7-16-2018

Rev. Reginald Hill

Raiven Scott

Oral History of Rev. Reginald Hill of the Antioch Missionary Baptist Church in Huntington, West Virginia, interviewed by Raiven Scott on 07/16/2018 in Huntington, West Virginia.

Raiven Scott: So, were you born and raised here?

Reginald Hill: I was born here in Huntington, West Virginia, October the 2nd, 1950 in St. Mary's Hospital. So, in answer to your question, yes ma'am, I was born and raised right here in Huntington, West Virginia.

Raiven Scott: What was your childhood like?

Reginald Hill: Early childhood was typical in a black neighborhood. We just engaged in just playin' around – you know, mostly bicycles. We did not have the electronics that you guys have today. Everything that we had then, it was either a bicycle, baseball, football, baseball bat, or something that we either put together.

Raiven Scott: Let's see, what else? What was your neighborhood like?

Reginald Hill: Well, the neighborhood was a community of individuals. It was a lot of people who, we all shared the same interest. Back then it was no big shot as they say in the neighborhood. Everybody was on an equal plane. We got involved with one another. It wasn't anyone was ostracized because of one having more than the other. Neighborhood was friendly. Kids bein' kids and grownups bein' grownups.

Raiven Scott: Okay. Let me see. Can you tell me about your parents and your family?

Reginald Hill: Okay. I was raised in a two parent home. Dad worked at American Car and Foundry. Mom was a homemaker. I have two brothers – it was three boys total. Dad was home every evening. Mom was there. I mean there was never a moment where dad was absent; he was always there. Mom was the disciplinarian. Whenever we got whippings, she's the one that did it.

Raiven Scott: Yeah.

Reginald Hill: And so, Dad – it was her job to raise us. We got along as a family. It wasn't none of this, you know, "He's better than I am." We sit down to eat dinner together and mostly on Sundays is when we got together as a family. So, we interacted.

Raiven Scott: Did you grow up in a Christian home?

Reginald Hill: Well, you had to go to church. That was one of the basics, as bein' an African American – that's part of our culture. And that was not even a – . It was. It was a given on Sunday. Irregardless and as we got older, Mom always stipulated, "As long as you're in this house, you will go to church on Sunday. I don't care what you do on the weekend, on Saturday night, but you will be in church on Sunday." It was a fact that if you didn't go to church back then – Sundays was the day that everybody went to the movies – and if you didn't go to church, you didn't go to the movies. Same way it was during a school day. If

you too sick to go to school, you too sick to go out and play. So, the obvious was, we was in church on Sunday to go to the movie that evening and we was in school through the week so we can go out and play.

Raiven Scott: [Laughter] Okay. What was school like?

Reginald Hill: That was a transition. It was when right at the beginning in my – well, my elementary school, I went to Simms which was an integrated school at the time. Even though we couldn't live in that neighborhood, we went to that school. So, we had to walk from our neighborhood to Simms. It was typically like, I guess, any other school. You know, you just go and you learn things of that nature and then when we went to junior high school, that was even different because they had the boundaries as to what district you were in.

Reginald Hill: We were in Lincoln's district and it was an integrated school. And then there was a lot of animosity there because black and whites did not get along. And so, there were times when we would get out of school to go to ball practice and then you was always confronted with a group of individuals who didn't want us there. And so, it just – there was a fight almost every day. That was a given. You went to school to learn but you were gonna fight your way back from school to home.

Reginald Hill: Then in high school, high school was even more complex because they had closed Douglass, which was – it was a predominantly black school. And that was our desire, was to go to Douglass and wear the blue and white. Then when integration came, it said that we had to go to Huntington High and we did not really want to go to Huntington High – all white school and Huntington High didn't want us to come because we were black. So, when we get to school there was a lot of friction, a lot of tension the first year that I was there. And fight. There was a pretty good size riot broke out in the school hallways because of the tension between blacks and whites.

Reginald Hill: As time went by, it got a little better – not much better, but we're talkin' the early '60s up until '69 when I'd graduate. So, that was, that was pretty difficult time.

Raiven Scott: Was racism a pretty big thing here?

Reginald Hill: Oh, yes.

Raiven Scott: It was?

