nobody wants to look any closer than that because that's the view that people are stuck with.

ANNA: Have you experienced stereotypes personally?

MIKE: Have I ever expressed or experienced racism?

ANNA: Yeah.

MIKE: Sure. In high school I remember the coach telling me and another Indian kid. We were the only Indian kids on the basketball team. This always sticks in mind. He was part Indian and the coach, who understood Indian issues, needed one of us because the junior candidate was an Indian girl and had won homecoming queen. We were both seniors, so seniors escorted the senior candidate, and the junior candidate was a white guy who was going to escort this Indian girl. It turned out that in the vote, she won, so he was going to have to crown her and kiss her. So, the coach came in and asked one of us to escort her because, he didn't want to say it, but we knew what he meant, that the white kid didn't want to kiss the Indian girl. She was a very nice-looking woman, very attractive. She was probably one of the most attractive girls in the school. But, even despite that, it didn't matter; one of us had to do that. That really bothered me. I thought, "Geez! You can't look past the fact she's very attractive." Just because she's Indian, you can't touch her or his parents wouldn't let him touch her, or whatever that was. I'm not sure what it was, but he wasn't going to do it.

So, I experienced that. I've heard people say derogatory things about blacks, whites, and Indians. It just depends on the generation. I never heard any older Indian people say negative things about blacks. I've only started recently hearing people in my generation, a few, and then the generation after me, talk more disparagingly against minorities, blacks too. So, that's a recent change, but I think it's moving away from the values. I think we're losing our values because our older people are passing on, and they're not able to teach those kinds of things, the tribal values; accepting people and looking at people just because they're human. They're alive and they have a right to live.

A lot of Indian people in the past believed that you could be punished by a power (creator) if you didn't act right. It's kind of like "what goes around, comes around," so you've had to be very careful. Indian people believed in this strongly. It's kind

of a fatalistic view and what happens to you happens. If you're good to people or if you're generous, one of the reasons why generosity was so important was because they believed that things could happen to you good later on. If you made any negative statements about anybody, that could come back and affect you because God would punish you. That's kind of a simple way of putting it, but that's why the older people were very careful about what they said in terms of making fun of or ridiculing people. I still believe that. I'm very careful about what I say, because now that I've got a little boy, I don't want anything bad to happen to him. So, I have to be very careful about that. So, that part of my upbringing has stayed with me, and he'll learn that from me.

For some reason, maybe the boarding school has had a major impact on Indian kids today, to where they didn't have that parental grandparent kind of interaction. Maybe that's the group now that we're looking at that doesn't have the sympathy or the empathy or the sense of gratitude about life that perhaps those that had interaction with their grandparents did. That's just a guess, but that's my feeling about that.

ANNA: You talk about the younger generation. How do you feel about the younger generation grasping onto the hip hop culture?

MIKE: I think part of that is a lack of awareness of their tribal culture, and it's becoming a desire, I think, by young people to latch on to something that gives them an identity. I think that's part of the reason why. It's just the need for an identity. I've mentioned that we lost much of our culture through the system and how the federal boarding school system and any other system within the states, as well, tried to obliterate the culture. I think it's something that we see today. I think we lost a lot of those. We're out of touch with those values. So, I think there's a movement to link to something, and I think part of Haskell serves a purpose and other places like Haskell serve a purpose when they can teach the history and the culture, and give young people something to hang onto or link to that gives them confidence. It doesn't have to be that other thing that you mentioned.

ANNA: Do you see that correcting itself?

MIKE: Well, I can see if we can continue. When I retire, you can continue and others like you continue to espouse the kinds of cultural values that we have, teach the history in a way that's direct and honest, but, also at the same time, make young people proud, I think it will get better. But you have your work cut out for you. You really do.

ANNA: Anybody else have any questions?

MIKE: Would I marry a black woman? I've gone out with a black woman. I don't know. I've never found any problem with that. I think sometimes in the back of my

mind there were times when you were out in public, you could feel people watch, looking at you, and that's a little uncomfortable. But, other than that, there didn't seem to be any issues with me feeling uncomfortable, other than sometimes feeling people staring at you.

ANNA: Do you think it would have been more acceptable if the woman was white?

MIKE: Yeah, it would have been more acceptable. Probably people wouldn't have paid attention at all.

ANNA: How would feel if your son brought home a black woman?

MIKE: If he brought home a black woman, I would view it just like I would hope people in my family would have viewed me. When I was out of state and I was working, I wasn't around immediate family. So, that didn't come into play for me to bring this woman home. But I'd like to think that I would view it like I would have anticipated my grandparents would have viewed it. I would accept it. But, also, like my grandmother, I would hope that he would link up with another Indian woman.

So, what people misinterpret as racism sometimes with Indian people, is really a desire by Indian people to maintain their culture, their tribe, and to keep it intact. I think I would feel the same way. Because, if he marries outside the tribe, he being a quarter Comanche, a quarter Crow, if he marries outside the tribe, his kids will be half Indian, but they won't be able to be recognized by a tribe unless blood quantum goes down to an eighth. So I would worry about that, because then his kids are out of the tribe. So, I would look at it from that perspective and it wouldn't be looked at, I don't think, from a racist type of view. I don't think it is.

I'm very proud of my heritage and I'm hoping that my son will be too, and I would hope that his kids would be as well. But, if he marries anyone without a tribal background, then his kids won't be able to even come to a place like Haskell or maybe even find closeness to their culture—the tribal dances and ceremonies and things like that. So, that would bother me a little bit, and that's how it would bother me, only from that perspective, I think.

ANNA: Why do you think the numbers are higher for Indian women to date black men?

MIKE: That's always stumped me. But, there was an explanation earlier about that that I think fell in line with what several other people have mentioned to me. People need attention and desire attention, and they are sometimes susceptible to a person who can really talk.

I always noticed this. When I was in college, I was very quiet, didn't say much, and I was always amazed at the non-Indians, the white guys and the black guys who just could really influence by the way they approached. They would be very open sometimes and I thought, "Man, that's not very polite to say that." But a girl would just laugh and think that was really great, and I thought, "Man, that's a different approach." But it worked and they'd walk out with the girl. I was always amazed by that. But I think sometimes women are influenced by a person and probably taken by the wit or the ability to speak in that way. It makes a person feel this person is somebody that they would like to be with, and that's great if a person is influenced by that. If they find that that's somebody that they could be compatible with, that's great.

ANNA: Thank you.

**Jerry Tuckwin**

Tribe: Potawatomie (Kansas)  
Residence: Lawrence, Kansas  
Education: Haskell Institute, Lawrence, Kansas; Wichita State University, Wichita Kansas  
Occupation: Retired athletic director and track coach, Haskell Indian Nations University  
Military Service: United States Air Force, Vietnam era

MR. TUCKWIN: I'm Jerry Tuckwin. I'm Prairie Bend Pottawatomie, from Mayetta, Kansas. It's about seventy miles from here. And I've grown up in the Lawrence community most of my adult life.

MIKE: Can you talk a little bit about your upbringing?

MR. TUCKWIN: I grew up on the Pottawatomie reservation until age fourteen, and then I realized that I could come to Haskell. I grew up on the reservation, never thought one way or the other about being Indian or black or white, so I didn't really think about prejudice there. Within, I'd say, a mile to a mile and a half, we had three black families on the reservation. I stayed with them, I worked for them, grew up with their kids, my brothers and sisters grew with their older siblings, and so we never ever thought too much about it really.

MIKE: Do you know how they got onto the reservation?

MR. TUCKWIN: We've got a checker-board reservation and they purchased land, and they lived within a one mile square of one another. They farmed and did some cattle raising there. It always seemed like to me they were well accepted by everyone there, and no one ever said anything about it. I grew up at a time when there was a lot of prejudice. In a neighboring town, a reservation town, border town—whatever you refer to them as, they had their signs up "Indians and Mexicans will be served in sacks, and blacks are not allowed at this particular restaurant."

Of course, by looking at me being light complected—my family is three-fourths or half or full-blood—we never had any problem because most everyone knew our family and extended family. We went right into restaurants or stores or whatever. But there was definitely prejudice from the border towns, the red-neck towns, as they call them.

MIKE: How did you feel about that, knowing that maybe some of your friends couldn't go in there?

MR. TUCKWIN: At that time we were always pretty accepting of things like that. We just sort of thought that was our role. The black friends that I had growing up, we didn't feel militant about it or anything of that nature. We just thought that in a

sense we were kind of second-class citizens. That's a terrible way to say it. At the same, I think all of us tried to prove through athletics and academics that we could still do what the Anglo students did. So we had our own challenges, I think. But we didn't dwell on the discrimination. We knew it was there.

MIKE: When I grew up around my grandparents, they never said anything derogatory about any race of people. They may have said something about being mad at somebody in a derogatory manner, but they didn't bring in race. They saw the person. They saw a human being. They didn't see any racial connection to why they were good or bad.

In my mind, that's kind of a traditional, cultural way that represents the tribal members, Indian people. How do you feel about that?

MR. TUCKWIN: I think that's true. Within most of the tribes, our neighboring tribes—we've got three other tribes in Kansas—having grown up around them, I don't think that there was a major cultural difference as far as race or ethnic groups were concerned, and I don't think we really looked at it that way. In our situation, even though my grandfather was full Irish, I would say that probably if we felt any prejudice; it was towards the white man. For instance, our word for white man in Pottawatomie is "Cha-mok-mon." What it really means is "one who would stab you in the back." That just kind of tells you. That's pretty sad when you really think about it, but it's probably true too.

My grandfather was full Irish though and was a second generation from Ireland to be over here. He grew up with the Indians though. In fact, he had four wives, and he was part of the Indian Agency for quite a while. But we never thought a whole lot about it really. I was orphaned at age seven, and I grew up with my aunt and uncle. They never did try to get us to discriminate or be prejudiced towards anyone or anything like that.

To be real honest, and this is kind of sad to say, I never felt discrimination until I came to Haskell. The reason I had it at Haskell is because I'm light skinned, light-complected. I probably had more trouble here for one full year than anywhere else. That was just to prove myself again. I think Indian people respect you once you can prove what you can do—not just through words, but through actions. After that, I never had any problem. But that was my really first feeling of discrimination.

MIKE: With tribal members?

MR. TUCKWIN: With our own people, yeah. That's kind of ironic. But I'd have to say that was really my first major encounter with discrimination. Another little side note to that is I was writing to this girl at home. I was a ninth grader. After a couple of letters, she wrote back and said, "Oh, my folks said, "I can't write to you

anymore. We didn't know you were Indian, and we know that Haskell is an all-Indian school." So that was the last letter I got.

MIKE: So there were strong feelings on the other side?

MR. TUCKWIN: Yeah.

MIKE: How about the Lawrence community and its relationship with the Indian students?

MR. TUCKWIN: I think there's always been some prejudice here in Lawrence. Lawrence has been a pretty prejudiced town through the years regardless of whether it was religion, race, or politics—even though it's probably the most liberal town in the state of Kansas. I would say that a lot of students felt discrimination. And, of course, me growing up here for four years when it was a high school, I was a part of that culture. And I suppose I felt it somewhat.

A lot of us would be a little upset when we'd go into stores and they would just attach themselves to you. That's how we saw it: "Oh, they're discriminating, and they think we're going to shoplift," or "What are you going to do in here? You don't have any money." That was always a big problem. We were in an Indian boarding school at that time, and I think we alienated and isolated ourselves from the community as well. I worked for a family, a non-Indian family, and they were very accepting of me. In fact, years after, I found that they'd tried to adopt me when I was in my freshman year at Haskell. But, it was here.

MIKE: Did you notice in your years here from your high schools days to professional life here that blacks were discriminated against in this community?

MR. TUCKWIN: Definitely. I grew up here in the 1950s in high school, and then I came back in the mid-'60s, and then, of course, in the '70s we had the race riots here in Lawrence. There was definitely discrimination here. I had a good friend who's an attorney, and I went in to rent a house my first year out of college and the lady was all "Oh, yeah, we're accepting you. And you pay this." Finally she said, "Tuckwin. What kind of name is that?" And I said, "It's Pottawatomie Indian." And she said, "Oh, "I'm sorry." And I said, "What's that?" And she said, "We don't rent to Indians."

He was on the housing committee at that time as an attorney, and he said, "Let's take her to court." And I said, "No." We accepted this kind of thing as our role in a sense. After I talked to her a little bit, she said, "What are you going to do here in Lawrence?" And I said, "Well, I teach." And she said, "Oh," she said, "That's fine. If you teach, we'd be glad to have you." And I said, "No, you already made your mind up about who I was and what I stood for. I don't need to stay here. There are other places."

Because they had a big rental company here, he tried to get them on probation or whatever they'd call it. But I didn't push it or pursue it, so nothing really came of it.

MIKE: What year was that?

MR. TUCKWIN: That was in 1964. And right in the middle of town. It wasn't like it was the elite part of town or anything like that. The social classes we have outside of here in Lawrence, and it wasn't like that at all, just rental properties.

MIKE: Do you think the American Indian status, no matter what tribe you deal with or talk about or describe, have they had a relationship that's been very difficult to overcome in terms of assimilation and the process and the boarding-school period? A lot of the boarding-school period, people look at that as real favorable, because it did give them a place to come to and interact with other Indian people. But then you look at the early history of the reservation life and allotment and taking Indian land. Do you think that awareness of that has allowed Indian people to be more sympathetic to black situations?

MR. TUCKWIN: Somewhat. Mike, I think probably we were more sensitive to any other minority group. I know a few incidents on the other side of it though. Our famed Olympian, Billy Mills, did not make the 1968 Olympics. He was an alternate, and he had a better time, for instance, than the third runner, who was African American. The African American said, "Hey, take my place. You know you just had a bad race," They had thought it out and had it all worked out. As you know, that was year that they made their stand in Mexico City, and the African American group said, "No. He's white as far as we're concerned, because he's not African American. That kind of stuck in my mind. This should be a feeling of reciprocity: "Hey, I'll accept you, but you also have to accept me."

When I was in Viet Nam, the way that we treated the Vietnamese people who were servants to us, whether it was in the kitchen or in the barracks, basically the Americans treated them as dogs. All I could see was they were another brown-skin person. To me it was just an American Indian serving me. It was really hard for me to have that feeling. That's the kind of image we leave around the world, as far as Americans are concerned, and it's kind of sad, I think.

MIKE: Yeah.

MR. TUCKWIN: Real sad.

MIKE: And your relationships in college, were they pretty much some of your friendships?

MR. TUCKWIN: My first year in college I went to Wichita State University, and I probably felt some prejudice. But I found out after about four or five months that it

was really my own feelings. Most everyone was so absorbed in trying to get their studies done and their activities done and involved in their own little worlds, they probably didn't even see me. And, of course, me being light-complected, I know they didn't know I was Indian. But I felt it just because of my own previous culture and my history. But, after a while, I start realizing that they could care less what color I am. I grew into being able to adjust to it. It was probably difficult. But, I think it was inward. I think it was my own feelings more than anything.

MIKE: So you really felt comfortable with both blacks and whites?

MR. TUCKWIN: I never ever had any problem that way. We've got interracial marriages in our family and our extended family—both black and white, Mexican—and so I've never really had a big feeling, even though we use phrases as we did back then, and titles for people and things like that. But it was always pretty well accepted by both. At least we felt that way. Tribal members use tribal phrases to describe racial considerations or to tease others with words that carry racial overtones.

MIKE: Yeah. Do you think there's a change in the attitudes of our young Indian people, as opposed to when you grew up or the influences that your parents and grandparents or aunts had with you in terms of teaching you to accept people? Do you think today's generation is more racist?

MR. TUCKWIN: I think there is more openness, and probably a lot of our youth are more accepting in many ways. But, at the same time, I think that they realize they are a minority and they attach themselves more to minority ways. You can look at the dress that we have. I know this is a concern from a lot of elders in Indian communities when kids tell them, "The only thing Indian about me is the color of my skin or my name. I'm accepting of whether it be gangs, whether it be music, going to college—Dartmouth or Yale or somewhere like that." They've accepted that. I can be outside of who I am as far as my ethnic background goes. The idea here is that tribal youth are connecting to other behaviors that create an identity that they find acceptable.

MIKE: Do you see us moving away from our traditions as Indian people?

MR. TUCKWIN: Yes and no. Now that we have more economic development—through the Indian gaming, for instance—I think that a lot of them are trying to reclaim and recapture some of the things that we've lost. There's a real push there, which is really good. On the other hand, I say yes, there is something lost. I'm pretty close to the Southwest through my coaching here and a lot of the former runners will say that the guys don't go through near the rituals that they used to go. The young women that go through coming into puberty and those kinds of things. Now they see a lot of that being lost. Some of them that are able to financially are trying to improve. But I think the more traditional ones are losing some things, as well.

MIKE: What are your personal feelings about that, knowing that we are losing some culture? And, it's accelerated. I can sense it, I can feel it, that we're moving farther away from the values I learned.

MR. TUCKWIN: That it is going to be a great loss to us. It took me forty years of my life, a lot of my adult life, to accept that I'm half Indian and half white and kind of like who am I. I'm just who I am. These young people are going to have greater outside influences with all the mass communication and mass media that they're able to be apart of. I think it's going to be a real loss if we do lose more of our identity, and it's going to cause a lot of mental anguish and anxiety for our youth. I think there's going to be more and more. It's going to dominate us for a while.

MIKE: Can you give me an example? You gave me an example of a moment when you felt discrimination and the circumstances. The discrimination occurred here on campus. But outside this community, what is the worst example of discrimination shown toward a black person?

MR. TUCKWIN: There are probably a number of things. We went to the Texas Relays when I was a sophomore in college and ran there at a big track meet. At that time a third or fourth of our team was African American. We came back through Ardmore, Oklahoma, and we were going to spend the night and they said, "No, you got blacks with you." That was in 1962-1963. We had to back to Texas to spend the night. That was probably one of the most overt personal experiences I had with discrimination. The same thing happened in Columbia, Missouri. We went into a restaurant with the track team and they said, "You can't eat here." We went to the next place, and they said, "Yeah, you can eat here, but you guys are all going to have to sit in the back." I saw that happen with black athletes.

MIKE: How did that make you feel?

MR. TUCKWIN: I guess your first emotion is anger. I was very fortunate to have a good support system—my aunts and uncles, coaches, and spirituality. I think a lot of times people just say, "Well, they're just ignorant. They just don't know. They weren't in their own minds." But that's how I'd have to stereotype them, too, if they were so discriminatory and so prejudiced.

MIKE: Did you ever base your frustration with the standard that this country is supposed to stand for?

MR. TUCKWIN: Very much so. I grew up as a Catholic and still am today. It is a big Christian church around world, and yet I see things even within the church that are very discriminatory. There are a lot of biases and prejudices there. It

makes you wonder sometimes why you are doing this when you see things like this happening.

You go back to our own government itself. There is definitely a lot of discrimination today even. Right here in Lawrence, there's always, "We need things on the east side. We need things on the north side." But it seems like the latest equipment goes to the west side or the southwest side. It's still here in 2004.

MIKE: I know some of the school teachers talk about that. The quality of education is needed more in some of these areas, yet they're the ones that are being drained. The money is siphoned off into an area that probably should do without it. I see what you're saying and it's probably true. One of the things historically that became an issue with Indian people was that they had no religious concepts worth regarding, as a consequence the need to integrate Indian people into this religious concept so that they can justify some of the actions taken—like the taking of land and things like that. Indian people would be more satisfied with smaller plot than a larger plot if they learned how to be white. The debate was religion. You're a strong Catholic. Do you sometimes have any doubts or questions about that?

MR. TUCKWIN: Oh, yeah. Again, I haven't studied that much because it's all negative, and if you look at Indian history in America written by the previous historians, they don't paint too good a picture of Indians. Of course, the churches have been just as much a part of that as anybody, whether it's the mission schools or the boarding schools that churches operated. Look at the history that's taking place in the Southwest or California: Indians being slaves in the name of the church. "We're going to Christianize you. But, if you don't want to become Christianized—in this case, Catholicism—then you're going to be slaves, you're going to build this big church for us in the name of Catholicism." It is kind of hard to be accepting. I see things today, I'm involved in the National Tic-a-wee-tha Conference, for instance. That's where we try to bring back the idea that Indians are a very spiritual people, and we should be more accepting of their cultural and spiritual values. We're trying to incorporate that into the Catholic Mass. There are some steps being taken, but you still see it.

MIKE: One more question: What is your overall take on the community? Do you think things have improved in the community as far as race relations?

MR. TUCKWIN: I do for me personally, Mike. I've been in the community for forty years, more than that actually. Growing up in the community people start being accepting of who you are. Positive steps are being taken. With the University of Kansas being here, and us going to higher education, whether it be the junior-college era or it's now the four year, they are more cooperative in efforts to work with us and to work on grants and the co-op program we have where we can transfer our students both ways. I think there are some positive steps being

taken, and we're good for the Lawrence community. We talk about the cultural diversity here in Lawrence and we're a great asset, actually, to Lawrence.

I think that we at Haskell, however, could take some bigger steps for us being in the community as well. I mean, it's not just one way. It's not just them accepting us, but we also have to be accepting of Lawrence. And I say that in a positive way, not just in a discriminatory way. I think we're at times hesitant about interacting with all those around us and sharing. I know in a sense where we're coming from. We have our own feasts at home and things like that. We don't share that with the community. That's our right. That's a part of our spiritual being. We may be more reserved in our whole approach to outside communities, outside people. It's going to take time, if we want that. We don't have to. But, economically, I think Haskell is great for the Lawrence community. We bring in millions of dollars to the community, and I think that the Lawrence community could interact as well.

It's kind of sad to say, "Oh, yeah, I really like your campus. I was out there for football games." But that's the only thing they've ever been here for. The Lawrence High or Free State football game, or maybe a Haskell game. But there's much, much more here. Then you'd get to know the people, the students, and the genuineness and the goodness that we have, because we've got some really, really great Indian people.

MIKE: That's good. Thank you.

**Delores Two-Hatchet**

Tribe: Comanche and Kiowa  
Residence: Lawton, Oklahoma  
Education: University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma (MA)  
Occupation: Director, Higher Education Office, Comanche Nation of Oklahoma

MIKE: Would you give me your name, your tribe, and then we'll start from there.

MRS. TWO-HATCHET: My name is Delores Two-Hatchet. Comanche and Kiowa. My maiden is Quee-ton.

MIKE: When you look at the American Indian culture and how you grew up with your parents and grandparents, did you find that they distinguished between races, or did the culture itself teach you tolerance about other races?

MRS. TWO-HATCHET: I didn't really stay with my parents when I was from five years old until I was twelve. I grew up at the government boarding school, Fort Sill Indian School. We were an institutionalized situation, and it was all Indian. But most of our teachers and counselors and dormitory personnel were white. There were a few Indians, but not very many of them. My first encounter with blacks was probably in high school. I transferred to Cash High School, a public school, when I was twelve years old. When I was in high school, there was one black family at Cash, Oklahoma, and that's the first time we had had any kind of interaction with a black person. He was a young man. He wasn't in my class, but he was on campus and he played basketball. But until I got to college, I really didn't have any kind of interaction with black people or even other minorities. It was mostly just white and Indian.

MIKE: Did you find you made any kind of a judgment on that one individual?

MRS. TWO-HATCHET: The only perspectives I had was from the media. During that time, they had the *Amos and Andy* television show. Was it Sambo, the jungle person? And in our books at school, it was the Sambo jungle character. Those movies used to have the Bowery Boys and Little Rascals. That's the only time we ever saw black people. And they always were ridiculed and stereotyped. But my parents always taught us to appreciate diversity and not to be judgmental. So that's kind of the way we grew up, even though we weren't around other ethnic groups or other racial groups.

MIKE: Do you think we've been influenced as Indian people by the media? Sometimes we see how blacks have been treated and then, just through looking at that, we find that we're thinking that they might be different. Sometimes when

we get mad at each other, we say, "Oh, you "Con-ge-on" or things like that. Did that affect you—the media—in terms of how you looked at other groups?

MRS. TWO-HATCHET: At that time the media didn't show any ethnic groups in a positive way, even the Indians and Mexicans. Cartoons were and still are really discriminatory to minority groups.

MIKE: Yeah. Do you think our historical treatment by the United States government has allowed us to be more sympathetic to the discrimination that's directed toward blacks?

MRS. TWO-HATCHET: In a way. But I think ours is a little different. I think blacks were more accepted than we were, probably because they had more political clout too. They even do now today because of the numbers of Indian people involved in political elections as compared to the blacks. We have no voice really, if you really think about it.

MIKE: Yeah. Did you realize at any point that there's something a little peculiar about the state of Oklahoma and how they would segregate blacks? Indian people could go to public schools, but it wasn't likely that you would see a large contingent of blacks, except at an all-black school like in Lawton, and some of these other larger cities had segregated black schools.

MRS. TWO-HATCHET: Even in Lawton on the south side where the black people were, they're still there, even though they have a choice of moving out. A lot of them prefer that, just like Indian people. We have our Indian communities, and a lot of Indians prefer that. The most segregated time of Sunday morning is 11:00 during worship because everybody goes to their own churches too.

MIKE: That's interesting. Do you think your boarding-school experience affected your views of other minorities?

MRS. TWO-HATCHET: It made me curious because we never saw very many white people and black people. I wanted to learn more about them. It helped me a lot. I'm very liberal as far as tolerance toward minorities.

MIKE: How did you feel when you went to school in Durant? That's considered a very segregated town.

MRS. TWO-HATCHET: It is. Even the mascot was called the Savages. The Indians were depicted as the mascot. In the 1970s, we went through the whole mascot issue that's happening right now. It's been thirty years. It went in a circle, and we're still going through that again. What you have to do to talk to white people, what they understand is money, and we showed them the amount of money that was coming into the college in the name of Indian education and the scholarships. That's how they listened and we were able to change the image of

the mascot. They took it all down, but now it's back again because there are Indian people that go along with that they don't think anything's wrong with it.

At that time, they wanted to put whether we should have the Indian depicted as the mascot to a vote of the general school population. And we said, "We can't do that, because it doesn't affect them the way it does us." We feel that we're discriminated. You're depicting a mascot as a savage, as an Indian, a Plains Indian. In Choctaw country they didn't even have that kind of dress. But they do now because there's so much intermarriage and adoption of other cultures.

MIKE: Were you aware of any KKK organizations in the state?

MRS. TWO-HATCHET: We heard there were in Durant. But, that was before we got there. My mother went to Indian public schools and I audiotaped her one year. I think it was 1983. And she was talking about that. They said they weren't afraid of the blacks. They were afraid of the KKK, because they would dress up in their little outfits and they would go driving around in the community. She said they turned out school one time because they said the KK were coming.

MIKE: That's interesting. Do you have any personal views about blacks in terms of intermarriage between blacks and Indians?

MRS. TWO-HATCHET: I have a lot of cultures in my family. My grandfather had two wives who were sisters. There are about five hundred of us. Or family represents just about every ethnicity in the whole United States (laughter), and everybody is accepted. It doesn't matter to us.

MIKE: Do you think that's the culture? Do you think that's tribal Indian culture? The acceptance?

MRS. TWO-HATCHET: To be accepting?

MIKE: To have the ability?

MRS. TWO-HATCHET: I think so. When I teach, I talk to the black people about, "You're just like we are. You have your tribes, but your tribes are in another country. Your language, everything is another country." But I bring that up, and they don't think about those things. They think that they're just here and that's it because they have a history behind them. They really understand and appreciate our culture because they feel a familiarity about it. They'll say, "Well, you know we used to do this." One lady did a report about Ethiopians, and all of the things were similar to our culture.

MIKE: At any time did any person of black heritage play a role in your tribe?

MRS. TWO-HATCHET: What kind of role are you talking about?

MIKE: Just a functional role, a role that had to do with everyday functions within the tribe as an accepted member.

MRS. TWO-HATCHET: When you go to the powwows, you can see the participation of those that are part black and part white or part Indian. One place that I saw that a lot was when I worked as a counselor at Riverside Indian School, and we had a lot of students who were half black and half Indian. They were accepted as Indians because most of the time a lot of them were involved in school activities, and that helped them to be more accepted.

MIKE: Now, there seems to be something about the culture that we've identified as a black culture with the language and the style and the fashion and things like that, and many of our Indian young people have actually imitated that type of behavior.

MRS. TWO-HATCHET: Yes.

MIKE: Have we dropped the ball on this as educators?

MRS. TWO-HATCHET: Yes.

MIKE: By helping our students become more proud of their culture.

MRS. TWO-HATCHET: By working at Riverside, the students come from all over the United States. Even though they may be brown, a lot of them grew up in urban high schools. They don't even know what it is to be Indian. They dress and talk like they're Hispanics or blacks. One of the ways we try to let them help to identify the way they were doing is that we had workshops. One of the particular workshops I designed was called "My Grandpa Wasn't a Gangster." That means our people had cultures, they had values and they had dress, and that you don't have to be someone that you're not. Try to get them to understand who they are. If you don't, you won't grow as a human being, because everything contributes to that—your spirituality and everything. It's not just going to school, it's everything.

MIKE: Yeah. To have that exchange of ideas would be more evenly matched to where other people could accept what Indian people represent as well. I think that's important.

MRS. TWO-HATCHET: I think with the rap music, we have Indian rappers too. I try to help students to get back to who they are and develop their own culture and interest in their own history and language too.

MIKE: This is the last question. Through, my experience I believe that our traditions are very strong in keeping an even balance and accepting people. But what I've seen in the recent contemporary time, I think a lot of our Indian people

being less tolerant and showing more racism towards groups in the way they speak to other peoples or address other people or describe other people. But I never heard my grandparents or even my parents speak like this. There seems to be now a difference in the way that the traditions have influenced, are influencing us.

