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7-19-2021

Marcia Lynn Hoard Williams

Kelli Johnson

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Recommended Citation

Johnson, Kelli, "Marcia Lynn Hoard Williams" (2021). *Oral Histories – NPS AACR Civil Rights In Appalachia Grant*. 6.

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Kelli Johnson: This is Kelli Johnson, a librarian at Marshall University, and we are doing an oral history today, July 19th, 2021 as a part of the National Park Service Civil Rights Era grant. So we'll go ahead and get started. What's your full name?

Marcia Williams: Marcia Lynn Hoard Williams.

Kelli Johnson: Can you spell that for me?

Marcia Williams: Marcia, M-A-R-C-I-A. Lynn, L-Y-N-N. Hoard, H-O-A-R-D. Williams, W-I-L-L-I-A--M-S.

Kelli Johnson: And this is why you don't do this with family. So why did your parents pick this name for you?

Marcia Williams: I really don't know. I don't know where Marcia came from. Considerably, it's an unusual name and there's not really many people that have the name Marcia. It's always, people called me Marsha.

Kelli Johnson: Interesting so you're not named for anybody that you know of?

Marcia Williams: No, there's no one in the family with the name Marcia.

Kelli Johnson: Did you have a nickname when you were growing up?

Marcia Williams: Marcy.

Kelli Johnson: Marcy?

Marcia Williams: Marcy, M-A-R-C-Y. Marcy.

Kelli Johnson: And when were you born?

Marcia Williams: July 26th, 1957.

Kelli Johnson: And where were you born?

Marcia Williams: Huntington, West Virginia at St. Mary's Hospital.

Kelli Johnson: And were you raised in Huntington?

Marcia Williams: Lived here all my life.

Kelli Johnson: So what are some of your earliest childhood memories?

Marcia Williams: I lived in what we might say today's the white hood. Lived off 28th Street onto a street called Wilson Street. Lived there, went to school in that area.

Kelli Johnson: What school did you go to?

Marcia Williams: Went to Lincoln Elementary and I was one of very few black kids. Went to Lincoln Junior High. And the thing about Lincoln Elementary and the kids, I didn't have any problems with race as far as any of the white kids are concerned. I think I was called a N-word one time and Mr. Hensley, who was the principal, very nice man. He apologized for that child and he cried.

Kelli Johnson: Oh wow.

Marcia Williams: And that's the only time I was ever called any bad name. Teachers treated me fairly and I was telling someone else about it, I think they were afraid of my mother. Only one teacher who had problems with, but it wasn't over race, it was over him trying to tell... He just whipped me and I told him, he used to whip everybody, but he wouldn't go whip me because my mom said he wouldn't. So I went home at lunchtime and my mother went back and told him he wanted to keep his job, he wouldn't touch me. And after that, and I've heard his other stories about other teachers like racial issues, but I was never treated that way.

Kelli Johnson: And that was at Lincoln?

Marcia Williams: Elementary.

Kelli Johnson: Elementary.

Marcia Williams: Then I went across the alley to Lincoln Junior High School and the problem was not again with the white kids. It was with the black kids because I didn't live in the black hood and they didn't know me. And they said that some girls, who are still around today, wrote me a letter and told me if I had a choice of colors, which one would I choose?

Kelli Johnson: Wow.

Marcia Williams: Which would I be black or white? Which one would I choose to be? Right. And that crushed my heart because I didn't know that there was a difference. I mean, race was never in our households. My grandmothers who lived next door, my other grandmother. In Proctorville, nobody ever used the terms. It was never N-word or it was never white trash or nothing was ever said racially to make you think that there was a really big issue. I spent the night with white kids, they spent the night at my house and it was not a problem. Then once the kids at Lincoln, the black kids got to know me, it was okay. A matter of fact, I was one of the first black cheerleader that Lincoln ever had.

Kelli Johnson: Oh wow.

Marcia Williams: Yes. And then I went to Huntington East and Huntington East was predominantly white as well. And at graduating class in 1975, there was 375 students and there was four black kids.

Kelli Johnson: Wow.

Marcia Williams: Now, I did not make cheerleader. That's where race came into an issue but it wasn't again with the kids.

Kelli Johnson: And that's the early '70s?

Marcia Williams: Yes. It was '72 to '75. All the girls that I cheered with at Lincoln, they made majorette or cheerleader. Now at East, when I tried out for cheerleader, they eliminated me. Now my mother, Ada, did her thing because they had the student body voted for cheerleaders. So Olin Nutter had a meeting with my mother.