Reginald Hill: Yes. It was obvious. I mean, it wasn't anything to be called the N word. In fact, you would hear it almost – if you go a day without hearin' the N word, you would think somethin' was wrong. Just ignorance. People drivin' by and they would call you the word or if you go into the stores, basically, "Why are you in here? Because we know you don't have the money to buy what we're selling." And if you were goin' in and a white person came in, they may be waiting on you but they would break off from waitin' on you and go to the white person. Irregardless of whether or not you were buyin' somethin' or not, they are gonna – they're gonna watch you, which they did a lot of times in the stores. They would follow blacks around in the stores. Not even ask 'em if

they wanted anything but they would be following you around to see if you was gonna steal somethin'. And while they were watchin' the blacks, the white folks was stealin' them blind.

Raiven Scott: Yeah. Let's see. Did you have any community events or anything that you remember? Any of your favorites or something?

Reginald Hill: When you say community events, we were limited as to recreation, say downtown. So, therefore, as stated in another interview, what the staple of the black community was two places: A.D. Lewis Center and Scott Community Center. On Sundays, A.D. Lewis was the place to be. This is where the community would come together and it was almost like a community picnic. There would be football games, softball games, people just standin' around talkin', people havin' picnics just enjoyin' one another's company. That was Sunday where the community came together. And it wasn't one of those scheduled things – this was just something that was done.

Reginald Hill: You got Scott Community Center where the youth would go. And they had a lady there – Miss Jenny. And she was a Miss Jenny. You did what she said. Once you go in through those doors, it wasn't like you were away from mama; you was under the hands of Miss Jenny. And it was a place where kids could go and play, have fun, learn things, have plays. It was one of the sanctuaries that we had within our community that a lot of the youth went to.

Raiven Scott: Okay. What were your parents' political beliefs?

Reginald Hill: Back then, political beliefs was that they believed that if a candidate was meant to serve people, then they would endorse them. Pretty much, I'd say that they were Democratic because of the fact that the Republican party at that time wasn't for the common people. It was basically – it was for the wealthy. But the reason I believed Dad was a Democrat, Mom was a Democrat, was because they felt that when John F. Kennedy became president there was hope that we as a people would rise up above the segregations and all of these things. And so that was what their beliefs were, and it wasn't based on because of an individual promisin' 'em anything. They was lookin' for promise for the whole people, that represented all of United States and not just one side of the United States.

Raiven Scott: Did you have any relatives around here? Did you grow up with any relatives, or – ?

Reginald Hill: First my grandmother came from South Carolina to Huntington first, for employment. 'Cause back then Huntington was one of the places where you had a railroad and a river and the industries were booming, and so she came because of employment. Then she sent for my dad. My dad came to Huntington in 1945 and he worked, as I said, he worked several jobs, then he got hired on to American Car and Foundry.

Reginald Hill: My grandmother, my great-grandmother – had a privilege of being around my great-grandmother, which was unique because she was born in 1855. And so, to me at that time bein' a young person, I thought she was old-fashioned. But there was a lot of

wisdom in this lady who was uneducated but she had common sense. And so, between my grandmother, my great-grandmother on my father's side and on my mother's side, my grandmother and great-grandmother who – these are the individuals that made up our family. So, yep, we had cousins. We had a bunch of cousins. But we all just got along together.

Raiven Scott: Okay. What do you remember most about your grandparents?

Reginald Hill: Okay, well my grandparents as I said were my great-grandmother. She had a lot of tales, would tell us, bein' raised in the south – 'cause my grandmother brought her up and all the things that she would tell us and there were things she wouldn't tell us because number one, of our age. Back then, parents, grandparents didn't talk to kids like they talk today. They call it, "Don't be gettin' in old folk business."

Raiven Scott: "Grown folk business." [Laughter]

Reginald Hill: Yeah. So, nothin's changed. And so, we didn't. So, only thing that I know that they told us basically was to be good, treat people right, and they would treat you right. As far as my grandmother, we had a dialogue as I'd come home from school. I would meet her on the bus stop 'cause she's on her way to work. And, you know, she'd ask about my day and then later on at nine o'clock I know I was gonna get a call from her. And so we would talk almost every night at nine o'clock. She asked how was my day and, you know, and I asked her basically, a grandson to a grandmother talk.

Reginald Hill: On my mother's side, my grandmother, she was a character. She was one that kept things goin'. She would tell you a tale and you would believe it to be true. And then right at the end she'll let you know that it was just a fairy tale. [Laughter] But she would scare us to death about, if you're out on the street, you know, this person gonna get you, that person gonna get you. The hobo's gonna get you and cut your feet off and all these things. But she did that for a reason, that was to keep us away from the railroad tracks and staying close to home.

Raiven Scott: Okay. Did you have any siblings?