MRS. TWO-HATCHET: I don't think I've experienced that.

MIKE: I think that, at Haskell I hear a lot of our students talk pretty negatively about other groups of people, and it's something I've never heard.

MRS. TWO-HATCHET: I hear a lot of tribalism, against other tribes. But not necessarily against the younger ones. It's usually the younger students who talk about blacks or Hispanics. It's usually the gangsters that do that. I think it's a phase they're going through too, because they all have to go through that.

MIKE: I appreciate it. Thank you.

**Ronald Two-Hatchet**

Tribe: Kiowa  
Residence: Lawton, Oklahoma  
Education: University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma, (MA)  
Occupation: Retired teacher, Oklahoma public schools, Lawton, Oklahoma

MR. TWO-HATCHET: My name is Ron Two-Hatchet. I was born and raised in Carnegie, Oklahoma. I now live in Lawton, Oklahoma. I'm a school teacher. I'm starting my thirty-sixth year in the field of education. I've been a classroom teacher and I've been a coach. I've coached several sports—basketball, girls' basketball, baseball, football, track, tennis, soccer, girls' soccer, girls' track, and boys' track. So I've got a pretty extensive background in the education field. I've been a school administrator for several years. I hold a master's degree from Southeastern State College, a master's degree in school administration from the University of Oklahoma, and I've spent the last thirty years with the Lawton Public Schools. I was born and raised here in southwestern Oklahoma at Carnegie, Oklahoma.

You asked about my relationship and my experience with African Americans in the community. As a small child, I grew up in an area that was primarily Indian and white. In the small community that I grew up in my whole social contact was primarily Indian/white. There were no blacks in our community. The closest African Americans, at that particular time, lived in Anadarko, which is about thirty miles from us, and Lawton, which is about fifty miles from us. The only time I ever saw blacks was when we went to those towns. Generally we didn't see them unless we went through their communities, because they were segregated communities, and you very seldom saw them in the mainstream of the community at that time.

I started grade school in the first grade at Carnegie and graduated from high school there. Only one African American attended school the twelve years in Carnegie. A young man came in, stayed about a month, and then he left. Later the young man came up here at Apache, Oklahoma, which is about twenty-five miles from here. And I knew him in junior high and then later competed against him in football and track in high school. His name is Sylvester Williams. Many people in the Apache community and the Carnegie community knew who Sylvester was.

I was active in athletics—track and primarily basketball and football. Though I played college football and I also coached for several years, I didn't really come into contact with African Americans, even in my social contacts and my professional contacts, until I was at least thirty years of age. I'd already had seven years of teaching experience at the time. I never taught with a black; I

never taught a black student until that time. The high schools that we competed with were small, primarily all-white schools in our community.

This was in the segregated 1950s and '60s, before the Civil Rights Act. Many of the African Americans that lived in these small communities left these communities and were forced to live in segregated communities. We competed against schools like Fort Cobb, Mountain View, and Cordell. Hinton, Roosevelt, and Lone Wolf were all-white communities. Because southwestern Oklahoma was primarily white/Indian, at that time there were very few African Americans that lived within our community.

From there, I went to Haskell in Lawrence, Kansas. There were very few blacks at the time living in Lawrence, Kansas. Most of the blacks that lived in Lawrence, Kansas, at that time attended the University of Kansas. Gayle Sayers was at the University of Kansas at that time and I think there were one or two other African Americans. But I never saw an African American in town at the time I was in Lawrence. I don't even know where they lived at.

I did play football at Haskell, and some of the African Americans that I encountered were teams, African American athletes that played at Fort Scott, Johnson County Junior College, and Butler County Junior College. They had African athletes. So, other than just competing with them, I didn't have any contact with them at all beyond that. After I finished Haskell, I went to college at Southwestern State College in Weatherford, Oklahoma. Once again, that's within a small community. There were four African Americans on that team, but I didn't socially associate with them. They stayed with themselves after practice. I never went to lunch with them; I never went to their room. I'd meet them occasionally in the hallways, in the dorm, or maybe in the classroom. But I don't think I even had classes with any of the Africans. I can't remember, other than football and track; I didn't have any contact with African American athletes at the time.

After I left there, I moved to Phoenix, Arizona. Phoenix, Arizona, is South. There were some African Americans, but you never saw them in town, so I didn't have any contact. There were no African Americans anywhere within the complex that I worked at. I got married and moved to Albuquerque, New Mexico, and there were very hardly any blacks there. This was in 1965-'67, that period of time. Then I left Albuquerque to get my college degree at Southeastern State College in Durant, Oklahoma. Durant was, during the early part of the 1920s and 1930s, the heart of Choctaw country. In Oklahoma, it was called the capital of Little Dixie. The southeastern part of Oklahoma was called Little Dixie. There were blacks living in Ardmore and Hugo and some of the smaller communities down there. But there were no blacks that lived in Durant. In 1968, when my wife and I went to college down there, there were no blacks that had ever attended Southeastern State College.

I graduated from college in 1970, and in 1967 and '68 the first group of African American students enrolled at Southeastern. Some from Ardmore and Hugo came to school there. But the first two years I was there, there were no blacks on campus. And then they brought their first group of athletes and football players and basketball players.

After I graduated from college in 1970, and I took a job at Durant High School. I taught there for four years, and there were no African Americans that lived in Durant or ever had gone to school in Durant. The only African Americans that were living in town were living on campus at the college. Matter of fact, in Durant, on the courthouse lawn there was a sign that said, "All blacks must be out of town by sundown."

There were many blacks in Colbert, which is a small town south of Durant, and Blue, which is a small town a little further outside, and some in Wapanucka, those small towns around Durant. But there was that sign. From having lived in the community for about six years I knew it was also one of the centers for the Ku Klux Klan at that time. Durant was a very segregated city.

During the 1970s when I first started—1971-'72—there was this big push for integration within many of the schools. When I first started coaching, I coached at Durant. We played some of these schools. I was coaching in 1972, when schools like Muskogee and schools Okmulgee integrated. They integrated Okmulgee Dunbar. Lawton Douglas was here, and the only time I ever played against an African American team was when we played Lawton Douglas. That's when I was a senior in high school. Many of the guys that played on that team, I later met in my professional life as a teacher or an administrator here in Lawton.

So I had an opportunity to coach against some of these players. But I never taught an African American student, never worked with an African American as a classroom teacher or as an administrator until I moved here to Lawton in 1974, and I started coaching Eisner High School. It was my first experience working with African Americans.

MIKE: What do you think was the difference? The state of Oklahoma was a very strong segregationist state. And, yet, it could integrate Indian people. But they integrated Indian people after they took a lot of their land and placed them in a situation where they made economic development difficult. Did you find yourself thinking about how you could be accepted and another minority group be excluded?

MR. TWO-HATCHET: It never dawned on me because the community that I came from was totally Indian/white. In that community, Indians pretty much remained with themselves. We went to school together on a daily basis, but in our social activities outside of school, we segregated ourselves within our community. I think many of the Indian communities did that—Mountain View,

Apache, Carnegie, and Anadarko. Anadarko High School had blacks, whites, and Indians. But on a social basis, most of the times the Indians remained to themselves; the blacks remained to themselves. Anadarko had part of their town where all the black community lived. They didn't come out of that community, because they had their own social setting, their own social economic setting right there in that area.

MIKE: It's still that way today.

MR. TWO-HATCHET: Yeah, partly that way. It's identified that way, but now the blacks live all over town. Here in Lawton it was the same way. Lawton had their black community, black economic system, stores, movie theaters, doctors, and dentists.

I knew many of the people that are up there who are as old as I am or a little older than I am now who integrated Lawton High School. I had the privilege of working with the people that were the first ones to come out of Lawton Douglas to go into Lawton High School in the early 1950s, early 1960s.

Having started teaching in 1970, I had the privilege of seeing schools integrated in Oklahoma. I mentioned Muskogee. I had a good friend that coached basketball at Muskogee, an Indian boy. His name was Spencer Wilkerson. Spencer was an assistant basketball coach, and when Muskogee integrated, he was the coach. He was assistant coach at Muskogee High School, and Muskogee had integrated at that time. Now this isn't written any place; this is something that I know because I know Spencer. You don't see it in the books. But what happened is that Muskogee High School integrated. Muskogee had an all-black school called Muskogee Manual, and they had some very good athletes at that school. And then they had Muskogee High School. When they integrated it about 1970-'71, the basketball coach that was at Muskogee was a white guy and his assistant was Spencer Wilkerson, who was an Indian boy. Which was no problem. Muskogee has a long history on Indian-white relations. When they integrated—and they were forced to integrate—they didn't voluntarily integrate. This was when integration was going across the United States in the early 1970s. When they integrated, the white coach resigned, because he said he did not want to coach blacks. Muskogee Manual the year before had won the Class B state championship, and so they had all those kids back. When they closed the black school, all those students had to go to Muskogee High School. So they had the coach there at Muskogee High school and all his kids. Muskogee Public School just hired a black coach as a coach. And he chose Spencer as his assistant. Where you down at Macomb about that time? You remember Spencer?

MIKE: No, I don't.

MR. TWO-HATCHET: They had a very good basketball team that next year, because all those kids that won that state championship came into Muskogee High School. And so they made the state tournament for two or three years in a row there. I think one year they won it two or three years after they integrated. There were several issues like that when schools were integrated. It was coming into fashion. And I came into Lawton in 1974, right after the Viet Nam war, the social issue of problems within the Lawton public schools. Lawton public schools were in the process of integrating. They were integrating not only the schools, but within the community also. So my experience working with African Americans was, when I came into the system, as athletes and as students.

MIKE: How about growing up? There is a sense that Indian people, in a traditional way of thinking, look at all things as human life, and really don't designate or distinguish. Did you grow up in an atmosphere like your grandparents or parents? Making comments that might show discrimination?

MR. TWO-HATCHET: My wife accuses me of being a racist. But I'm a selective racist. I mean, I know what I'm doing when I'm being racist. It's kind of like—who's the OU baseball coach that just got fired? I know what I'm saying and I know how I'm saying it. I understand his comments, I understand where he's coming from, and that how he tried to be facetious in what he was saying and what he was doing. Yet, it crossed that fine line: "This nigger baseball player, and he's acting like a nigger." When I was coaching, we made those comments. In my very first coaching job, I was the only Indian. I was the only Indian in that whole school system.

We were a big school. We played 2A football. We played Ardmore, Ada, and places like that. And McAlister. We played big schools, and we made comments like this. For example, I coached with a guy that was the national high school coach of the year. He got the job down there. He and I both competed for the job. He got the job, so I was his assistant. I was his offensive coordinator. And I went out to Okmulgee. Okmulgee had just integrated the year before, or two years before that. The year that we played them, they won the state championship. But they won it because, the year before, Okmulgee Dunbar had won the Class B or Class A state championship in football. When they integrated, they brought all those kids to Muskogee High School. Two of those guys, Thacker for example, one of the running backs, went on and became a professional football player with New England. He went on to college and he didn't go to a college in Oklahoma, but he went on to some other place and became a professional football player. When we go out and we scout—now this just sounds facetious—he says, "Ron," what did they run?" I said, they run the wishbone." Okay. He said, "What do they do?" I said, "They got number 22 over here, they got number 35 over here, they run on single. They run a single wide receiver." I said, "Sometimes they'll come in and they'll run a sweep ride, they run option right, option left." And those guys are fast."

That was the first year Okmulgee had had black athletes and their whole backfield was black, except the quarterback was white. They had a black fullback, two black halfbacks, and had a black out here at that split receiver, a fast kid. I said, "The kid outside is fast. We got a good boy." He says, "What do they do?" I said, "They run wide. They run option left, option right, and then they, and then occasionally they'll belly in there and they'll step back and they'll throw deep." And so we're sitting there, and he said, "Well, what do you think of their offense?" I said, "I call their offense 'Nigger right and nigger left and nigger go deep.'" That was our comment in that coaching session. And that's the way we prepared for Okmulgee.

Those are the kind of comments that I worked with. As young boy, I grew up with this, with using the 'N' word. I teach at a school now where we're probably forty-percent African American, but we don't allow the kids to use the 'N' word. Even the African American kids using the 'N' word. It's like using the 'F' word. The 'N' word is like using the 'F' word. Kids can't use the 'F' word, we know what the 'F' word, we know what the 'N' word is, and we can't do that. Let me give you an example. When I was growing up, we'd come to Lawton and my grandmother always told me that, "If you don't behave when get to Lawton, if you don't mind, I'm going to take you and I'm going to leave you with those..." We call them—Kiowas call them "Kon-gi-own"—that's what we call blacks, African Americans. "And I'm going to leave you down there in "Kon-gi-own" town." And we'd go to Anadarko, it was same thing. "If you don't behave, I'm going to take you down and leave you with those 'Kon-gi-own.'" So they were always kind of the bogeyman as I was growing up.

Then my uncles who had been in World War II, when they came home. You know what a "nigger shooter" is, don't you? You don't ever use that anymore. (A nigger shooter is a sling shot).

MIKE: No.

MR. TWO-HATCHET: You don't dare use it. You know what being "nigger rich" is, don't you?

MIKE: Yeah.

MR. TWO-HATCHET: That's having the old shack with the Cadillac parked in front. I'm using all these racial remarks. But those are the remarks that I grew up with. Those are the things that I knew because that's what I was taught. You remember playing softball and baseball? When you got a hit and the ball went to the right field, what was it called?

MIKE: I don't know.

MR. TWO-HATCHET: It was called a nigger hit, wasn't it? When you hit to the opposite field. Lanny? You remember that? You remember hearing that term?

MIKE: Yeah.

MR. TWO-HATCHET: I mean those were the kind of things that I grew up within the community that I was at.

MIKE: Yeah.

MR. TWO-HATCHET: That's what my whole experience was as I was growing up. And I'm bringing things back that I think most of us are familiar with. You came from Wichita down here. You went to school with blacks in Wichita.

MIKE: Yeah.

MR. TWO-HATCHET: But you didn't have—maybe just Sylvester, maybe his brother down there in Apache.

MIKE: Yeah.

MR. TWO-HATCHET: That's about it. Lanny Asepermy went to school with Mack and those guys. But in Anadarko, there was Mack Kurkendahl, Donnie Kurkendahl. I met these guys later in life. I knew them when I was in high school. Fine gentlemen. The finest people you want to meet.

MIKE: You mentioned the story about your grandmother raising a black.

MR. TWO-HATCHET: I never met the young man, I don't know who he was. But it came out. Blacks used to come and work the farms. Most of ours was farm labor in the area. Apparently this boy was abandoned for some particular reason. He was abandoned and nobody took him. He was needing somebody. My grandmother at the time—this was back in the 1930s I guess—she said he was about twelve, thirteen years of age at the time, and he didn't have any place to go. Nobody wanted him, and his folks were gone. They were itinerant farmers, I guess. They'd come and they were black. They left and he was there. So he came to her house, because he was hungry and didn't have any place to stay. She fed him and he stayed and he worked. He stayed, but the way I understand it, he slept in a cellar. She would feed him and he stayed down and he slept in the cellar. And he would go and he would work and he would come, and he'd go back and sleep in the cellar until he got to be maybe fifteen, and see if he could go on his own. So then he left. I just remember one time in my life some black person coming to our house, and somebody said that was that person.

But from that point on, I never knew. When I was young, we used to come to Lawton, we used to come to Lawton and go to the Indian hospital. My

grandmother would come to the Indian hospital. And we'd stop in Lawton and work. At the time, down there by Douglas High School, we'd go to some black lady's house, and me and my grandpa would stay in the car, and grandma would get off and go talk to this old black lady. Now who she was, I never knew. It wouldn't be all the time, but it would be every three or four trips down there, she'd come and she'd talk to this black lady, get in the car, and we'd go back home.

Then after a while, we stopped. I don't even know where the house is. It's still down there, east of Lawton, some place in that area. I remember when I was growing up, also in Hobart, us going to Hobart as a young child, and later when I became a teenager sometimes we'd go over my grandma's. There was black kid there; he grew up in Hobart and was raised by a Kiowa family. That guy could speak Kiowa better than any other. Some of the people in Hobart know who he is. Apparently he's left Hobart also.

There may have been some intermarriage, some interrelationships between these people. I don't know for sure. But I do know in that instance what happened. I think there was some compassion to that point, and I think there were a lot of white people that was raised by Indians and they left. That was a characteristic of Indian people. If somebody was in distress or somebody was in a situation, whether it be Kiowas, Comanches, whatever it is, they offered a helping hand to those people. And then, they went their way—there's documented histories—throughout Oklahoma and different tribes. I imagine if you talk to other tribal people, you're going to find stories of African Americans that were among the people at one time. And you'll find some of the older and, now, the interracial couples that are within the communities. That's quite common. You see the characteristics within the children that are within our communities. And you don't think anything about it.

MIKE: Yeah.

MR. TWO-HATCHET: Some people, the older people, still think that there should be the segregation of the races. I do. I'm of the old school. I still think there should be segregation of the tribes (laughter). I'm educated enough to know this isn't possible anymore. I always knew I was going to marry an Indian girl. I go to Southwestern. Mike, you were in the same situation at OCU. About the only girls that were there were some Indians and white girls. If you're a high profile individual—football, basketball—then normally the white girls are can draw your attention. It was my determination many, many years ago. My grandma always told me, "Don't ever marry a white woman because they'll make you work." I married a Kiowa-Comanche. Hell, I got to work every day (laughter).

But through my career, I've had the opportunity not only to work with, professionally with blacks, to associate with them, to coach them, to teach them, to serve on committees with them within our community. I've had the privilege of

working with Hispanics within our community, with working with Orientals. Within our community of Lawton, there's a lot of Orientals, Southeast Asian people, Vietnamese, Chinese. So I've an opportunity to experience all these kinds of things. You mentioned athletes. I remembered in 1965, the very first black athlete ever recruited by OCU. Who was it?

MIKE: Maybe James Ware?

MR. TWO-HATCHET: Eddie Jackson. Remember the Jacksons?

MIKE: Yeah, he came from Oklahoma.

MR. TWO-HATCHET: Eddie Jackson. In 1965 I stayed in Oklahoma City with Gene Tsoodle. Gene Tsoodle and I had an apartment together. Eddie Jackson was from El Paso, Texas, where he went to high school. Seven footer. Eddie came from El Paso, Texas, was recruited by the University of Oklahoma. He stayed there one year, and he was the first black recruited by the University of Oklahoma. He left Oklahoma. Abe picked him up at OCU in 1965. Eddie was the only black there, and he would come to Pork's. You know where that little milk bottle is right there on Northwest Classen?

MIKE: Yeah.

MR. TWO-HATCHET: Northwest Classen, Classen and Northwest 23rd. Pork and I had an apartment a block, maybe two blocks, north there. In the summer Eddie couldn't stay in the dormitory. He had to stay in east Oklahoma City. And so Eddie would come back. He practiced basketball at OCU, shoot around at the gym, and he'd sometimes spend a night with us there at OCU. And sometimes we'd go out, Pork, he, and I. He and Pork and I would go eat some place, and then we'd take him back to east Oklahoma City. I was surprised that Eddie stayed in Oklahoma City all these years. So I've known Eddie since he first came to OCU. I knew who Eddie was and I've known him since then. So my experience with African Americans has been very positive over the years. I still understand those old childhood prejudices that we knew and that we learned. I still have a problem, a personal problem. I've seen it in schools and where I teach at. The interracial dating and stuff like this. But it's something I, as an adult, as a professional, understand. The social shifts and things have eventually come through here.

I went through high school, I went through Haskell, I got a master's degree at Southeastern, and I got sixty hours above my master's degree at the University of Oklahoma. Look at all those hours and all those courses that I took. I've never had a black instructor. Never in my life. Now that's a lot of hours. Two years at Haskell, twelve years of high school, two years at Haskell, four years of college, at least two years in a master's degree, at least three years, fifty more hours above a master's at OU, and never had a black instructor.

MIKE: That says something about the state.

MR. TWO-HATCHET: That says to me about selecting teachers (laughter). That says it about Oklahoma. Because all of my education was there in Oklahoma. I don't know the answer to your questions.

MIKE: Yeah, you have.

MR. TWO-HATCHET: I've gone from a professional setting to a social setting to a professional education setting to a personal setting. I've tried to take you through the whole gamut of my experience of how I worked with them and dealt with those people.

MIKE: It's interesting. I've forgotten how segregation was.

MR. TWO-HATCHET: In Oklahoma? Having so much experience in the history of the education of Oklahoma, we used to have what were called county schools in small communities like Caddo County for example, in places like Fort Cobb, Alden, Broxton, Apache, Cyril. If there were blacks living in those communities, in order for them to get a public education, there was a central school built some place along the way where the blacks would go to school. They wouldn't allow them to go to the public schools. They'd have to go to those county schools to get an education, and some of them were long distances for them to go. They were spotted throughout the county. That way, if there was any blacks that wanted an education, they didn't go to public school. They went to those schools.

One of the very first Indians to attend the public schools in southwestern Oklahoma—I don't know if you remember Dorothy Lorentino? She was Comanche. She was one of the very first to go to school in Lawton public schools. Her grandpa had to go to court in 1912, 1914. Cornell Pewewardy knows the story. He had to go to court because they wouldn't let her attend the public schools in Lawton or Comanche County.

Fort Sill Indian School was in our area when I was growing up, if you're an Indian. Lanny and those guys were young enough, you didn't have to make this choice. You went to public schools. I went to public schools. But in the 1940s and '50s, usually it was Fort Sill Indian School, and for the blacks there were segregated schools. That's my experience with this.

MIKE: I appreciate it. That's really helpful.

AUDIENCE: I've got a question for you. I know like your parents say you're supposed to respect all races, but when we're at home, everybody talks like that. Do you think that has been passed on to your children?

MR. TWO-HATCHET: Yeah. I see it in my son. I just saw it in my granddaughter. We were down in Carnegie during the Fourth of July. There's this huge tall guy. He's a movie actor. Everybody's going up shaking hands with him--speaking to him and everything. And my little four-year-old granddaughter. Her grandma takes them up there and says, "This is [so and so], he's a movie star. Shake his hand." She puts her hands behind her and says, "No." She comes back to the car. "Why didn't you want to shake hands with him?" "He's 'Kon-gi-own,'" she says.

She's four years old. My youngest son is kind of the same. We're selective in our prejudices. You want to talk about blacks? He'll talk with me privately about it. Yeah, we'll throw out racial slang. We know all these racial slangs. We know all the racial slangs about the spics, the whaps and the niggers and all those kinds of things.

I mentioned with this Haskell game coming up, I got a good friend who's a graduate from Langston. I just got through meeting with him. I said, "When I was growing up at Carnegie, we played a lot of games where it was Indians against the whites." Now," I said, "with this football game, it's going to be Indians against the niggers." But he's a good friend of mine, so I can talk to him like that. Of course, he'll say things about Indians.

I don't know when you were, Mike, when you were playing. When I was playing football at Southwestern in the 1970s, I was called a red nigger. There was those rednecks that I played with, from Beaver, Clinton, El Reno, Altus, and Hobart. I was out there, I was taking their spot. You know? I was a starter. I started as a freshman at Southwestern and played football games. As a freshman, I returned punts. When something would happen in practice, I was called a red nigger, blanket ass, and all those kinds of things that go along with that. I don't know if you had those kind of terms thrown at you, but I did. You know?

MIKE: No, I never did have anything like that.

MR. TWO-HATCHET: And I had fights in the dressing room. I remember going in there and getting undressed after practice. I had my stuff sitting on this bench, and this little white linebacker comes in there. He's on the other side of the dressing room. There's a locker over here, and my locker is on this side. We're all stripped down and we just come out of the shower. He comes in there and knocks my helmet and my shoulder pads off. He said, "I supposed this belongs to some goddamn red nigger sitting in here some place." And, I mean, the fight is on. I guarantee we're naked, rolling. We're going toe to toe. Those are the kinds of things. I talked to Junior Wolf, who was an All-American football player at Panhandle State. He got the same kind of thing. You guys are too young and don't hear, you don't know that kind of stuff. I don't know if you experienced it where you were at.

MIKE: No, I never did.

MR. TWO-HATCHET: Those are the kinds of things that came out in that process.

I befriended the blacks that played before that I knew there at Southwestern. Mutual Bryant, Charles Randall, some of those guys I had to see very often. A guy named—he was from Lawton—Wayne Davis. He came back through Lawton many years later. I was teaching school up there and one of the guys, one of the black guys I worked with, said, "Ron Two-Hatchet works here." "Hey," he said, "I played football at Southwestern with Ron." He got drafted. He only played one year, but he left and went to Viet Nam. And I hadn't seen him in thirty years, and he came by and saw me at the school.

So, that's my experience. I'm sixty years old now. The first half of my life I never had any association at all with blacks until I was thirty, until I came here to Lawton Eisner High School. When I started coaching and teaching there in 1974, I was thirty. My last thirty years were here in Lawton. And I've served on state committees. I've been appointed to state and national committees, organizations that I've been a member of and stuff like that, with African Americans.

AUDIENCE: There was one other thing. You talked about the KKK in Durant. Were you scared of them? Were the Indians scared?

MR. TWO-HATCHET: They didn't exist as a group at that particular time, even in this county. Lanny Asepermy was telling me. He's aware that back out here around Indianahoma, around 1900-1920s, there was a KKK group there out here at Fletcher. An Indian couple said that down where they lived, in the creek bottom down below where they lived, the KKK met. When I was living in Durant, a block away from where I lived at, they were tearing down an old house. In the basement of that house, they found a trunk setting in the corner. One of the guys I talked with there, his name was Billy Orr, a white guy. He said, "Ron, they're tearing this house down across the street from me." I lived about a block from where he did. He said, "And this is what they found." It was a little suitcase like you have back there. He opened it up. In that suitcase were 100-120 sheets that had certificates for membership in the KKK. He showed me what he had and what was in there.

So the KKK was in the community where I was at. It was an all-white community. I didn't deliberately go out in my life time to not have associations with blacks. I just happened to go from Carnegie to Haskell to Phoenix, to Albuquerque, to Southeastern, and the junior high school, where there were no blacks.

AUDIENCE: But the Indians weren't afraid of them?

MR. TWO-HATCHET: I don't think so. I went to a lecture not too long ago about a black guy that became the first person who went to a KKK rally in the 1980s in some place in the South—Mississippi or Alabama. If you remember anything about the history of the KKK, their emphasis was on three groups; first the blacks, then the Jews, then the Communists. Later, in the 1940s and '50s we had the Communists. In the 1930s and '40s, they kicked the Jews in there. That's part of their terror activities, that they wanted a particular group. But history will tell you that those are three groups that they targeted for. And today the KKK is pretty much nonexistent as far as their efforts are concerned.

MIKE: All right. Thank you.

**Toma (Asepermy) Ella Yeahquo**

Tribe: Comanche  
Residence: Apache, Oklahoma  
Education: Apache High School, Apache, Oklahoma  
Occupation: Comanche Nation of Oklahoma, Language Preservation Office

MIKE: We're working with KU to set up a new curriculum that focuses on black/Indian history. My questions will be directed toward trying to get your take on this. Please give us your name and your tribe and your birth date.

TOMA: My name is Toma Ella Yeahquo, and I'm from the Comanche tribe. And my birth date is February 21, 1951.

MIKE: Do you think our culture, in its traditional sense, like how our great-grandparents and great-great-grandparents and your parents grew up made us more tolerant or allowed us to be more tolerant of other races of people?

TOMA: I feel that it did because we interacted with just about anyone and everyone in a sense that they were people just like we. In my family, the only difference was just the color of their skin and maybe the texture of their hair. Other than that, we were all the same. I came from a small town and we only had one family of blacks, and they lived less than a half a mile from us. They would come over to our house and do things with the other family members—play and romp around the creeks and stuff like that. I was little at that time, but I was aware that they were there. We rode the same school bus into town. I had no feeling against any of that. My parents were brought up and brought us up to accept people as they were and as they are. I was well aware of the differences, but my parents never made a big thing of the differences, so I had no viewpoint on prejudice growing up in a small town. We went to the same school, and they excelled in athletics and they were like the hometown heroes. I looked up to them because we all had hometown pride.

I never went into their house. I don't think they ever came in ours. But they lived nearby and they interacted with us. I never felt any type of prejudice, and I really still don't.

MIKE: Do you think that's attributable to your upbringing?

TOMA: It was. It pretty much was the way I was brought up and how none of the bad things were said about other people at all. We lived our lives and they lived theirs, and we interacted together. And I never saw any type of prejudice at that point. We were brought up in a household where we tried to help everyone. If we had the food available, we would feed them. I think it was just the way we were brought up.

In the cultural sense of the word, I guess you would say that we accepted everyone for what they were worth.

MIKE: There was a small family I remember a male and female, Buddy and Sweet, who used to live nearby.

TOMA: That's right. I barely remember them, but they were an elderly couple, and I never really thought of them as different. They were there from the time I grew up. The only ones that I remember was the family that lived by us because they were new to me. Buddy and Sweet, I had completely forgot about them being black (laughter). They were always there. They lived maybe about a mile from my house, and I never really thought about them being black.

MIKE: I remember them being in town, but they were always on the corner with the Indians.

TOMA: I don't remember that. We hardly ever went to town except to go to school and then come back home.

MIKE: But they seemed to interact with mainly the Indian population.

TOMA: They did. They pretty much grew up and they knew the tribal customs, I remember. They'd do all the tribal customs and they always attended the churches that were mainly Indian churches. They helped out, and they always worked for the Indians.

They worked for them in their fields or whatever they had to do. Anyone that needed any help, they would work for, basically Indians.

MIKE: Yeah. Have you ever had any personal experiences with African Americans?