Kelli Johnson: And who was that?

Marcia Williams: He was the principal of Huntington East and he told her, he knows how you people have been treated. Well, Ada about went over the desk, "What do you mean by you people?" Now he said, "Well, I was afraid that the kids would call you names." Well, the kids, they were never a problem. They weren't an issue ever, the students. It was the adults, but the teachers really weren't rude or anything, but still it was the adults in charge until there was Joe Avis my senior year. Now he called me Marshy doll and I worked in the office and I could sign myself out when I wanted to, I could go eat lunch at Williams when it wasn't lunchtime. I basically did what I wanted to do, but I didn't have any issues. I had friends from the first grade on to high school that still contact me now. Just out of the blue, I might get a message on Messenger that's hey, hello, or how you doing? We were always friends. One, especially with the sheriff in Barboursville. I think I cussed him out every day, just calls across the choir room.

Kelli Johnson: Oh Lord.

Marcia Williams: And he contacted me a little while ago just to say hello, it's never been so much the students. But it was a good experience as far as the people I met. And it was, I guess still trying as far as some parts of race are concerned, but it was kind of more or less, more mixed racism. It was more, still going to East and people just still, the people of color did not know my family. And they had certain section of friends that were doctors and lawyers. And even though we had friends with, we still didn't live in or hang around in the black hood and it was still we were like a... Nobody really knew or understood. What do they do? They think they're better? They think they have a little money. We only had one car. My dad worked real hard, so did my mom. But when you don't know about somebody around here, they make it up.

Kelli Johnson: Well, that actually is a perfect setup for my next question and you probably, you kind of talked about this. What was Fairfield like when you were a child? So you lived in Fairfield East.

Marcia Williams: Right, Fairfield East. And there were a lot of hardworking families either way in the Fairfield East and the Fairfield as it was, at West. There were people around, always families were together. Kids were always out playing, people were always out working. Both were good neighborhoods with neighbors, I mean, if you did something at somebody else's house down the street, they'd smack your butt and call your mom before you get home. People cared. There were a lot of businesses, a lot of little neighborhood stores. It wasn't just the Walmarts, which there wasn't the Walmart, but there were the big stores. And smaller stores where they knew your mom could send you to get a pack of cigarettes and they'd sell them to you, they knew it was your mom. Or go get a loaf of bread and if you didn't have the money, you'd bring it back later. And right into Fairfield West on 8th Avenue, there were always people, there were cars. There were barbers. There were doctors, there were a lot of black doctors. There were three black dentists.

Kelli Johnson: Oh wow, three.

Marcia Williams: Yeah. My dad belonged to black professional business men's association. There were a lot of social clubs, a lot of black social clubs. There were a lot of, even small bars before 20th Street and after 20th Street. But it was bustling. I should say. There were people always out and about.

Kelli Johnson: Did you have any childhood role models?

Marcia Williams: I guess my parents and their friends because their friends were again doctors and lawyers and people at church. Of course, everyone's all about church. We went to a little church, Ebenezer Methods on 8th avenue and we had two white ministers.

Kelli Johnson: Oh, I never knew that.

Marcia Williams: Reverend Childers was the first and he left to go be a chaplain in the military.

Kelli Johnson: Oh, okay.

Marcia Williams: And we also had some very good black ministers, but the one when I was most active was Reverend Miller and he was a white minister. We did so much stuff. It was fun. We had a banner in the church, red, black and green.

Kelli Johnson: Yeah.

Marcia Williams: Red is for the blood, black is for the people, green is for the land. I swear I learned how to sing Lift Every Voice and Sing, the black national anthem.

Kelli Johnson: Oh wow.

Marcia Williams: And we sang it in white churches.

Kelli Johnson: Did you?

Marcia Williams: We went to the youth conference, the Methodist Youth Conference in Buckhead in West Virginia. And he encouraged us to talk about the part in the Bible to talk about the color of Jesus skin with the white people.

Kelli Johnson: That was the white minister?

Marcia Williams: Yeah.

Kelli Johnson: Ooh.

Marcia Williams: We did a haunted house. We did a lot of things with him. There was a lot of fun activities.

Kelli Johnson: What year was that?

Marcia Williams: Okay, well. That's a whole nother story.

Kelli Johnson: How old were you? Put it that way.

