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Shirley Ann Williams and Joseph L. Williams Jr. – Part 2

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Kelli Johnson: This is Kelli Johnson. It is October 8th, 2021. I'm here again with Mr and Mrs. Williams, and we are going to pick up where we left off last time, and talk some more about the civil rights era in Huntington. So, did you all have anything that you thought of since the last time I was here, or do you want me to just jump in with questions?

Joe Williams: Why don't you jump in with questions? I don't remember all I said [inaudible].

Kelli Johnson: It was all good stuff, I know that. Excuse me. Do you remember when you all first voted, and what do you remember about voting in Huntington at that time?

Shirley William...: That's all long ago, [inaudible].

Joe Williams: I don't remember the first time, but I do remember that I voted in every election since I became eligible to vote. And I think they it dropped it to 18, because before that, I think it was 21, I'm not sure. But I've voted... Yes, I think I may have missed one, but no matter what the questionnaires are put before the voters, I vote. Because our ancestors have paid such a price for our ability to vote, and now you have those who are trying to take it away under the guise of protecting the vote.

So, I think it's an obligation to vote, no matter... And especially local issues, because I think we're finding out that when you fail to vote locally, then that's where the foundation is built, good or bad. On a local level, a lot of people don't realize, just the general elections or presidential. But a lot of our friends who are really opponents, they've learned that we're going to build our base from the bottom up, and they've been very effective at it, let's face it. How come when... In a nation where one party receives the majority of the votes, and yet that party is not elected. That tells you something about jury measuring, and a lot of things that happen on a state and local level. So, I've always voted. I just felt an obligation.

Kelli Johnson: Did you ever feel that it was difficult to vote in Huntington, or were there any problems with Black people being able to vote in Huntington?

Shirley William...: Well, like I told you, I was born and raised in Ashland, Kentucky, and I voted in Ashland, Kentucky. Then, I moved to Huntington and transferred, so-

Kelli Johnson: But you've never experienced any problems like they have in... We know that, in the south, it was difficult and continues to be difficult in some instances.

Joe Williams: No. I have to say, no, I have not. But as in Dr. [inaudible] book, West Virginia was somewhat different from the south. In many cases, our discrimination was more subtle than it was in the south, but it still was discrimination. Laws were put in place that made it difficult for some people to vote. But no, I've never had a problem. But a lot of the time, it depends on who you are too, let's face it.

Shirley William...: [inaudible].

Kelli Johnson: You either make it a priority or you don't make it a priority, so... Yes.

Joe Williams: Right, so... But I have to say, no. I think the problem that a lot of our people... Number one, when people commit some type of crime, I feel that once they've paid their debt to society, that they should have all the rights and so forth that anyone else should have, and that's not the way in many places. I think West Virginia may be a little more progressive in that area than a lot of states. But when I was living in Virginia, that was a big issue, because it was so difficult to regain your right to vote, and... Now, it has been almost 12 years, so that may have changed, because Virginia overall, who would've thought, had been one of the most progressive states in the union. Who would've thought the Black governor would've been in Virginia?

But as I think, when I was there, it was... And I don't know... I've been here 12 years, but I was impressed, I guess, by the progress in Virginia when it came to people of color, and so forth. And think about Virginia. In West Virginia, you go to some areas, and you would say, "I'm probably the only person of color here." in Virginia, not necessarily there... You're out in the country, and you're thinking... You have that West Virginia mentality. "I'd better watch myself," and next thing, there were people color throughout most of Virginia, and... So, that was always... It was a good feeling when you found out that that was the case.

Kelli Johnson: Yes, I think I told you all that. I can't remember if I had just gotten back from South Carolina, or if I was going. But I was in South Carolina, and it was wonderful to look around and just see people that look like me. Well, then, we ended up in Hilton Head and it went back the other way. Driving down there and stopping.

Joe Williams: But the thing about Hilton Head, [inaudible] because it was actually [inaudible], and it was actually populated with people of color. There were two crops I forgot, but what happened... Now, this is what happens when you don't vote locally. Once they built the bridges and so forth, then they begin to increase the taxes. And normally, that's not on a local basis. And many people were just forced out. They couldn't pay the taxes, because the land became very valuable, and the people who lived there throughout their lives were literally forced out. So, Hilton Head and [inaudible] island. It's-

Kelli Johnson: We just got forced out.

Shirley William...: I heard some people complain. I said, "Well, did you vote?" And they would say, "No." And I said, "There you go. You need to vote."

Kelli Johnson: Yes, exactly.