TOMA: I had gone to a workshop or conference one summer when I was in high school, and my roommate was black. She did react when she walked into the dorm room, as if, "Oh, I don't want to room with this one." But after a couple of days, we were best friends from that point on, and I still see her every once in a while. She lives in a nearby town called Weatherford, Oklahoma, and I went to her house. She introduced me to her family and then we got along really great.

MIKE: Was that your first personal experience?

TOMA: Yeah. That was when I went to a little conference for high school children. It's called an Upward Bound Project. That was my first really contact with any others.

TOMA: Black people other than the ones that were at my hometown. “Crazy” as in fun. Her name is Mary Williams. She was crazy. She was crazy, she was fun, and we got along just fine.

MIKE: Do you ever recall your parents or maybe even grandparents—your grandparents probably spoke tribal languages—making any derogatory or racial remarks?

TOMA: I don't remember them ever doing that at all. They would say “Con-ge-on,” “Con-ge-on” is Kiowa, “Thu” is Comanche, and that's what they referred to them as. It refers to the color. Just the color.

MIKE: It's like they'll call a white person. And not a derogatory reference.

TOMA: No, it was just a reference everyone used. Just the type of color that they thought they were.

MIKE: How do you personally view African Americans?

TOMA: They're just people like I am. Now I know I've learned later on after high school and stuff and meeting the one in the school. I don't go around them, not unless I have to, because I don't know anyone at this point that is black. I just prefer to go around the Native Americans, because those are the people I can relate to.

MIKE: How about your children? Do you think you transfer the same kind of sentiment that you learned from your parents to other children?

TOMA: I think so. I try to instill in my children that everyone is basically the same and that we are equal, other than the color of our skin, and that if anyone else tells them that they're less than perfect, they're lying (laughter). I was brought up knowing that I was the same as everyone else, even though the color was different or the type of hair I had.

I always told my children, "You are who you are. You're the same as everyone, you're just a person. Maybe the culture is different." I'm hoping that they realize that. I'm pretty sure that they do.

**William Yellowrobe**

Tribe: Assiniboine, Lakota, and Nakota  
Residence: Mobridge, South Dakota  
Education: University of Minnesota  
Occupation: Playwright

MIKE: If we could just start with your name and then your birth date, and then we'll move from there.

WILLIAM: My name is William S. Yellowrobe Jr. I was born February 4, 1960, on the Fort Peck Indian Reservation. I'm Assiniboine and Lakota and Nakota. My father was William Stanley Yellowrobe Sr.; my mother was Myrna Rose Forest-Yellowrobe.

MIKE: Where you raised on a reservation?

WILLIAM: Yes.

MIKE: What was your major influence in your life at that point?

WILLIAM: It was the community. I grew up on the reservation, so it was all my relations, all my relatives. I think the most sharp contrast of an outside element is when I started going to public school and in high school. Then I became aware that there was a white race that we had to deal with.

I had heard stories about that, because most of the communities around Low Point were isolated. We lived outside the city limits. In fact, up until the late 1970s, when the City Council of Low Point produced a map of Low Point, they would draw all the streets that were recognized by the city and they would eliminate the Native communities. A whole population of maybe a thousand Native people were never drawn into the maps.

MIKE: Did you realize that when you were young?

WILLIAM: No. In fact, the only time I ever came into contact with the idea that I was different was when I was in third grade. I had a close friend, who I had been told, was a breed. I never considered myself a breed. And we got into a fight. Then, he called me the 'N' word, a nigger, and we got into this huge fight. When I went back to my mother, I said, "Is this true? Mom, this guy called me a nigger," and I asked her, "Is that true?" She said, "Bill, you're part colored, but I'm raising you to be an Assiniboine."

Through that process, that eventually came out. Then, the only time we recognized that concept of being a breed was when you were part white and Native. We never talked about the possibility of being part Native and African American. But, as I grew older on the reservation, I realized we were not the only family who were part Native and African American, because there were no resources available to you.

To give you an example of the social conditions, if you are white and Native, if you messed up in the Native community and upset the Native community, you could find refuge in the white community. After a certain amount of time, if you angered the white community, then you found refuge in the Native community. So, eventually you had people who were breeds and played both communities against one another, for resources, politics, social posturing, whatever. But, if you were African American and part Native, or Native American and part black, there were no other resources available to you.

When I was growing up in the 1960s, the African American community was still going through the process of civil rights, and you still had segregation in a lot of aspects of everyday life.

MIKE: You attended public schools?

WILLIAM: Yes. It's sort of ironic, because I think I was the second one of a family of nine that actually completed grades one through twelve on the reservation. Most of my older brothers and sisters had been sent off to boarding schools.

MIKE: Did you see any difference there? Did you ever question or wonder why they were sent and you weren't?

WILLIAM: It was simply because I was determined not to leave. It was almost by will that I wasn't going to kowtow. Sometimes when we got into the mid-1970s, we had the choice of going to boarding school or not. I decided that I was going to stick it out, and I wasn't going to be chased off. I think that's why I became politically aware that I wasn't going to be chased off. This was my home, too.

What it came down to was I wasn't going to give up due to pressure from the white community. I wasn't going to bend.

MIKE: I've interviewed other people from the Northern Plains area, and even into the 1960s, very few Indian people actually saw blacks. When the first time you saw a black?

WILLIAM: That is a very good question. I think it was probably when I was a teenager, maybe when I was thirteen. We used to have this place called Bill's Pizza Palace, where the Native kids would go and play pinball. I think it was in the afternoon, this African American family, who were French Canadians,

stopped off and they had their lunch, and everybody stared. Because we had government contracts, through HUD, Department of Labor, CETA, every once in a while, Washington DC would send an African American from that department. When they came on the reservation, it was special.

Also, there used to be a second-rate basketball team that was similar to the Harlem Globetrotters. They used to call them, I think, the Harlem Nights. But they used the same routine of the Harlem Globetrotters. They came to Low Point High School, and they filled the gymnasium. People were fascinated, because they were seeing African Americans. But it was only through touring or entertainment and sports that we actually saw African Americans within our community.

MIKE: How about your own personal perspective in terms of views of other people, whites, blacks, or Hispanics? What kind of influence did your family have on that?

WILLIAM: It was through my mother who taught us to respect people. We were taught very simplistic lessons like, “You don’t stare. You don’t stare at people.” So, if we were caught staring, we were in big trouble. It was impolite to stare at someone for their differences. We were taught to respect the differences of other people. Even though they’re not like you, you still have to treat them as you would treat yourself. I think that was what was lost through the generations—that quality of respect in another human being for their differences, instead of using it as a weapon or using it to create a wall.

Today people are still fearful of meeting someone that’s not like them. But Native people historically have had the world come to them.

MIKE: Do you believe that Indian people, at one point, were a little more tolerant in their philosophy?

WILLIAM: It’s so ironic that my mother grew up with the idea that—and she taught me this idea— “Never believe what your enemy tells you. Watch what they do.” In other words, watch the action of the individual. And watch their character, because the actions reflect the character.

After I graduated high school, I read the works of Malcolm X and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and they basically had been saying the same thing; it’s the character of the individual, not the color of the skin. Native people were like that in the way they were very accepting. Even though a person might have blond hair and blue eyes, if their actions were that of a Native person, they accepted them. They were welcomed within the tribe, because of that respect, honor, honesty. Those were elements that were literally actions. They weren’t intellectual arguments, they weren’t clichés; these were practicalities of life, the way to live life.

MIKE: In terms of relationships, why do you think it was easier for blacks and Indian people to mix, as opposed to whites and Indian people?

WILLIAM: It's a difficult question, but I think it has to do with that relationship with oppression. All tribal people who have suffered some form of oppression through colonialism have a common connection, because your language is attacked, your culture is attacked, your institutions are attacked—whether it be from African, Australia, New Zealand, or China. Your indigenous institutions, your way of life was attacked by a colonial infringement or encroachment. I think that's the reason why there's a relationship there.

Historically, when the conquistadors brought their slaves, a lot of them fled and found refuge and freedom among the Native people. It continued all the way through colonial America, all the way up to pre- and post-Civil War.

MIKE: How about you as an individual: what was your feeling when you realized that you are part black?

WILLIAM: That discovery came through an act of violence. It was through a fight. It came to a point when every time someone would call me a nigger in high school, I'd have to fight that person to make them kowtow to the fact that they've just disrespected me. For me, it wasn't so much outright anger. It was like I've been treated as a human being by my parents, and we were taught never to tolerate this kind of disrespect. So, if you're going to be disrespectful to me like this, then I must show you how you dishonored me, by dishonoring you physically.

But there comes a point, too, where the cycle of violence must end. I wrote a play called *Grandchildren of the Buffalo Soldier*, and that's a reflection of that individual's life, of my life, where you get to a point where you no longer want to fight, but you realize it's sort of really idiotic to have to go to war over something so stupid. But, then again, you have to remember that not all people share the same values. So, when you're attacked like that, you have to really question, "What is the value of that individual who's making this assertion?" Sometimes within this racial mixture, whether it be white and Native or African American and Native, there's a lot of pain, so you have a lot of people lashing out. You must also refrain from practicing that weapon of oppression, which is racism.

MIKE: Do you think many people benefited from the Civil Rights Movement?

WILLIAM: To a certain extent, in some of the legislation, yeah. But, also, it caused a division to a certain extent. Because, in Montana, I was always amazed in the early 1970s hearing white people say, "Those coloreds are raising all kinds of problems back east. But, at least, our Indians behave."

The phrase that I really enjoyed was that they would say, “Our Indians.” It was almost as if we were their property. It was a colonial mind-set, because, if you studied western history going back into Montana history, hearing these people talk about homesteaders that came out and settled the west. I’ve always asked the question, “What was there to settle?” We were living peacefully, and then, all of a sudden, the homesteaders came and settled the West. What did they do? If you look at what they did, they practiced environment genocide, they wiped out a lot of indigenous plants, indigenous wildlife, so they could make room and make homes for their domesticated colonial animals, for beef and wheat.

MIKE: How about the American Indian Movement? Did it seem to be an offshoot of the Civil Rights Movement?

WILLIAM: I don’t really think the American Indian Movement (AIM) is so much an outgrowth of the Civil Rights movement. I always compare it to the Nation of Islam—what Malcolm X did in the early 1960s in that it was a right for us to be ourselves in our own homeland. Even before there was an AIM, my mother used to say, “Billy, I’m waiting for the time when we can be ourselves in our own homeland.” At the time when she was saying this and she would always say this as I was growing up, I never realized exactly what she was saying. Then I realized, “Yeah, the right to be an Assiniboine person in this country, in our own homeland.”

But, it was sort of fascinating to me that I was thankful for, and I don’t disrespect the American Indian Movement. They did do a lot of good things. They brought Native America back into the forefront, to remind people that we are one of the original peoples of this continent. Also, it helped provide fodder for what I argue. They always refer to all minorities as minorities, all ethnics as ethnics. But, when you look at Native people, we’re unique because we are aboriginal; we’re not ethnic. The Irish, the Jewish, the Italians are ethnic. We are aboriginal.

MIKE: One of the things I think that people misperceive when I talk to non-Indians about some of these interviews is that Indian people are racists like everyone else. Like I was taught, marry Indian. I don’t think it was done in a manner that was racist, but it was done so that we could preserve our culture or our tribal identity.

WILLIAM: Yeah. Part of that is coming out of the framework of being a survivor of the Holocaust. If you look at the interviews of the people who survived Auschwitz, Treblinka, the Jewish Holocaust during World War II, a lot of them had instructions that you should marry someone who is Jewish to preserve the race, because the race was almost devastated. The Irish were the same way, too, because in the 1800s they were almost completely wiped off the map by the British.

These are all tribal people who have suffered some sort of oppression. So, the other reality of that, too, is that most Native people don't really control the institutions to set their own tone of racism. We don't control the educational system. We don't control the financial institutions. We don't control these resources so that we can implement our racism as white America do, and that's the reality.

MIKE: You mentioned that our young people seem to be moving away from the cultural sense of the only people who are tolerant. What do you think has caused that?

WILLIAM: Like everybody in this country, I think what has happened is that we forgot the whole idea of what respect and self-sacrifice is. The fact that I'm here, even today, being able to do this interview, forty years ago it would have never happened. But, because of the efforts of our grandparents and of our parents, that made this possibility happen. We must also never forget to honor these people who've made this sacrifice.

With the narcissistic approach that America has, especially with this rampant consumerism, you can buy things and discard them after you're done with them. One of the people I used to read a lot was Studs Terkel. He used to write books based on the laborer. In his book *Working*, he mentioned the idea that what's missing in American labor is the whole idea of craftsmanship, of being able to build things and have that honor and respect, so that when you made a chair or you made a table, you gave it to someone, it was of quality and it also had a signature about it because you made it. But now we have things that they've flooded the market with— rampant consumerism. If you buy a coffee pot, instead of going to someone who could repair the coffee pot, you just discard it, go to Wal-Mart and buy a new one.

In some aspects, culture is that way, because we've had such a mismatch that, "I'm tired of being this, so now I think I'll be Italian Mafia. I've been watching "The Sopranos," so now I'll go be that," or "I've watched the latest MTV video, so now I'll be a gangster," or if seeing this in a movie, so now I'll go do this. So we appropriate culture, and then we get tired of it and discard it. At the same time, we can buy those icons of those cultures now wholesale and embellish ourselves with those icons without having any responsibilities with them. That's the other key component, too, is being responsible for these.

MIKE: Is that an impact or is that a result of the policies of assimilation that our young people are grasping for something different?

WILLIAM: It comes after everything that you've been told by your grandparents is no longer validated. Part of the thing about being who you are is when you have a reference point that's been validated. As a Native playwright, it was very difficult for me to continue in the art form, because whenever I opened a book of

theater history, there was nothing about Native American theater or intertribal theater that I could use as a reference to base my work on. So, it's almost a question of, "Is the work I'm doing validated," even in the colonial art medium that I'm working in, known as theater. How do I validate my experience in it?

MIKE: You want to go back a little bit? Was there any reference by your grandparents or parents that allowed you to take a look at blacks or other minorities?

WILLIAM: This is very harsh, but my father used to have this great saying. In the Depression era, he actually jumped on a train and went across the country and then eventually wound up serving in the United States Army. My father had this quirk about him where he would say, "You know, Bill, sometimes some people are like assholes, everybody's got one and they're all over the place." Why am I American? That's what he was saying, but he would always say there are good and bad people in all groups of people. So, you had to determine what kind of person you wanted to be. For my mother, it was more of a Native aesthetic where you had to respect and honor individuals who were different from you.

The other thing is being respectful, responsible, and loving yourself enough that you won't advantage yourself to appropriate someone else. Growing up on the reservation, we had a lot of Ictomi trickster stories, where he would want to become a duck or a mouse, and would fail miserably at being a mouse and duck. Then the ducks and mice would come and say, "Why don't you be yourself?"

MIKE: And that was a lesson?

WILLIAM: Yeah. It goes back to what Shakespeare said in *Hamlet*: "To thine ownself be true." It's a universal lesson.

MIKE: Do you think we can draw some comparisons? Do you have any examples of cooperation, where blacks and Indians have actually worked together?

WILLIAM: Historically, a lot of that has been destroyed, because a lot of that is not written. A lot of it is unwritten. If you take a look at it, the African American and Native American relationship allowed cities like Saint Paul, Minnesota, to be built. In a lot of these cities they set up forts and helped establish them. There have been so many different contributions, but a lot are not even given credit.

To give you an example, there is an African American cowboy that actually started in the same cattle company with Will Rogers. When they portrayed this cowboy in the movie, they portrayed him as a white man (laughter). But even those images have been misleading. But the contributions that we know that were made, were never heard of or they were attacked.

To give you an example, the Navajo Code Talkers. No one heard about the Navajo Code Talkers. Then they did a movie about the Navajo Code Talkers, and they tried to manifest this lie where they had someone watching over them. A friend of mine was at the movie theater with Navajo Code Talkers. When they saw the movie, one of the elderly gentlemen turned to the other and said, "You mean we had someone watching us?" They didn't even know that. It's just a manifested lie. But, also, it was a movie, sadly enough, with Tony Curtis based on Ira Hayes, where they tried to negate his action in raising that flag on Mr. Suribachi. It's really tragic that we have to go through that process.

MIKE: How about stories of friction? Do you ever hear of any friction that would create some animosities or create some perspective by young Indian people in your age category who have been told stories? For example, I'm Comanche, and I heard about the Buffalo Soldiers. The Buffalo Soldiers were at Fort Sill, and they helped to keep Comanches on the reservation. Did you grow up with any of that?

WILLIAM: Oh, yeah. Even the genesis of how I became African American was based on the Buffalo Soldiers' story. Supposedly this Buffalo Soldier raped my grandmother and, when she gave birth to my father, had abandoned my father on the prairie. He was adopted by an older Assiniboine man, and I bear his name. In the Nakota (Sioux) way, I have his name. As a kid, I had his name when I was growing up, so I find that fascinating. Through my father's side, all his stories are based on oral tradition and they're all a little bit skewed as to how my father, my grandmother, and all these stories have different tellings. The Assiniboine have one set and the Sioux, who share our reservation, have a second set of how these stories came to be. It's really fascinating.

In fact, when I go back to Fort Peck, there are still some people that say, "Well, yeah," in terms they're part black, and then some that go, "Oh, no, no. You're not part black." But, on my enrollment, it says five-eighths Assiniboine. They can't explain to me what the other three-eighths is. In fact, my enrollment card is that way, five-eighths Assiniboine, but it doesn't say what the other three-eighths are.

MIKE: Do you think the fact that your father was left to be raised by someone else was a symptom of discrimination?

WILLIAM: No, because sometimes kids are given to their grandparents. That's the other thing, too: you'd reach a certain age, so you're expected to stay with your grandparents, because that's how you learn the language, that's how they indoctrinate you into the tribe. Grandma has to go visiting, you go along, but you're going to learn something. Grandma or Grandpa had to go do this job, to chop wood. You go along; you're going to learn something. They'll teach you something. Every day you spend with them, they teach you all the basic elements of how to live life. That was expected.

That story about my father—sometimes I can believe it, sometimes it's a slightly skewed story. But, as far as the racism and discrimination, it comes from the outside force whenever there's a third party involved in a two-way communication. The third party is never invited, and that's when you have problems. Especially if the third party is very influential and wants to force that presence, it becomes skewed.

MIKE: Do you remember the first time you saw clearly that blacks were being discriminated against?

WILLIAM: Yeah. I saw a lot of the tape. I was a child of the 1960s, so I remember a lot of those old videos that we saw in the '60s and in the '70s decade. Summary reports of what happened in 1968. To see those videos again, it was just amazing to realize that that wasn't that long ago. When I was in high school in 1978, I remember NBC did a film on Dr. King, showing what happened within his movement, and it was just that realization, it wasn't that long ago.

MIKE: I knew blacks had Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, and I grew up in the '60s as well. My heroes were people I could refer to, who were considered significant Indian leaders, were nineteenth century. They weren't all contemporary.

WILLIAM: In that period, a lot of the old chiefs were killed. They were assassinated or they were imprisoned. A lot of those old leaders after the 1800s, a lot of them were rounded up, put in prison, executed, tried, and then eventually discarded. That's the reason why. But my leaders were my mother and father, simply because of the fact they would not kowtow to the idea of being assimilated, that they were Assiniboine. Even though my father fought in the war, and I've had a lot of cousins who went off and fought in the wars, when they came back, they were still a member of the tribe.

MIKE: That's another interesting thing that I've been curious about. If you read the manner by which the federal government ignored so much about Indian issues through the early twentieth century, losing so much land, and the health conditions were terrible in the 1920s. Yet, when Indian people had come to defend the country, they did so, in large numbers, large percentages. Is there any reason why you think they did that?

WILLIAM: I think it was the idea that we must keep up the honor. Even though they failed, we must not fail. Even though they broke the treaties, even though they broke their promises, we must fulfill our promises. If that was part of our promise, that we fight for them, then we must fight for them. Even though they did that to us, we can't allow ourselves to do that to them. So, we must keep our honor and our respect. But sometimes it's very difficult.

MIKE: Do you know of any other time that blacks have been integrated into your tribe?

WILLIAM: Not really, because we're talking about families. Usually, what happens is that they became reindoctrinated into the Assiniboine culture, so you would never consider that. Out west, I know a lot of other families and other tribes, where they were totally assimilated by the tribes, simply because of the fact they found peace in that tribe. If you were not Native and then you tried to live among the white people in Montana, you were in for a world of hurt, because they didn't really want you there as far as the African American presence.

But, even as a Native American, there were times in Montana history where the racism was so harsh. I had friends that used to come to Montana to work in the 1980s and '90s, and they would say, "We're going back to where we come from. They would say, "Bill, this like being in Alabama in the 1960s." For a Native person, that's how bad the racism was.

Because we were Native, we were second class. So, if someone told a very racist joke about an Indian person, it wasn't regarded racist, because it's Indian. When I was in Seattle, Washington, one year I had a friend who was African American. We were talking about this and he said his wife, who works at a business, had a new employer who was from Montana, and he told this very vicious, vile, racist joke. His wife turned to the man and said, "Wow! That's really a racist joke." The guy said, "Well, it's really not racist, it's about Indians." That made it better.

That's a duality of where you focus your energies. Racism is like that. If the Natives aren't being attacked, then the African Americans are being attacked, or the Chicanos are being attacked, and the Asian Americans are being attacked. Everybody gets a whack. Everybody is attacked. The reality of this country is this: everybody survives by two things. One is that we're diverse. When you have all these resources, you have all this incredible resource to tap into, to help out.

The second thing is the ability to change. Native people have survived with our traditions, because we change things. It's always amazing to me to go to a ceremony and see someone light a fire with a Bic lighter, or having a styrofoam cup full of water or a thermos jug full of water at this ceremony, or a plastic bucket full of water. That's a sign of change. Native people have always celebrated change. Even though we have our tradition at the same time, our traditions teach us about changing and being able to receive that change. That's a great sense of humanity.

MIKE: That's a point that's always lost. We're backward, but the adaptation that Indian people have always made is material.

WILLIAM: Yeah. Because, one of these things that I've always been pursuing in my writing is this exercise of humanity. How do you nurture humanity? Because humanity isn't really necessary. I don't want to sound like a new-age freak show, but the idea that your humanity as a human being is very important. Part of that is being responsible and being respectful, and knowing what honor is, knowing what love is, know what commitment is. Knowing, most importantly, too, what is sacrifice. Being able to give of yourself to help others.

MIKE: That's the beauty of the tribal cultures and, yet, that was also directed at the real aspect of humanity. And, if they ask us to be human and they ask us to be civilized, they were tearing away the thing that made Indian people civilized.

WILLIAM: I don't want to bad-mouth it, but they also wanted us to be Christians. Yet, they did some very vile things in the name of Christianity. That's the reason why, when people ask me, I always tell them, "I pray every day, but I'm not a Christian." I do that not to get anybody ruffled, but that's the reality of it. My parents were praying long before there was any church on the reservation. My grandparents were praying long before there was any church. But we were already committed to the act of humbling ourselves to something greater in this universe than us.

MIKE: That was an aspect of survival. But can you make a connection to how blacks did the same thing with their spirituality?

WILLIAM: They went through that same process within slavery. They were no longer allowed to use their drums. They were no longer allowed to use their language. They were no longer allowed to practice the very elements that kept them together as a community, because now they became property. They became a number. They became a number on a manifest and, then, when they moved out west, they were still property. Then, all of a sudden, they realized maybe the property is actually an entity, a human being.

The same thing with Native people, we were considered parts of the environment, and we were never viewed as fully functioning human beings, or that we actually might have a soul or a mind. There was a great conflict in Euro-American literature regarding Native people, because there was a debate as to whether we had souls or sciences. Within this decade, it's been very exciting, because now you're seeing Native math being discussed, and Native natural sciences. These are the things that we were told we never had, but actually they were always there. We never had a chance to validate them and to actually practice them again.

MIKE: That's good. I appreciate that.

**Rachel A. Allen**

Rachel A. Allen. A K-State student, Rachel Allen is majoring in interior architecture. She was raised as a “United States Air Force Dependent.” Rachel describes herself as a “white, grade A, American student.” She is part “everything from Choctaw Indian to English blue blood and Hispanic . . . as well as Scottish.”

CARMALETTA: This is Carmaletta Williams with the “Shifting Borders” project. Would you please identify yourself?

RACHEL: My name is Rachel Allen.

CARMALETTA: Rachel, how do you identify yourself ethnically?

RACHEL: Just as a white, grade-A, American student.

CARMALETTA: How did you come to that recognition?

RACHEL: America being, I guess you could say the finest melting pot of the world, we all have some sort of tree that’s split in different places. Genealogically. I’ve got everything from Choctaw Indian to English blue blood and lots of Hispanic origin on my father’s side, as well as Scottish. Coming to America was kind of a way of life. Once our ancestors immigrated here, one person meets somebody else, marriage, and then you’ve got another race that will come into the family. And it just all builds upon itself. Eventually you get a product down the line. But there’s no way to really see what that’s going to be, and I’m the result of what all that was.

CARMALETTA: What about the Choctaw part of you? How do you acknowledge that in your sense of identity?

RACHEL: That I just acknowledge by way of what I’m told as far as family blood, blood lines. My great-great-great-grandmother on my mother’s father’s side was on the reservation. But, beyond that, I really have no recognition of any of the cultural bearings on our family. I just know of it as by name and, I’ve got this much DNA in my blood that says, well, you’re a part of this blood line.

CARMALETTA: Has it become more interesting to you, if not important, as you’ve gotten older?

RACHEL: I have ventured out to research a little bit of it, but it’s not like it’s going to be this great thing in my life that’s going to define me. It’s a part of my past and I respect it and I want to find out a little bit more about it, especially when I come across people who are from that tribe or if they’re an American Indian. At the same time, it’s just an interesting fact that I can share with others and it’s just one of those things that makes me who I am.

CARMALETTA: I thought it was interesting when I asked about your ethnic identity and you just took the global “white American, grade A,” wonderful, beautiful American person. And then when you started talking about your blood line, you talked about the immigrations, about the European part. And not so much the Indian part, which would not have been degraded, of course, and would have been the first Americans. I guess my real question is, How important do you think it is for your family to grasp all parts of who you are, and then later, when you marry and have children, to make sure that your children understand this?

RACHEL: As far as importance to my family, we find great interest in researching past family trees, blood lines, where our ancestors came from. But it's to see where the family was and what it's come to be now. And how values have gone from, for instance, Anne Hutchinson, was expelled from her colony in, I believe it was Massachusetts, and then she went to help settle Rhode Island. But that was for religious reasons. And, from way back then, I'm related to Anne Hutchison, but all the way until now, those same religious principles and moral values have traveled through her one surviving daughter. Other settlers and some Indians came, and they raided their camp and they thought they killed everybody, but one child survived. And from that one child, those values have been reinstated generation after generation after generation, all the way until our family now. For us, it's more of finding out the values, rather than what days of the year do we celebrate, what holidays do we celebrate. It's more of the intangible things that are passed from culture to culture and generation to generation. A combination of all of these different things really makes us who we are. As far as my children in the future, I'll probably try to reinstate those same values and keep the family heritage going. Something that lasts over two hundred years really is something you can say about a family.

CARMALETTA: It's wonderful. I truly agree. I think it's interesting that you've researched your family down to the one surviving child. But I also see the contradiction that the rest of her family had been killed off by Indians. Do you see a conflict there when you try to reconcile all those parts of your past?

RACHEL: Well, given that it wasn't the Choctaw Indians.

CARMALETTA: Okay (laughter)!

RACHEL: It was the Iroquois Nation. Honestly, I don't have any personal grudge against any kind of disputes that were fought two hundred years ago. I wasn't there. I don't know the details and the personal interactions between those two societies. Obviously, they were segregated on their own accounts, as well as by other things among them socially. It wasn't something that I could judge for myself first hand. If you look at my blood line, there have been names changed in the family because a Spanish man had married a Mexican woman, and the families would have feuded, had they found out.

There are so many different things. The people knew who they are and it wasn't their backgrounds that defined them.

They came together and they really made up who our family line is. But, as far as Anne Hutchison, a white English woman being killed by the American Indians, I don't really have too much of a disapproval of that history because my family is so split as far as the family tree goes.

CARMALETTA: It certainly makes her an exciting character and a more exciting character that she's the only survivor. It makes her place, I think, very, very special. If you were going to leave a legacy message to people, any people, your own family or any of your classmates or your professional people, what do you think that it would be most important for people to know and to remember about what goes into making them who they are?

RACHEL: I think it goes back to the intangibles that are passed in a heritage of a family from generation to generation—things are learned, stories are told, things are passed from one person to the next. It's just something that really cannot be accounted for in any kind of monetary or material value. Each person has a story. Every person has a place that they've come from, a place that they've gone, something that's happened to them. Get to know them and learn them for who they are. Getting past somebody's handicap or somebody's race or the clothes they wear, any kind of preconceived idea, there's so much more to learn and there's so much more to grasp hold of. And actually to make your own life better, whether it be on making judgments or decisions based on information you learn from somebody, or even learning a new paradigm of a certain situation that you may only see one way. There's a lot that can be learned from others.

CARMALETTA: Wonderful! Thank you very, very much, Rachel. Great job.

**Iris Anderson (Starr)**

Iris Anderson Starr was born in Nowata, Oklahoma. She resents the fact that because they were black Cherokee, the Dawes Rolls people just put them down as “freedmen” and acknowledged none of their Native American heritage. Ms. Starr identifies herself racially as Cherokee. Through her grandmother, she was born Cherokee and she holds fast to that heritage. Her grandfather, John Walker Star, lived on Big Creek about eighteen miles from Nowata and his mother, Georgia Grimmet Star, was also Cherokee. Even with proof of her Cherokee heritage, Mrs. Starr has been denied her Cherokee card and is working hard to acquire what is rightfully hers.