Marcia Williams: I guess from junior high, I guess through high school, he was here for quite a while because my sister and I would babysit for them because see, they adopted four biracial children. Jonathan and then a set of twins. And then afterwards they left here and moved to Canada, another child. But I guess it was from junior high especially through high school. So I guess late '60s up to '75, somewhere in that area. But it was very important part of a lot, my life and a lot of other young people, my age. Now we're old, but then our lives because we were very active that there was a lot of things for the youth. And then there was a place called Action too, it wasn't a role model for me. But my sister was a few years older. It was right on the corner where Carter G. Woodson apartments are. It was an Action center. It was for young people. They did trips, they took people places, they did things to help educate and get some assistance to young people.

Kelli Johnson: So it was on the corner of 16th Street and 8th Avenue?

Marcia Williams: Right behind Hunters.

Kelli Johnson: Well, and you know what? You mentioned your sister and you mentioned your mom and dad earlier and I should have asked you this. So what are your parents' names? And what's your sis because I know you just have the one sister.

Marcia Williams: Yeah, that's one.

Kelli Johnson: What's your parents' name?

Marcia Williams: One sister.

Kelli Johnson: We're recording. And so what are your parents' name and your sister's name?

Marcia Williams: My father is William Hoard. William Arthur Hoard Jr. And he was a contractor, wallpaper painter. He worked till he was 85. He had a very lucrative business, very well respected in the community. My mother was Ada Francis King Hoard. She did a number of jobs. One that I can recall as a child, she worked, there was a Job Corps downtown and she worked at the Job Corps and she was one of the floor supervisors. And she was very well respected. I think that's where I get some of my spunk from because every time somebody get into it, they call her. Friend of mine, talked about at church. She said now we'd be acting up at church and Ms. Ada turned around and looked at us, raise her eyebrow and we would stop.

Kelli Johnson: Yeah, she didn't have to say anything. She didn't have to do anything. She just needed to look at you.

Marcia Williams: She'd play. And my sister, Toni Paulette Hoard. Now, she left here when she was 21 and she was gone for 41, 42 years so her memories of West Virginia and Huntington are totally different because she's kind of forgotten most of that stuff.

Kelli Johnson: Well, and luckily I've done some oral histories. I've recorded Uncle William and his stories are amazing and I'm going to hopefully record Toni and sadly I never recorded Ms. Ada because that, so wow. Yeah. That's a major regret in my life.

Marcia Williams: Well, she grew up in Proctorville and for her, it was kind of different too, because well, we found the history, the book said the mulattos went to Proctorville, but where they lived out in the country and then on the main street in Proctorville, they went to Fairland, which was predominantly white and they didn't have a lot of issues and that was way back there because I think, your dad didn't go to, he went to Fairland too?

Kelli Johnson: Yeah. My dad went to Fairland, and I'm actually, I'm going to record Annabelle. That's our great aunt or my great aunt, your aunt.

Marcia Williams: Yes.

Kelli Johnson: Yeah. So to keep on with my little list of questions. So did your family have any special traditions or special holiday things or birthday things that you all did growing up?

Marcia Williams: Let's see, holiday things. The thing. Well, it was always family. We spent holidays. My grandmother lived next door, my father's mother. So she and my grandpa, they would always come over Christmas morning and we'd open gifts there. And then we'd go Proctorville to my other grandmother's and open presents, but not a tradition that our family had. Mr. Henderson, Herbert Henderson, who was a lawyer and his family and a bunch of kids, they would do something, Christmas Eve around the world. They'd go to all their friends' houses, all the kids and everybody they'd show up. You knew they were coming sooner or later and they'd show up and they'd come and it wasn't about even bringing a gift. Just something that they did every Christmas Eve went to everybody's house and all their kids in the station wagon. And they'd come over and guess they'd have a few drinks wherever they saw, they'd move on to the next. But that's something about, I think we anxiously waited them coming every Christmas Eve.

Kelli Johnson: Your parents were very, very social.

Marcia Williams: Yeah. They were quite.

Kelli Johnson: Very social.

Marcia Williams: They were. Far as birthdays, I remember having one big birthday party and that was at Rotary Park and there's a shelter up on the hill. And I remember my mother made hot dog sauce and that was just a big deal and it was all the kids of all their friends. And I don't remember how old I was. I just can see it still in my head. And then we walked from Rotary Park to my house on Wilson Street. You can't do that anymore. Yeah, because the woods were all built up, but it wasn't that far away. So we walked from Rotary Park to Wilson Street and I can remember that and I can remember some people that were there. It was the Hendersons and Dr. Gunn's kids and the Qualls' kids and Fullens and just the people that they were friends with, all their children. And there was quite a few, probably about 30 kids. And that's really the only birthday as a kid that I can remember. Now me, on the other hand, I was a birthday queen. I made cakes for everybody birthday. Everybody got cakes from me.