Reginald Hill: Two brothers. I'm the youngest of three boys. My oldest brother – two oldest brothers, they both live here in Huntington. And so those are the only siblings I have. No girls. No sisters.

Raiven Scott: So, did you play sports?

Reginald Hill: I did.

Raiven Scott: I think you had mentioned sports earlier?

Reginald Hill: I did.

Raiven Scott: How was sports and everything? Did you like it? Or what all did you play?

Reginald Hill: Well, we always played sports on the side of the house because at that time there was no such thing as midget league football. Baseball was a trucking company's parkin' lot. But that was community. These are the things that we had to do for ourselves because we didn't know anything about the Little League or then – . Plus you couldn't afford to be on a Little League team because you had to buy uniforms and money was scarce. But we always played ball on the side of the house or in the community. We had our own leagues. And like I said, they played at A.D Lewis, you know, whether it was 19th Street against Primrose, or 19th Street against Artisan Avenue, or things of that nature.

Reginald Hill: When we went to junior high school, Lincoln had a junior high school football team. So, bein' able to go to Lincoln and play on their team, we liked it because we liked the sport. Then from Lincoln, we went to Huntington High. We played at Huntington High. And again it was a transition because of the fact there were those who didn't really want you to play on that team, but the law said that we could go to the school so we could play on the team. It was a situation where the boosters who had the monies and they had children, they wanted their children to play, but coaches wanted to win and in order to win, they wanted the minorities to play and really, nothin's changed.

Reginald Hill: I did, I played linebacker. And the reason – my reasoning for wanting to play defense was because of all the anxiety that I had built up in me. I could not just hit anybody and not go to jail. But when I was on that football field, I hit anybody I wanted. So, really it was a relief for me. I can get all that anger out of me without goin' to jail, but I was a sportsman about it. So, that's why, when I played football, I wanted to play defense.

Raiven Scott: Were there a lot of African Americans on your football team?

Reginald Hill: It was. And not only was there a lot of African Americans on our football team – we went to a predominantly white school; so when you go to a predominantly white school, you had white cheerleaders, you had white majorettes, and you had a football team that was comprised of a lot of minorities. So, we one time got together and we said, "Look, we know because all the girls that went out for the cheerleading or for the majorette, they always came up short." So, we got together, the football team, and we said, "We're not playin' unless we get us a black majorette." So, we actually boycotted the team and so the coach knew, he knew we were for real. And after that we stood together and then they had a tryout and Anne Rice was the first black majorette at the Huntington High School. And it did somethin' for not only the team, but for the community to see a black majorette when they would march into the stadium that was out representing the school that was an integrated school.

Raiven Scott: Oh, that's nice.

Reginald Hill: Yeah.

Raiven Scott: What was your economic circumstances?

Reginald Hill: Economic circumstances. We were entrepreneurs. We did not have the programs that they have today. We had – I guess it was just in us that if you wanted money, you

couldn't rely on gettin' it from your parents because they was on a limited income. So, we would cut grass, and when we cut grass we didn't have power mowers. We had the push mowers, the ones where you had to sharpen your blades on your push mower and we would cut yards. Some had paper routes. Mine was basically cutting grass and savin' newspapers to take over to the paper place and sell newspapers back to 'em. Scrap iron is where we would walk the tracks and the metals that would fall on the track, we would load 'em up on a cart; and when we got enough, we would take it down there or my dad would put it in his station wagon and we'd take it and sell the scrap iron.

Reginald Hill: And so, we were always out makin' money because we were doin' things that other people didn't want to do or was too old to do. So, we didn't have job jobs. And when we did get jobs, they were – you were either a bag boy or somethin' of that nature.

Raiven Scott: Okay. What'd you like in high school?

Reginald Hill: What did I like in high school?

Raiven Scott: Yeah.

Reginald Hill: Well, I liked the classes that I took because I was always interested in history. History was one of my favorite classes; English was my worst class. And mechanical drawing was another class that I liked. But in high school, the social atmosphere, this is where we can talk to individuals from the community and extend the community that didn't live on your block and we can talk to the other kids our age from other areas of our community. So, the social aspect was pretty good.

Raiven Scott: Okay. What'd you do after high school?

Reginald Hill: Okay, after high school I thought I had a good chance of gettin' a football scholarship. There's another situation where when schools were looking at players, a lot of the ball players – especially minorities – we didn't get the letters because some of the coaches kept 'em on their desk. They would not present 'em. And we were told by counselors, the best thing for you to do is go into the military. That was their answer for everything.