Joe Williams: Yes. Like I mentioned before, it doesn't make any difference whether you vote or not. You're going to abide by the rules, and there's such a difference between what's lawful and what's moral. Slavery was lawful, apartheid was lawful. But in the eyes of God, if you truly believe that, do you think that it was a moral thing to do? They talk about pedophiles now, and so forth, and I say, "Well, you better look at your ancestry." Even my great, great, grandfather had 20 children, 13 or 14 [inaudible] women. And not only that, many of the slave girls were probably only 12, 13 and 14. Well, a friend of mine... We were talking about plants, and he said, "Well, that was a different time." I said, "Do you think God is constant? What difference does it make?" If it was wrong now, it's wrong then, whether you were punished for it or not. But he said, "Well, that was a different time." Well... Yes, it was a different time, but-

Kelli Johnson: Well, speaking of a different time, do you remember anything specific that happened in Huntington that had to do with civil rights? So, things that happened in the '60s and '70s? And I know there were some things that happened, but I don't want to put words in your mouth. Because I think we talked a little bit last time about the CIP, Civil Interest Progressives, and... So, do you remember specific events that happened in Huntington in the '60s and '70s that had to do with civil rights, and if you participated in those things?

Joe Williams: Well, there probably were. I know there was... And I've forgotten where this was, but the police killed a person. If I'm not mistaken, they used to live across the street here, the house that's the... Well, it's a new house now, where the Freemans live. And somebody said that they set the house on fire or something, and... Anyway, they killed him. And then, I remember when that Woods boy was killed. This is when drugs began to really play a role in town, and we'd gone to the Pittsburgh area. And in fact, when it happened... Excuse me. [inaudible]. I'll call you right back, Senator. That was my sister. I don't know if you remember, but evidently, it was over a drug deal, so they decided they were going to kill somebody. And they killed this... I think his name was Woody, or Woods. He and Leroy Cooper's son were friends, and I think it was on Howard [inaudible] and 9th avenue, and they just came back and killed him.

Kelli Johnson: And when was that? Do you remember?

Joe Williams: That had to be back in the late '70s or the early '80s, yes. Now, whether they ever found out who did it... Yes, I don't know. But of course, a lot of time it depends on what circles you run in, too. We were married relatively young and had children, so we weren't out on the streets [inaudible]. And so, all the things that happened, we weren't aware of. It doesn't mean they didn't happen, we just weren't aware of it.

Kelli Johnson: Yes. You had a different focus.

Joe Williams: Yes. And then... I shouldn't say this, but sometimes, I think that Huntington... A lot of cities, you would have the riots, and so forth, and so on. Huntington didn't

have that, per se. Some people said, "Well, that was a good thing." And then, I said, "But sometimes, that's what causes change." So, was that really a good thing or not? I don't know. It's just like the highways and so forth that were built outside the city, and now we look back, and maybe they should come down the flood walls, but... And of course, Charleston really changed its traffic, and so forth. But now, in doing that, in most cases, they went through the Black community, and they destroyed much of the Black community, so is that the price of success or progress? Unfortunately, most times, it seems like it's the areas of the less privileged. Those are the areas where... "Well, we can afford to tear that community apart." It's just like, "Yes, we believe in... Everybody should have a place to live, but not in my community." [inaudible].

I see so much hypocrisy in our nation. So-called good people, whatever that is. Quote "good" unquote. But I wonder about things like that. How can people think like that who came... We used to have a church on every corner in Huntington, and whether you were against... And I remember this one. You were against selling beer in the civic center. I remember that was a big issue years ago. I was on the council. I don't drink, don't like it and so forth, but I wasn't against it. But we had this minister, very popular in Huntington, that had a big church. And he called me one day, and he was getting into me about my position on beer in the community. And I said, "Now, listen here, whoever. Now, if you want to discuss... Now, I'm telling you, if you want to go there, I'm going to question why you don't say anything about all the discrimination and so forth in Huntington."

And I said, "Now, you better think, man. Who has the most to lose?" And I said, "You come on." I never heard another peep from him. That told me a lot about his sincerity, and so forth. But he moved to the south, but-

Kelli Johnson: Did he?

Joe Williams: Yes, but... [inaudible] come on. I don't have anything to lose. Y'all have taken everything, I don't have much to lose. So, if you want to have that fight, I'm going to question all the things that you don't talk about that's wrong with our society. Well, like I said, that was the end of that, but-

Kelli Johnson: I'm not sure if I asked you guys this last time or not. Were you and are you members of the NAACP in Huntington?

Joe Williams: Yes. Lifetime.

Kelli Johnson: Lifetime member?

Joe Williams: Of... Not only myself, but we had the [inaudible], and we took out a lifetime membership. Now, somewhere along the way, they've forgotten that we took out a lifetime membership, because I don't get the crisis magazine, and so forth. See, when they-

Kelli Johnson: So, it was the national NAACP you joined, not just the local branch? It was-

Joe Williams: It was the national... Yes.

Kelli Johnson: Yes, the national. Okay.

Joe Williams: [inaudible]. But I haven't been that active in the NAACP. And NAACP does a lot of good things, but there's some things that happened years ago that just disgusted me in the area. We had a couple leaders in the area, and in most cases, they had the... I guess the good of the community at heart, but we were young. It was three or four, we were young, and we wanted to do things differently. And-

Kelli Johnson: It must be hard being that popular.