Kelli Johnson: You missed mine, mine was in April. So we talked about where you went to elementary and middle and high school. Talk about college a little bit.

Marcia Williams: I'm a two time graduate of Marshall University.

Kelli Johnson: Go Herd.

Marcia Williams: I have a bachelor's. Well, I went in '75 of course and I have bachelors in special education, mental retardations. People said that's not politically correct, but that's what my diploma says so I have a right to say it. And elementary education, I have a master's in learning disabilities and I'm certified in behavior disorders.

Kelli Johnson: And so your whole career, you worked in Cabell County Schools?

Marcia Williams: I've never worked or lived more than five miles from my house.

Kelli Johnson: The place where you were born.

Marcia Williams: Yeah. Or I've only lived in two other places other than Wilson Street. And I lived in an apartment and that wasn't, I taught at Spring Hill to be, no, I taught at Simms to begin with. So then I was there for a year and a half, then moved to Spring Hill. And then after Spring Hill, then of course I moved to a home and then I taught for Geneva Kent, Huntington High. And then I of course stopped, retired from working in 2011.

Kelli Johnson: So how many years did you teach altogether?

Marcia Williams: Over 30.

Kelli Johnson: That's amazing. That's wonderful.

Marcia Williams: And I still got kids calling me mom, my black mama, Mama Williams. Call me when they have all their issues. Still the counselor, doctor, lawyer, Indian chief.

Kelli Johnson: And then somewhere amongst all of that, you got married and you had kids?

Marcia Williams: Yes, got married in '79. I had my master's before my daughter was born.

Kelli Johnson: Oh, I didn't know that.

Marcia Williams: Yeah. I had my master's in '83. She was born in '84 and then I had a son in '88. My daughter is Kristen Gabrielle Williams Sims who's now working for Marshall University.

Kelli Johnson: Yes, she is.

Marcia Williams: We're keeping it in the family. My son is David Arthur Williams and he lives in Little Rock, Arkansas. He ended up there after being in the Air Force and then he's been a locksmith and he's a jack of all trades. He's very intelligent young man, he just can't decide which thing he wants to do the most.

Kelli Johnson: Yeah, we had a locksmith job open at Marshall. I tried to give him to come back and apply. I guess I'm trying to get everybody in town or something.

Marcia Williams: He would've, but then he would've left his daughter there so that's a big thing, but I'm very proud. I have two very, very intelligent and very good children that neither one of them have ever been in trouble except for with me or my mother.

Kelli Johnson: And four amazing grandchildren.

Marcia Williams: Yes, four amazing grandchildren.

Kelli Johnson: Okay. So we'll get a little bit more background here and then we'll dive in on the civil rights era stuff. But you mentioned about going to Ebenezer Methodist. What part did religion play in your family?

Marcia Williams: Well, number one, if you did not go to church, you didn't go anywhere because you better be sick, die, have a fever, be strong enough. You got to have the [inaudible] of some kind because you were not going anywhere. So we went to church every Sunday. The Methodist church, you at go 11, you're out by at least 12:15.

Kelli Johnson: Yeah.

Marcia Williams: But we did, like I'm saying a lot of things as youth, we were very active in the community with in all the churches. It doesn't matter. It wasn't just black churches. It was all the churches, the community churches. We got to Amesbury Woods, which is a new Methodist youth camp. We went to Buchanan to the youth conference, Methodist Youth Conference. So religion was a lot. It wasn't just as far as the, it was about how to treat people and kindness. And it was education as to, like I said, I learned Lift Every Voice and Sing which black national anthem from our white pastor and sang it at the white churches. First Methodist down on 5th Avenue. They may not have known what the anthem it was, but that's where we learned it. That's where we sang.

Kelli Johnson: They knew after you sang.

Marcia Williams: So that gave a lot of education and it helped mold several kids because I have another friend that doesn't live here anymore and he says that he was the best person, I respect him a lot. And he said he gave a lot to us as young people, it was very important.