Reginald Hill: But me and several other guys, we had a coach that seen our potential. We went to Eastern Kentucky and we showed 'em our film, and they were to get back with us, which, you know, you just didn't stop there. Came to Marshall University and there the coach said, "We will give you a semester scholarship, which means you play for me for a semester, football season, then afterwards, then we'll pull that." And so at that time we could not get a job because you was classified 1-A because of the draft. And a lot of employers would not hire you because you were classified 1-A.

Reginald Hill: So, at that time I was 18 years old, I was soon to turn 19 and I knew I would be getting drafted if I did not get into school. So, I went, takin' a test for the Air Force, passed the test, and then I was just waiting for a date to ship out. I turned 19 on the 2nd of October and on the 3rd of October, I got a draft notice. But I'm still waiting to hear from Eastern

Kentucky, I'm still tryin' to decide whether I wanted to go over Marshall. So, I just decided that I'm 'a go ahead on in to the military.

Reginald Hill: So, I went into the Air Force and while I was in the Air Force, I get a letter from Eastern Kentucky sayin' they wish for me to come and play football in Eastern Kentucky. Well, too late for that, you know, I'm already in the military. Then I was told to – what's his name – I was in the Philippines, and while I was in the Philippines, that's when the news came where the plane crashed with Marshall University's football team on it. And so, therefore, by the intervention of the Lord, that's why I did not walk on for Marshall. It wasn't my doing; I think the Lord knew something was up, however you look at it. And so, that's how I ended up in the Air Force because of all these other doors bein' shut, and I walked through the door at the Air Force.

Raiven Scott: Okay. Let's see. So, what'd you do during holidays?

Reginald Hill: Okay, our holidays, they were typical white holidays. You can't separate culture from holidays. Thanksgiving was one of our holidays that, again, we share as a family. We would go – my dad and mom's friend in Portsmouth, Ohio, would invite us down every Thanksgiving. So, we would go to Portsmouth and we would have holidays with that family. And we as kids, we looked at it opportunity after we ate, we go to the movies. Christmas, it was unique around our household because everybody had a wish list. We wish we could get this, but we knew financially we wasn't gonna get that. But our parents were good to us because they tried to get us at least one of the things that we liked.

Reginald Hill: But back then life was simple. If you got a bicycle, buddy you was on top of the world. And basically that's the way it was. Whatever the popular toy was, is that what everyone wanted. So, mostly we got bicycles and sleds. And those were the two main things that we looked at and got and we was not walkin' around mad if we didn't get it because we understood. There was just no money to do that. And a lot of the things that we did, we made.

Raiven Scott: What was your favorite toy or thing you liked to play with?

Reginald Hill: Well, we always – like I said, it evolved around bicycles. We would take old bicycle frames and we would soup 'em up, you would say, you know. Ridin' bicycles was the thing back then. If you had a bike, you was on top of the world.

Raiven Scott: Okay. What'd you guys do during the Fourth of July?

Reginald Hill: Well, when we got a little older, we were crazy. [Laughter] We went crazy with it. Rather than light a firecracker and be sensible with it, we was throwin' it at each other. You know, 'cause kids gonna be kids. That primarily's what – and then back then there was, you had your regular sparklers and the girls played with the sparklers, but we guys we wanted the firecrackers and the cherry bombs, is what we call 'em, which was a little powerful then. And like again, we was throwin' 'em at one another, very dangerous.

And that's why we know it was nobody but the Lord watchin' over us because I mean we would just – no regard to safety. We were just throwin' 'em at each other.

Reginald Hill: But Fourth of July, we did not look at it – and I'm just bein' honest – we did not look at it as a day of independence. It was a day to shoot firecrackers.

Raiven Scott: Did you have any cookouts or anything?

Reginald Hill: Sure. We had plenty cookouts. Again, that was on Sunday at A.D. Lewis and that's where everybody would come together. But now, in the backyard, I don't think we really had cookouts like that. We just, you know, 'cause Mom would cook every evening and on Sundays Dad, he wanted to cook. So, he'd cook on Sundays. But as far as grillin' out and things of that nature, very rare – now we might do that on a holiday. But say, "This Saturday we're gonna cook out," that wasn't one of the things that we did.

Raiven Scott: What was your favorite thing that your parents cooked?

Reginald Hill: Well, Dad's favorite was roast, potatoes, carrots, and onion. That was his favorite. Mom's was fried chicken, potato salad, green beans, and corn.

Raiven Scott: Okay.

Reginald Hill: But now, Dad coming from the south, on Fridays we were eatin' fish. He loved his fish.