Joe Williams: [inaudible]. For all the wrong reasons.

Shirley William...: I'm telling you, you should see the phone calls I get.

Joe Williams: But there was three or four of us, and we wanted to do things a little differently. I used to belong to organizations, and every meeting we had, we talked about what was wrong, and what the city wasn't doing, and so forth. And it's true, but some of us want to be more progressive, do some positive things. Well, a lot of times, those of us who are older, when the young people come along, somehow we think they're going to take away our leadership role for [inaudible].

And I know I promised myself that I was never going to do that. If a young person's up and coming, that I wasn't going to do anything to try to deter him or her from being a leader, and... But it turned me against the local chapter NAACP, and all those people are dead now. Or most of them are, [inaudible] and... But still, it just... If I'm going to get into something, I have to have my heart in it, and it just... I don't know if it's just with me, I'm not sure. It just did something, I don't know. Yes, [inaudible]. We're doing the same thing we claim other people are doing to us, or we do it to one another.

Kelli Johnson: Yes, yes. Was there... Because nobody had really said to me anything like that. The one thing that I remember a few folks telling me is that... So, they were younger in the '60s and '70s, and they remember their parents being involved. But mostly it was the mothers, the moms, because the dads were working probably two, three jobs. And so, the moms were very, very active in the NAACP in the '60s and '70s, and working towards things like... Doing the sit-ins, and that type of thing, so-

Joe Williams: Well, that's true. I'll say now, if you want to have a job, and you want [inaudible], you better have some women involved. Maybe there were several reasons for it. Maybe the men... They were afraid to get involved because of the jobs, and so forth, and so on. I guess, back then, you probably didn't have as

many women working in professional jobs that you do now, and... All of them did health work and stuff like that. But the women were very-

Kelli Johnson: They couldn't get him, so they tried you.

Joe Williams: Maybe I should've cut him off. But even when we had the golf tournament, we had three or four men who were really involved. But if you want something done... Look at the event we had for Dr. [inaudible]. And I always say, you better have the women involved, because they get things done.

Shirley William...: We sure do.

Joe Williams: Our egos get in the way, and so forth. That's not always the case, there's exceptions to every rule. But yes, the women, I'll admit, I don't know all of them, but there were quite a few women who were very, very active in the end of what we [inaudible] in the civil rights movement.

Kelli Johnson: That's one of my questions. So, who were the most important people in the community in terms of just community leadership, but also in terms of civil rights activities?

Shirley William...: Yes. [inaudible] Gray, Amanda Franklin, Sylvia Ridgway, and... Who else?

Joe Williams: And of course, Sylvia was much younger than them, but there were some... And not from Huntington. I don't know all the names, but I have a... Now, I'm trying to think. Down at the office, a quote from one of the leaders in the community, but... Sadly... And I think we should do something together with those names, and... Now, this is where Michael Gray-

Kelli Johnson: Yes, it's on my list. I need to call him.

Shirley William...: Oh, you do. Yes.

Joe Williams: He's really... Now, his mother was really involved in it. Now, his father was involved, but he provided financial reports, but he was down at Jim's, and so forth. I can understand why, some people, you just can't speak out, because number one, you've got to take care of your family, and I always said [inaudible]. Even though at Marshall, there was... Sometimes people criticized it. "So and so doesn't do such and such." If that person has a decent job and so forth, so forth... So, to me, whether you agree with it or not, we have to protect one another, and that's how come, a lot of the time, I think ministers were better able to be involved, especially if they had a large congregation and they were actually paying your living expenses. So, I think we have to think about whether a person does what we want him or her to do. You have to put yourself in their position, and what would you do?

Kelli Johnson: Yes. Let's see what else I have on. So, I think we talked a little bit about this last time, because we talked about... You all went to some segregated schools, and some integrated schools. Can you think of any other differences that you encountered growing up in this area, and as young people in Huntington, just because the color of your skin?

Joe Williams: Shirley, maybe you can answer that... See, I didn't grow up in that. I grew up in Boone County. Maybe you can-

Shirley William...: Well, I went to Douglas for year, and then we went... Moved back to [inaudible], but I've never had a problem whatsoever.

Joe Williams: Well, now, but that was all back [inaudible].

Shirley William...: But then, when I went to [inaudible] and it was integrated, I had no problem whatsoever.

Kelli Johnson: That's good to hear. It is one interesting thing, though, because I spoke to a couple people on the same day. They were a little bit different in age, but he was older, and he had very dark skin. And then, I spoke to somebody a little bit younger, female with very light skin. And their... It's only maybe a five years difference, but his experience was so much more difficult. He seemed to have a lot more difficulties than she did as a female and being very light skinned. I thought that was interesting, too.