MRS. ANDERSON: We were Cherokee, but they just put us down as Freedmen.

CARMALETTA: Can you identify yourself?

MRS. ANDERSON: My name is Iris Anderson.

CARMALETTA: How do you identify yourself racially and ethnically?

MRS. ANDERSON: Cherokee.

CARMALETTA: And why is that important to you? Just full-blood Cherokee?

MRS. ANDERSON: Yeah.

CARMALETTA: If someone were to ask you, you would just say Cherokee?

MRS. ANDERSON: Yeah. It was through my grandma that we are Cherokee. My grandfather’s name was John Walker Starr.

CARMALETTA: Where did he live?

MRS. ANDERSON: He lived on Big Creek. That’s what they called it.

CARMALETTA: Where was Big Creek?

MRS. ANDERSON: It wasn’t too far from Nowata. It was about 18 miles east of Nowata. Before you get on that four-way, you turn and go back east, and then a little ways and then back east.

CARMALETTA: And your father was Cherokee?

MRS. ANDERSON: My grandfather was.

CARMALETTA: Your grandfather?

MRS. ANDERSON: His mother was. Her name was Georgia Grimmet. She was a Grimmet before she came to be a Starr.

CARMALETTA: Because she was Cherokee, then you were able to get your Cherokee card?

MRS. ANDERSON: No. I ain't got it, that's what I'm working on (laughter).

CARMALETTA: Why is it important to you to get it?

MRS. ANDERSON: Because they got a whole lot of stuff you can do. We really need it. Because I have two sons and I have seven brothers and sisters altogether, counting me. And they got kids coming up, and they need it too, but they can't get it if I can't get it.

CARMALETTA: That's right.

MRS. ANDERSON: And I'm the oldest in my family.

CARMALETTA: You have seven brothers and sisters?

MRS. ANDERSON: I'm the first one, and then I got six more up under me.

CARMALETTA: And then you have kids?

MRS. ANDERSON: Yeah, I have two sons.

CARMALETTA: Two sons—and grandchildren?

MRS. ANDERSON: No grandchildren yet. My oldest son is forty. He had a brain tumor.

CARMALETTA: Oh, my!

MRS. ANDERSON: But he's doing a lot better.

CARMALETTA: He's okay now? So then it's the benefits of being a Cherokee that's important to you? And the recognition of your family?

MRS. ANDERSON: I don't know.

CARMALETTA: No? Just the benefits?

MRS. ANDERSON: Yeah. Because everybody is getting stuff and I said, "How come we can't get some?" I said, "At least I'm going to try." I have aunties that's way yonder older than I am. One will be seventy-nine in November, and the other

just turned seventy-one. Then I got a auntie that's just turned sixty in January, and she got grandkids coming up and she's going to need it too. I have one sister who's got five boys. They been trying to go to college, but they can't go because they don't have the money. They live in Tulsa.

I have one sister who has four kids. And then I got a brother down there that's got twins.

CARMALETTA: So they need some money for college too?

MRS. ANDERSON: Yeah, they do need it.

CARMALETTA: So, if they got the Cherokee Indian card, they would be able to go to college?

MRS. ANDERSON: Yes, they could.

CARMALETTA: Oh, okay.

MRS. ANDERSON: And then I got a brother up here. One brother has one and then I got another brother, he's got two. And one, the girl, is going to college and she don't live here no more. She live in Connors, Texas. She need money to help go to college too. My nephew, her brother, is in the eleventh grade, tenth or eleventh grade. And he need it too.

CARMALETTA: So if they could make it possible for them to go to college without acknowledging them being Cherokee, would that be okay with you?

MRS. ANDERSON: I guess, I don't know.

CARMALETTA: Because that's what you want, right?

MRS. ANDERSON: Yes.

CARMALETTA: Yes, the benefits?

MRS. ANDERSON: Yeah. That's what I need. And then I can get me some medicine and stuff. Because my son, sometimes he have to have it. My son is forty years old. His name is Kevin, and he had a brain tumor. The brain tumor is gone, except they say it's a little bitty piece in there and he's taking medicine. He stay at home with me and my husband.

CARMALETTA: So he needs some assistance?

MRS. ANDERSON: This is my second marriage.

CARMALETTA: Good luck to you.

MRS. ANDERSON: And I've been trying to win the lottery. Haven't won it yet.

CARMALETTA: I hope you will.

MRS. ANDERSON: And then we wouldn't need it any more (laughter).

CARMALETTA: Yeah, that's right. You win the lottery, to heck with this Indian stuff, huh?

MRS. ANDERSON: No. We'd still try to get it.

CARMALETTA: Would you?

MRS. ANDERSON: Yes (laughter).

CARMALETTA: Good.

MRS. ANDERSON: But me and Wilbur been married twenty-two years.

CARMALETTA: Thank you so much for the interview. This is great.

MRS. ANDERSON: Thank you.

CARMALETTA: Thanks a lot.

**Linda Calvert**

Linda Calvert is a Baptist minister's wife. She identifies herself racially as African American. Linda was raised in Independence, Kansas, and has no memory of any Native Americans in her town when she was growing up. The community was racially composed of black and white families. Only as an adult has she had any interactions with indigenous people, a neighbor and a coworker. Those relationships have shown her that the similarities far outweigh the differences along the racial divide.

CARMALETTA: This is Carmaletta Williams with the "Shifting Borders of Race and Identity" project, and I'm interviewing Linda Calvert. Linda, will you introduce yourself, please.

LINDA: I'm Linda Calvert from Tulsa, Oklahoma.

CARMALETTA: I just want to ask you a few questions and get your response.

LINDA: All right.

CARMALETTA: Linda, where were you born?

LINDA: I was born in Independence, Kansas, in 1949.

CARMALETTA: What's that like, Independence, Kansas? How would you describe that town?

LINDA: Home.

CARMALETTA: Home?

LINDA: It's a hometown. People have grown up, moved away. We have very few friends that have stayed, but everybody comes back home sooner or later.

CARMALETTA: Why do you come back home?

LINDA: To visit my mom.

CARMALETTA: Your mother is still in Independence?

LINDA: Yes.

CARMALETTA: What is her neighborhood like? What was it like growing up in Independence as a little girl?

LINDA: It was fun. Everybody knew everybody. And everywhere we went to play, there was always a lot of children, and we just had fun playing with each other.

CARMALETTA: Now, I want you to tell me a bit about the community.

LINDA: Okay.

CARMALETTA: "Shifting Borders" is a project that's looking at the intersection of African American and American Indian people. And I'm using the term "American Indian" because my colleagues on this project identify themselves as American Indians, and we know that people use Native American and First Person and all kinds of other identifiers. So this is not a political statement that I'm making. "American Indian" is a term that I'll use for this project.

LINDA: Yes.

CARMALETTA: So, as far as ethnic groups, racial groups in Independence, how would you identify them? What do you remember?

LINDA: I don't remember a lot of Indian groups growing up. I do remember basically black and white. I don't even remember any Mexican or Latino families. The only ones that I can really relate to are either black or white.

CARMALETTA: But you did have a neighbor who was of a different ethnic group? A Hawaiian?

LINDA: Yes. The man that lived next door when I was very small was married to a lady that grew up here in Independence, and he was from Hawaii, I guess.

CARMALETTA: So that made him the outsider, in a sense, in the neighborhood?

LINDA: I guess it did, but this is a small family, small group, small neighborhood, so there was really no difference between people.

CARMALETTA: Where do you live now?

LINDA: I live in Tulsa.

CARMALETTA: And Tulsa is in Oklahoma, which identifies itself as Native America.

LINDA: Yes.

CARMALETTA: So what is the community like that you live in now? How do you see the ethnic groups there, the racial groups in Tulsa?

LINDA: When I first moved into my neighborhood, we had several white families in our neighborhood and several black families. My neighbor across the street is Indian, and she was in this neighborhood before I moved in, and I've gotten to know her. That's about it. A basic little mix of different cultures.

CARMALETTA: Is she still there?

LINDA: Yes, she's still there.

CARMALETTA: And the neighborhood, though, has transitioned?

LINDA: Yes.

CARMALETTA: And is pretty much all African American?

LINDA: Yes. Basically Afro-American, yes.

CARMALETTA: Okay. Do you have any interactions with American Indians in your grown-up life?

LINDA: Yes, I do. My neighbor, Sarah, but I also work with Mary. She's Indian.

CARMALETTA: So what's it like working with Mary? How much of your interaction with her is based on your racial identities? Your racial designations, the way that you see each other?

LINDA: We just see each other as coworkers, as one on one. We don't really see each other as Indian or Afro-American. We just see each other as people.

CARMALETTA: Does that enter into your daily conversations at all?

LINDA: No. As far as chatting, "How's your mom?" She asks me about my mom. She's brought her grandbaby up, who is part Indian and, she's bringing her grandbaby around so everybody can see her. It's good to see little babies grow up.

CARMALETTA: Yeah. So you have a lot of conversations about your mothers?

LINDA: Yes.

CARMALETTA: Are they comparable situations?

LINDA: Yes, they are. She's concerned about her mother's health as I am about mine. She's concerned that her mother lives alone as I am about mine. Her mother lives in a small town in southeast Oklahoma, and I really couldn't tell you what tribe they're in, but there are family members around that are close to her

mother, whereas our family have moved away, and so it takes us time to come back to see her.

CARMALETTA: She's in southeast Oklahoma. Then is she in a community of other American Indians? Do you know that or not?

LINDA: Yes, there are other American Indians that live in her town, but I know a lot of them are related to her, but I don't know just by talking with her in deep conversation, if there are any other ethnic groups.

CARMALETTA: What about your mother? Is her community racially mixed?

LINDA: Yes. Our community is racially mixed there in Independence.

CARMALETTA: So the people who are looking after her—I know that you and your family are dedicated to taking care of her—come to visit as often as you can.

LINDA: Yes.

CARMALETTA: But, when you're not here, who do you depend on or rely on? What kind of community does she have that looks after her in your absence?

LINDA: She has a very caring community all around her. She has friends that pick her up and take her to political events. She has people that pick her up and take her to church, to the grocery store, to the movies, out to eat. She's surrounded with loving friends.

CARMALETTA: And these are African American friends?

LINDA: Yes, they are.

CARMALETTA: For the most part. Can you tell me what perception you had of Indians when you were growing up and how and if that's changed as an adult?

LINDA: I didn't have any Indian friends or know of any Indians that lived in Independence as I was growing up as a child. But, as I have grown, and living mostly in Oklahoma, I have met several Indians and have been able to become friends with some of them.

CARMALETTA: In most situations, when you don't have that interaction, then you have to depend on stereotypes, or readings, or the media for your perception of Indians. So, if you can recall at all, growing up in Independence in an area in which there were none, there were no American Indians, if you could encapsulate the vision that you had, the perception that you had of American

Indians then, what would say? How would you say that those images were formed?

LINDA: The basic image that I can remember as a child came only from whatever I saw on television since I didn't know any Indians personally, only what I saw on television depicted what I learned or knew about. And basically cowboys and Indians was the only thing I grew up with and as far as interaction with any Indians.

CARMALETTA: But, now that you're an adult and you've had life experiences and now that you're in Tulsa, in the heart of Native America, how have those perceptions changed?

LINDA: They've changed because I'm more close to a few friends and family now. I never really had, growing up, known a difference between Native American and Afro American.

CARMALETTA: Okay. And these personal relationships, other than the woman that you work with and your neighbor, have these been a long-term relationship?

LINDA: Yes.

CARMALETTA: Were they there when you got there?

LINDA: Right.

CARMALETTA: And then continue to stay in the neighborhood?

LINDA: Yes. Over thirty years.

CARMALETTA: And, even though the neighborhood has transitioned, she has not left?

LINDA: Right.

CARMALETTA: And have there been other relationships?

LINDA: Yes. My little cousin married a young Indian girl last year and they have a little boy, named Little Jay. Meeting Billy for the first time was great. She was very sweet. She's a very nice person. And, when I first met her family at a baby shower we had for her and I met her family also at the wedding. Her family is very close. They are just really basically like our family.

CARMALETTA: Okay. So they were close to each other.

LINDA: Very close to each other.

CARMALETTA: But how open and welcoming were they?

LINDA: They were very open to receiving me and they were very kind. They're very nice. We had good conversations. The one person of Billy's family that really stood out to me was her grandmother.

Her grandmother is up in age and she's very talented as far as crafts. And she made Billy the most beautiful quilt that depicted their heritage.

CARMALETTA: Do you have any departing words or anything that you'd like to say about relationships, especially racial relationships?

LINDA: The only thing that comes to my mind is know God makes us all and we're all his children, and He shows no difference between his children. As people, we should try to treat each other the way we want to be treated, and be as good as we can to each other. The first commandment, the greatest commandment of all in the Bible is always love. So, as long as we continue to love each other, I think racial, race relations will be better, and in time everything will be good.

**Ethel L. Hardridge Colbert**

Ethel L. Hardridge Colbert was born in Ketchum, Oklahoma, and now lives in Coffeyville, Kansas. She describes herself racially as American black Indian, in that order. Rich in knowledge of her family heritage, she passes the information that she was “raised around” to other family members. Her mother and father always teased her about her Indian blood. Her father was Afro American and her father’s father was a slave. Her father’s mother was Cherokee, as was her mother’s father. Her maternal grandfather cooked for the surveyors who surveyed the state of Oklahoma.

CARMALETTA: This is Carmaletta Williams with “Shifting Borders of Race and Identity.” Would you identify yourself, please?

MRS. COLBERT: My name is Ethel Hardridge Colbert.

.CARMALETTA: Can you tell me how you identify yourself racially and ethnically?

MRS. COLBERT: I would say American black Indian.

CARMALETTA: American black Indian? In that order (laughter)?

MRS. COLBERT: (Laughter) Yes.

CARMALETTA: Okay. I like that. It sounds interesting.

MRS. COLBERT: My mother and father always told me that I had a lot of Indian blood in me. And I know my father was the Afro American. My father’s father was a slave. So I knew that I got Afro in me. And he told me he then came from Georgia, so that’s why.

CARMALETTA: What about the Indian?

MRS. COLBERT: The Indian is Cherokee. My father’s mother was, I think, a quarter Cherokee. And my mother’s father was a quarter Cherokee.

CARMALETTA: So you have it on both sides?

MRS. COLBERT: Yes. My grandfather, who was my mother’s father, cooked for the surveyors who surveyed the state of Oklahoma.

CARMALETTA: My goodness! That’s important to know and to pass that information on. So why has identifying a part of you that’s Cherokee been important to you?

MRS. COLBERT: I know some of my father's uncles were Cherokee and the only language they talked was Cherokee. I was just raised around it.

CARMALETTA: That's interesting. So they kept that going then in the family?

MRS. COLBERT: Oh, yes.

CARMALETTA: Do you or your children speak the language still.

MRS. COLBERT: No.

CARMALETTA: Now it gets lost, things get lost. Why is this freedman's struggle important to you?

MRS. COLBERT: I think everybody should have their right to any freedom that's due them. And that's part of it. And I was raised like that, so that's why I believe it. My father was real stern.

CARMALETTA: Really?

MRS. COLBERT: Yes, he was. And anything he said, he said it for our benefit. He didn't just talk. It was always a lesson in whatever he told us.

MRS. COLBERT: It was eighteen of us. My mother and father was a mother and father of eighteen children.

CARMALETTA: What did your father tell you about being an Indian?

MRS. COLBERT: I know more about that than what he told me, because I was around my Indian uncles, the ones that were practically half. I was around them a lot. He told me that the reason why he didn't get on the Dawes Roll. I can't explain it, but he said something about the too-lates. They didn't get on the roll. Of course, he received a little money back in 1970, but he had to fight for it.

CARMALETTA: That's interesting. And what about your mother?

MRS. COLBERT: My mother did too. She got hers at the same time he did. But they really had them work for it.

CARMALETTA: Did she tell you stories about the part of her family that was Indian?

MRS. COLBERT: Yes. She would tell me about how her grandmother made all their clothes, and my grandmother, I can remember that my grandmother made her aprons and her skirts and her blouses. They raised lot of crops. They even raised some cotton. They raised a lot of corn. Big truck patches.

CARMALETTA: That's great you have those memories. If you were going to have a legacy for your children about what it meant to be both black and Indian, what is it that you would tell them? What is it that you want them to think about now?

MRS. COLBERT: I would want them to just cherish everything that's been instilled in them about their genealogy and the legacy. And never forget where they came from.

CARMALETTA: Thank you very much. That was so good.

MRS. COLBERT: Thank you.

**E. W. Collins**

E. W. Collins was born in Cherokee County, Oklahoma. As a child, he used to play on the floor and listen to his siblings recite Paul Laurence Dunbar poems in their entirety and talk about their community. He absorbed these stories and remembered them. He grew up in “a little one-horse town” that was Fort Gibson. The town had “two cotton gins, a dry cleaners, a little old train station, two banks, a couple of hardware stores. The blacks in the town lived in the north end of town, down toward the river.” His aunt, Alabama Moore, reminded them of the social stratification in town by living at the top of the hill in town. Fort Gibson was tri-segregated--blacks, whites, and Indians. None of the groups had much, if any, interaction with the other. The only time there was any racial mixing was in the town at the markets. Mr. Collins passed on to glory on August 22, 2006.

CARMALETTA: This is Carmaletta Williams with “Shifting Borders of Race and Identity,” and I am interviewing Mr. E.W. Collins of Omaha, Nebraska. Mr. Collins, Uncle E.W. (laughter), how are you?

MR. COLLINS: I’m hanging on by a thread. Don’t cut my thread.

CARMALETTA: (Laughter) Oh, we won’t do that. Can you tell me about growing up in Oklahoma and what that was like?

MR. COLLINS: You have to remember that I was born in Cherokee County, Oklahoma. And the first school I went to and all of that. I was nine years old when we left there. So my memory in a lot of areas would be fuzzy. I would figure my older siblings would know more than I because they were there when things happened and had a chance to know more details. But a lot of stuff I picked up on the floor playing. For instance, our youngest brother, Walter Raleigh, used to recite Dunbar pieces. And I learned a couple of those and had never seen them until I was grown.

They used to go to BTU (Baptist Training Union) and they had these, I guess you would call them orations. They would write a speech for the different ones and recite them. They’d put on programs and so forth. And I remember excerpts of some of those things. They just hung in the back of my mind. How did that go? “It has been assigned to me the task of welcoming you on behalf of our convention. We are indeed animated that you have come, and look forward to this very day with rejoicing and sincere hope. That as you are workers for a Master, much good will be achieved.” That’s just how I picked it up on the floor listening to them.

CARMALETTA: That’s an incredible memory. So you were on the floor, playing around and listening to the older ones?

MR. COLLINS: Second Timothy 2:15, First Thessalonians 5:22 will tell you exactly what to do. “Study to show thyself approved unto God, a worker that

needs not be ashamed rightly dividing the word of truth.” That’s just something I remember from hearing them.

CARMALETTA: Do you remember what Fort Gibson was like when you were a little boy?

MR. COLLINS: Fort Gibson was a little one-horse town. It used to have, I believe, two cotton gins, a dry cleaners, a little old train station, two banks, a couple of hardware stores, and the blacks lived on the north end of town, down toward the river. Our aunt, Alabama Moore, used to live at the top of the hill as you go down there to the river.

She had a daughter named Rosie and, of course, my memory is fuzzy. But, let’s see, Aunt Alabama had a son named James Moore and one named Jodie Moore. James Moore was married to Sally. And he had a stepson. I can’t think of his name right now. The farm that Papa bought crossed the intersection of a road, a north-bound road and a east-west road. And right on the southeast corner of this intersection, where we would head to Thompson School, the first school I went to was this little shack where our cousin Sally lived. That was Jodie and James Moore’s sister. She used to live right at that corner. And there would be a big split up there. Some would go east and some would go west, when we came from school.

CARMALETTA: What was the school like?

MR. COLLINS: There’s a whole lot of history back there. Our teacher used to room at our house. That is something you should have heard my older brother talk about that. He got four whippings for something that he didn’t do. It was death to have an older person say that you did something wrong—and don’t let it be a preacher or a teacher.

They had a spelling bee, and my brother was flip on the tongue. Give him spelling bee is “storm.” “S-T-O-R-M.” “S-T-O-R-M.” Give it to another old boy, “S-T--O--R--M.”

“Correct. Sit down, J.C.” “But that’s what I said.” And then one of the girls in the class made a mistake of saying, “Yes, Ma’am, that’s what he said.” “Oh, you shut up, you’re just stuck on him.” So she whipped him. She said he sassed her.

Went home, told Mama, Mama whipped him, Papa came home, she told Papa, Papa whipped him, and the next morning he gave him one for good measure to remind him.

CARMALETTA: Not to talk back?

MR. COLLINS: And my brother, J.C., said he had to stop talking about that after he was grown. It hurt our mother so, to know that the teacher would lie.

After he was grown, he was telling her about that. And it hurt her so that he just had to drop it.

CARMALETTA: All those years...

MR. COLLINS: But that's the way things were back in those days. Our sister, Paralee, was light complexioned and she was first or the second child and I was number nine, I don't know anything about that. But it seems that her first day in school, the teacher whipped the blood out of her legs because she couldn't spell "puff" and "muff."

CARMALETTA: No!

MR. COLLINS: And that is what you go to school for, to learn. And he whipped her. And, of course, Papa had told Mama.

CARMALETTA: I bet. Beat the blood out of her legs.

MR. COLLINS: Yeah, those were some days back there. There used to be this was a little one-room school called Thompson. We were inside of Cherokee County. I was born inside of Cherokee County, and a half a mile, I think it was, from the line of Muskogee County. Where you go in the front, you had a cloak room and, as I remember on each side of the entrance, and you had a bell out at the fence and I think it straddled the fence some kind of way. But, anyway, they would ring the bell for time for school. "Bling, bling. Bling, bling. Bling, bling." While we're on bells, the church also had a bell and if someone passed in the community, they would toll the bell.

They'd ring it for regular service. "Bling, bling. Bling, bling. Bling, bling." But, when they toll the bell, someone had passed. "Bong. Bong." And they would toll the number of years of the person that had passed.

CARMALETTA: That's interesting. My goodness!

MR. COLLINS: I saw my first movie at that little church. Four Mile Branch Church. Somebody had had a machine. I don't know if they were from Texas or wherever, but I think they had a little motor that was generating this juice. And they showed this little movie there at the church out there in the country. I could rattle on and on and on.

CARMALETTA: So then Four Mile Branch then is north of town, and that's where all the black people lived in that area? Down by the river?

MR. COLLINS: Incidentally, there were two fortune tellers in town, two black fortune tellers. Sarah Newton and—I can't think of the other one's name now.

MR. COLLINS: Anyway, people used to go to see fortune tellers if they had a problem or if they'd lost an animal or something to get a description of where it was and all of that sort of thing. And our father followed that stuff pretty closely. We are products of our exposure and how we were raised. And that's how he was raised.

So he carried that on for a long time. Have you ever seen haunts?

CARMALETTA: No.

MR. COLLINS: Spooks? Ghosts?

CARMALETTA: Sometimes, I guess (laughter). Not really.

MR. COLLINS: I haven't seen one either to know it. But I have been out sometime alone at night, where you couldn't see your hand before you. There's certain spots, it could be hot in the summer time, and you get to this spot and you get a cold breeze right down the back of your neck.

CARMALETTA: I believe they exist.

MR. COLLINS: Take a few more steps, and it's hot again.

MR. COLLINS: We have been out places at night in the wagon. That was the mode of travel in those days. They'd take the kids out of the house and put them in the wagon and sit (laughter). And they'd get to talking about it later, "When we were passing such and such a place, did you see so and so?" "No." Everybody saw it but me.

I remember my father telling about that at the Four Mile Branch Church at Prayer Meeting on Wednesday night. And one of the deacons didn't believe in spooks. No, he don't believe in no boogers. So, one night he got caught out, and there wasn't nobody going his way home.

And he was shifting along kind of fast. And he was catching up with somebody.

"Oh, great! I'll have somebody to walk with," he was thinking to himself. The closer he got, the more this person bore over to the side of the road. He got right along beside of him, he just started walking on up into the air. And he was telling it the next day, "I saw a booger last night" (laughter).

CARMALETTA: He believed then (laughter).

MR. COLLINS: I could only take their word because I didn't see it.

CARMALETTA: So is Cherokee County where there are a lot of Cherokee?

MR. COLLINS: You remember the five so-called civilized tribes were settled in Oklahoma—Cherokee, Creek, Choctaw, Chickasaw, and Seminole—were the five supposedly civilized tribes that accepted reservation status.

Counties were named after these tribes. And I was born in Cherokee County. I grew up in Muskogee County.

CARMALETTA: Were there any American Indians in your neighborhood or your area? Did you see any?

MR. COLLINS: Any Indians? We were not around many of them there. We would see them occasionally. And, in Muskogee, they had an Indian college. But you go out west, like Anadarko, Fort Sill, out in that area there were a whole lot of them.

CARMALETTA: Do you know why they were out west rather than where you were?

MR. COLLINS: That's where some of the tribes were. These were not of the so-called Five Civilized Tribes. But, you know there are a lot of tribes. Incidentally, we were at Golden Corral here about a year ago and ran into a man who claimed that he was a chief. And he gave me a card. I should have it here somewhere.

He said we should keep up with him, because one of these days they're going to have a settlement and we should have something coming from the way the tribes were treated, and we should have something coming from the Cherokee tribes. He went on back into those that came from Mississippi and all that. We just happen to get to talking. He wasn't in the conversation but he ended up at our table.

He was telling about how the white man has done the Indians and the black and so forth, and they were going to have a settlement one of these days, and how they had fought this in Congress, and they had tried their best to get around it, but it was going to come to a head one of these days.

There are a lot of little old things that come across your mind. But details, I'm sorry.

CARMALETTA: Those were great details. Those were extraordinary details.

MR. COLLINS: Oh, my goodness! I can only reminisce and try to remember. Something that cross my mind here and there. They had that little one-room

school, I started to tell you about. That wasn't the only one. And, when they'd have school closings.

That's when the teacher taught all the way from we called them charts in those days, from chart through the eighth grade, everything. Mathematics, music and everything.

CARMALETTA: Yeah, the same teacher taught everything.

MR. COLLINS: One teacher taught everything.

CARMALETTA: In one room?

MR. COLLINS: One-room school. There was one old professor, Henry. I was scared of that man as you would be the devil. "By the way, by the way, take off my belt, I'll whip 'em or kill 'em. I'll whip 'em or kill 'em." And these things he would say at the school closing. You call one of these teachers for remarks, and that's some of the stuff he'd say.

CARMALETTA: And he could take off his belt, too. Oh, my! What about your parents? How did they end up in Oklahoma?

MR. COLLINS: How did they get there? That I could not say. We heard just a smattering here and there. Old folks didn't talk. I just found out in going to these family reunions that our father, Jim, came along between two marriages, between Collins and Outlaw. I didn't know that until we started going to these family reunions. We were being left out, and some of them started saying, "Well, what about Jim? Jim's kids are here." Then they act like they didn't recognize him. To make a long story short, my cousin Countee knew. He had done a lot of digging and had seen that somewhere back down the line, way back when the old folks died out, they had a division of some property. And Uncle Santana, Savannah, S.C., whatever you call him, he went through several names. And Uncle Savannah and our father, Jim, were always close. And it seems in dividing up the property and so forth, they left our father, Jim, out. Did not leave him an inheritance. He didn't belong. So Uncle Santana said, "Well, if Jim can't have his, you can have mine too." And they walked off and didn't go back. And that's how they got to the Indian Territory before it was a state.

CARMALETTA: Oh! Such a wonderful story. So he stood up for his brother?

MR. COLLINS: And these two brothers, half brothers, stuck together.

CARMALETTA: Stuck together and they both left.

MR. COLLINS: As far as I know, they were never very far apart. When the farm that I was born on was lost, we moved. A family moved in on us, and we moved

to Muskogee County, near the little black town called Taft. You may have heard of it.

CARMALETTA: Yes.

MR. COLLINS: Uncle Santana moved out on King Creek, and that was about eight or ten miles toward Oklahoma City. But that wasn't really that far apart except for transportation. And that's about as far apart as they ever were, as far as I know.

Across the years, after I was a grown man, when I would go to see my father, we would go take him to see his brother. And that's how they would see each other.

CARMALETTA: And they stayed close?

MR. COLLINS: And I understand when Papa passed and my brother, J.C., and I took off, then Uncle Santana broke down and said, "I'll never see those boys again." And the next summer, we were right back down there, and he broke down again.

He thought he would never see us again. But they are buried in the same cemetery—Uncle Santana and I believe all his kids are buried in that cemetery.

CARMALETTA: In Taft?

MR. COLLINS: The Doyle Cemetery at Yahola. Yahola is a little town, it is no longer there. Y-A-H-O-L-A, Yahola.

CARMALETTA: The town just died off?

MR. COLLINS: Yeah. They used to have a lumber yard, a cotton gin, a eating joint, two stores. That's about all I can remember was out there. And it finally just died down.

CARMALETTA: Were Yahola and Taft close together?

MR. COLLINS: Not really. They were about four miles apart.

And in between was our alma mater, Sugar Creek. That's where we went to grade school.

I graduated from grade school at Sugar Creek. And then my sister, Verlene, went to Moten High School in Taft. And she went, I think, two semesters there, and I had to stay out to pick cotton. And, when I went back, I was lost. So the next year our stepsister, Vera, and her cousin who stayed with us for several years, Robert Williams, were both then in high school. So we all went to Wheatley High in

Boynton. That's really my alma mater. That's where I graduated from high school.