Kelli Johnson: So now I'm going to start asking a series of questions that have to do with the civil rights era in Huntington, West Virginia. And if you think of anything else, just throw that in but that's the main focus of the grant so that's what we're going to focus in on now. And they might seem kind of random, but is what it is. So do you remember when you first voted and do you remember anything about voting when you were younger? And remember when we're talking about civil rights era, we're talking about late '50s to the early '70s?

Marcia Williams: Well of course I didn't vote in the '50s, '60s.

Kelli Johnson: Yes. We know this

Marcia Williams: Probably it was the late '70s. Let's see, because I graduated when I was 17. That was '75. So I guess the voting age, was it 18 then or was it 21?

Kelli Johnson: I think it was 18.

Marcia Williams: Okay. Well, then that was in the late '70s.

Kelli Johnson: So it was probably in '76 was when you were eligible to vote.

Marcia Williams: Right.

Kelli Johnson: But you don't remember voting?

Marcia Williams: Don't remember voting. Now I remember voting when I was married. I remember going to vote and I know that I got my voter registration card early because I was very proud of getting it, but I don't remember going to vote and I don't remember there being an issue as far as me being able to vote.

Kelli Johnson: Yeah. It's interesting, when I was a high school senior, so that was in '85, our civics teacher made us register to vote and he made the males register for selective service in class. So we were registered to vote or we had to at least fill out the form. And so I was 18 in April so I was registered to vote before I graduated high school. Do you remember any specific events that happened in Huntington that had to do with civil rights?

Marcia Williams: I remember being told Mr. Henderson, there was a place called the White Pantry.

Kelli Johnson: And Mr. Henderson is Herb Henderson who is an attorney in town, a good friend of the families. And actually, there's an office named for him at the state level that has to do with minority affairs. Sorry.

Marcia Williams: He's the president of the local NAACP. I think it's downtown on 5th avenue near where Chase Bank is now it's called the White Pantry and I remember there was a sit in or something there, but other than that, I don't remember anything that really happened. I know there were places that I did not go ever because at one point there was a place called Bailey's Cafeteria, which was on 9th Street and they said that was some place that they didn't want or allow black people to go and I never ate there. Even after there wasn't even a time where it was said that there wasn't segregation or told you couldn't go there or whatever, I never ate there.

Kelli Johnson: So did your parents tell you don't go there or that was just the word on the street or?

Marcia Williams: Yeah, it's probably the word on street or something that I remember being told, but there wasn't a time in my life where there was any place that I felt that I

couldn't go because of race. Because matter of fact, in the bars and stuff we went to, I was usually one of only, the only one in a lot of white places today. They would say white on, not on the west side of 20th Street. But it never really bothered me and I wasn't treated wrong.

Kelli Johnson: So you talked about the sit-in at the White Pantry, which is well documented sit in that happened here in Huntington. Do you remember hearing about any other boycotts of businesses or schools or anything either in Huntington or in the US? Do you remember the?

Marcia Williams: Now, I do remember I was in the fifth grade with Martin Luther King was shot and I remember it very well because we were supposed to be going on a trip on a train to Washington, DC.

Kelli Johnson: Oh wow.

Marcia Williams: Right when it happened, it was already paid for and everything that happened.

Kelli Johnson: For school or?

Marcia Williams: For school. And it was the elementary I was in fifth grade. And so it was just a big deal. It was a big deal because everybody was, "Oh, we can't go now," it's like you were scared because there was rioting and things happening so they postponed the trip. I also thought, well, they were not going to hurt me because I'm not... But I can see that and remember it very vividly when he was shot and killed. And it just doesn't have anything to do with race really, but I do remember I was in first grade when John F. Kennedy was shot.

Kelli Johnson: Really?

Marcia Williams: I remember our first grade teacher brought the lady next door to the school, told her. There was a little white radio, plug in little radio, Mrs. Hawk got the radio, we listened to the information on the radio and then we were sent home early. I think we went home early or there was one day that school was closed when Martin Luther King was assassinated.

Kelli Johnson: Oh really?

Marcia Williams: Yeah. But that's all that I remember. And that then I do remember there were walks on Martin Luther King's birthday here quite a few years. And of course they still have them, but not as many people anticipated as used to be. But as far that, that's about all I can get. I know my father, that you've talked to him, I can remember stories that he's told me. He was very fair complected man and he told me about working at the Frederick building downtown. I think he was doing something called the elephant walk and his work is still there today. And some of the men said they refused to work because they weren't going to work

with the N-word. Excuse me. And he said, "Well, that's okay with me. I'm going to go and work." And they refused to work so who lost in?