Joe Williams: And that's even in our own race. My brother, Eddie. Eddie's very good looking, about my complexion. Maybe a little bit darker, but he had the beautiful hair and so forth. And he said down in... He went to [inaudible], said he could pass the straight hair, but he couldn't pass the paper bag.

Kelli Johnson: The paper bag test.

Joe Williams: And I've explain this to not only my grandson, and even the... Gabby, Yves-

Shirley William...: Our granddaughter.

Joe Williams: She's darker in complexion, and... So, when we would be at their house. Now, this was... She's 16 now, but I'll always... She'd be looking at books, and I'd say, "Oh, how beautiful that Black person is," or something. "How beautiful her skin is." Trying to instill in her that it's okay to be darker complexion, but things have changed. I noticed this in Richmond, when I was in Richmond. And the things have changed, but a lot of the... I met a lot of the so-called elite Black, and I always [inaudible]. Normally, if the husband was darker complexion, he had a very light complexion wife. I always... Over the years, thank God, that has changed, and... But you know what it is, right? What do they say? If you're white... What was that saying? If you're brown, stick around, [inaudible] whatever that is. And color does make a difference. But I think, to a degree, that

we have... People, we've become just a little more... What's the word I want to use?

Kelli Johnson: Tolerant, or... I don't want to put my words in your mouth.

Joe Williams: Maybe it's more intelligent. But... And that's still the case. I think, in most cases still, the darker you are... Let's put it their away. The lighter you are, you probably have a better chance of landing certain positions, and so forth.

Kelli Johnson: Do you feel like it's still that way now, or that's the way it was then, or-

Joe Williams: I think it's better now, but yes, I think I that's still the... And I was just saying, and I made my sister all upset. Maybe opposites attract, because when I met and married Shirley, she was a little bit lighter than she is now. [inaudible]. Johnny married Karen. I don't think you know Karen Williams, my sister-in-law?

Kelli Johnson: No, I don't think I know [inaudible].

Shirley William...: No, she's real dark complexion. John's real light.

Kelli Johnson: Really?

Joe Williams: Yes, John is real... Yes, and she's darker. Jimmy, Jimmy was relatively light, and-

Shirley William...: Rita is dark.

Joe Williams: Rita's dark, but pretty. Very pretty. And then... Who else? Joyce was relatively light.

Shirley William...: Fred and [inaudible].

Joe Williams: I mentioned that one time, and [inaudible], "I didn't marry him [inaudible]." I would stay away from that comment.

Kelli Johnson: I was just making an observation, yes.

Joe Williams: I was just looking. But my sister Sandra, she never married. She was... I guess she's about... Maybe a little bit lighter than I am.

Shirley William...: A little bit, yes.

Joe Williams: [inaudible]. But the three of them took off their mom, and three of them, I guess, took off their dad. But yes, that is, if you're a very pretty person, and so forth. And in our country, pretty seems to be... If you have straight hair, light complexion, European features and so forth... That's just the way it is, so you have to... You can't deny certain things. You learn to deal with them, and how to overcome stuff, and you have to just outwit your competition.

Kelli Johnson: There you go.

Joe Williams: [inaudible].

Shirley William...: We were at a restaurant. I forgot where we were, and this-

Joe Williams: Down in Charlotte.

Shirley William...: Black lady... Well, waitress came up and said, "Are you all Indian?"

Joe Williams: Well, yes, I've been asked that several [inaudible].

Shirley William...: People have asked me that several times. She said, "Oh, [inaudible] your cheekbones, and your nose."

Joe Williams: Yes. Well, we... Probably... Well, my grandmother, I never met her. She died, but she was part Native American. I don't know whether half or a quarter Native American. But I've had people ask me, "What are you, Joe?" I'm Black, but... I know what they're trying to say. "Your features are a little bit different," and so forth.

Kelli Johnson: I remember... Because last time I was here, I remember we talked about... It happened to both of us. When we were in Hawaii, they thought we were Hawaiian. It happened to me, and you said it happened to you. Yes, I remember, because we were eating, and the waitress came up, and she started speaking. And I looked at our friends that we were with, and he said, "Oh, she thinks you're native." And I said, "No, I'll just have breakfast." And that reminds me of... I'm sorry to keep bouncing around, but I was thinking about some of the stories you were telling last time before I had the recorder on about some experiences you had at work. Yes, and I can't remember where you said you worked.

Shirley William...: Well, there's one-

Kelli Johnson: At the factory, right?

Shirley William...: Yes.

Joe Williams: Maidenform, was it?

Kelli Johnson: Maidenform?

Shirley William...: No.

Joe Williams: No, it wasn't Maidenform?

Shirley William...: It was the Huntington dress factory.

Joe Williams: Oh, okay.

Shirley William...: Yes. This lady asked me, "Do you have nigger toes?" I took my shoe off. I said, "Look. Does it look like I have nigger toes?" Now, Brazilian nut, I took to work the next day. I said, "Look at this. What do you think?" "Oh yes, oh yes." And then, another time I went into work, and this... I couldn't stand her. Had this black mannequin with big eyes, big lips, toenails I don't know how long. And I went and got the manager. I said, "I'm not putting up with this." And I even went to the union about her.