Raiven Scott: Like, every Friday?

Reginald Hill: Pretty much. And back then, you know like I said, you come walkin' toward the house and you smelled fish, you already knew what you was havin' for dinner. In fact, you can walk by through the neighborhood and you can pretty much tell who was havin' what because of the aromas that was comin' out of the house.

Raiven Scott: [Laughter] Let's see. You said you went into the Air Force, right?

Reginald Hill: Yes.

Raiven Scott: And then, what'd you do after the Air Force?

Reginald Hill: When I came out of the Air Force, I went to work for a place called Advanced Mining. And after workin' there for about three months, I got another job at the nickel plant or Special Metals. And then I had this desire just to go to a Bible college. I mean it was just somethin' I hadn't planned on doin'. I had a military fund that would pay for my schooling, so I went to Tri-State Bible College. And during that process, I had no desire to be a preacher or anything, but the church called me to be a licensed minister and again, I can see how the Lord was workin' in my life from where I didn't walk on at Marshall and then all of a sudden I want to go to Bible college. And then I get called as a minister. So, I think that was his way of preparin' me for the work that he's doin' now.

Reginald Hill: And so, after Bible college, then I started pastoring here and I pastored here for 32 years and that brings you right up to about right now.

Raiven Scott: [Laughter] Okay. So, how would you compare the community now to the community back then?

Reginald Hill: We have no community now. We do not have a community now. Back then, every parent from every house knew every child by their first name. And if they saw you doin' somethin' wrong, they would correct you; and then what I liked about it then, they'd say, "You go home and tell your mother what you did, 'cause I'm gonna ask her." And then therefore we had to go tell Mom what we did because whoever the person was, they would check on us to see if we did it or not.

Reginald Hill: They were together. If some kids didn't have anything to eat, they had somethin' to eat. They can go to any house and just ask for somethin' to eat and they would feed 'em. People cared about one another. Kids respected our parents. We respected the elderly. We spoke and it wasn't no, "Yep. Nope." It was, "Yes, ma'am. No, sir." I mean, it was just respect given. If there was something goin' on in the neighborhood, everybody was involved. It affected everybody.

Reginald Hill: But now, people can care less if you walk by 'em. If they walk by 'em, they won't speak, they won't even nod their head. They don't have a sense of who they are. We respected one another. Now not only children but adults don't respect themselves. To allow themselves to be called certain names. And to call each other certain degrading names. As I was sayin' earlier, the N word. We heard that all our lives, but as in a derogatory statement now, we've got artists rappin' about it, callin' everybody degradin' 'em.

Reginald Hill: I mean, people died because they not wanted as a race to be called that. And here we do it worse, more so than anybody else. And so, back then it was self respect. We didn't have much but we were clean. As far as profanity, Mom didn't have to be there; you just didn't do it. And the ones that did it, we considered them mean people. But now it's the norm. Everybody cuss, you know, for no reason. I mean, my thought is, if you're gonna cuss, at least put them in perspective. You know, know how to use it. [Laughter] That's what I can't get. People be callin' folks names and it has nothin' to do with what was goin' on. So, mine is, is that if you're gonna cuss somebody out, at least keep it in perspective. You know, so – .

Reginald Hill: But then, mine politically now, back then you know people were talking somewhat about politics. But now we have a generation that can care less, but they better because it affects them. And that's why I always encourage my children to at least watch a half hour of the news a day. At least a half hour national news to know what's goin' on. Register to vote. Lot of people in my generation, "Well, it don't – my vote don't count." But we see the votes count. So, if you don't do anything else, register to vote, and vote. I don't care who's runnin'. I'm not going to tell you who to vote for, because people died for that. So, that's what I see that's tore our community apart, is that everybody's satisfied with the status quo. Doin' nothin'.

Raiven Scott: What would you say would be the best thing that's happened to you?

Reginald Hill: The best thing that's happened to me?

Raiven Scott: Yeah.

Reginald Hill: Well, number one was a young lady named Josette Hill, well Walden. I met her in my junior year in high school. And I did not know her at that time. I wasn't pursuin' her at that time, she wasn't pursuin' me. We met, in fact, when there was an altercation at the school and I was gettin' busy. Okay, I'm gonna put it that way. You can write that however you want. [Laughter] And someone grabbed me and I had no idea it was her, and so from that moment on, we started dating. And 48 years later, I think that was the greatest thing that ever happened to me because it kept me from goin' down a path I didn't really want to go down, that I didn't have sense enough not to go down. I was goin', but she altered that path for me. 'Cause not only was it about me, I had to respect her. And in order to respect her, and I knew her mother, and she didn't want her to be runnin' around with some thug. So, that's what altered my course.