Kelli Johnson: There you go.

Marcia Williams: They did for their stupidity.

Kelli Johnson: There you go.

Marcia Williams: And he went on work and brought his paycheck home. But I remember little small stories like that. And the other thing about race is my grandmother, my father's mother whose mother was Irish and German who married not only one black man, but two. Anytime I would be telling her about a friend and this is all really about race that I remember is that she'd say, "What color are they?" We'd get so frustrated. I start telling her purple, she'd go, "Shit." Or since our family is so unique as far as race is concerned, but my grandmother said, "Miss, somebody saw you and your sister in downtown and they called me and said, you all look nice. You dressed nice and well behaved." And I said, "Well, who was it grandma?" "I'm not going to tell you." This is some of those, I guess some white relatives that she talked to and called and check in with her every now and then. But she would never to this day she died without saying exactly who those people were.

Kelli Johnson: Oh wow.

Marcia Williams: See you, that was a cousin. Another cousin who didn't know who exactly her real father was. Well, my grandmother died not telling her who her dad was. You don't tell things like that.

Kelli Johnson: Yeah.

Marcia Williams: You didn't tell who those relatives were. You didn't tell, if something you weren't supposed to say, you didn't say it.

Kelli Johnson: Yeah, a family secret stays family secret.

Marcia Williams: Yeah, that's right. But that's the only things about really race that I can remember.

Kelli Johnson: So you talked a little bit, of course, about your dad, Mr. Henderson. So who were the important people in the community at that time?

Marcia Williams: There were quite a few people. There were doctors, there was Dr. Wright, he was a dentist. Dr. Gunn, whose son now has an office. There was Mr. Spencer, he had been a teacher at Douglas and he was very unique man. He was the educators. Mr. Nicholson, who was the tailor at Sears for years, he's still alive and working. Of course, my dad. Mr. Fullen, Mr. Nicholson. Those were a lot of

blue collar men, they worked at similar plants, the nickel plant or somewhere like that. And Mrs. Henderson was a teacher, she was counselor. Mrs. Fullen, teacher. Mrs. Starling, a teacher. Ed Starling, who was assistant athletic director at Marshall. Those were a lot of the people. They all had very good jobs and were very respected men. Mr. Smith, Bill Smith, whose father Bill Smith was the second African American superintendent of Cabell County Schools. Mr. Slash who hired me, he was the first.

Kelli Johnson: Oh, I didn't know he hired you.

Marcia Williams: Yeah. He hired me and he's a nice man. In fact it's not subject, but my friend Mac or Irvon, he's married to Mr. Slash's daughter now.

Kelli Johnson: Oh wow. Okay.

Marcia Williams: They come into town every down and then, but Mr. Slash was a very soft spoken, very well respected man. There was quite a few, really, really good men here of color. We want to say just good men period.

Kelli Johnson: Yeah. And though, do you remember who were the black national figures at that time that you remember hearing about?

Marcia Williams: Yeah. [inaudible], really we were never educated in school as far as black history is concerned and the only national figure I remember is Martin Luther King, was Martin Luther King. And that's really all that was spoken. I remember Arley Ray Johnson used to go around and do the I Have a Dream speech all through Huntington in schools to help educate the kids. But it's still a shame today and as a teacher and when I was teaching high school, the children, the kids, the students, only people they know they've heard of Rosa Parks, they heard of Martin Luther king and that's about it.

Kelli Johnson: Well, now use this time to put a little plug in for, I just recently made some flashcard. It's a deck of playing cards, there's 52 cards and they're people, places and things from Fairfield in Huntington so it's all from the neighborhood. All the faces are black faces so I just made the first set of those.

Marcia Williams: That is cool.

Kelli Johnson: Yeah. Mr. Slash is in there and Mr. Henderson, I believe. Yeah.

Marcia Williams: It's just like the Carter G. Woodson statue, my kids thought it was Martin Luther King.

Kelli Johnson: Really? Goodness gracious.

Marcia Williams: So I took that time. Even when I taught elementary, we did do black history. Emma Williams is my aid, there was Williams and Williams, both black. We had

posters that went down the hallway that had pictures and names of people and what they did. And we did with elementary, taught black history with those elementary kids and I had parents call me and tell me thank you. If their kids would come home and educate them about things they didn't know. I mean, they didn't know who Mary McLeod Bethune was, they went home and they told their parents. High school, we had those kids look, we listened to black music. They didn't know about the one 10th or about the drop of blood, if you got a little drop, you black. We talked about movies. We talked about blackface. We talked about every day, we've learned something in an African American person. Who'd been found out that potato chip were invented by a black man and why he was doing it to be smart aleck.