And then another time, one of the ladies came out and said, "Shirley, Brenda's in there telling Black jokes." So, why... I go and I said, "What's your problem?" I said, "You want to look so much like me, lying out in the sun burning up, but yet you're telling these jokes." I said, "Your ancestors love my ancestors." And I just walked out. And I told my manager about it. "You've got to do something with her."

Kelli Johnson: Were you the only Black person that worked there?

Shirley William...: No, it was two of us.

Kelli Johnson: Two. Well, it's better than one!

Shirley William...: Yes, there was two of us.

Kelli Johnson: And when was that that you worked there? Because the Huntington dress factory's been out-

Shirley William...: For a long time. We worked... I worked at Maidenform first for 10 years.

Joe Williams: It was middle '80s, middle to late eighties. [inaudible].

Kelli Johnson: Oh, wow. Okay. Okay.

Shirley William...: But that was the only problems I had.

Kelli Johnson: That one person, yes.

Joe Williams: But some people... Believe it or not, one of my really good friends. We're not quite as close now because he's one of those staunch Republicans. And I used say, "You go to the meetings and so forth. Why haven't they ever given you a good job?" He doesn't want to talk about that. But we were talking about... He said, "I thought that was the name." So, sometimes, it's just a matter of ignorance. You have to-

Shirley William...: [inaudible].

- Joe Williams: He truly thought that was the name of Brazil nuts. I didn't know. I didn't know that.
- Kelli Johnson: And I had never heard that until you said that, so it must be something common to here, south or something, because... Yes.
- Joe Williams: [inaudible] no, it's some kind of a candy that they call nigger something. Some kind of candy. And he said, "I just thought that was the name." Because when you think about it, if you'd been taught... How would you... If you didn't actually go, Then, to an encyclopedia, or a dictionary, or something, it's just... Ignorance is... You know what they say. "A mind is [inaudible]." But ignorance... If you don't know, you say and do things... Sometimes you know and you do it on purpose, but you just don't know. But I may have told you this, my good friend, [inaudible]. I think I told you this, about the comment he made about... Adams didn't own any slaves.
- Kelli Johnson: No, I don't think you told me that. I remember you talked about him last time, but... Yes.
- Joe Williams: We were at a board meeting, and I was on the board in DC, in Adams National Bank, named after Abigail Adams. And he said, "Well, you know that Adams didn't own any slaves." And we were all sitting around the board table [inaudible]. And yes, he said it. But now, they didn't own any cattle either. I said, "Marcy, if you're equating the slave women with a low grade of animal, and your ancestors had relations with them, were they guilty of bestiality?" I thought people wanted to [inaudible] the table. [inaudible] "You started it, Marcy. You started it!" But I said, "Were they guilty of bestiality?"
- Shirley William...: Oh, goodness.
- Kelli Johnson: You did tell me that story, but it was good. It needed to be told again. Well, it's just like you said, education is the key. People don't know. You don't know what you don't know. Now, if you know it and you still choose to do it wrong, that's on you.
- Joe Williams: [inaudible] raise it all. Yesterday, we were at Madison, and we had... This white guy did some work for us. And Sandra, she'd been having a water bill of \$500 or \$600 a month.
- Kelli Johnson: That's ridiculous.
- Joe Williams: But knowing Sandra, she... So, we finally said, "We just have to take over." So, we got him to... He does up the pipes, and so we'll put new pipes in. Now, we don't know until she gets another water bill whether he was part of the problem. But he was talking about... He had COVID after he left, and it was real bad. Then, after he got better, he went out too soon, and he ended up having double pneumonia. I think he had. But... Won't take a shot. Didn't take... And his

daughter had COVID also. And I said, "Well, you probably have some antibodies. You won't take..." "No, I'm not taking it."

And you don't... And we sat there and talked about half an hour. He said, "Well, you don't know what's going to happen." Which is true. He said, "For our age, it probably doesn't make much difference." And he said, "Well, what about our children? We don't know what impact that these shots are going to have down the road," which is an excellent point. We don't know, because how many times have we done things and we found out, "Whoa, this caused this cancer effect." And I couldn't argue with him about that. I could argue about the 700 million that died, [inaudible]. But he said, "No, I just don't trust them." And... Why do you-

Kelli Johnson: Well, I think the same way, because my grandson, he's five. He had COVID, and... So, we don't know what that's going to do to him. So, what do you do? What do you do?

Joe Williams: But with the shot. He's talking about the shot.

Kelli Johnson: Yes. Yes, I know. Well, but which one outweighs the other, though? What you don't know about the shot, or what we don't know about COVID?

Joe Williams: That's right. Or what we do know about COVID? It can kill you.

Kelli Johnson: Right? Exactly, exactly. Yes.