Raiven Scott: Did you guys have any children?

Reginald Hill: We do. We had three daughters. My oldest daughter currently lives in Charlotte, which blessed us with the first grandchild, which is a granddaughter. And my second daughter, she lives here in Huntington. She's a beautician here in Huntington. Like I said, my first daughter, she's what you call a cytotechnician. She looks through microscopes – that's all I can tell you about that. And like I said, my second daughter is a beautician, own her own shop. And then my third daughter is a paralegal for Henderson, Henderson and Staples.

Reginald Hill: So, they're young women now and so we were blessed because that's the choice my wife, as I said, it kept me on track. She had a business degree but she chose, as I told her, I said, "Look, one of us need to be with 'em because I don't want my kids raised by somebody else and develop their ideas." So, at least – so she said she would sacrifice her career, raise the kids, and then at any point after they get a certain age she can go back to work if she wanted. But thank the Lord, I was able to get employment to where I could take care of everybody. 'Cause that was my job.

Reginald Hill: And so, we got three wonderful, young ladies out of the deal and we couldn't ask for anything better. Never caused us any trouble.

Raiven Scott: Okay. What kind of advice did you give your children?

Reginald Hill: Well, bein' girls, I told 'em that guys was out for one thing. And I tell 'em I'm speakin' from a guy's perspective, okay? But then in reality, I said, "Do not – " I said, "You always want a guy that will respect you as you see me respecting your mother." I said, "If you can't see that in him, don't fool with him." Then my oldest daughter, she's a lot like me. She said, "Well, Daddy, what would you do if I say I'm 'a marry a white man?" I said, "He just better be saved." 'Cause it wasn't about who you choose; it's just that I'm not gonna

deal with somebody that don't know the Lord. You know, and all of ‘em had the same thing, respect. You get somebody that's gonna respect you and because they cannot, they should not, and they dare not put their hands on you. Because they would have to deal with me.

Reginald Hill: And when the husbands – prospective husbands – came, they came to me and my wife to ask permission, because that's what we had told them. That I want to meet ‘em, I want to talk to ‘em, and I want to let ‘em know what we think that they should be toward our daughters. And that was one of the things. “If you feel you gotta put your hands on ‘em,” I told ‘em, “I'm available.” And they married two great guys. Ain't had no problems out of ‘em yet. [Laughter] Ain't gonna have no problems out of ‘em! Thank the Lord.

Raiven Scott: [Laughter] Let's see here. Can you describe a time where you felt most proud of your community and, or of your family, or just – ?

Reginald Hill: Well, again, when I – I shared it with another gentleman about the most proud moment in my life. I knew how hard my dad worked. 'Cause for 15 to 20 years he was a custodian at American Car, 'cause at that time, blacks, that’s the only jobs you can get in Huntington. It was either custodial, busboy, or somethin’ of that nature. And I remember him comin’ home one evening, and he was just – I mean, I've seen Dad happy before but this was somethin’ special. And I heard him telling Mom, he said, "I got the job." And what it was, was that he'd taken a welding test at American Car 'cause they built railroad cars and the pay was a whole lot better than what he was doin’ as a custodian.

Reginald Hill: And I heard him say, "Now I can raise my family the way I want to." And because of the excitement I saw into him, it made me feel good that my dad wasn't thinkin’ about his self, but he was thinkin’ about us. And so, at that point, I believe that was one of the most memorable moments for me and so to me that would stand out above all of ‘em.

Raiven Scott: Okay. You got through a lot of the questions.

Reginald Hill: It's just 11?

Raiven Scott: Yeah, it hasn't been that long, actually.

Reginald Hill: Go ahead.

Raiven Scott: I'm trying to think. I'm trying to think what I want to ask. I had it earlier, I just forgot.

Reginald Hill: That's all right.

Raiven Scott: Let's see if I remember it. Oh, yeah. What did adults do for fun?

Reginald Hill: Well, they – I can remember Mom and Dad and them, every now and then, they called ‘em – . Well, the teenagers had house parties. Y’all heard about house parties. You have.

Raiven Scott: Kind of.

Reginald Hill: But adults had somethin' similar to a house party is that on a Friday night they would come over, people, just people in the community, certain ones that everybody had their own close little knit community gathering. And the record player would go on and they would, you know, be playin' records and there were – I'm tryin' to think if they were drinkin' or not. It wasn't, 'cause like I said, there was none of these knock down, drag out things, you know. If it was, it was social – they'd have little drinks. But they'd just be sitting around playin' music, talkin'. And that was what pretty much the adults did on a Friday night.