I barely got out because I didn't have enough money. I grew up during the Depression. And I could not carry what they call a man-size project. What a man would do in life. I did not have the money, and I barely got out of high school. They made a way for me to get out because we had what was left of two orchards, and my vocational agriculture teacher had me to prune what was left of those two orchards, and he came out and graded and that's how he let me out.

CARMALETTA: So you got your man-size project done that way?

MR. COLLINS: A man-size project. One of the fellows had the backing of his folk. They borrowed money from some kind of a farm credit and he built a brooder house and started raising chickens. Another one bought a steer and raised beef. I could not carry a man-size project.

CARMALETTA: Yeah. That's a lot to ask of a kid, being a high school student.

MR. COLLINS: The problem was nobody had any money during those days. It was nothing to see teachers walk behind their students to keep the kids from seeing the pasteboard in the bottom of their shoes.

CARMALETTA: Oh, my!

MR. COLLINS: And teachers with patches on top of patches in the seat of their pants.

CARMALETTA: Yeah.

MR. COLLINS: I tell you, times were tight. That is just history to most people. But I lived it.

CARMALETTA: What was Boynton like?

MR. COLLINS: It was a little one-horse town.

CARMALETTA: Another little segregated town?

MR. COLLINS: Oh, yeah. It was segregated. The whites and blacks lived there, but they didn't go to school together or anything like that. You had your white schools and you had your black schools. We got the books that the white kids left. If the white kids didn't get new books, we didn't get the old ones. And in our high school, we had vocational agriculture and shop work for the boys, and home economics and Negro history for the girls. I had no Negro history. In none of my schooling I had any of the sciences.

CARMALETTA: Were they there or they just didn't give them?

MR. COLLINS: They were not there.

CARMALETTA: Were the teachers not able to do it?

MR. COLLINS: They were not there. When that little part time I went to Taft to Moten High, they had a class called General Science. And I remember the teacher, called Buck Waters. I think he had a ego trip. He put heel plates on his shoes and when he walked down the hall, he'd "pompity-pomp" so we could hear (laughter). And I remember his telling that "One of these days you'll be able to talk to a person on the phone and look at him at the same time." And this was about 1933 or somewhere along there, '33 or '34. So you see how long it took to get it.

CARMALETTA: It took a while, but he was right. A man way ahead of his time. What stands out the most when you think about growing up in Oklahoma?

MR. COLLINS: Love. We didn't have much, but we had love. And you had standards. Certain people you really didn't associate with and, yet, you didn't look down on them. You just had different standards. I remember there were two: A lineage of Indian, they called them freedmen. And my folk were what you called state niggers [black people in Oklahoma who were not part Indian]. They come from Mississippi. I heard the story that this woman looked down on state people. And then one summer—they had a real nice house out there in the country, and a rent house, and during that summer their nice house burned down. And they had to move and live in that chicken coup until the end of that year, until they could get possession of their rent house. And I heard some of the old folks say how it brought her down.

CARMALETTA: So there were the freedmen who were part Indian? And then the state people?

MR. COLLINS: Yeah. There was a man in Muskogee, he lived on the outskirts of Muskogee, named Luther Manuel. And they said he was a millionaire. I have to take that back. He didn't live on the outskirts of Muskogee. He lived down in the area on King Creek, where I said my Uncle Santana moved to. I never was to the house, but it was a three-story brick house out in the middle of the country. They said there were imported rugs on those floors, and when you walk on them, they lap over your feet.

Luther Manuel's sister, Pearl, and the woman I said was Hardy, these two brothers, Bob and Fred Lee, Pearl was Luther Manuel's sister and Luther was supposed to have been a millionaire. The freedmen got land allotments along with the Indians.

And the story was, when they would come of age, those white folk would get them in town, get them drunk, and when they came home, they may have a horse or a saddle or something like that, no land.

CARMALETTA: Signed their land away.

MR. COLLINS: Luther Manuel's brother-in-law, Fred, told me one Sunday, one summer, "If I knew then what I know now." Times were tight then. You've heard of the dust-bowl days?

CARMALETTA: Yeah.

MR. COLLINS: You know what that means?

CARMALETTA: The drought, the extreme drought?

MR. COLLINS: And when you see what happens in certain areas of Africa, you know what it was like. I have plowed in the fields and a cloud of dust going along with me. And the dirt so smooth, like talcum powder squirting up between my barefoot toes. Go a few steps and spit mud. The dust-bowl days—I lived them.

During one of those hot, dry summers, Fred Lee was watering seventy-five head of cattle twice a day out of our well. He put a pump in it and piped water about a half a block out to the road and put a bunch of farm tanks out there. Then he come down there and pump them full of water, and drive those cattle down there twice a day and let them drink. And at the same time that they'd be drinking, there would be eight to ten wagons lined up to haul water from our well. The well was only about ten feet deep.

It was drilled and, and about the size of a stove pipe, and all of that water going out of there. The only difference you could ever tell, it got cold as ice. If you had watermelon, fill a tub full of water and put it under the bed in the shade, and you'd have cold watermelon.

CARMALETTA: Did these people pay you for the water?

MR. COLLINS: Nah. Papa said, "It's the Lord's water and as long as there's plenty for us, help yourself." I understand there were people who had a little left and was selling it.

Papa says, "It's the Lord's water, not mine."

CARMALETTA: How generous of him. Your papa sounds like an incredible man.

MR. COLLINS: Oh, he was. The more I think about him, the more incredible I can realize he was. He was something.

MR. COLLINS: When rich white people were jumping out of windows because they had lost their fortunes and all that, the bottom went out from under him also. But he said, "The Lord will provide."

CARMALETTA: Yeah. That's a great thing.

MR. COLLINS: And that is the heritage that has been passed down to us. You didn't bargain for all this, did you?

CARMALETTA: Oh, I love it (laughter). This is great. So then you got a strong faith because your father had a strong faith?

MR. COLLINS: Oh, yes, yes.

CARMALETTA: If you think of one thing or a couple of things that you want the people in your family to know about themselves and about the family, what is it? What's most important? What is it that you want them to know?

MR. COLLINS: A couple of things? I said one summer we went to a family reunion, I don't even remember where we were now, but I told them, I told all those young people, "Be careful what you do to your kids. Some of the song, a man named his son Sue.

CARMALETTA: Yeah, "A Boy Named Sue."

MR. COLLINS: You remember that song?

CARMALETTA: Yes. Johnny Cash, I think.

MR. COLLINS: I told them about that. Let your children hear you pray.

That's one biggy. And be careful of the names you give your children. I'm going to tell you this, I don't scatter it into the wind, but my first name is E-U-L-A. And I don't use it, because I don't like it. That's why I use my initials. And I told them at the family reunion, "Be careful what you name your children."

You asked me about things that stand out. These things stand out to me: Faith. When we had family prayer, everybody was supposed to be there. It wasn't as if we'd run in and pick up a sandwich, or I got a bite at such and such a place and all that.

You came to the table, you sat down, and ate. You had family discussions. You talked about things. If there were any problems in the community, you had a chance to discuss them. And get the old folks' slant on them, as much as they would tell, because, as I said, there were a lot of things that old folks didn't talk about.

CARMALETTA: That's true. Those were the days of children should be seen and not heard.

MR. COLLINS: As I told you, I just found out going to these family reunions that Papa came along between two marriages. And in talking to Uncle Savannah's boys, the older one. There was one they called Big Baby. His name was William. And William says every time they get to a certain part, they say, "We better let that alone." That's all they ever got out of it.

CARMALETTA: Your family sounds fascinating.

.MR. COLLINS: But family is family. You can't help where you came from.

CARMALETTA: Yeah. I'm still discovering my family. I spent quite a bit of time looking up things and trying to reconstruct the past. But you have such a wonderful handle on your family. It's incredible; it's a great gift to share with the young people. And I understand you're doing that, you're sharing these stories.

MR. COLLINS: My brother, J.C., told this story: He was looking like one of those little old clodhopper fellows in the community. Cap bill turned hair sidewise, rocking when he walked, and he come down the road walking like that, and Uncle Santana met him. "J.C., what's a matter with you? What are you doing walking like that? Straighten that cap up. Don't you ever let me catch you walking like that again. You ain't killed nobody."

CARMALETTA: (Laughter). That's great.

MR. COLLINS: And that stuck with him. And he was a proud soul. He'd kind of swing his hand when he walked. He grew up proud. I think he had too much pride.

CARMALETTA: A haughty spirit.

MR. COLLINS: But you pick up little things here and there. My father used to smoke a pipe. He smoked Prince Albert. He used to chew tobacco. He chewed Bronze Mule. I don't know if you've seen them or not, but it's strong. I would smoke the papers that came with Prince Albert can, but Papa smoked in his pipe. And when the papers were gone, I withstood smoking until he bought another can and paid it no attention. I never did get the habit.

CARMALETTA: That's good.

MR. COLLINS: But Papa told me a story here and there, just little things. He told me about when they first left home and went and got jobs. And one of the fellows he said was a handsome guy, bought a new suit, went and got drunk, laid down, and vomited all over that new suit. He decided from that, if that's what drinking

did to you, he wanted no part of it. Now, he didn't tell me, "Don't drink," but that hung in the back of my mind. I told you Papa used to smoke. He'd quit when he got ready, start again when he got ready. And I got from that don't grab a hold to anything that you can't turn loose when you get ready.

CARMALETTA: All right!

MR. COLLINS: Just in passing I got that lesson.

CARMALETTA: Yes. That's a good message. That's a good lesson to learn.

MR. COLLINS: I picked up a thing or two here and there, just in living. But the problem is, and this is what I tell the preachers in private conversation, that there has been enough preaching going on to save the world, but we are prone to forget.

And it's hard to keep the things that we need on the front burner. You don't think about them when you need them. If Adam had thought, he didn't want to turn Eve loose. I don't know how it came down the pipe, but I just know that we're in trouble.

CARMALETTA: So your final thoughts for this project?

MR. COLLINS: My final thoughts?

CARMALETTA: What words would like to leave with the people on the "Shifting Borders of Race and Identity" project? Because this will be on the website and people will see it, or will hear it, all over. So what's important?

MR. COLLINS: I'd say faith. The definition of faith. Some people say, "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

CARMALETTA: Yes.

MR. COLLINS: I say, "Faith makes tangible the things you can't see."

CARMALETTA: All right. This has been an excellent interview. Thank you very much.

MR. COLLINS: You can't see love. You can't see hope. And, yet, there abideth these three, Paul says, "Faith, hope and charity, and the greatest of these is love." They remain regardless of what comes or goes. But the greatest of these is love. You can't see love. You can see the result of it in action. You can't see faith, but what does the scripture say? "Faith without works is dead." What good does it do to have the faith if you don't act on it?

CARMALETTA: That's right.

MR. COLLINS: And you let your faith dictate what you will say, what you will do, how you will treat people.

**Bill Davis**

Bill Davis, with an authoritarian voice, identifies himself racially as Cherokee. He grew up around Cherokee and Winnepeaw with other black Cherokees. He has received his BIA card but realized that some of his friends were not allowed to get theirs. These people, when growing up, identified themselves clearly as “Cherokees” and are entitled to all the rights and benefits that accompany their heritage. Mr. Davis is working to organize and educate those people who have been denied their cards on the process necessary to overcome this travesty. His primary advice is to “get your ducks in order. Educate your people, start forming together again.”

CARMALETTA: This is Carmaletta Williams with the “Shifting Borders of Race and Identity” project. Would you identify yourself, please?

MR. DAVIS: My name is Bill Davis.

CARMALETTA: And how do you identify yourself racially and ethnically, Mr. Davis?

MR. DAVIS: I’m a Cherokee.

CARMALETTA: You said that with authority. Why are you interested in this freedman’s project?

MR. DAVIS: In the Coffeyville area, I grew up with a number of freedmen, black Cherokees, in the Coffeyville school district, and also down towards Winnepeaw. I got to know quite a few of them, and I always felt that they’d got a raw deal. Where I got my travel card, others got their cards. Some of my friends said they weren’t allowed. I really didn’t see it until about 1978, and I noticed where some people were able to get benefits as far as hospitalization and stuff down at Nowata and Claremore. These families were not allowed. I couldn’t understand it, because I know many of them just from growing up. When I was in grade school—out on the school grounds—they wanted to be called Indians, Cherokees. That’s one of the biggest reasons, and I think it’s unfair—what’s going on with them now—after reading the treaty agreement of 1866. They should be entitled to all the rights.

CARMALETTA: Do you think that there will be a favorable resolution for the freedmen?

MR. DAVIS: In time. Yes, I do. I think the biggest thing is to organize and re-educate the people. Many of the freedmen are not educated in this. A meeting like they had in Coffeyville, Kansas, today is getting the word out. Many of them are just not educated enough. They know that their grandparents are Indian or they’re Cherokee, but one time we had land, but they had to move into Kansas to find work. I believe there will be a favorable place some day.

CARMALETTA: Great! What kind of advice would you give to the freedmen?

MR. DAVIS: The advice would be, "Get your ducks in order. Educate your people. Start forming together again." I know down toward Road 5 south of South Coffeyville, they used to have what they called the picnic ground. They used to dance down there. When I was a little boy, I remember going over there to the old dance grounds and stuff. They need to communicate with their children and get the young people involved again.

CARMALETTA: The freedmen had the dance ground?

MR. DAVIS: At one time, yes.

CARMALETTA: That's interesting.

MR. DAVIS: You could talk with Rosie Green. She could tell you a lot more about it. She's very knowledgeable about the freedmen in that area. I remember growing up as a young man, a lot of the old, they call them shanties, down there. There was a shanty and lots of them down there, and they called it the old—to be honest with you, they called it the old nigger grounds. That's what they called it.

I'm not pulling no punches and you can ask anybody down there, that's what they were called. But they also knew around Possum Creek and that area, that they were freedmen. They were at one time and should be, as far as I'm concerned, citizens of the Cherokee Nation.

CARMALETTA: For the children who will read this and for other people, what advice would you give? What's important about grasping onto being a Cherokee?

MR. DAVIS: The history and being proud of who you are and where your people come from. That's the way I would like to put it.

CARMALETTA: All right. Thank you very much. This is great.

**Janet M. Ford**

Janet M. Ford, a resident of Olathe, Kansas, was raised in Tulsa, Oklahoma. She identifies racially as “Caucasian.” In her Tulsa neighborhood there was no racial diversity. It was a white neighborhood. She went to all-white schools and grew up in a “snooty part of town.” Until she went to college, she had never been exposed to people of other nationalities or races, except for the family maid and her family. She applauds the bravery of the “lady that came and cleaned” their house for taking her places with her and introducing her to diverse people and cultures. When she graduated from high school, Janet decided to learn about other cultures. She attended Northeastern State University in Tahlequah, Oklahoma, where she estimates that half of the student body was Native American, and half of those were Cherokee.

CARMALETTA: I am Carmaletta Williams with the “Shifting Borders of Race and Identity” project. Would you please identify yourself?

JANET: My name is Janet Ford.

CARMALETTA: Janet, how do you identify yourself ethnically and racially?

JANET: Caucasian.

CARMALETTA: Why do you say that?

JANET: That’s what I was always told as a child.

CARMALETTA: Did you know any different or have you learned any differences?

JANET: Through my lifetime, absolutely. Do you want me to just tell my story?

CARMALETTA: I do.

JANET: I grew up in Tulsa, Oklahoma. I was born in 1950. I lived in a predominantly white neighborhood and grew up in a family that had no diversity in our lives and a time where it was hard to identify that. I went to all-white schools and I grew up in a time when busing, as they termed it at the time, was starting to happen. My high school did not participate in that. I grew up in a snooty part of town. Not that my family belonged in that part of town, but that’s where I grew up. Probably until I got into my college years, I was never even exposed to people of other nationalities or races—except as a child. I have some funny stories Amanda [Janet’s daughter] likes for me to tell.

When I grew up, my grandmother and I used to go on the bus a lot, to go shopping because she didn’t drive. And I remember I’ve always wanted to ride in the back of the bus. I was not allowed to, because that was where the African Americans were allowed to ride, and I was very upset by that because I wanted

to ride in the back of the bus. I didn't understand differences; I mean, it didn't make any difference to me. That's where I wanted to ride.

CARMALETTA: Yeah (laughter).

JANET: And my grandmother obviously would not ever let me do that. Until I got a little older and a little more defiant, then I would do that. We had a lady that came and cleaned our house, and I was allowed as a child to go places with her. And that was probably the first time that I ever really saw any kind of diversity in my life. And I became kind of a part of her family, as she did ours, and that's when I started seeing the differences and how people were treated. The good life that I had versus the not-so-good life that her family had. And I was thankful that my mom allowed me to do that, because that was in a time that was very admirable for that to happen.

CARMALETTA: What about being in Oklahoma? That's Native America, that's the way they promote themselves. Did you have any interactions with American Indians while you were there?

JANET: I did in college. I went to school in Tahlequah, Oklahoma, which is the Cherokee capital and the university that I went to was Northeastern State University. At the time it was Northeastern State College. It's since been named a university. It was known as a teaching college. And, at that time, I would say probably half of the student body there was Native American, and probably half of those were Cherokee.

They lived right there. The rest of the student body was made up of everything else. So that was probably my first real encounter with that. During my college years, I actually did some volunteer work out on the the reservation that they have there in Tahlequah. And that was kind of fun to get to know that.

CARMALETTA: What did you do?

JANET: We went out there when they usually had tour groups through the reservation. We college students went out. I minored in sociology and criminology, and so that's how I got involved in that. We were able to go out and actually go through a part of the reservation set up for tourists. Obviously, it wasn't the real workings of it. But we were able to see the real workings of it because there were people that lived out there. Wilma Mankiller was the chief of the nation at the time, and so I got to visit with her more than one time. That was very interesting to listen to her stories and to see the stories of the Indians. Because on the reservation they actually lived like they would have years ago. They did that obviously for show, and their point was they didn't have to live like that.

But it was kind of interesting because then you got to see into that culture. We got to learn Native dances and we got to do things with them behind the scenes, so that we could be able to tell about it. So that was kind of fun. And to hear how they had to survive. In talking to people like Mrs. Mankiller, it was interesting because she told stories of actually being in Indian raids and in different things like that. Scalpings and some of those things, I think she told us for effect (laughter).

CARMALETTA: (Laughter). I like how you white kids turn white.

JANET: Very white (laughter). Very red sometimes (laughter). Like, what are you doing to us?

CARMALETTA: So how do you think that you were accepted on the reservation?

JANET: In the front we were accepted fine. But when you started getting back into the interactions, you could definitely tell we were the outsiders in that and that sometimes we were not welcomed. That even bled over into the campus with the students there, because a lot of the jobs were given to the Native Americans. I grew up in a family that didn't have a lot of money, and I needed the scholarships and the jobs as well. And it was harder to get because I was white and in a world that wasn't. I don't know what it is to be discriminated against, but I guess if I ever had to say it, I felt like I was discriminated against a little in those days, because I was in a world that was different than my world.

I chose that. I chose to go there because of that, because I wanted to learn those things. But on the campus and off the campus, even in the town, a lot of places that I went, you could tell you weren't quite as welcomed as some other people were.

CARMALETTA: Your daughter is my college student. And her life now seems to pretty much mirror your early life. She's in Johnson County, which is very white for me. How do you feel about that?

JANET: The differences with her life and my life are that there was no diversity in my school. She went to a high school where there was lots of diversity in her high school. There were lots of different people and different cultures in that high school. I purposely sent her to a high school like that because I don't want her to grow up without knowing what is prejudice and how do you get around it? I don't know the answers to that. But I didn't want the things taught to her that were taught to me as a child by my grandparents. My mom didn't really teach those things to me as much as my grandparents did, and now I resent some of that. My daughter has always had friends that are different than her, and sometimes her white friends make a big deal out of it, but Amanda refuses to give in to their racists remarks.

We had no African Americans or Native Americans in our high school period. Until I was in college, I was never exposed to that. She's had friends growing up that were spending the night at my house and were not treated any differently than any of her other friends, and that's the life I want her to have. I wish other people could be that way.

CARMALETTA: Yes. That's right. And, in fact, I do programs a lot for high school teachers and many of them have called to say, "I live in a very white community, and we need you to come here and do some work with us." But I also discovered that people who move to those communities—not the ones that were born there, but the ones who move there—move there for that reason. So it's interesting that you moved here from Oklahoma for some reason, but you made sure that your daughter got an exposure to a wide variety.

JANET: I moved here because of my job. I moved to Johnson County because that's where my job was, not because that's where I necessarily wanted to live. But then, when we moved here, we lived in an apartment for six months so that I could find the right place for us and the right neighborhood for us. In my neighborhood there's diversity and that's what I want.

CARMALETTA: So this is not white-white (laughter)?

JANET: Definitely not. But, some of the things that happened to me in college are interesting. I was in college during the race riots. And I can remember being in my dorm room and we had codes of whether you needed to be in your dorm room with the door locked, or you needed to be out in the hall. There was a period of probably three weeks that we were not allowed to walk around the campus without being escorted as females. And luckily I had friends that were African American males that would walk us to the library, and wait for us and walk us home. Otherwise, we would not have been able to do that. And that was scary.

And it's scary to me from a standpoint of I didn't understand it and didn't understand why it was going on, and probably because of going on at that time, that's helped me to understand other sides of it. I've done volunteer work with homeless organizations and with battered women shelters, and you see a lot of that in those places. And that has helped me to have a better understanding because that could be me.

CARMALETTA: Yeah.

JANET: And I think those are divided by race. But, unfortunately, what we see growing up in our little white world is what we see.

CARMALETTA: I think that's a testament, though, to you as a person that you were able to bridge that kind of background to actually become a person that's

open and accepting of all kinds of people and certainly it's apparent in your daughter, she's great. That was going to be my next question. Were any interactions with African Americans? I'm hearing, when you grew up, you had household staff that shared their lives with you? What were those experiences?

JANET: The experiences were kind of fun because her kids—her name was Willie Mae—and her grandkids always wanted to be at our house, and my sister and I always wanted to be at her house. Isn't that interesting?

CARMALETTA: (Laughter). Yeah.

JANET: Because we always wanted to see what the other experiences were. We walked into their neighborhoods and did not feel safe and did not feel accepted. People would stare at us. It's probably why my mom had us do it, so that we could understand what it was like to stand out in a different world. And I appreciate that she let me do that and let me experience that. Because even today—I work in the insurance business—and in my office we have very little diversity in our office, and that's unfair. In fact, when I first started, I was the one female in my unit. Even that's a little bit different.

And now I've grown into a world where a lot of the people that are in our business are Caucasian and, at least in the Midwest here, we work very hard to try to diversify that. But it doesn't always happen and I don't know how to change that. Those are the things that frustrate me. But right now I'm interviewing for some people to take some positions at my office, and the people that I'm getting are not so diverse, which I would like to see. Maybe it's because people don't want to work in the insurance business (laughter). But, it's frustrating just to see that. I saw it from my childhood.

I did college recruiting when I was down at Tulsa for a company. I went to an all-black American school to do some college recruiting. Even the recruiters there most of the time are African American. I thought, "Why?" I wanted to be there. I wanted to be the one to talk to them, and want them to want to work with me.

You did feel like an outsider in there. So I understand what people feel like in my office sometimes. I work with a minority-woman business owner in Kansas City, Kansas. She owns her own agency and is probably the person that I learn the most from right now. She's very giving and trying to help me find the right people to hire. And I went to her and just said, "I need help here. Send me people." And she's starting to do that. But she's having the same problem I'm having, finding the people at the education level that want to do this.

CARMALETTA: So a lot of businesses color-coded early and just didn't really break out of those molds.

This has been great. If you were to pass on a message to your daughter or friends or anyone about race and ethnicity and identity, what would it be?

JANET: The lesson I've tried to teach my daughter her whole life is to look past what people look like, and see what people are inside. Whether it be somebody who had the same color of skin you have or a different color of skin, there are good people in every place and there are bad people in every place, and you have to learn to tell the difference. Growing up, the saying we had was, "Don't judge a book by its cover."

Do that with the people and you'll make it in life by doing that. And we have to work really hard to get the notion of difference being real out of our heads, so we can overcome it and realize that people are the same. We're all here for the same reason and we're all here because God wanted us to be here. Not because your skin is a different color than my skin. Just get past that. And I think she does a good job listening to that.

CARMALETTA: I think she's a very lucky young woman to have you as a mother. Thank you very much for this interview.

**Ron Graham**

Ron Graham, a resident of Okmulgee, Oklahoma, identifies himself racially as a black Indian. He is a Muskogee Creek Indian. His father was involved with the Muskogee Creek way. His father “was what they called traditional Muskogee Creek Indian. He spoke the language. He went to the stomp grounds, the powwows. He was a member of the Abeka Stomp Grounds, where he even led in the stomp dances and all the songs—himself, his brothers, and a couple of his sisters.” Mr. Graham’s mother was also Creek and spoke the language. She and his father have Dawes Roll numbers. Mr. Graham has been denied his. He is determined to get his BIA card because “It shows me who I am. That’s part of what I am and who I am.” Although he has been a citizen of the Creek Nation, his membership was stripped in 1979. He is fighting to recover it.

CARMALETTA: This is Carmaletta Williams with the “Shifting Borders of Race and Identity” project. Would you please identify yourself?

MR. GRAHAM: My name is Ron Graham.

CARMALETTA: Mr. Graham, how do you identify yourself racially?

MR. GRAHAM: Racially, I’m Black Indian.

CARMALETTA: Black Indian?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes.

CARMALETTA: Okay. And, what part Indian? Do you know what tribe you’re with?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes, Creek, Muskogee Creek.

CARMALETTA: How did you know that?

MR. GRAHAM: My father.

CARMALETTA: Tell me about him.

MR. GRAHAM: My father even spoke the language. He was also involved in the Muskogee Creek way. He was what they called traditional Muskogee Creek Indian. He spoke the language. He went to the stomp grounds, the powwows. He was a member of the Abeka Stomp Grounds, where he even led in the stomp dances and all the songs—himself, his brothers, and a couple of his sisters.

CARMALETTA: That’s interesting.

MR. GRAHAM: Yes.

CARMALETTA: How about your mom?

MR. GRAHAM: My mom was Creek also. But she didn't live like that. It was her grandmother. My mother's mother spoke Creek also. She has a roll number also, along with my father.

CARMALETTA: So were you able to get your Indian card?

MR. GRAHAM: No. That's what we're trying to get right now. We're trying to get our card actually.

CARMALETTA: Why is this struggle important to you?

MR. GRAHAM: It shows me who I am. That's part of what I am and who I am. There's no criteria I have to go to. I don't have to carry around a card saying that I'm black or anything. You could see that in my appearance. But that's how it is with the Creek Nation. Although I've been a citizen ever since I was born, it was stripped away from me in 1979. But, my father was always a Creek citizen. When he died, he died a Creek citizen. It's just who I am. That's what I am. I'm black; I'm Muskogee Creek—that's what I am.

CARMALETTA: Sounds like a lot of this is embedded in your father's legacy.

MR. GRAHAM: Yes, it is. It is. Because he actually raised me.

CARMALETTA: Did you participate with him when you were a child in the Creek culture?

MR. GRAHAM: I remember going to the stomp ground one time. That was the only thing. I wish I would have remembered more of that or went to more, but I do remember one instance that I did go to the Abeka Stomp Grounds with him. I wish it was more that I've learned from him. But some things are still instilled in me.

CARMALETTA: Sounds like you've learned much. And it seems to be such an important part of your personal fiber. So how does that work in your real life? Outside of this struggle to be recognized as a Creek, what does being a Creek mean to you as far as you as a person and in your life?

MR. GRAHAM: Well, again, this is who I am. There are a lot of things I don't do traditionally as a so-called Creek Indian, Muscogee Indian. I don't speak the language fluently, like my father did. His brothers and sisters did. We don't wear the same type of clothes they wear, although this is a different time and era.

CARMALETTA: What difference will it make to you when you get the card?

MR. GRAHAM: It'll make a lot of difference, because it'll benefit my kids. It'll make a lot of difference in just letting other people know who I am. I know what I

am and who I am inside. This card will mean a little bit, especially to my father. That's the main thing to me actually. He was Creek, Muscogee Creek Indian. He lived it and he showed it. People looked up to him, respected him.

CARMALETTA: That's marvelous. If you were going to give some advice to these freedmen who are in this struggle to get identified and to get recognized, what would be your advice to them?

MR. GRAHAM: First of all, I take a different approach. You're saying struggle. But, I mainly called this education. I'm educating people on the freedmen. People say the freedmen are just black slaves or were slaves of the Indians or this and that. But a lot of them were very influential in treaties, in constitutions, back in 1866. But, I make this educational. I want people to know who I am—not a label that they had put on my father. Although he was black Indian, they put them all down as freedmen, stating that they didn't have any Indian blood, and that's not the case.

There's documents, I have lots of documents pertaining to my father, where it states the degree of Indian blood that he had. I'm also a genealogist. The struggle that I've had is getting documents about the freedman, because a lot of stuff has been destroyed, hidden, or misplaced somewhere. That's the only struggle that I've had actually. Because I've taught myself—in looking at these so called census cards—what the Dawes Commission has enrolled people in. So, when it came to enrolling freedmen, they either removed them from one roll to another, or they gave them another name, things of that nature. So, I find this more educational to me, and then I'd like to educate other people about what I've learned.

CARMALETTA: I think you do a marvelous job, and you're so knowledgeable about this that somebody has to learn something from you. And knowledge is power. But what I want to know is personally about you. I know that you're seeing this big view for all of these people are involved in the struggle. But what do you think about the political climate? Will it allow or not allow these people to be recognized, including yourself? It seems to be so much of a political struggle. Do you have to wait for the old guard to pass away, or do you think that the climate is going to be ripe soon for people to get their rightful dues?