Joe Williams: Do you want to continue to live now?

Kelli Johnson: Yes. Right.

Joe Williams: Do you want to die now, or die later?

Shirley William...: Die later.

Kelli Johnson: You might have a tail, but that's okay, because you be alive.

Joe Williams: You took the shot, so you live longer, but it caused you to die later. [inaudible]. It's not much of a decision. But he said, "No, he's not taking it." I said, "Well, maybe you have some antibodies now, but..." I don't know. Good guys... They're good old boys, and that's who I grew up with, and... Good people. In many cases, good people, but just been taught differently. And West Virginia, I didn't really... They were very skeptical of federal government because of these mine wars where they sent federal officers in to side with the owners of the coal mines, and so forth. So, we start... You can understand why we may be very skeptical about federal government, and... Although, if it wasn't the federal government, we'd be in poorer shape than we are now. And just... We gain far

more from federal taxes and so forth than we pay into it. Same thing, I think, with even Alabama, so... I don't know.

Kelli Johnson: Well, I thought of one other thing. When you mentioned mine wars, it made me think about something else. So, I've done several of these interviews, and none of the Black people I've talked to have said anything about there being a lot of violence in the neighborhood as a result of the civil rights movement, but two white people, unsolicited, have told me stories. One who is about... He must be about 64, 65, and he said he remembers either seeing or reading about in the paper or something where there were... There might have been a riot somewhere along 16th. And things were on fire, or things were burning, and he said... And he was younger, and he remembers saying to himself, "I don't understand why they're burning their own neighborhood." And I've never heard that from anybody else.

Shirley William...: Me either.

Joe Williams: Yes, I've never heard of the burning, and I've been here since '63. Now, I do know that sometimes, they were throwing rocks and things that people that would... I've heard that.

Kelli Johnson: Yes, that was going to be my next one. So, a colleague, her dad who's... Probably in his seventies, and he said he was driving... They live in Ohio, and he was coming underneath the underpass there to go to Cable. And he said that he had told him, "Be careful, because people are standing up top, and throwing rocks and bricks down," and that people would stand in front and join arms, and wouldn't let people come from the downtown area through. And he said... I guess he was [inaudible] he drove a hot rod and everything. And he said... He just revved up the engine. He said, "They're not going to hurt me or my car." He revved up the engine, and he said they jumped out of the way, and he went... He went to the hospital. But I'd never heard anything about that, either.

Joe Williams: Well, I'm sure those are some isolated incidents. I have no doubt in my mind. But as a whole, I don't think we were... In this community that we did what they did, as some of the [inaudible] did, and I'm not sure that was a good thing.

Kelli Johnson: [inaudible], yes.

Joe Williams: But yes, there've been... Yes, no doubt at all about it. Yes. And there's... A lot of people who are very bitter, I guess, are Caucasian brothers and sisters. And for good reason, but that... It doesn't destroy them. It probably destroys the person that's holding those feelings. It does more harm. But as a rule, I'd say no, but we stayed there. We were married, and had kids, and so forth. We didn't venture out, so I'm sure things happened. They say at Huntington High, when it was integrated to [inaudible], that the Black kids had a lot of problems, and I've heard that. In fact, you may talk to Marie Redd.

Kelli Johnson: I want to talk to Mr. and Mrs. Redd both.

Joe Williams: Because... Yes.

Shirley William...: And Tony Page.

Kelli Johnson: Oh, yes. I'll talk to Tony, yes.

Joe Williams: But they say down there that... In fact, I forgot, they ended up having a Black Miss Homecoming.

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

Joe Williams: And I think it was Marie, Marie Redd. She can tell you. But they had far more problems at Huntington High then we had at Scott High. Two reasons. It was only about 1520 of us, so we did [inaudible]. And then, number two, you had people from down in the west end coming, and maybe hadn't been around people [inaudible]. But they had quite... From what I've been told, that they had quite a few problems with... At the Huntington High initially.

Kelli Johnson: Yes. Bill Smith told me a really good story. I might have told y'all this, too, but when he was at Huntington High... So, it would be Huntington East, I guess. He said they told him Robert C. Bird was coming to speak. And he said all the Black students and all the Jewish students got together, and they said, "We're going to stand up and walk out of the auditorium." And so, when Robert C. Bird walked in, they all stood up, all the Black students and the Jewish students, and walked out together. But I think Bill and another guy were doing something else, and he was like, "Well, I missed it." He was in class or something, I don't know. But I thought that was interesting.

Shirley William...: Oh, yes. Probably-

Joe Williams: Because Senator Bird, I think... As time went on, I think he... I don't know whether he mellowed any, but I think he became wilder. And Dr. [inaudible], did you ever meet Dr-

Kelli Johnson: I did. She scared the bejesus out of me.