And the kids want to know, "Well, how come nobody knows these things?" Well, because they weren't allowed to get the patents for it and somebody else took the credit in most cases. But we did try at the end for them to be educated a little bit more than they were to begin with. They would to choose somebody that they wanted to do or report at the end. And remember one young man. I mean, they taught me things about the Red wings in the war, the ones that, the pilots that flew. Once they flew in the war, they didn't fly anymore. They weren't allowed to fly planes so there was a motorcycle group. That's the closest thing they could get to flying. I didn't know that-

Kelli Johnson: There you go.

Marcia Williams: I very proud of myself that I was some kind of impact. That because when we were in school, most of the things we were taught weren't true anyway. Christopher Columbus and any of that mess, nobody told us the truth. I don't know what they were thinking when they did those books, those textbook. They was lying.

Kelli Johnson: They was lying. So it sounds like you had a wonderful growing up experience for the most part.

Marcia Williams: Yeah.

Kelli Johnson: And from what you've said, either, I can't say the whole community but it seemed like you were kind of insulated from the civil rights movement that was going on across the country. Are there any other memories that you have of that era, the civil rights era either in Huntington or across the country?

Marcia Williams: Not really. I think Huntington was unique since we're located, we're not the south. We're right on the edge, the fringe of both things. We are not Virginia as people say. I know there were things about the Civil War that did take place here in West Virginia. But as far back of that is concerned. But as far as race it's not... There is prejudice everywhere. There was then, there is now, but it was more sense of community here at that point, growing up race wasn't really the top issue. Guess it was for some people. And if Billy, we get Billy here and he

explained, he had a different real thing than I did. And even though we grew up in the same white neighborhood, so to speak and he went to East and Lincoln and stuff before me, things I guess were a little harder for him. I don't know if it's because his skin color or what it was, he's a little darker but.

Kelli Johnson: And he's male, you're female.

Marcia Williams: Yeah.

Kelli Johnson: I don't know if that has anything to do with it.

Marcia Williams: He didn't have Ada as a mother.

Kelli Johnson: He didn't have Ada as a mother.

Marcia Williams: So I don't know. But still for the most part, still here, even today, there's still racism everywhere, but people are more likely to smile and say hello and stop and ask you where something is in the grocery store than they are to call you a racial slur.

Kelli Johnson: Yeah.

Marcia Williams: I mean, it does happen and it does happen more often than you would like, but still it's not as often as it is other places. People are just still more likely to smile. I mean, I know people in Huntington all walks of life and all job titles and all financial status and friends with people in the south side, people in the east end, people in the west, people in both Fairfield areas and I could still say a lot of them are friends and have had. Whether I like them or don't like them, it doesn't have anything to do with race, it's more about [inaudible] and not their financial status either.

Kelli Johnson: I understand. I want to circle back around. You mentioned the NAACP earlier. Can you talk a little bit about your remembrances of the NAACP in Huntington?

Marcia Williams: Well, I knew Mr. Henderson was the president and I don't really know at that point in time younger exactly what they did. Now, I know that my daughter, when she was in high school, she was the president of a youth chapter and she tried to do some things with that. And she did go to the NAACP conference.

Kelli Johnson: I remember that.

Marcia Williams: In Atlanta. Now, then Sylvia Ridgeway was the president and guess she still is today.

Kelli Johnson: No, she's not but I can't remember who is off the top of my head.

Marcia Williams: Well, she was for a long time and that was a issue as far as-

Kelli Johnson: David Wells maybe?

Marcia Williams: Yeah. Who's David Wells?

Kelli Johnson: I just.

Marcia Williams: I don't know that one.

Kelli Johnson: Anyway, sorry to interrupt.

Marcia Williams: Anyway, but she did try to do some things as far as the youth are concerned. The NAACP, I don't think really was that active. I mean, it was but it wasn't. Not directly as far as that touched me.

Kelli Johnson: Okay. And were your parents involved?

Marcia Williams: Yeah. I'm sure they were involved in the NAACP, especially him and Mr. Henderson was friends and stuff. But yes, only thing I really knew is that if somebody treated you wrong because of race, the NAACP would hopefully be there to help you.