MR. GRAHAM: I think it is. I think the climate is right. This is the right season, the right time, simply because I'm having an opportunity to speak. I'm going to the national council meetings, I'm going to other committee meetings in the Muskogee Creek Nation, and they're letting me talk. They're letting me demonstrate what happened to the so-called freedmen. And that's what I'm doing. That's the only opportunity that I want: to show them what I have and show them what the Dawes Commission did to us as Creek Indians, because we're also Creek Indian. But what's on the outside is what people see.

If they're going by a degree of blood, there's a degree of blood going through my veins, just as much as a degree of blood going through their veins. But they're seeing what people call Indians. But, when you look at me, you see a black man.

CARMALETTA: But on the inside do you feel like a black Indian?

MR. GRAHAM: I can't say. I don't know. I'm who I am. I mean, I'm black and I'm Indian. I don't live traditionally as an Indian, but I don't live traditionally as an African. I'm an American actually. I'm from Oklahoma, I'm an Oklahoman. Those ways and those things are gone actually. We still have our roots and our upbringing. I still have the things that my father used to do traditionally as a Muskogee Creek Indian, but a lot of those things have changed. They still have powwows, but I haven't went to a pow wow since I was a child, since my father had been around. But I'm just who I am. I'm a black Indian.

CARMALETTA: Just a blend of both?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes.

CARMALETTA: You said you have children?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes.

CARMALETTA: So what is the legacy you want to give to your children? What word of advice is it that you want them to know and to hold fast to?

MR. GRAHAM: To know who they are—plain and simple. To know where you're from and who you are, because this is spiritually, to me, also. In "Matthew," "Mark" and "Luke," it starts off with the genealogy of Jesus in "Matthew" and "Mark." But in "Luke," it goes from Jesus to Adam and Eve. It shows the seed of his whole genealogy, from Jesus all the way to Adam and Eve. And it's something else. Being who you are and what you are is everything. Because if that wasn't the case, it wouldn't be printed in the *Bible* that way. So, it's all about who you are and what you are, to me.

CARMALETTA: Okay. Any final words for us?

MR. GRAHAM: There's a lot of documents. I don't know if I could show them to you now, but I have them right in my briefcase. There's some documents that's been put away, hidden—to hold back who we are and what we are. We just got to search and research, and to find out who we are and what we're about, what we are. If you didn't have that mother, father, grandmother or grandfather to give you the generation of your family, then you got to look toward the documents. It's terrible what's been written and rewritten. Our people have been put on this role and put on that role. But we just got to search to see who we are and what we are. That's my main goal, and to educate. Don't hold that inside, let people know.

I tell my kids who they are and what they are. And don't be ashamed of it. That's what you are, period.

CARMALETTA: Be proud.

MR. GRAHAM: Yes.

CARMALETTA: Thank you very much.

MR. GRAHAM: Thank you.

CARMALETTA: Thank you. It's so informative. You're truly an educator.

**Rosie Elnora Brown Green**

Rosie Elnora Brown Green lives in South Coffeyville, Oklahoma. She was born five miles north of Lenyard, Oklahoma, in the community of Hickory Creek. She identifies herself as “black and Indian—Cherokee . . . an Afro-Indian because [her] great-grandmother was full-blood Cherokee.” A retired cook, Ms. Green is described as the keeper of the keys to her family heritage, a skill she got from her mother, father, and great-aunts. She is pursuing obtaining her BIA card because she is in the fifth generation and wants her children to know about their ancestors and claim their rights to their heritage.

CARMALETTA: This is Carmaletta Williams with the “Shifting Borders of Race and Identity” project. Would you please identify yourself?

MRS. GREEN: My name is Rosie Eleanor Brown Green.

CARMALETTA: Mrs. Green, I understand that you are the keeper of the keys when it comes to information about the family heritage.

MRS. GREEN: I have a way. I got it from my mother and my father and great-aunts.

CARMALETTA: Tell me about your parents. How do you identify yourself racially?

MRS. GREEN: Afro Indian, because my great-grandmother was full-blood Cherokee.

CARMALETTA: Great-grandmother?

MRS. GREEN: My great-grandmother had a daughter by the name of Rachel, and Rachel was my great-grandfather’s mother. His name was George Hammer, as was his mother’s, George Hammer Brown.

My grandfather was named Silas Brown, and my dad was named William, Willie Brown. And that’s where I got my Indian ancestors from.

CARMALETTA: So your Indian blood comes on the mother’s side?

MRS. GREEN: On my father’s side.

CARMALETTA: So are you able to get your Indian card?

MRS. GREEN: I have my Indian card.

CARMALETTA: So you’re in a different position than from the other ones here, right?

MRS. GREEN: The reason I came up to support Marilyn and them is because when I first went to apply for my card, they said we were freedmen, even though all through the years we knew that we had Indian blood. They passed us off as freedmen.

CARMALETTA: How did you get that to change?

MRS. GREEN: Just try, digging back there. I mean you have to keep on trying, and that's what I did, even though they give us a payment, I think, in 1963 or '64, but it was as freedmans. So now there's Indian by blood.

CARMALETTA: So then you protested that, and did you get that straight?

MRS. GREEN: No.

CARMALETTA: No? You're still fighting for more money?

MRS. GREEN: I just gave up on it, because they said they put the money in escrow or something, and after so many years.

CARMALETTA: It's lost?

MRS. GREEN: Lost.

CARMALETTA: Oh!

MRS. GREEN: But I'm just trying to help anyone else that I can to get their card, because I know what I had to go through to get mine.

CARMALETTA: That card still has value though, right?

MRS. GREEN: Yes. I have a house and my son has a house through the Cherokee Nation. And we have medical, and my granddaughters that went to college have got help from there.

CARMALETTA: Do they go to Indian colleges?

MRS. GREEN: One of them just finished in Topeka, at Washburn.

And I have another one; she finished Langston.

CARMALETTA: But they could have gone to the tribal college?

MRS. GREEN: Yes, if they had wanted.

CARMALETTA: I also understand that you know about a place where black folk used to gather and dance. Would you tell me about that?

MRS. GREEN: I live on row five, ten. It must be row eleven or eight, it was the place where I was born. It's close to a church, and this church is named Little Flock Baptist Church. Also, it's a black cemetery there. Just east of there is where they used to have the dances.

CARMALETTA: What would that be like? Where would people come from for this?

MRS. GREEN: Everywhere (laughter).

CARMALETTA: How many people?

MRS. GREEN: I can't say exact, but lots of them.

CARMALETTA: Lots of folk would come from everywhere just to get together? Did this happen on a regular basis?

MRS. GREEN: No, just on the weekends.

CARMALETTA: Every weekend?

MRS. GREEN: Every weekend.

CARMALETTA: That sounds wonderful.

MRS. GREEN: Yes, they did.

CARMALETTA: Are there stories written down about these anywhere? Or am I getting some news here? This is great!

MRS. GREEN: I started writing a book.

CARMALETTA: Great!

MRS. GREEN: But it is at a standstill now. I started because we're the fifth generations of Browns and I wanted my children to know about their ancestors and to let them know that these people here are fighting for their rights now. I say from Fort Scott all the way down to Pryor, Oklahoma. It was black people, but they were mixed black people. And as you can see here today, you can see the people here—you can look at them and you know that they have Indian blood. But they just can't prove they have Indian blood.

CARMALETTA: Why is that important? I mean, other than the benefits, the physical benefits like houses and education?

MRS. GREEN: I think it's just that they want that heritage. It's something. It's important to know. I go to the Indian powwows and stuff. Like Labor Day weekend, they have Cherokee Days, and it's great. At first you didn't understand, and then you understand where your heritage comes from.

I think it's more them wanting to find their place. They know I belong there too. It's not about the money and I don't think it's about the benefits. I think it's only fair to them.

CARMALETTA: About claiming culture, and claiming your heritage.

MRS. GREEN: Because my children were real excited. And I have a lot of children (laughter).

CARMALETTA: How many do you have?

MRS. GREEN: I've got eight children, and about twenty-six or twenty-seven grandchildren, and maybe twelve or thirteen great-grand.

CARMALETTA: That's a whole lot of folk on the Cherokee role.

MRS. GREEN: That's right.

CARMALETTA: Do they all have cards?

MRS. GREEN: Most of them do.

CARMALETTA: They were able to get them because you got yours?

MRS. GREEN: Yeah.

CARMALETTA: That's great.

MRS. GREEN: I signed up all my older children when I first got mine. And you can't do that now. Each one, when they get to be eighteen, has to sign up for themselves.

CARMALETTA: Oh, really? So you came at a fortunate time for this?

MRS. GREEN: Yes.

CARMALETTA: How do you honestly feel that this is going to turn out for the freedmen?

MRS. GREEN: I don't know. It's all politics, to me. And I believe that it may work, it may not. It's because they didn't want to acknowledge all of these people. Can you imagine how many people (laughter)?

CARMALETTA: Yeah. Once you get twenty-seven great-grandchildren, et cetera, included.

MRS. GREEN: That's just my family. And we have our card already, but the other people don't have them. Cherokee Nation is one of the largest groups in the United States. And then to take on all the freedmans, that's going to be a lot of people.

CARMALETTA: If you were going to give advice to these freedmen who are in the struggle, what would you tell them?

MRS. GREEN: I'd just tell them to keep on fighting. That's what you have to do. That's what I did. Until I could prove I'm Indian.

CARMALETTA: How long did that take from the time you started?

MRS. GREEN: Probably ten years.

CARMALETTA: A long time. And for your children, if you were going to give them a word of legacy about what it means to you, what would you tell them?

MRS. GREEN: To me, it means a lot. I think about my grandfather and my great-grandfather and my grandmother and my father. I think what my grandfather had to do to get this right. He went to court in Tahlequah and stood up for his rights.

CARMALETTA: Good.

MRS. GREEN: And I'd tell them that if he was strong enough back then when most people wasn't strong enough to stand up, then they should be able to.

CARMALETTA: So their foundation comes from a rock?

MRS. GREEN: Yeah. His name was George Hammer Brown, and we don't know what the Hammer stood for, but it stood for something.

CARMALETTA: Thank you. Is there anything else that you'd like to tell us?

MRS. GREEN: No, that's all.

CARMALETTA: Thank you. That was a great interview. Thank you very much.

**Paulette R. Horn**

Paulette R. Horn is the wife of Rev. Virgil O. Horn. An active participant in church life herself, Ms. Horn is a mother and teacher. She works with People for Institutional and Communal Harmony (PINCH) and is deeply involved in church auxiliaries, including being a musician. Mrs. Horn was raised in Cherryvale, Kansas, and lived there until she graduated from high school. She describes Cherryvale as a "closed community." If you were there, you were accepted, but they wanted no new people to come into the community. In this small community there were very few African Americans and no identifiable Native Americans. Her great-grandmother was half Native American and half African American. She came to Kansas from Oklahoma to be with her Cherokee brave husband. As an African American, her mother wanted to live in Kansas, so they had to sneak over. Mrs. Horn's great-grandmother and her mother were hidden under the seat of a wagon, because the Native Americans did not like their children to be taken from them, and smuggled across the state line into Kansas. Mrs. Horn has some wonderful revelations about the need to have insight into tribal customs and traditions in the teaching of children.

CARMALETTA: I'm interviewing Mrs. Paulette Horn. Would you please introduce yourself?

MRS. HORN: I'm Paulette Horn, and I live in Coffeyville, Kansas.

CARMALETTA: Can you tell me where you were born and raised?

MRS. HORN: I was born in Independence, at the hospital in Independence. Actually, though, my home was Cherryvale, Kansas. And I lived there and was raised there until I graduated from high school.

CARMALETTA: How would you describe Cherryvale as a community?

MRS. HORN: It was a closed community. Those that were there, that's all they wanted there. They didn't want anyone else coming in. If you were there, you were accepted. It was a small community. Very few African Americans. As far as Native Americans, I couldn't really identify any there in the community. The closest I came was my great-grandmother, who was fifty percent Native American and fifty percent African American.

CARMALETTA: Where did she live?

MRS. HORN: She lived there in Cherryvale too.

CARMALETTA: I understand from some of my readings that there are some colonies that were actually established with mixed-race people. I'm wondering if she lived in one of those, because they were here in southeast Kansas? That's interesting.

MRS. HORN: She came over from Oklahoma. In fact, she came with her father, who was a Cherokee brave. And her mother, being the African American, wanted to come over into Kansas, and so they had to sneak over. And she and her mother were hidden under the seat on the wagon because the Native Americans did not like their children to be taken from them. And so she had to be smuggled across the line.

CARMALETTA: That's exciting (laughter).

MRS. HORN: And settled there in Cherryvale.

CARMALETTA: So Cherryvale, then, was a safe haven?

MRS. HORN: Yes.

CARMALETTA: In a way where they could be safe and not found, I guess. So was there ever any reconnection?

MRS. HORN: No, there never was.

CARMALETTA: How important was it to her that she was of mixed race? That she was part Indian?

MRS. HORN: I don't know.

CARMALETTA: The story continues. So your mother told the story and you've told the story, so it had to be important. I don't want you to discount that story and say, "I don't think that there . . ." because that looked like that's where you were going.

MRS. HORN: Yeah (laughter).

CARMALETTA: (Laughter). It was important or she wouldn't have kept that story going.

MRS. HORN: That's all I had ever been told. I don't know the reason why they came over. I don't know whether it was a safety issue or whether my great-great-grandmother just tired of the Native American ways. I never heard that part. That's all that I had ever been told. They came over and they had to be hidden under the seat in the wagon.

CARMALETTA: Takes a little courage. Just took mother to have that courage and leave with her man.

MRS. HORN: True.

CARMALETTA: (Laughter). And you've told this story to your children?

MRS. HORN: Yes.

CARMALETTA: So, then, you're actually a mixed-race person too?

MRS. HORN: Yes.

CARMALETTA: And you married a mixed-race person?

MRS. HORN: Yes.

CARMALETTA: So then how important is it to you that your children embrace both heritages?

MRS. HORN: I think it's a necessity. In order to understand, to get to know people, then, especially with the heritages, the different heritages, it takes going into behaviors and things like that, because some things that we do, as African Americans, are different. They're a normal thing for us, but they're different to another culture. And the same thing with the Native American. There are some things that are done that may seem strange to us, but it is their culture. In order to know and to accept, and to get along, I think it's imperative that we all understand each other and know what the heritage and cultures entail.

CARMALETTA: You're a teacher, so does this how does this spill over into your professional life?

MRS. HORN: It's a great deal. There is a certain Native American tribe that will not answer a question right away. If you ask them a question, they won't answer it. And it could be an hour later, it could be a day, it could be quite a while. If I have one of those students in my class and I ask them a question and they don't answer me, then if I'm standing there trying to make them give me an answer, I'm trying to make that student go against his or her culture.

CARMALETTA: How culturally aware you are. I would probably say, "Did you hear me?"

MRS. HORN: Yes (laughter).

CARMALETTA: "I want an answer." And how patient of you. How difficult was that for you to do? I would think that most teachers would want an answer.

MRS. HORN: Yes.

CARMALETTA: How difficult was it for you to develop that skill and that patience?

MRS. HORN: I did a lot of cultural studies. As a matter of fact, for a few years I did a cultural-awareness class. It enabled me to look into several different cultures, pick them out, and draw them out and to be aware. In Asian countries children are taught, especially when they're being chastised, not to look an adult in the eye. In my culture, I've always been told, "You look at me when I talk to you." That helped me to pick up a lot of things.

CARMALETTA: That's incredible. Now, what happens with this interaction with your children? I could see one of my sons, when they were younger, doing something and I would probably say, "Boy, that's the Indian in you." Do you recognize those things? Do you think that there is an inherent bent towards certain actions or activities, or do you think those are all learned behaviors?

MRS. HORN: Most of our behaviors are learned, but there's always going to be some inherent. I mean, the culture, the heritage—it's there. It's just part of it. I would say ninety percent of our behaviors are learned. But there are some things, like you said, that are just there.

CARMALETTA: What do you do extraordinarily to your children or for your children to help them be aware of their different ethnicities or the different cultures that they actually belong to, whether or not they're operating in the dominant part of their lives?

MRS. HORN: I guess the biggest thing I do is live by example. It might sound minor, but we talk about the dress, and when there's something going on at school and the kids are supposed to dress well. That's one thing that I've heard several other teachers saying. The African American students really do dress.

Whereas, for some of the others, maybe a pair of khakis and a shirt. And our students will be in suits and the girls in their little heels and things like that. I really think that's the biggest thing that I do is live by example. Show them by example.

CARMALETTA: And that's an example that was taught to you?

MRS. HORN: Yes.

CARMALETTA: It's interesting. And your and Rev. Horn's children went to Haskell. How important was that to you that they go to Haskell?

MRS. HORN: That was very important. They learned quite a bit that they had never been exposed to, what we might say true Native American here, growing up here and in Ottawa. But, when they got there, they would say, "Wow! We didn't know this and we didn't know that." They were exposed to a lot. Some of the foods specific to the Native American culture, and even some of the ways that they did not do here.

We do have one thing here at this school each year. It's a tribal powwow. And they have some different tribes come in and do the dances and they sell the different articles, artifacts. Matter of fact, the boys always buy their dad some things, and that totem pole over there, that pole is one of the things that one of them purchased. It helps to expose them, but it was nothing like actually living with, side by side, and socializing with those of true Native American, or 100 percent Native American culture.

CARMALETTA: Did immersion into the culture shock their systems or did you get phone calls, "Mama?" (laughter).

MRS. HORN: It was a shock (laughter).

CARMALETTA: "You didn't tell me this part (laughter)."

MRS. HORN: Yes, I did (laughter). But there was no problem with adjustment, and I think they enjoyed it, because it was a great learning experience for them too.

CARMALETTA: Would you recommend it for all of your children?

MRS. HORN: Sure.

CARMALETTA: So these two weren't extraordinary children. Do you think all of them should have that?

MRS. HORN: Yeah, I think all of them should have that.

CARMALETTA: You're real close to Oklahoma here, and Oklahoma is full of Native Americans. In fact, that's the way they promote themselves, as Native America. There are still some reservations around. Have you thought or planned any trips to put your children into those situations and have them see first-hand what American Indian life is like?

MRS. HORN: Two of the boys and their dad, as a matter of fact, last year went down into, I believe it was New Mexico. And they stayed on a reservation and they stayed in their tents and slept on the ground. I guess it was like a three-day workshop. They had basketball players there, professional basketball players who were Native American. They had come back and they did camps and things with them and, of course, they did the arts and crafts and everything, and so they've had a little bit of it and enjoyed it. And they want to go back this year, but I think two of them are going to have to be working when they get back.

CARMALETTA: (Laughter). College.

MRS. HORN: But they really did enjoy it, the sleeping on the ground and everything.

CARMALETTA: So it sounds like you're really active in your family, making sure that both sides are addressed and appreciated—and celebrated even. What did you think the first time they went to a powwow or one of these sessions, and actually paid money for Indian artifacts? Did you feel like you had accomplished a goal, or did you think it was just a lark or what? How did you feel about that?

MRS. HORN: I felt good about it. I thought it was good that they thought, "Dad would like this." And so I thought that was great.

CARMALETTA: So they're appreciating him?

MRS. HORN: Right.

CARMALETTA: That's interesting. What would you do for your grandchildren now and your children to take them to a different level to make them fully appreciate everything? Is there anything that you feel like you need to do that hasn't been done or that you wish you'd done a little differently or a little sooner? Sometimes we have the advantage with grandchildren when they come that we didn't have with children.

Is there anything that you think that, for your grandchildren, would be important enough to start early or anything that you wished that you had started younger with your children?

MRS. HORN: I think probably talking with them more, passing the story on more to make sure that it is embedded. Read books. Different movies and things that really show and really tell what the true experience was like.

CARMALETTA: I'm thinking about Cherryvale and your growing up there, and saying that not only were there none or few American Indians, but there were also few black people there.

MRS. HORN: Yes.

CARMALETTA: And that had to have been—maybe I won't say it had to have been. How do you identify it as a way that you created your racial identification? What kinds of struggles were involved there?

MRS. HORN: Since it is a small community, we really didn't have a lot of struggles. I was first exposed to the struggles on TV. I was in the seventh grade, and that was when they started putting the cameras on the situation in the South. But, with us being so few there, we were all respected. All the black families that were there were respected. There were never any problems. As a matter of fact,

I often tell the story that my brothers and I were the only kids that could go in the store—I don't know if I should say this—and buy a package of cigarettes.

CARMALETTA: (Laughter).

MRS. HORN: As long as we bought Kools, because that's what my dad smoked, and my dad was a very well-respected man in the town, and they knew that we weren't smoking and they knew we were getting them for Dad. That was something a lot of people would find strange. "Well, how come these little African American kids can go in here and buy these cigarettes and no one else can?" But that was one of the things.

I would describe it, though, as being culturally deprived. When I first started teaching, I was teaching in Atchison, Kansas, and, we'd do library assignments and things like that. And I went to the library and I started seeing these books with pictures of African Americans on them. We never had any of those in Cherryvale. And I think I was reading the books faster and more than the kids were reading them. And, from there, it just clicked. And that's why now I have tons and tons of books on African American heritage and by African American writers. And, honestly, I haven't read a lot of them, but I just want them, to have them in my library, and one of these days maybe I will. But growing up in Cherryvale, that's really the way I would describe it, culturally deprived.

CARMALETTA: How is Coffeyville the same or different from Cherryville culturally?

MRS. HORN: It is culturally deprived, but it's by choice, because there are many, many more here than were in Cherryvale, but they choose not to be active in so many things. I write articles to the newspaper. Things will be done like on Father's Day. There'll be pages, two or three pages—we're celebrating Father's Day—of nothing but the Caucasian families in the paper. No one says anything when they have the basketball tournaments and the African American teams will be stuck in roach-infested motels and the other teams get all the good (pause). And nothing is said.

And that's why I say it's by choice. If I put a letter in the paper, I get calls, "Oh, that was good. That was good. That was good." But no one steps up and does anything.

CARMALETTA: Steps up to the plate?

MRS. HORN: Or says anything. And it could be so much better. We could have a lot of cultural things going on, but it's deprived by choice.

CARMALETTA: That's an interesting phrase, "Deprived by choice."

MRS. HORN: By choice.

CARMALETTA: I like that. If you could choose of the places that you've lived and been, the place that you think that would be most culturally advantageous, for your family and your children, where would it be?

MRS. HORN: Well, I've only lived in Cherryvale and Coffeyville and Denver, so I would have to say Denver, Colorado.

CARMALETTA: Because?

MRS. HORN: The opportunity for cultural expression, the opportunity for cultural exposure is there. Anything that you would want to delve into, the opportunity is there.

CARMALETTA: Great. Give a message. What is it that you want your children, your grandchildren, your great-grandchildren to think and know and remember about you, about their heritage, about who they are and what they are? What would you tell them? What is it that you want to have engraved in stone for them to see forever?

MRS. HORN: I want them to always remember that they have a very proud heritage. Whether it be Native American or whether it be African American, they have a very proud heritage. They come from people who have always strived to do the very best. I tell my kids that many years ago, when we went to baseball games, you saw the men in their black suits and white shirts and ties and hats, and the women were in their dresses and heels and hats.

CARMALETTA: Gloves (laughter)?

MRS. HORN: Yeah. I said, "We always made it a point to look nice whenever we went anywhere, because it was a point of pride." We have so much to be proud about because of the contributions that we have made to America. And these are a lot of things that people try to keep from some of our children. And they want to keep the image of slavery in front of them. Yes, our forefathers were enslaved. They were not slaves. They were humans that were put into the condition of slavery. But you have so much more to be proud about and to continue with that legacy.

CARMALETTA: Yeah. And they survived over this.

MRS. HORN: Yes.

CARMALETTA: Which is actually something to be very proud of.

MRS. HORN: Yes.

CARMALETTA: That we were actually able to survive slavery. So be proud.

MRS. HORN: Be proud.

CARMALETTA: Be proud and be happy. Thank you very, very much.

MRS. HORN: Thank you.

**Virgil O. Horn**  
**Interviewed by Carmaletta Williams**

Virgil O. Horn is the husband of Paulette R. Horn. Rev. Horn is the minister of Sardis First Missionary Baptist Church in Coffeyville, Kansas. He is also the mayor of Coffeyville. Dr. Horn is the director of an alternative education school in Coffeyville. Rev. Horn identifies himself as African American. He identifies his heritage as African American/Native American. His mother was Cherokee and his father African American. Born in Kansas City, Missouri, he was raised in culturally mixed neighborhoods in Detroit, Michigan. Rev. Horn has always had a strong sense of who he was, even in the 1960s when the African American community was struggling to assert itself in the larger American community with mantras and slogans, such as "Say it loud, I'm black and I'm proud." Horn was definitely proud and fought to assert his African Americanness in the contradiction of his physiognomy. He has constantly worked to share both his Native and African American heritages with his family, students, congregation, and community.

CARMALETTA: I'm interviewing Rev. V.O. Horn. Rev. Horn, will you please identify yourself.

REV. HORN: Yes. I'm Virgil O'Neil Horn, Jr., pastor of Sardis First Missionary Baptist Church. I live in Coffeyville, Kansas, 722 East Seventh Street.

CARMALETTA: Part of this "Shifting Borders" project looks at the intersections of African American and Native American. I've been using the term "American Indian," not to make a political statement, but because that's the way my colleagues are identifying themselves. So I will let you identify yourself however you choose. Part of this project looks at mixed-race people. In this oral history project, I'm looking at mixed-race people, and I'm also looking at African Americans and also American Indians, and any interaction that they've had with each other. I'm really happy that you're doing this interview with us first of all, because you're the mayor of Coffeyville. That's exciting. But, secondly, how do you identify yourself racially?

REV. HORN: Racially, I identify myself as an African American. I am a black Indian. My culture is African American. My heritage is African American/Native American. I have been exploring my Native culture, my Indian culture. I was raised in an African American-cultured home with roots in Kansas City, Missouri; Arkansas; and Mississippi on my dad's side. On my mother's side, Oklahoma. There was a Cherokee focus. There was an American Indian focus, but not strong and not dominant in the family that I was raised in.

CARMALETTA: So your mother, then, is the American Indian?

REV. HORN: That's correct.

CARMALETTA: Okay. How important is it then? I'm glad that you were raised in Kansas City. That's my hometown. I was born and raised in Kansas City. I'm

surprised our paths never crossed before, but life is like that. How much interaction then did you have being raised in Kansas City and in those areas, and not in Oklahoma with that American Indian part of you?

You said something I thought was very interesting when we talked about this earlier. You said that there is a strong mulatto focus, a serious mulatto focus culturally. That interested me on a lot of levels, but primarily because, when I think of mulatto, I think of black and white, and not black and Indian. I thought that would be something that I would want for you to explain to me more. What do you think about that?

REV. HORN: I was born in Kansas City, Missouri, but I was raised in Detroit, Michigan, from the age of three and up. Detroit was a city in the 1950s and '60s where there was serious civil rights struggles. It was a lot different than rural settings. There was suburban living, there was inner city living, and then there was the town was all divided up. I attended a school with 3,000 students. Southwestern High. And it was predominantly African American at that time. There was a few, maybe 300, Caucasians or Italian descent. But for the most part, just like on our football team, it was all African Americans and one white. Living in Detroit, Michigan, in the '50s and '60s was tough on light-skinned Negroes who had straight hair. Even at that time, individuals were getting processed. You could tell that I didn't have a process. It was a struggle because America was in this area of identity, and we were going from being colored to Negro, from Negroes to colored, back and forth, to "Say it loud, I'm black and I'm proud."

And now African American. So there was a culture, there was an identity crisis that was seriously going on. And I, being an individual of mixed blood, wasn't really well accepted by African Americans at that time, nor by white folk.

So it was a struggle. Seriously, you had to know who you were. And my mother taught me who I was as an individual, as it relates to heritage, to my culture, to me as a person, who I was and what were my bloodlines. And that's what helped me to be, to stand in some critical times when individuals weren't very accepted, or tolerant about crossing over culture lines, color barriers and all of this kind of thing. Mother shared, "You are of African American descent, you are of Native, and there is some white in your blood. So you can never be ashamed of who you are. You can only be who you are." And that helped me a long way when individuals were resistant, or weren't very kind, or when there was name calling. I had been taught well about who I am as a person. And so that's where the mulatto thing, the mixed blood, that's what that means, being a man of mixed blood. Being a man who was an individual who was dominantly raised with African American culture, but still mixed blood.

CARMALETTA: How long does it take? I can see this developing in you from your youth on, but how long did it take for you to actually grasp onto that

American Indian part of you since you had been so submerged in the African American culture? When did you say, “Okay, it’s important for me?”

REV. HORN: It was always there, but I didn’t start to know my mother’s side of the family until I was twelve years old or a little older. There were some individuals, some family members that I knew on my mother’s side and when I started meeting more on my mother’s side of the family, that’s when it really became important to me.

And I began to do studies on my mother’s side of the family and discovered that a lot of my family, my relatives, my uncles, my aunties had attended Shaloco Indian School, how they attended, how they were raised in certain Indian communities and this kind of thing, and on farms. And so I started doing a study of the Hicks’ side of my family, and that’s when it really became important to me.

CARMALETTA: So how did things change after you did that, for you personally?

REV. HORN: It just broadened my knowledge about my mother’s side of the family and that blood that’s in me, which is seriously important. I discovered that my grandmother and my grandfather were on the Dawes Roll, and that was seriously important to me. And I began to look at those times and why they were placed on the Dawes Roll and what that really meant.

Then my great-grandparents were on the Dawes Roll. My grandparents were not on the Dawes. Yes they are, excuse me. So, great-grandparents and grandparents were on the Dawes Roll, and that was significant because I needed to understand why, how, and what, what was the whole purpose. That’s when I began to open my eyes towards the Native American or the Indian side.