Reginald Hill: Then every now and then, one of the artists would come to Charleston. They would come to Charleston to watch one of the artists, Jackie Wilson, that was back then. That's the onliest one I can remember 'cause my mother was crazy about him. And so, they would go to Charleston for somethin' like that. But during the community, everybody always had somethin' goin' on.

Raiven Scott: Were there any groups or organizations or stuff, like I don't know how to explain it? Or clubs or anything that people would go to?

Reginald Hill: Yeah, they had on 16th Street, they had the Bison's which a lot of the affluent black folks went to, you know. I know the Bison's was one where they went and played, or not played, but had local bands and things come and played. Then there was the Owl's. These are just from memory 'cause I was too young to know exactly what their function was. And the Elks Club that they had over on 10th Avenue. And so, well, down here the house is torn down now – no, I think that house may be still there.

Reginald Hill: But anyway, those are the one clubs that I know of. Now as far as the kids, there was Action. Action was kind of like a community center, but that's where they had different programs. They had summer jobs that you could go, that they would sign up for. And Action, A.D. Lewis, and Scott Community Center was the ones where the teenagers would go.

Raiven Scott: What kind of music did you listen to growing up?

Reginald Hill: Soul music. [Laughter] Well, you had Kool and the Gang, Ohio Players, Temptations, Four Tops, The Impressions, Curtis Mayfield, Isaac Hayes, Barry White. Those are the ones that pretty much everybody listened to and then you had the Supremes, The Marvelettes. Then the Jackson 5, they came out. All of that kind of music came out, just basically Motown sounds.

Raiven Scott: Who was your favorite artist?

Reginald Hill: My favorite artist? I liked Otis Redding. The reason I liked Otis Redding is because he was one of the first, other than James Brown, that came out with pretty much the horns. Otis Redding had the saxophones and all that, 'cause most back then was like a three or four person group and they just had the guitar, basic guitar, drums, and the

pianos. But when you had Otis Redding, Otis Redding had a beat that, for me now, that I really liked because most of his songs were a ballad type. Now the Jackson 5, now when they came out, we were in our 20s then so you can imagine.

Reginald Hill: But when you go back into the ‘60s, you're lookin’ at The Temptations, The Supremes. But I think overall, I liked Otis Redding.

Raiven Scott: Okay. Whenever you were growing up, what kind of things did you wear? What was fashion like?

Reginald Hill: Well, early on in elementary school, it was basically jeans. You wore jeans and a shirt. That was the uniform for everybody 'cause that was pretty much all you can afford. Except for picture day. When you go take a picture, you find your best sports jacket, if you had one, and a white tie – I mean, white shirt and a tie. Then when we went to junior high, it was just the average fads. And then Ban-Lon shirts or – . And then, back then you had to wear your shirts tucked in. You had to wear your shirts tucked in, you had to have socks on your feet. Shoes and socks. Your hair had to be cut. It could not come down below your ear. That was the school code.

Reginald Hill: And when we got to high school, basically the dashikis, anything black, you know with the medallions. Now we on Fridays, we would wear – the black community, I'm just sayin’ the black community – we would wear ties. And we would try to find the loudest, wildest tie, you know, we wore ‘em to school. But pretty much, then what I always call the Rap Brown jacket, it was the railroad jacket that the old men used to wear when they worked on the railroad or on farms, and that was because of a guy called H. Rap Brown, that's the way he dressed. And back then we had the movement goin’ on, you know everybody wanted to identify with our blackness, so if it was African print, they wore it. The afros, sunglasses, the shoes, the platform shoes like you may have seen some had the fish in ‘em but we didn't – you couldn't afford them. And things of that nature.

Raiven Scott: Okay. Let's see. Trying to see what else I was gonna ask. What was the most difficult thing that you faced here?

Reginald Hill: In Huntington?

Raiven Scott: Yeah.

Reginald Hill: Rejection. When you go apply for a job and every place you go to, "We're not hiring. We're not hiring. We're not hiring." And then it wasn't – I think one of the most was, is I went to a job, and they told me I was overqualified for the job. Now, and that was when I first got out of the service and I even went to the city, the City of Huntington. I didn't care what the job was, I'm lookin’ for a job. And I gave them my resume and they said I was overqualified.