Joe Williams: She'd ask you a question and give you the answer at the same time. But I really like it. So, one time, we decided... Now, we decided, they were having something to honor Senator Bird in DC. Now, this had to be in the... It had to be in the late '90s [inaudible]. Me and Derrick Anderson. I don't know if you met Derrick Anderson. And sure enough, we all went up there. In fact, we went to Morgantown. I think we stayed at that remodeled inn, [inaudible]. So, we went... He was honoring something. And then, later on he did something honoring... Was it Jesse Jackson or something? He did some things. Also, you know Reverend Watts?

Kelli Johnson: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Joe Williams: You check with him. If I'm not mistaken, he formed a relationship somehow with Senator Bird. And sometimes, they would do something almost to prove that I'm not the way people say. But I think he got a lot of money, over a million dollars, something that had to be spent by September 30th, for whatever that date is. I don't know the whole story, but he was able to obtain a lot of money, he had the non-profit, from Senator Bird.

Kelli Johnson: Oh, that's interesting.

Joe Williams: Yes, [inaudible].

Kelli Johnson: I tell people that... And I know it's an unpopular opinion, and I know I'm not supposed to be putting my opinion in any of these, but I'll say one thing for Robert C. Bird. I think he did truly love West Virginia, so... And he-

Joe Williams: He did a lot of things that, whether he wanted to or not, [inaudible] for all of us.

Kelli Johnson: Right. Exactly, exactly. Yes.

Joe Williams: And not only that, he knew the constitution up one side and down the other. He really did. I think he had a lot of respect, so... I voted for him. He was bringing some [inaudible]. And then, like they say about... And we mentioned this about Georgia Wallace, that a lot of people of color said he did a lot for us. He was saying one thing to placate his base, but behind the scenes, he was doing some things that, actually, was helping people of color.

Kelli Johnson: I think... Because I had recently had that discussion about somebody else who... I'm not going to say the name, but somebody else who's in politics from the state of West Virginia, and saying that that person's the same way. That person might say some things, and speak out some kind of way, but really, behind the scenes, they're really working for all of us. So-

Joe Williams: Well, I think Joe Manchin. [inaudible] to the extent, because I was on a conference call that Reverend Watts set up and so forth, when we were talking about having access to the COVID... And so forth, and... Well, he seemed to be very supportive, and so forth. So, I guess that's reason I don't like politics. I use to not say... Elect people just as many times as you want to, I'm beginning to think maybe we do have a term limit, and... Because now, as soon people get elected, they have to think about getting re-elected, and... So, I've... Over the years, I've changed.

Kelli Johnson: Being a politician has got to be tiring.

Joe Williams: But I think... Now, he said some things about, "I don't want..." Becoming the entitlement. The side that he said yesterday. And of course, Sanders came back

and said, "Well, yes, you think having decent childcare, having decent... Is that..." And then, entitlement, and so forth. So, I agree with Bernie. I don't think... I agree with Bernie on a lot of things. I don't think he could have been elected.

Kelli Johnson: I don't either, unfortunately.

Joe Williams: Yes. I don't think. But I have to give the squads, and the progressives... This time, they said, "We've got enough clout that we can hold things up," so [inaudible]. Now, whether we should have separated the \$3.5 trillion from the \$1.2 for infrastructure, you have mixed emotions, but I understand what they're saying. If we don't get it now, chances are, we won't get it.

Kelli Johnson: It gets to the point where you're like... You just have to weigh all the options, and you've got to take the good with the bad sometimes, because... Especially if the good's going to outweigh the bad, you're just going to have to ride all that out.

Joe Williams: Lord knows we need the infrastructure.

Kelli Johnson: Yes. Oh, God knows West Virginia needs all the help we can get in terms of infrastructure, so-

Shirley William...: Yes we do, yes we do. Oh, my goodness.

Joe Williams: I see. But it's almost as if they're assuming that the Democrats are going to really control the Senate and the house in the midterm election. In fact, people are assuming that's going to happen. Because normally, that's what happens, the norm. And so, some of the progressives are saying, "If we don't do it now, when?" Well, I don't know. I'll tell you, the lady... What was her name? I thought for sure she was going to be defeated. Is she from Maine, or wherever? But she wouldn't handle it. And then-

Kelli Johnson: I was surprised by some of the things that happened this past election.

Joe Williams: Yes, and even what's going on now, and... I just... I don't know.

Kelli Johnson: Well, since we have about 10 minutes left, I'm going to wind on back, and just see if there's anything more that you wanted to say about being a young, married couple in Huntington, or when you first got here, or anything that you remember about the community, or civil rights, or anything. Final thoughts on that before I... Because I don't want to keep y'all all day. I know somebody's tired because they were dancing all night, so-

Joe Williams: Me, I understand... Anyone wants a nice, clean neighborhood, a nice home, and so forth. I wish more of our people would have stayed in the community. I understand why. Like Muhammad Ali said... I think he was the one who said,

"I'm fighting and so forth, get beat up so I could have a nice home and so forth for my..." I understand that. I just wish things were... First, when people come to Huntington or come to Marshall, I wish we had the type of homes and so forth that we could show them, because I have a feeling many of them would just soon live in the community, because I know they feel very isolated, and so forth. But we don't have that, I guess... Yes, so that's one concern I have. Shirley... Now, if it was up to Shirley, we probably wouldn't have stayed in West Virginia.