I’ve done some traveling and associated myself with Indian culture. But there’s a lot of the Indian, the Native that I don’t understand. And I miss a lot of that because I don’t speak Cherokee. Although I’m accustomed to a lot of the cuisine or the foods of the Indian, there’s a whole lot of customs that I wasn’t exposed to as a young lad, so, therefore, it’s hard for me to identify with a lot of the culture. The stomp dances, the various ceremonies and this kind of thing—you know what I’m talking about.

CARMALETTA: That was going to be my question. Do you have a new view, when you see Cherokee as your tribal nation?

REV. HORN: Yes.

CARMALETTA: When you see these things, because now there is a direct connection. Not only do you know it, but you have experienced it and it’s truly a part of you. I’m sure that now that you know about your grandparents more than

just your mother, and your great-grandparents, there's got to be a stronger link there for you?

REV. HORN: There is a stronger link, and it's like the Indian culture calls out to me when I am African American, and that part of me, the Indian culture, has not been nurtured in me. So I value the Indian culture. Although I have not participated in a sweat lodge, there is a spiritual side to the Indian culture that I have not come to grips with because I have not worshipped in the Native American church. I'm a Baptist, that's how I was nurtured.

That's what I am. But it's seriously intriguing.

CARMALETTA: And, as a minister, you have spiritual connections and maybe an expansion of the man to see what the other side of your heritage does spiritually and how that would feel to you? I'd like to interview you again after you've gone to a sweat lodge and after you've participated in that to see how those things felt to you.

REV. HORN: My belief now in Jesus Christ wouldn't allow me to experience certain things.

CARMALETTA: There are Christian Indians.

REV. HORN: But I'm not talking about the Christian Indian.

CARMALETTA: You're talking about the indigenous religion?

REV. HORN: Yes.

CARMALETTA: But, with an indigenous religion that's based on spirituality, somehow I just feel you tapping into that with very little effort. Now that you've done that for yourself and you have admitted it, you've grasped it and you've also started to educate yourself on the whole of who you are and not just that part that you were forced into, how do you then give that to your children? What is it that, that's important for them, you want them to know about themselves and about who they are, and about where they came from? How are you transferring this information to them?

REV. HORN: I transfer it the way that I received it. I let them know that they have blood ties to Native American. But their culture is African American.

We have two of our sons right now attending Haskell and this has been a serious experience for them. It opened their eyes because they are living and going to school with kids from all over the country who came from reservations, who came from Native American, Indian communities and this kind of thing. They're even learning some of the language. And so it's been seriously meaningful to them.

CARMALETTA: Did you encourage that or was it an aside?

REV. HORN: I did encourage it, so they could have a broader understanding that they have African American blood, they have Native blood running through their veins. And that's important. That's important to look at both cultures.

CARMALETTA: When I think about the story that I've heard you tell about growing up in Detroit in the middle of the Civil Rights Movement and the Black is Beautiful Movement—which in a sense actually forced you to deny everything except for that part that is black, that part that is African American—is the time now ripe for your children to be able to grasp all of their heritage? Maybe it wasn't for you at their age?

REV. HORN: I think they are not struggling with identity crisis as they were in the 1950s, the '60s, or even '40s or '30s. What was your question again?

CARMALETTA: Because you were in the midst of the Black Power Movement, do you think that you then subjugated that American Indian part of you in order to belong, in order to survive, culturally and socially, in that atmosphere?

REV. HORN: Yes and no. Yes, because I lived in a predominantly African American community, in southwest Detroit, with Italians in the same neighborhood. But it was obvious because my features and my hair texture and my color was not of African descent. So, therefore, there was always something there to remind me when I looked in the mirror that I had other blood ties.

Certainly others pointed it out at that time.

CARMALETTA: I'm sure. I'm thinking how it probably wouldn't have been safe and would even have felt ridiculous for you to be in Detroit in an all-black school saying, "I'm an Indian," and people looking at you. But, on the other hand, when I saw you in the parking lot at the church and I said, "Oh, wait a minute. I'm doing this project and I know that you're the subject for it." Because I looked at you, and you looked like an Indian to me.

REV. HORN: Okay.

CARMALETTA: So there was no doubt there, and there was probably no doubt with the people that you were with then. But those were tough times, culturally and socially. I know with my students, when I tell them about the Black Power Movement and buy-black movements and things, they don't have a clue what I'm talking about. But those were very strong social indicators and social pools, and people formed their identity by that. We don't really have that going on now. So do you think it's easier than for your children to say, "I'm part Indian?"

REV. HORN: Yes.

CARMALETTA: Than it would have been for you?

REV. HORN: Yes. And it wasn't hard for me to say that. It might be hard for someone who was prejudiced against people. It might be hard for some to accept me because of the cultural identity thing. But it wasn't hard for me to say who I was.

CARMALETTA: Okay.

REV. HORN: It never has been, because I was nurtured that way. This is who you are. So it wasn't hard to do that. And so I wasn't caught in a lack of understanding, mixed emotions about who I was as a person, even as a young man, or even as a boy. So, one of the ways that I really focused on the Indian side of my family is through pictures that my mother had. My grandparents and my great-grandparents migrated from Oklahoma Indian Territory to Coffeyville, and they had a restaurant in Coffeyville, Kansas. They had a farm in Oklahoma, and we still have Indian land in Oklahoma over by Pryor, Oklahoma. They migrated from Oklahoma to Coffeyville, from Coffeyville to Ottawa, and the burying ground for my mother's side of the family is Ottawa, Kansas. My great-grandfather, my great-grandmother, and my grandmother are all buried in Ottawa, Kansas. Here are some pictures of my great-grandmother and her sisters. My mother shared these pictures with me, and this is how she shared with me and showed me, because I never met my grandmother. This is my grandmother here. This is my Aunt Ada, who was like a grandmother. My grandmother died when she was quite young. Maggie Hicks died in 1918, she was born in 1894. She's a Cherokee woman. Of course, there's pictures of my mother from childhood and we continued with pictures of my mother, and then my mother's brother and, on this first page, my great-uncle, my grandmother's brother, Emmitt Hicks. And then I have a picture of my great-grandfather, and his daughter and sons are hugging him there. We have pictures that go back.

CARMALETTA: This is your mother?

REV. HORN: That's my mother.

CARMALETTA: She's a beauty.

REV. HORN: This is my mother. I think Mom was in her twenties then, and she was in her seventies here.

CARMALETTA: She's beautiful.

REV. HORN: Thank you. And this is her when she was an infant. Mother died in 1988. And so that's important to me. Further back in the book, I began to put pictures and what-have-you together of the Horn side of the family. This is how I come to know those who I did not know, through pictures that were passed on

from Mother, from my great-aunt, and this kind of thing. This is how I got to know the Indian side of my family. There's not a whole lot of us. I don't have a large family like that. But, even today, I stay in touch with my cousins, who are doing the same thing that I'm doing—exploring their Native side, their Indian side. And we made trips to Oklahoma and Tahlequah, and we've dug in the archives of city halls and looking up dates and family members, so we would see what communities they were living in. Like I shared with you, we still have forty acres left. We used to have a lot of land. I mean each one of my family members had forty acres.

And all of that land is gone now, except for forty acres, and it appears to me that the forty acres is still getting smaller because people are putting fences up all around that. Unless we were living there, it's kind of hard to protect that, to keep that from happening.

CARMALETTA: If you had some advice on how to keep this going for your children and your grandchildren, what is it that you really want them to know and that you really want them to remember, and you want them to think about when they think about who they are and where they've come from?

REV. HORN: I'd pass on who their great-great-grandparents are and who their grandparents were. Who their great-great-great-grandparents were, because I can go back that far even with pictures, and that's important. That's important to know who you are and where you come from. That's what I'd share. I share that with my children and I sit down with them from time to time. Like we'd look at the photographs and what have you. But the most important thing in our life, and I shared this earlier, is that it's important to know who you are as an individual. It's important to know your blood, what your bloodline is. It's important to know that. It's important to know your name, but it's even more important to know that you're saved, you're a child of God. It's important to know that we have an earthen vessel, but we're going to one day go on to be with the Lord. So I share this history with them, so they'll be able to pass it on, to know who they are.

CARMALETTA: Thank you very, very much.

REV. HORN: You're welcome.

**Laura Partridge**

Laura Partridge is theater artist/director in the Racial Justice Program with the American Friends Society. Racially, she identifies herself as African American, even though she has Native American blood on both sides of her family. Her fraternal grandmother is Cherokee and was raised in Oklahoma. Her maternal grandfather, Henry Walker, was also of Indian descent. He took Laura and her siblings to powwows every year from the time they were able to walk. She heard stories from her maternal grandmother, Inez Station Partridge, and learned African stories as she grew older. Laura has reconciled her Native and African American components through her art.

CARMALETTA: This is Carmaletta Williams with the “Shifting Borders of Race and Identity” project, and I am interviewing Laura Partridge. Will you please identify yourself?

LAURA: My name is Laura Partridge.

CARMALETTA: Laura, how do you identify yourself ethnically?

LAURA: I identify as an African American.

CARMALETTA: African American seems to be a widespread identification because people just assume that. Do you know the other parts of your racial heritage?

LAURA: Yes, I do on both sides of my family. On my father’s side, his mother is Cherokee. She was raised in Oklahoma. And on my mother’s side, I don’t know what particular nation, but I know that my grandfather, Henry Walker, from a very young age, from the time I was able to walk, we went to powwows every year. That was a part of our summer, and we traveled to different places in the Midwest to be a part of that. We danced and sang—that was part of my growing up.

CARMALETTA: How does that impact you? How did you feel about that?

LAURA: Oh, I loved it. I felt like it was really a part of me that I grew up knowing and cherishing and respecting. And, as I learned more about African culture, I could see the connection between the American Indian and the African culture from what I had experienced as a child, with the kind of dress and the use of feathers and the drums. And also that communal aspect and the importance of the circle and those kinds of traditions. So, yes, I grew up being very proud of both parts. Just hearing stories, on my father’s side—my grandmother’s name is Inez Station and Partridge. She’d tell stories that her mother had told her. And as I grew up and learned African stories, I could see the connection. It’s just been a part of who I am or haven’t been. Neither one was made any more significant than the other.

CARMALETTA: These are childhood stories that you're telling. How did that manifest itself in you as an adult?

LAURA: It manifested as my being very comfortable with the American Indians and just feeling welcomed in most cases. I always made an effort to do work that involved American Indians, to be inclusive in that culture and understand its importance and relevance. And also making sure the story was told honestly about American Indians and as a counter to the public.

CARMALETTA: Let's talk about your work. I know that you are a wonderfully artistic woman. I've worked with you and I've seen you perform and I've watched you work. Talk about that a bit. Talk about your work and what you do.

LAURA: I would go back to the point that I actually became more intimate again with people of Indian descent. It had to do with work that I was doing in employment. I worked in administration and personnel administration with the University of Colorado Medical Center, and we found that although people of other backgrounds walked in freely and applied, that we weren't finding people. It was the time Affirmative Action was becoming a mandate. And so people were making more efforts. But I had contacts already because I had continued associations with the Denver Indian Center and knew people that had been in the first neighborhood that we lived in, in Denver. That was very important to me. As a personnel administrator, I began to go to the Indian Center and set up a table and talk to people about what kind of work they were interested in and what kind of work there was at the center. Over time you develop relationships with the people that worked there. There were people that were regularly there and socializing. So I began to be invited to powwows and events. Having had experiences with powwows already, I thought, "Ah, this is great."

So I was back into that realm and developing close relationships. And then later, the next time I really had a consistent relationship was when I worked for what used to be called the Amy Gifford Children's Theatre in Omaha, Nebraska. But we all called it the White Children's Theatre (laughter).

It was so expensive to attend that low-income people—people who didn't have a lot of money to spend on extra things (which unfortunately encompassed most of us who had melanin in our skin)—were not able to attend. And the shows that were offered had nothing to do with us. We didn't relate to them at all.

I was initially hired to do some research and work as an adviser on multicultural issues, and then went on staff full time and developed what I am very proud to say were totally segregated programs. The teachers were all of the heritage of the students—American Indian teachers with American Indian students, African American, and so forth. All of the material that was produced was written by, for, and about those cultures, and it was done very deliberately because there wasn't any other way in a structured, consistent way, outside of family setting, where

people would learn this information and where we would have an opportunity to display it, to present it, to share it with other people.

That worked out; that worked very well. We did that for four years. But it gave me great opportunity to know really well the teachers, learn more about the culture, and particularly about the Omaha, the nation within that part of the world, and learn more about other cultures, the Lakota, and the art. Not only the theater work and the written word, but the visual arts and the whole way of living relating to it, as well as that communal style and sense of family and being responsible for people outside your immediate nuclear family. So that was part of it. When I'm producing plays myself, I look for works that encompass that particular part of our culture. And the big part of my work has always been to tell the truth about who we are as people of African descent, Latinos, people of Mexican descent, American Indian. Our story is not told clearly at all, if it's told. So that's been my major work. I was really fortunate to work with an American Indian playwright who had written, and had an opportunity to bring him to live in Omaha for four months and contracted him to write a play and then direct the play and produce it. I've had those special kinds of opportunities.

CARMALETTA: Regardless of what we hear about integration being the way to go, segregation does have a wonderful impact and place in your work. What's usually lost in integration is the minority, those ethnic attributes? That's great that you've been doing that. Did you meet much resistance when you did that?

LAURA: Yes, you usually do, and it's still the same way today in that there's that mistrust: "What are you trying to get from us? Why are you here? What makes you invested in what happens in our community?" And it just takes time and consistency for people to learn who you are, and what you're about, and what your purpose really is. And you have to be committed to it. I think one of the biggest problems that we have is we're not consistent. You might go in and do a project, and then move on somewhere else. But it takes years to develop those kinds of trusting relationships. Then it's easier, when you have that base to move outside of the immediate realm that you've been working in. Then it's definitely worth the time. In all of my experiences, bringing up the issue of my own American Indian background has met with resistance. From American Indians that I talk to I've heard comments like, "Oh, all black people say they got some Indian blood," or "It doesn't matter if it's been so far back," or "Can you trace it and prove it," and that kind of thing. So it's has met with resistance. But I usually don't even bring it up.

I don't even share that part of me, because, instead of being something that will be positive, I just view it as trying to take advantage of a situation that maybe appears to have gotten bitter to them.

CARMALETTA: Or infusing yourself into a culture that they don't want you included in?

LAURA: Yes. There's so much division in the American Indian culture in my work with Pine Ridge reservation about who's full blood, who's half blood, and what kind of leadership and authority you can exert based on what percentage of blood you have. It seems to be very counterproductive to me in a goal that doesn't deal with the individual and their capability.

CARMALETTA: Yeah. Authority and blood quantum is also big and critical in work with American Indian literature. Tell me about Pine Ridge.

LAURA: Pine Ridge has been a wonderful experience for me. That came about through my work with the American Friends Services and the region that we're a part of, the central region, including South Dakota, North Dakota, Nebraska.

It's a part of the world where there are many populations of American Indians and reservations unfortunately. But two of the people that I met during that time are Richard Iron Cloud and Norma Ridden, who both live at Pine Ridge. Richard is a staff person and Norma is a volunteer on the program committee. We began discussing the issues that we had in common within our communities. One that hasn't had much press with the American Indian population is an alarming increase in people who are tested HIV positive. There are a couple of reservations and one up in Washington State where eighty percent of the population on the reservation have been tested positive. And the other part of that is the number of teenage pregnancies and the resistance to birth control and to the whole idea of just saying "No," and those types of things. We need to be more frank and open and honest with our children. We can't just keep tiptoeing around and watching the numbers grow and beginning to watch them become victims of AIDS and dying. American Indians see this as something very similar to the polio vaccine being brought in to the reservation.

CARMALETTA: Genocide.

LAURA: Correct. It's exactly what they fear. And I see it that way too for African Americans. I was just reading yesterday in *Time* magazine about the increase in the AIDS population. The largest significant increase is African American women.

It's not a subject that we talk about openly in our communities. So we decided to do a project together on the reservation, and we received funding from a group that both of us belong to, which is called the Third World Coalition, a part of the American Friends Service Committee and from the state of South Dakota, which has funding for HIV/AIDS education and has an office that's funded on the reservation. We brought a Latino and an African American young woman from Kansas City and another Latino woman from Austin, Texas. We brought adults who specialize in AIDS work, AIDS education from Kansas City, Missouri, and from Denver, Colorado. Staff were of Latino background and African American background and, of course, American Indian background.

All came together and did an extensive educational piece that was real plain talk.

CARMALETTA: Frank.

LAURA: Very frank and very open. And the students were all female from Pine Ridge High School. There were about fifteen of them. They were students who identified as young people who were respected and listened to in their environment. We did a major piece with education. But the second piece, which is my specialty, is on Theatre of the Oppressed Techniques. And these are the techniques that are developed by a Brazilian named Augusto Boal. There is one portion of it called Forum Theatre, where the participants identify what the issue is. Obviously for these young women it was AIDS, and what are we going to do with watching these numbers grow in our community. They set up scenarios that show what the problem is, what situations they could end up in where there's a possibility that they contract AIDS. You present the situation to an audience who become actors. Those people then see the three-to five-minute scene and the problem, and they can come in and take the place of the protagonist, the one with the problem, and offer their solution to this issue. Then the group discusses it. With this work or this magic, it can possibly work. But once you have identified tools that will work, then the responsibility is in the area of social action. To get out there and inform people and do these same kind of things, open them up, but begin to have a dialogue that's very much just right with those people that you live with that are affected by the issue. It's not me or someone else coming in and saying, "Oh, you should do this or you should do that." It's a collective deciding what would work best in their environment. We did that piece of it last summer and we're going back at the end of this summer.

We feel very comfortable about the education piece on HIV/AIDS because it has been continued and embellished through the schools, through the South Dakota state funds. The idea is to create the scenarios and actually take them on the street, and see what kind of response we get. The young women and the adults that work with them came up with some extremely imaginative and creative scenarios. And we created costume and prop pieces out of whatever we had right at hand. They're ready now to take it out and trying to feel confident about their role in education, about what they're talking about, and we'll spend the first part of the time with refreshing on the technique. And then we want to get out there.

CARMALETTA: That's a wonderful forum. You're not imposing your values on them; you're allowing them to work through and root their solutions in their own lives and their own culture.

LAURA: The other part of it that I liked using so much with the young people is that it develops thinking skills, leadership skills. Nobody is telling you what is right or wrong. You have to think through and figure it out for yourself.

CARMALETTA: And these are high schoolers?

LAURA: These are high schoolers.

CARMALETTA: Wow!

LAURA: That's been the latest effort. More recently there have been some connections where you develop a community, a planned community in Georgia which is on the land where American Indians and African Americans live together. A collective people has purchased this land and created what they call an intentional community. The Native American people that were part of our group going there were so—all of us really—were so touched that we were on this land where our people live together, procreated, flourished, and survived. We were there on this land and had an opportunity to be a part of it and get to know some of the family that's right outside of Atlanta, Georgia.

CARMALETTA: What is this community?

LAURA: It's a historical community where slaves would escape. You've heard so much about going into the American Indian populations. We don't always hear the other side of it, about American Indians actually owning slaves.

But this particular group of people were bringing people in for safekeeping and defending them. They tell the story of how the soldiers never came there. They marched in, but they didn't ever find Indians (laughter).

CARMALETTA: So this intentional community is a modern-day community?

LAURA: Yes.

CARMALETTA: Or is it historical?

LAURA: No, it's a modern-day community. It's amazing. There's a reggae camp.

They call it the reggae camp, but they're actually Rastafarians that have acres of land and hold a reggae festival there every year. They are individuals who have their homes there, and it's maybe a forty-minute drive from Atlanta. So it's not bad for commuting back and forth to work.

And it's primarily African American at this point. But all the streets are named, like Harriet Tubman Row, with a theme of something that relates to African ancestry, except for those places that they know the American Indian names for, like the rivers or streams that run through it. It's just becoming known. It's been pretty quiet. But there's interest now from American Indian people, more people who would have the resources to be able to buy the acreage and build a home in that area. Very peaceful. It's beautiful.

CARMALETTA: It seems like it. It sounds like it. When you look over these experiences and think about yourself, which ones do you think have been the most important to you in identifying for you who you are?

LAURA: I think the ones when I was younger. The ones of listening to stories and those just common to talk about. And we always said Indian blood, it wasn't anything politically correct (laughter). It was just Indian, and it was just a natural feeling that this is part of who I am. And the fun of being in the powwow. And then also knowing myself, whether I'd ever share it with other people, but that there was a very personal connection. And having read the book on the one-drop rule and being the only nation in the world that ever had that kind of rule, actually a law. After reading and understanding that, it may have even been more important to me to recognize the other parts of me.

One of my brothers has done some research and had gotten kind of stalled, but is trying to find out more about my father's mother's part of it. But then that's what's probably the most formative. And the friendships. In Denver, where I spent most of my young adult, teenage, formative years, in the communities with Latinos and American Indians and black people, we were all together.

It was based more on our income, not so much on our particular heritage. Now we see more division based on what your heritage is, and so there's not that intermingling. Just having those opportunities for that experience, and then as an adult with the children's theatre, getting to know the teachers and kids and the moms and dads, and being loved for providing an opportunity where that could happen. I wasn't in the classes, but I would go to all the performances. I'd stop in sometime and see how the classes were. I worked with them on building sets and costumes. So what will make a difference is when people really begin to know each other for who they are.

CARMALETTA: I know they love you. I love you (laughter). You've got this just wonderful spirit, and I have to say that because I'm sure that people now can just pick up on how great your spirit is. But I just want to make it official, you've got this beautiful spirit that people are just attracted to. I guess it's just a collection of all of those parts of you that come to make this wonderful person. I can see you just walking into one of the performances and having people just radiate to you because you do have that spirit. If you were going to leave a message for people, for your daughters, for folk that you work with, and the children that come to your theater projects, about claiming those parts of themselves and about identifying themselves, what would you tell them? What is it that you think is important for them to understand and to know?

LAURA: I think it's important for them to know that the whole thing about racial justice and identity has to do with honoring who you are, all of you, and your respect for yourself. You and I, we can look at each and we're examples of people who grew up being nurtured, but not with a lot of material things. You

have the ability, you can do anything, you can be anything you want to be. You are worthwhile. And the more you know about your background and what contributions people like you and all of your different phases have made, then the more of that self-respect that you have and the more ability to do it. On the way here I saw on the highway a billboard that said, "Dream it. Do it." I was just talking a few weeks ago, it's that our young people don't dream anymore. We don't use the words "imagination" or "creativity" with them often.

So what we've created is this void. There is no hope. If you can't dream, then you have nothing to wish for or hope is going to happen. It's important to understand all these parts of you. It's taken me a while to reconcile the European part, because I have some very strong, negative feelings about that part, but it's there. It's a part, too, of who I am and understanding and accepting that, and knowing that whatever kind of conglomeration it is, it's wonderful. The grandfather or God or whatever spirit what I want to call all of this, there are no accidents. Who we are is perfect just the way we are.

CARMALETTA: Thank you very, very much. That was wonderful.

LAURA: Thank you for inviting me.

CARMALETTA: Thanks, Laura.

**Jason Rozelle**

Jason Rozelle grew up in St. Louis, Missouri, which he describes as a “very segregated town.” Rozelle identifies himself as a black American but clearly acknowledges the Osceola Cherokee part of his racial heritage that came from his mother. He has done historical search that has revealed much important familial information such as the killing of his great-great-great grandmother’s Indian family and how she was then sold into slavery. Jason has been broadening his sense of racial identity as he becomes more educated. He wants to inform and educate his family about all the parts of their heritage, so they can all learn what made them the people they have come to be.

CARMALETTA: This is Carmaletta Williams with “Shifting Borders of Race and Identity,” and I am interviewing Jason Rozelle. Would you please identify yourself?

JASON: Jason Rozelle.

CARMALETTA: Jason, how do you identify yourself ethnically or racially?

JASON: I’m a black American.

CARMALETTA: Where did you grow up?

JASON: I grew up in St. Louis, Missouri.

CARMALETTA: St. Louis is a very cosmopolitan town. Would you describe it as that?

JASON: It’s probably got about a million and a half to two million people population.

We have the Cardinals and Southwestern Bell is there. We have Monsanto. We have a lot of major corporations in St. Louis, and sports teams. I would say that growing up, and even today still, the city is still very segregated. You know how the city is broken up? When I was in high school in 1984-’85, the first black mayor came into office. So there’ve been some changes within the city in how people are looked upon and how people are hired and things like that.

CARMALETTA: How did you feel when St. Louis got a black mayor?

JASON: I guess I should change that. In the neighborhood that I lived in, we had had the first councilman that was black. Back in the early 1990s, when I moved out of St. Louis, then we had a black mayor. That was kind of exciting, because actually his father was the councilman and Bosley was his name. After his father had been in office and he went off to school and played some political roles, he is the Junior that actually became the mayor of St. Louis. That was really great for

the city and exciting. People were very excited to get him into office and see some changes made for the city.

CARMALETTA: Great! Now you describe St. Louis as a very segregated city?

JASON: Yes.

CARMALETTA: So what I want to ask you about is the nature of your relationships with any American Indians? What was your perception of them? Were there any around you?

JASON: Actually I look at more so Native Indians as part of my heritage on both my grandparents' sides. From my mother's side, her parents, her father's side was actually part of the Cherokee (Osceola), which is a tribe. I have a little history from that side. Just recently, I did a research paper on my mother's side, my grandmother's side, which goes back to the early 1800s, where we find that my great-great-great-grandmother was actually an Indian and that somehow her family was killed off and she was sold into slavery. So that's the background of the American Indian. I had an aunt who just died a couple of years ago that considered herself as an Indian. She was blacker than me, but she still considered herself as an Indian.

CARMALETTA: I think it's especially interesting then, that when I ask you how you identified yourself racially, you didn't mention Indian and, yet, you have a very strong Indian background and your family is actually rooted in American Indian tradition. Why is that?

JASON: As you get more educated, you find out who you are and where you come from. You see yourself as black and that's what you've always been told. But I think once you follow your history and look at your family history, then you begin to bring the pieces of your life together to say, "Okay, this is a little bit of who I am and this is a little bit of who I am."

CARMALETTA: What about your children? What do they know about their heritage?

JASON: Very little. I guess because I'm just going through that process of learning right now. But we're getting ready to have a family reunion—the first one in probably twenty years. We have a family historian who's going to start sharing that and educating the family about our history.

CARMALETTA: That's great. How important will it become to you as your life progresses and as your family grows? And your wife is not American, right?

JASON: Right. Because of understanding now how important that history is, I can use it to say, "This is who I am." I can put the pieces of the puzzle together and

identify this aspect of it. Unfortunately I can't get enough information on my grandfather's side. We do know the Indians' name and the chief from which his family comes from. What helped me was the Census Bureau, the early census bureau where I can see this is where these people lived, this is who the family was, this is where they were born, and stuff like that. So those are the kinds of concrete information that you can use and say, "I have the documentation that supports what I'm doing." I hope I answered your question.

CARMALETTA: That was great. There are also Dawes Rolls, where Native Americans were registered. You might want to check those out. I think it's interesting, when I think about your family, that your children will have to learn about African American history. Ethiopian history and American Indian history, because those are all major parts of who they are.

JASON: I guess the one thing that has also helped me and taught me a lot is really studying history as a whole, because all cultures or ethnic backgrounds are all part of the American history. Until you study it and realize what every race of people have added to who this nation is, then you find the value of who you are and your place in society. I think sometimes that's what gets lost. You forget or you don't know it. You wonder, "Where is my place and what is my place?" Sometimes you begin to hear things that other people try to put you into until you learn it for yourself. Then you can know, "Okay, this is who I am."

CARMALETTA: That's a wonderful statement. And I think this recovery effort that you're talking about is extremely important in people understanding particularly who they are. One thing that you've recovered that's often lost in history is the fact that American Indians owned slaves. That you've recovered that about your grandmother is an important piece of history.

JASON: Right! Even today, just reading a little stuff about the Buffalo Soldiers, not realizing that that was the nickname that was given to them by the Indians. The Buffalo Soldiers were soldiers that were in the US Army that went out to the front to fight against the Indians. You hear about the Indians always talking about the red skin, but, now, here you have a part of history that says, "Okay, this is why they were black like the buffalos and that's why they got that name." So just taking that time to learn is amazing what it will do for you.

CARMALETTA: That's true. And I'm glad you brought up the Buffalo Soldiers, because what I was amazed to learn is that it was a term of respect because the Indians respected the buffalo, and by giving African American soldiers that name, they were showing respect. I had always heard that it was because they had hair like buffalo. And I like the term of respect much more. So what is going to be important to you to pass on to your family about your heritage? What is it that you want them to see and understand and know?

JASON: I think most the value of who they are as a people. I think if I can just convey that one thing is being married to an Ethiopian who really understands how even today they are able to maintain their culture. They're apart of America, but they still speak their language fluently. They have an Ethiopian church, and every Sunday when you go to church, they're speaking Ethiopian. They eat their food. They import their food into the United States. They're importing clothing and just everything of who they are. So I think if you can begin to create a culture and say, "This is who I am," and be able to maintain that culture that passes from generation to generation. Maybe the language might get lost, or I think if you can track it and say that this is who I am. I may not know all the words, but I understand and I can follow along. It just helps you to identify with who you are.

CARMALETTA: Wonderful! Thank you very much.

JASON: You're welcome.

**Verlean Tidwell**

Verlean Tidwell is active in Democratic politics and church endeavors in Independence and southeast Kansas and Oklahoma. She was born in Muskogee County, Oklahoma, and raised in Fort Gibson, which she remembers as a “huge place” and an “interesting place to live.” She was one of nine children of farming parents in a community called the Four Mile Branch, four miles north and east from Fort Gibson. She identifies herself racially as African American. Her church and her community were racially segregated, or in her words “of one accord.”