Reginald Hill: So, basically it was rejection. When you know that they're hiring, but because the color of your skin, they wasn't hiring you. And to call and look for an apartment and on the

phone, they said, "Come on down, I'll show it to you." And you pull up in front of the house, and then they say, "Oh, we just rented it." So, those are the rejections that we went through is that you talk like you got sense, but then when you go up there and they see the color of your skin, many times people ask me, "Were you born and raised here in Huntington?" "Yeah." Basically, "You don't talk like everybody else." And so, that was one of the – you know, over the phone is one thing, but when they see you, actually see you, that's another. Those are the rejections that I seen here in Huntington.

Raiven Scott: Okay. I'm trying to think. I don't know, I think I asked you pretty much everything about your life. Is there anything you'd like to tell me before we end?

Reginald Hill: Well, I think, which would be important is that young people need to research their history. I would encourage you to find some old person and just say what you're doin' to me now, talk to 'em. Find out. Where you are today, why you're able to do what you do today, and what somebody else couldn't do but they were willing to stand up to do it. Like you can go to any school you want to now. To where there was those who couldn't go. Theaters right here in Huntington that you could not go. One's the Keith-Albee, which is now the Redemption Church.

Reginald Hill: Then there is the Orpheum, which it's no longer in existence. Then the Palace. The Palace, you couldn't go as a black person. The Keith-Albee, you could not go as a black person. The Orpheum, you can go, but you had to buy your ticket at front, in the front, come out, go up some steps to the balcony. In the dusty balcony that they never cleaned. And no bathrooms. If you had to use the bathroom, you had to come out and go and hopefully at a filling station somewhere they let you use the bathroom.

Reginald Hill: And so, mine is, is that find out what it was like and the things you can do now. Camden Park. Camden Park, you could not go to Camden Park except for one day, and they called that "colored day." Now you talkin' 'bout the community. The community said, "If that's the only day we can go, my kids are not goin'." We never did go to Camden Park on colored day because of the fact that they say that's the only day that you can go.

Reginald Hill: Dreamland Pool. You couldn't go to the swimmin' pool but one day out of the year and that's the day before they get ready to drain it. So, there was another one. Didn't want to go there anyway. A lot of things that when you say community politically was, is that they didn't picket it, they just boycotted it. If you can just give us one day, we're not goin'. And so, White Pantry, which people don't realize – Phil Carter, down in the museum in Memphis, Tennessee at the Martin Luther King Museum, his picture is there where he was sitting on the stool at the White Pantry, where they boycotted it. They didn't want blacks to come in there.

Reginald Hill: Drugstores back then, Kresge's. You can go in and buy your order, place your order, but you couldn't eat it there; you had to get it to go. And so there's a lot of things, a lot of places that things that happened here in Huntington that the youth need to realize that, hey, you got an opportunity if you go to school. There's too many grants out there. Don't just give up. Don't tell anybody or let anybody tell you, you can't, when you know that you can. And you got there on the backs of somebody else.

Reginald Hill: That's my advice. Just talk to some of these old people, man. You know, we had a life. You know, I at one time, were where you are now. But what I had to go through, you don't have to but you can see it raisin' its head up right now. You seen on the news where people just have gone crazy. Blatantly showin' their racism. It's getting back to what it was like. "We don't want you here." And that's why I say, watch the news, watch the people around and vote. If you're not registered, register. Please. Like I said, that's the only thing because today it's the Hispanics. Tomorrow it may be us again. You can see how things are goin'. And racism is dangerous. It is dangerous.

Reginald Hill: The only thing then, is they were in sheets then but now they're in suits. So, that's my advice to you guys. Tell your friends that – to lay off the game for a while, for 30 minutes and watch the news. Get involved because it's gonna affect you. And the reason we talk about voting is that you gotta vote for somebody that supports your ideas. You see? Don't just vote on somebody because they look like you or whatever. And people say the same thing about me when President Obama was the president. I can say one thing about him. He was the people's President; he wasn't no particular people's president.

Reginald Hill: I did not agree with everything that he did, but at least he was for everybody. And now you can see this is just totally one side. And they do not have us in the plan. And so that's why I say, look at the issues, look at what's goin' on, and once you vote for the person or persons that best represent your ideas and that can best help everybody – not just you, but everybody.

Raiven Scott: Okay.

Reginald Hill: All right.

Raiven Scott: I don't have any more questions, but thank you so much.

Reginald Hill: Not a problem.

Raiven Scott: Okay.

Reginald Hill: I want this for the record. We went to THE Huntington High School!

Raiven Scott: [Laughter] Okay.