Kelli Johnson: Okay. So you knew they were there for you?

Marcia Williams: Yes.

Kelli Johnson: But you never saw that action.

Marcia Williams: No, I didn't really have to.

Kelli Johnson: Okay.

Marcia Williams: Have to put that in my repertoire, but I knew if I did, they were there. But see, I'm Ada's daughter so ain't nobody going.

Kelli Johnson: You didn't need it.

Marcia Williams: Bother me. Most outspoken in high school, it didn't have nothing to do with the race that's Ada's daughter. Nobody's going to mess with me. But I will say my students, they would still, especially high school students. They asked me, what was I? Not, what race are you? What are you?

Kelli Johnson: Yeah.

Marcia Williams: And I always say I was Indian, Irish, Black American. But now since you found out we're just about 25 different nationalities and the highest percentage is British. So yeah, throw that one in there, Scandinavian, Asian too.

Kelli Johnson: Yeah, with the DNA services these days, I got mine back. I'm 76% European.

Marcia Williams: Well yeah, that's the majority of-

Kelli Johnson: 25, 24% African.

Marcia Williams: Well, that about six African continents, different places. I mean, not competence-

Kelli Johnson: Countries, we know.

Marcia Williams: Yeah, countries in Africa.

Kelli Johnson: It's early.

Marcia Williams: And Native American, Scandinavian, British, but British is one of the highest numbers right there and Irish, German. Scottish. But about 25 different nationalities.

Kelli Johnson: Yeah. Me too.

Marcia Williams: Yeah. Well of course you too, I don't exactly, exactly your mama's side. Right. But yeah, we were all just a mutt, but Billy gave me the definition of what mutt was. Well, okay.

Kelli Johnson: Did we wait for him for that?

Marcia Williams: I just figured we're all a [inaudible] variety. A mixture. We're all... I tend to believe that we all came from Lucy, that 40 million year old still we found in Africa and that's the fertile crescent, the cradle of life and we all started there.

Kelli Johnson: So you're telling me you believe in science?

Marcia Williams: Yes, I do.

Kelli Johnson: Okay. Alrighty.

Marcia Williams: To a degree. I don't, scientific racism.

Kelli Johnson: No.

Marcia Williams: Darwin's theory, no. See that's where they lied in school. He wasn't even talking about everybody being, he was trying to prove that black people came from apes, not everyone.

Kelli Johnson: I'll have to try and get a grant to talk about what we're taught in school, that'd be an interesting set of recordings.

Marcia Williams: I still try to educate myself. What's the thing about the middle passage and how the Spanish was more involved in slave trades than the British and [inaudible] conquered people-

Kelli Johnson: Okay, I have one last question on my list of questions.

Marcia Williams: All righty.

Kelli Johnson: So do you remember, so 1964, so you were small, you were seven that's when the Civil Rights Act was passed and signed in the law. Do you remember anything about that or was it talked about at home?

Marcia Williams: Well, since I was seven, no, I don't recall. That's sad to say. And it wasn't that my parents were not active in anything, just that just really didn't affect me then. And as I said, having fifth grade before and he, and probably Martin Luther King been, so at the point, so vocal, it probably would've been brushed right by because schools, we were not educated as far as those things concerned. I mean, we were still being told that Columbus discovered America. So no, it didn't affect me.

Kelli Johnson: So do you have any final words for the recording about the civil rights era in Huntington about growing up, about looking back on?

Marcia Williams: Just as I said, that my experiences in Huntington were unique and probably different from the next person's. It's sad to say that. I still say this, I was treated more equally by non people of color than the people of color because of where I grew up. And this is the, shows reverse racism.

Kelli Johnson: When you've got light skin.

Marcia Williams: Oh that's-

Kelli Johnson: Your father's real light. You're light skinned. Yeah. We're light skinned in our family.

Marcia Williams: That's a problem. Especially in Huntington when you don't know something about somebody, you either make it up or they decide they just don't like it.

Kelli Johnson: Should we end on that note?

Marcia Williams: But it wasn't always about race here, it's about attitude to people. But for the most part, as far as my growing up is concerned, there weren't a whole lot of racial stripes. I do remember and even though my growing up was different because of race, race was not really major issue in my life or in my family. It's always there and will always be there.

Kelli Johnson: Thank you very much for your time, Marcy.

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Marcia Williams: Thank you.

Kelli Johnson: Appreciate you.