CARMALETTA: This is Carmaletta Williams, and I’m interviewing Mrs. Verlean Tidwell for the “Shifting Borders” project. For this project, we are asking people to discuss their relationships with others in their community. Tell me where you were born, please.

MRS. TIDWELL: I was born in Muskogee County, in Fort Gibson, Oklahoma.

CARMALETTA: And Oklahoma is Native American country?

MRS. TIDWELL: Yes.

CARMALETTA: Or at least that’s the way they identify themselves. What was it like in Muskogee County in Fort Gibson as a little girl?

MRS. TIDWELL: It’s a huge place. So often when the winter rains would come, we’d have high waters and things like that we got going down from Fort Gibson. And it was an interesting place to live.

CARMALETTA: Okay. Was the place that you lived in the city or out in the country?

MRS. TIDWELL: It was out in the country. The community was called the Four Mile Branch. It was four miles north and east from Fort Gibson.

CARMALETTA: How many people were in your family?

MRS. TIDWELL: There were nine of us children at one time.

CARMALETTA: What did your parents do?

MRS. TIDWELL: They were farmers.

CARMALETTA: So you lived on a farm in rural Fort Gibson, Oklahoma. Did you have much interaction with other people in your community?

MRS. TIDWELL: Just going to church and community things like that.

CARMALETTA: And what was your church like?

MRS. TIDWELL: My church home was called the Four Mile Branch, as I afore stated. That church is still standing.

CARMALETTA: And when was this built?

MRS. TIDWELL: I was born in 1917, so this was between 1917 and 1929.

CARMALETTA: Was the church built during this time, or was the church was already built when you were born?

MRS. TIDWELL: The church was already built.

CARMALETTA: So the church is older than 1917 or older than you are?

MRS. TIDWELL: Older than I am.

CARMALETTA: And it's still standing?

MRS. TIDWELL: Yes.

CARMALETTA: That's remarkable. What about the members of your church? Were they racially diverse, or all of one race?

MRS. TIDWELL: They were all, more or less, all of one accord.

CARMALETTA: Was the community that you lived in then pretty well segregated or was it an integrated community?

MRS. TIDWELL: It was definitely segregated.

CARMALETTA: Did you have any interaction with people of different races?

MRS. TIDWELL: No, not at that time.

CARMALETTA: But you were farmers. Where did you go to school?

MRS. TIDWELL: I went to a school called Thompson, the first school I went to was called Thompson School.

CARMALETTA: And it was at Four Mile Branch?

MRS. TIDWELL: Yes, it was.

CARMALETTA: And was it a segregated school?

MRS. TIDWELL: Yes.

CARMALETTA: So all of the African American children from Fort Gibson went to the same school?

MRS. TIDWELL: Yes, more or less. But there were two counties along in there. Some went to another school, but I was in the Four Mile Branch School.

CARMALETTA: And after the Thompson School, were there other schools in the area that you attended?

MRS. TIDWELL: No. There were other schools no doubt, because there were buses going to various places. They went to other places, but I was not in that category.

CARMALETTA: Did you see people of different races when you were growing up?

MRS. TIDWELL: More or less, none.

CARMALETTA: That's interesting. You grew up on a farm, went to segregated schools. Did you ever go to the city?

MRS. TIDWELL: Yes. When we'd go to the city, we'd see other people.

CARMALETTA: And what would you be going to the city for?

MRS. TIDWELL: To buy food and shop for clothing and necessary things to run a home.

CARMALETTA: And would these people be in the same shops? Were the shops segregated also?

MRS. TIDWELL: No, there were different shops.

CARMALETTA: For different races?

MRS. TIDWELL: Yes. All races could go to these shops, but they just go there to buy the purchase that was being sold there.

CARMALETTA: So you'd go into the shop, get what you want, and then just leave?

MRS. TIDWELL: Yes.

CARMALETTA: So there was no social time?

MRS. TIDWELL: No social contact with each other.

CARMALETTA: What would you think when you saw people of other races, particularly American Indians? The focus of our grant is the interaction between African Americans and American Indians. I'm using that term because my colleagues use it.

MRS. TIDWELL: We would go to a Fourth of July picnic and rodeos and things like that, and come in contact with other people at that particular time.

CARMALETTA: Did you speak to each other?

MRS. TIDWELL: Yes. Because they would have food to sell—you know how they do at picnics. One group is selling ice cream, and one selling soda pop, and things like that.

CARMALETTA: Were you a teenager or an older person or a little girl during this time?

MRS. TIDWELL: I was a little girl at that time.

CARMALETTA: How did you feel? These are people who are completely removed from your normal life. How did they appear to you then when you would have these interactions with them?

MRS. TIDWELL: They were very nice people because they would talk with us and correspond with us.

CARMALETTA: So they tried to sell you things?

MRS. TIDWELL: Of course, naturally.

CARMALETTA: So they were very, very nice to you?

MRS. TIDWELL: (Laughter).

CARMALETTA: But you didn't feel uneasy?

MRS. TIDWELL: No.

CARMALETTA: Was there ever a time when you would have interactions with them and feel uneasy, or feel that there was a vast difference between you?

MRS. TIDWELL: No, not necessarily.

CARMALETTA: Do you know where their schools were?

MRS. TIDWELL: Yes, they had schools, but they were different from our schools.

CARMALETTA: In Fort Gibson?

MRS. TIDWELL: Yes. We would go to black schools, and they had schools of their nature.

CARMALETTA: So there were black schools, white schools, and Indian schools?

MRS. TIDWELL: Yes.

CARMALETTA: And never the twain did meet (laughter)?

MRS. TIDWELL: (Laughter).

CARMALETTA: As you grew up, then you moved to southeast Kansas? And out of the territory?

MRS. TIDWELL: Uh-huh.

CARMALETTA: Did you have any interactions in southeast Kansas with Native Americans?

MRS. TIDWELL: I moved to Taft, Oklahoma, before I came to southeast Kansas.

CARMALETTA: What was Taft like?

MRS. TIDWELL: Taft was nice, too, because we would go to school. They had a school that was called the DBO, Deaf, Blind and Orphan Home, in Taft, Oklahoma. We would go there because they would put on plays and social affairs, and our school would put on the same things.

CARMALETTA: Did they come to your school?

MRS. TIDWELL: They didn't come to our school as often as we went to theirs, because they were under strict orders to stay on their reservation, in their schools where they were going.

CARMALETTA: So these were the American Indian children at the DBO School?

MRS. TIDWELL: No, they were all black. It was three different schools in one.

MRS. TIDWELL: There was a deaf part, and a blind section, and an orphan section.

CARMALETTA: That's fascinating.

MRS. TIDWELL: They were very interesting because they could put on plays that some of us could not, and they would learn their part. In those days you had to learn your part. You didn't just get up and read a script.

CARMALETTA: None of this reader's theater stuff, huh (laughter)?

MRS. TIDWELL: None of that (laughter).

CARMALETTA: They had to memorize the parts. So they wanted, then, this interaction?

MRS. TIDWELL: Yes.

CARMALETTA: They wanted you to come to the school?

MRS. TIDWELL: Yes.

CARMALETTA: And next to Taft was Boynton?

MRS. TIDWELL: That was another little city. That is where I finished high school.

CARMALETTA: And then?

MRS. TIDWELL: I went to two years of high school there at Taft. And then I finished two years in Boynton.

CARMALETTA: How was Boynton different from Fort Gibson?

MRS. TIDWELL: It was just a different location. They all got along.

CARMALETTA: Just a different place? But socially and culturally?

MRS. TIDWELL: Well, as I forestated, there were white schools and other schools. I went to the black school. And later on in life, though that was after I graduated, the black school, I think, burned, and they all consolidated and all went to one school. That was after I left there. I really don't know just how long I had been gone when that happened.

CARMALETTA: But, until then, they maintained segregated schools?

MRS. TIDWELL: That's true. Yes.

CARMALETTA: Was there a large Indian population that you were aware of in Boynton? Did you see any of them?

MRS. TIDWELL: There could have been, but I just didn't.

CARMALETTA: They just weren't in your area?

MRS. TIDWELL: That's right.

CARMALETTA: So, not only were the schools segregated, but the communities were segregated? Like attracts like, so people live with people who are like themselves. What about when you left Boynton and Taft? Then where did you move? To southeast Kansas then?

MRS. TIDWELL: That's when I moved. That's when I married and came to Kansas.

CARMALETTA: Came to Independence (laughter)?

MRS. TIDWELL: Independence, Kansas. 1936.

CARMALETTA: And what was Independence like then?

MRS. TIDWELL: It was quite different because that was my first affair of knowing that the schools were all consolidated. See, I had always gone to segregated schools, and we had always had our parts in the community, and we carried out our parts. But this was the first time that I knew of integrated schools.

CARMALETTA: How did you feel about that?

MRS. TIDWELL: I adjusted to it.

CARMALETTA: There is a lot of conflict and contradiction when people talk about integration of schools. As some people say, "But we did so much better when we had our own schools because we had people who looked out for each other and the teachers cared more." And then other people say, "You know we had to do this because we had to integrate."

Can you tell me what your reaction is to the schools that you had in Taft and in Boynton and Fort Gibson? How did they compare to the schools in Independence that you saw that were integrated, and the schools you eventually put your children in?

MRS. TIDWELL: The schools that I had gone to, they were all on first level, but I just didn't realize it. I didn't know that there was a difference.

We knew there was a difference in a way because we knew that so often the books that we got were from the other schools. But we learned to adjust and do the best we could with school, with the books and property that we had.

CARMALETTA: Did you feel that you got a good education?

MRS. TIDWELL: Yes.

CARMALETTA: In segregated schools?

MRS. TIDWELL: As good as could have been, because we were in different affairs. So often we'd hear what was going on with the others, but we were not elevated to that level.

CARMALETTA: I think it's interesting when you talk about the plays that as a young girl you participated in and that you watched at other schools. You all would have these exchanges. Culturally and artistically, do you feel that there was a movement to make sure that you all were exposed to culture and to art with the limits that your school administrators were operating under?

MRS. TIDWELL: We found out that they were different, but yet our schools were climbing. They were striving to do better. They really were.

CARMALETTA: Did you see a difference then when you moved to southeast Kansas?

MRS. TIDWELL: Yes, there was quite a difference there, but it wasn't as visible as it should have been. But when I moved to southeast Kansas, there weren't very many black teachers. I had lived here for years before there really was a black teacher in the area.

CARMALETTA: So the schools were integrated, but the staff wasn't integrated?

MRS. TIDWELL: That is true.

CARMALETTA: Only the children were integrated?

MRS. TIDWELL: Only the children were integrated.

CARMALETTA: Did parents, then, take any initiative or any role in making sure that their children had exposure? I'm concerned with how people pass on their heritage.

What do they think is important for their children to know about themselves racially and about their history and about their past? Was there anything specific that you and the other parents in your area did to make sure that, even though your children were integrated schools, they developed a pride and an interest and knowledge of their history and their culture?

MRS. TIDWELL: I've tried to carry it on through the church work and various community services. We really reacted in that line of work. Each church could go

to other churches, and they would integrate like that. Eventually, they became churches that were integrated.

CARMALETTA: The churches took care of it. I've heard your children say how proud they were to hear you when you would recite Dunbar poems, et cetera. Did you do that as a way of carrying on something with them?

MRS. TIDWELL: Yes. And as I forestated, we learned everything. Of course, at this day, I have forgotten so many of them. I still know parts of certain poems that I had once said.

CARMALETTA: Can you tell us one (laughter)? I don't want to put you on the spot. You can if you want. If there's something that you think it's important for your children to pass on to their children and their grandchildren, especially about being African American in this country or about being good people, what is it? What are the last words that you want to make sure that they understand? That's important that they understand?

MRS. TIDWELL: The main word is love and appreciate one another, and be close to one another, as close as possible. Because you never know how long you will be together. So just be kind and thoughtful. Don't just think of yourself at all times, but think of others as well.

CARMALETTA: What about ethnically and about their heritage, and your background? What is it that you want them to know about you and your family to carry with them? What about your parents? Is there some special word?

MRS. TIDWELL: There's nothing really special. My parents came from the state of Mississippi and always in later years we've been getting together in a family reunion. Of course, all the older ones are passing away, so that's why they try to have it each year, to maintain a relationship as closely as possible.

CARMALETTA: And the last word was love?

MRS. TIDWELL: Love. Love. Love.

CARMALETTA: Thank you very, very much.

MRS. TIDWELL: Thank you.

**Leona Williams**

Leona May Williams was born in Cherryvale, Kansas, and now lives in Independence, Kansas. Her family comes from a special place, the Votaw Colony in Coffeyville, Kansas, as part of a "band of slaves that came up from Shelby County, Texas. They came up through Oklahoma to Kansas and settled north of Coffeyville." The settlement wasn't easy. The landowner, a Mr. Allen, would not sell to the displaced people. So a Quaker, Mr. Votaw, bought the land from Allen and sold it to them. In gratitude, they named the settlement after him. Mrs. Williams' grandmother was a quarter Cherokee. When Leona and her siblings were small, she would take them down to Oklahoma to Cherokee Nation powwows, a trek that they abandoned as adults. Mrs. Williams did not feel connected to the Nation, only to her mother who had "this pretty black hair that she just put Jergen's lotion on when she washed it and put it in a ball. Like I wear mine."

MS. WILLIAMS: My name is Leona Reddings Williams, and I live in Independence, Kansas.

CARMALETTA: Mrs. Williams, thank you for doing this interview for the "Shifting Borders" project. How long have you lived in Independence?

MS. WILLIAMS: About thirty-three or thirty-four years.

CARMALETTA: Your family comes from a very special place. Can you tell me about that?

MS. WILLIAMS: We lived in Cherryvale, Kansas. My mother was born in Cherryvale.

CARMALETTA: There was a colony, though, that your parents are from?

MS. WILLIAMS: My dad's colony was the Votaw Colony, just north of Coffeyville, Kansas.

CARMALETTA: Can you tell me about that colony?

MS. WILLIAMS: They were a band of slaves that came up from Shelby County Texas. They came up through Oklahoma to Kansas and settled there north of Coffeyville. At first, a Mr. Allen owned the land and he would not sell it to the slaves. So a Quaker, Mr. Votaw, bought it from Mr. Allen, and then he sold it to the slaves. So that's the reason that it's called Votaw Colony. My father was born down there.

CARMALETTA: Did he give you any special memories of that colony? What it was like living there?

MS. WILLIAMS: They sold a lot of families so many acres a piece, and they built their homes there. They didn't know anyone except people that had come up

from there. Because when they left Texas, the slave masters didn't give them any money or anything, they just told them to get (laughter).

CARMALETTA: "Get out of here! We don't care where you go, you just have to get out of here," huh?

MS. WILLIAMS: And so the women and children in covered wagons and the men, they walked along with the teams and, and covered wagons, and wrapped gunny sacks around their legs so that the snakes wouldn't bite them. That's the way they went through a whole lot of hardships, trying to come up here. They'd stop at different places and work to make a little money, enough for food, and then they finally made it up here to Kansas and formed the colony.

CARMALETTA: How long did he live there? Do you know?

MS. WILLIAMS: I don't remember.

CARMALETTA: Do you know why he left the colony?

MS. WILLIAMS: The reason that they left the colony was the Verdigris River and the Big Hill Creek flooded the colony out. And then they scattered. Some of them stayed. Most of them stayed there in Coffeyville, but some of them moved to Oswego, Chautauqua, Parsons, Cherryvale, Independence, and some moved as far as Burlington, but finally the ones that moved to Burlington came back this way.

CARMALETTA: Did they ever live in closeness to each other again, or was that gone?

MS. WILLIAMS: That sense of colony was gone after the flood.

CARMALETTA: After the flood?

MS. WILLIAMS: Until last year. That's when a cousin of mine, May Phipps from California, wanted to form a reconnection. He called it Reconnection One. He came back and tried to get the descendants of all the colonies together. We have a monument placed where the colony used to be. He wishes to purchase a building there in Coffeyville, so he can make a museum of that little colony.

CARMALETTA: That would be wonderful. Are there still artifacts left from the colony? Do people still have things from there for the museum?

MS. WILLIAMS: From their foreparents that came up, they have found a few of those.

CARMALETTA: That would be marvelous.

MS. WILLIAMS: We've been taking pictures of Mr. Votaw's church and the home of Mr. Allen, where he used to live. It's the oldest house here in Independence. We hope to eventually get all of those things in the museum.

CARMALETTA: That would be fascinating. How did the reunion go?

MS. WILLIAMS: It was real good. We met at Sandy Ridge, because every fourth Sunday in August, ever since I was born anyway, they have this dinner and so forth. The families get together with the others down at Sandy Ridge and that's where we started from. They have a church down there now, and they had a program. And then we went from there to where the monument was in Coffeyville.

CARMALETTA: That's an exciting journey that is being not only restored, but recaptured. The people are telling the stories. Is anybody collecting those stories?

MS. WILLIAMS: Yes. This is the reconnection of the other Votaw Colony that my cousin is trying to get together.

CARMALETTA: Those things need to be preserved in some kind of way.

MS. WILLIAMS: He even made a calendar in 2005 and sent it to me, with different pictures on it of the Votaw Colony. Mr. Votaw's great-great-grandchildren live in Texas and they came up for the reconnection program.

CARMALETTA: That's like a reverse.

MS. WILLIAMS: Slaves came out of Texas, and now they live in Texas.

CARMALETTA: How ironic! That's great! So that's your father's life then? What about your mother's?

MS. WILLIAMS: My mother was born in Cherryvale, Kansas. But her father, I don't know exactly where he was born. He lived there in Coffeyville when he came up to Cherryvale and married my mother's mother. She was a quarter Cherokee Indian, she said. When we were small children, she used to take us down to some part of Oklahoma to the Cherokee Nation powwows. But after we'd gotten a little older, we never did go back again.

CARMALETTA: What did that mean to you, to go to an Indian powwow as a little girl?

MS. WILLIAMS: It was fascinating. They let us go to all these different events, learn dances, and all these different things that Indians used to do. And then they had the dress and we had Indian foods, and it was really interesting.

CARMALETTA: Did you feel connected? Like that was really a part of you and your heritage?

MS. WILLIAMS: I was too small to really get a connection with them. But I knew my mother was part Indian and she had this pretty black hair that she just put Jergen's lotion on when she washed it and put it in a ball. She kind of wore it like I wear mine.

CARMALETTA: So you kept parts of your mother (laughter).

MS. WILLIAMS: Everyone says I look just like her (laughter).

CARMALETTA: That's exciting.

MS. WILLIAMS: But she never did tell us much about her side of the family, except her mother's family came from Tennessee and there was eleven girls in their family. Her grandfather was a minister, and the last name was Walker. And they moved to Cherryville from Tennessee.

CARMALETTA: Straight from Tennessee?

MS. WILLIAMS: I think they came up through Parsons and then over to Cherryville.

CARMALETTA: There were a lot of black folk. My great-grandmother's parents were included, and they came from Tennessee. But they all settled in Topeka first. I look at Topeka as a way station, and then from there they spread out to different places.

MS. WILLIAMS: My mother's aunts, two of them, lived in Topeka. And they were the ones that was telling me about those eleven girls in the family.

CARMALETTA: I imagine they're probably of that group then. A lot of them came here to southeast Kansas, where there were different colonies set up, like the Singleton Colony and other colonies. So we might be related. The Williams plantation was a pretty big plantation.

MS. WILLIAMS: That's what I'm saying. I don't know who I'm related to. I've just been trying to find out here in the last few years, because it's been very interesting to me to find out about my mother's folks and my father's folks. Her father's name was William Jones, and she never did talk about him very much.

CARMALETTA: Do you know about her mother?

MS. WILLIAMS: Her mother was Daisy Walker, and she was from Tennessee with the eleven girls.

CARMALETTA: What about your cousins in Topeka? Did they tell you anything that's special that you want to pass on to your family about?

MS. WILLIAMS: No, because one of my cousins was a school teacher. He had died fairly young from meningitis or something or other. My mother's brother lived in Topeka for a long time, but all of her family is gone now, and they just never did talk much about their family.

CARMALETTA: When you have memories of the powwow and of your mother being part Indian, how do you think that that went into the way you thought about yourself? How do you identify yourself racially or ethnically?

MS. WILLIAMS: Negro was all I knew back then. And I go as African American now. I just never did think too much about my Indian heritage.

CARMALETTA: I think that's important, and I think that's happened to a lot of people.

MS. WILLIAMS: I had to get older before I started finding out anything (laughter).

CARMALETTA: And social conditions.

MS. WILLIAMS: Right! I've run into a lot of those in my lifetime too.

CARMALETTA: When people look at you, they don't think Indian, they think African American. So I think you grew up reacting to that since we live in a country that has a one-drop rule. If you have one drop of black blood, you're black.

MS. WILLIAMS: But then people tend to push aside those other parts of you; you're right.

CARMALETTA: I know that you went on an expedition, taking pictures and things. Why was that important to you?

MS. WILLIAMS: After my cousin came and set up the monument, I got interested in, "Where did I come from?" "Who did I come from?" And "What about my being a descendant of the Votaw Colony?" So, I was asking my neighbor for her paper, because it was in the *Reporter and Good News*, and she said, "Are you a descendant?" And I said, "Yes." And she said, "Well, I knew a lady that had a great-great-niece or somebody that was married to one of the descendants of the Votaw Colony." And she had a friend that went to the Quaker church that she knew he had gone to. I went and bought a camera, just a little old camera out to Wal-Mart, and started taking my pictures. And they turned out real good. I have a photo album. I'd send one to my cousin and kept one in my photo album. I'm getting all this stuff together for myself too.

CARMALETTA: How did it feel?

MS. WILLIAMS: Felt good. Found out where I came from (laughter).

CARMALETTA: That's great! That is so important. What about the relationship of Mr. Votaw to the slaves? What kind of reaction did you have to that and how did you feel about that?

MS. WILLIAMS: I felt good about it, because it took somebody with compassion to sell the slaves land because the other man would not sell it to them. I think quite a bit of him. I think he was a very compassionate, Christian man.

CARMALETTA: And I'm sure that he caught the blues when they found out what he had done.

MS. WILLIAMS: Oh, certainly (laughter). You know he did. But, he just didn't care about that. He was trying to do right and had compassion for the slaves because so many of them kept coming up through here. I got a copy of a website that my cousin in Connecticut sent to me. She used to live in Coffeyville. It said that they were coming so thick and fast into Parsons that they didn't know what to do with them.

CARMALETTA: I believe it (laughter).

MS. WILLIAMS: All together it's real interesting.

CARMALETTA: So there was a huge migration then from Texas up, of slaves, where your father was a part of that group then?

MS. WILLIAMS: Right. And one came through Parsons. Some of them was from Texas and some of them was from Tennessee. That's probably where my mother's folks came up through Tennessee first, and then they moved on to Topeka.

CARMALETTA: Are you aware of any other colonies around in this area where black folks lived? Like in Votaw?

MS. WILLIAMS: No. The only town was Nicodemus.

CARMALETTA: It's way out west.

MS. WILLIAMS: I got to go out there when I was working in Fort Riley, Kansas, and the chaplain would go out there hunting for quail. I went with him one time out there and saw it. That's really the only colony that I've been to.

CARMALETTA: Are there parts of the Votaw Colony still standing? Is there anything left there?

MS. WILLIAMS: No. It's just a field. It flooded everything out.

CARMALETTA: So no houses ever got rebuilt?

MS. WILLIAMS: No. That's when they spread, spread out all over the different towns.

CARMALETTA: It's just a field now? And just the marker then?

MS. WILLIAMS: There's just a monument marker. It's marble. It's beautiful, I think. I've got pictures of it too.

CARMALETTA: That's wonderful.

MS. WILLIAMS: I went back out and took pictures of that. I just got my little camera and went all around taking pictures.

CARMALETTA: So, growing up in this area, what kind of person would you say your mother was? Tell me about your mama.

MS. WILLIAMS: She was nice and strict (laughter). She had six children, and we lived in Cherryville, out in the country. My father was a farmer all the time and she was a happy person. Just a happy person. She didn't let too much get her down.

CARMALETTA: That's where you get that great laugh from?

MS. WILLIAMS: She was just smiling all the time. She had two big dimples, and I got one of them (laughter). My father was a deacon, so you know where we were on Sundays. In church all day. We were just good Christian people. My dad made us raise two gardens. One was for us and one was for everybody in town.

CARMALETTA: Really?

MS. WILLIAMS: Because we had to tend them, we didn't think too much of it. But since we've been grown, we've never been hungry. So I guess that was the best thing to do.

CARMALETTA: That's fascinating.

MS. WILLIAMS: We just lived a regular life.

CARMALETTA: I wonder if that came from that idea of the two gardens. Part of it, of course, is this ministry. “Feed your family and feed the flock.”

MS. WILLIAMS: That came through.

CARMALETTA: From the colony life, or slave life?

MS. WILLIAMS: It probably did. I imagine it did. But, also, it was during the Depression and people in town didn’t have a lot food. We had plenty food out there, because he always raised a garden by “signs.” And we always had good gardens.

CARMALETTA: By the “signs”? Like the moon?

MS. WILLIAMS: Uh-huh. He’d work the land up and then, when it was the right time to plant this and plant that, that’s when he’d plant. And we always had good gardens.

CARMALETTA: You have to know that. Did he tell you—so you can tell us—what those “signs” are?

MS. WILLIAMS: No, I don’t know. I didn’t inherit all that.

CARMALETTA: He didn’t pass those?

MS. WILLIAMS: Now, my oldest brother, he lives seven miles north of Andover, out there by Wichita—it’s kind of out in the country—and he raises a good garden every year too.

CARMALETTA: So he knew?

MS. WILLIAMS: He learned to follow Daddy’s things and plant by the “signs.”

We had an almanac, and whenever we went to the dentist or had to have surgery, if the “sign” wasn’t in the legs or the feet, we didn’t have it until it was there. That was my mother’s doings.

Unless it was emergency. Like when my appendix ruptured. That was an emergency. We couldn’t wait on no “sign.”

CARMALETTA: You couldn’t wait for this “sign” or that one (laughter).

MS. WILLIAMS: But if you had a tooth pulled or anything, never would have it pulled while the “sign” was in the head. Because one of our ministers did that, and he liked to bled to death. So it must have been something to it. But my mother had all of those “signs.”

CARMALETTA: And you're a retired nurse?

MS. WILLIAMS: Yeah, I'm a retired nurse.

CARMALETTA: My mother is a retired nurse, and she worked in the delivery room. Now that you're speaking about the "signs," it reminds me of what she used to say if she would be going to work and there would be a full moon.

MS. WILLIAMS: Yes, indeed. It's true, because I worked in the birthing rooms at Wesley Medical Center before I moved back home to take care of my folk after they'd killed some woman. [There was only one birthing room for black women in town and if someone was in it, you just had to wait until their baby was born, even if there were open white birthing rooms. Also, there was only one recovery room, and if another black woman had a baby after you had yours, they would send you home early so the next one could have the room.] Sometime they'd have their babies in the elevator before they got to the birthing rooms. Yes, it's something to that. And right now, it affects us. We don't know it until we get older a lot of times. What do they say? Eighty percent of our body is fluid?

CARMALETTA: A lot of it.

MS. WILLIAMS: And that's when the tide's high is on a full moon. And that's the reason it affects the different things. After I retired, I worked in a nursing home for three years. And, on a full moon, they act just the opposite of what they ordinarily act normally.

CARMALETTA: My!

MS. WILLIAMS: So there is something to that full moon.

CARMALETTA: When I was an undergraduate, I did a teaching practicum in a first grade. I really thought I was going to teach grade school then. Then I came to my senses.

MS. WILLIAMS: I know what you mean. My dad wanted me to be a teacher. None of us are teaching (laughter).

CARMALETTA: One of the things that they used to tell us was, "If the weather's bad, then don't expect the children to be good," because they react to the weather.

CARMALETTA: Now that you've talked about the water, the percentage of water in the body, it makes sense. See, nobody told me that, I would have understood it.

MS. WILLIAMS: That's when the tide is high. So they had a joke when I moved back here and worked at Mercy, that I was the full-moon nurse (laughter). But they finally found out that some of that was true. And they started watching then (laughter).

CARMALETTA: And then the other part about the story with the two gardens is that you said, "And we've never been hungry."

MS. WILLIAMS: Never.

CARMALETTA: So, how does that fit? How does that work? What do you think? Is this payback for helping out so many other people?

MS. WILLIAMS: Cast your bread on the water and it'll come back to you. Not a one of us has ever been hungry. And it's five of us still living, and one brother passed.

CARMALETTA: Is that like reaping what you sow?

MS. WILLIAMS: You do.

CARMALETTA: Cast your bread?

MS. WILLIAMS: I'm a firm believer in that. You're going to reap just what you sow. It hadn't been easy all our life, but we never been hungry.

CARMALETTA: What do you think was the most important thing that you learned when you were growing up?

MS. WILLIAMS: My mother always taught us to be kind to everyone because the very person that you're unkind to may be the person that has to give you a glass of water when you're flat on your back. And that stuck with me all my life. So I don't meet any strangers.

CARMALETTA: I know. I feel like I've known you forever. If you're going to pass on something for the people who are going to see you or for young folk, or if there's a legacy that you want to leave to folk, what would it be? What do you want people to know and to always remember and think about?

MS. WILLIAMS: Always trust in God. Tell the truth. Just be honest. That's the key.

CARMALETTA: Any final words?

MS. WILLIAMS: No. That's about it. That's the most important thing.

CARMALETTA: Thank you so much. This was a great interview. Thank you.

MS. WILLIAMS: You're welcome.