Kelli Johnson: Really?

Joe Williams: We'd probably have lost a lot economically, because I had to compare it to my two brothers who left West Virginia. They've done extremely well.

Shirley William...: They have. Yes, they have.

Joe Williams: Extremely well. Even Eddie, he was... He retired as the vice president of Novo Nordisk. Now, some... See, a lot of these pharmaceutical companies are actually owned outside the US, and... Because-

Kelli Johnson: Yes. We learned that with-

Joe Williams: [inaudible] Denmark all the time, and... Was it Copenhagen? And so forth, but... So, he retired, but he's on two pharmaceutical boards out in California, because they just went to San Francisco three weeks ago. And one of them, when they first... He was supposed to make from... You meet once a month. He was going to make \$60,000 to \$90,000 a year. Now... [inaudible] another one. But this firm... And he opened up the office for them in Princeton, New Jersey. He showed it. Now, it was a six month contract, but they extended it. He was getting \$30,000 every two weeks.

Kelli Johnson: I went into the wrong field.

Joe Williams: Tell me about it! And Jimmy and Rita... Now, Jimmy, he was in pharmaceuticals. He didn't go quite as high as Eddie did. First, he was with Kroger's for... And Jimmy's very frugal. He's loosening up now, but [inaudible]. And then, his wife Rita, she worked for this chemical company, and I think they have about 26, 28 plants around the world, and she traveled... Well, they hadn't the last two years, but she traveled all over the world, and she was the head auditor. They'd take a group to audit their books and things, and then she would have to report to the board of directors. So, she has a real good job. She's still working now, because... She's talking about retiring. Well, she's doing it at home now. She's working more hours now than... Because of different time zones, and so forth, sometimes [inaudible], but she's getting her pay. And she took my sister-in-law, Karen, and Jackie... My second cousin's wife, Jackie, they all went to Dubai last-

Kelli Johnson: Does she need more friends? That's my question.

- Joe Williams: And of course, she was working, but they were staying in up-scale hotels, [inaudible]. And she said... She had told them, "Now, if I quit this job, we'll be staying at a Holiday Inn next time [inaudible]."
- Kelli Johnson: Well, like I said, if she needs another friend, I'm happy to make that sacrifice and go to Dubai.
- Joe Williams: They were there for, I guess, a week or so, and then... But we've all made decent livings, but those of us who left have done far better economically. If you based everything on economic, there's no doubt in my mind that Jimmy and Eddie both... That they retired with more than a million dollars. I'm sure about that. Eddie could have a lot more, but they spend money like it's... I can make a \$30,000 every two weeks from [inaudible]. Yes. Now, Jimmy and Rita, they actually may have more than [inaudible], but they're very... Both of them are very frugal.
- Kelli Johnson: Well, what you're talking about brings up a good point. So, we talked a little bit earlier about infrastructure, and that we need help with infrastructure. Economic opportunities aren't here. So, even with any strides that were made during the civil rights era, we're still trailing behind. And do you think it's doubly hard because, number one, we're in West Virginia, Appalachia, and we're people of color. Does that just make it even that much harder, or... I don't know.
- Joe Williams: I think in the last... I think during the '70s, even during Richard Nixon... I know he was a racist, but you had [inaudible]. There was the time when, I think, opportunities, if you were prepared, were greater than they are now. And then, also, in West Virginia, we lost some union car buys up in Charlestown. People had good jobs, paying \$40,000, \$50,000. It's no longer there. Monsanto used to be one of our major customers at my little company. Not only are they gone, the building's no longer about. There was a lot of things that moved out of West Virginia, and I know my brother Eddie was saying... He said, "Places like Philadelphia. You have all the rich people, but they left something. Be it museums, be it whatever. They left something without taking just all the money." In West Virginia, when you think about it, what did these coal barons... What did they leave West Virginia?
- Kelli Johnson: They just took, and didn't leave anything behind.
- Joe Williams: Right, because they owned the politicians, and so forth, so... And then, years ago, maybe one state could build a mile of... Now, this was years ago, for a million dollars of highway. It may cost us three million, because it's just... Your layout of the land, and so forth. But I think that's a mistake, that if we had left west Virginia a long time ago... We've been married 56 years.
- Shirley William...: I loved Richmond. I wish we had to stay there.
- Joe Williams: I think Richmond... I could have done very well in Richmond.

Kelli Johnson: Are any of your kids still around here? Do they all live-

Shirley William...: We have a daughter in Charleston, and then our son still lives in Huntington.

Joe Williams: And then, one daughter lived in Birmingham, and one lived in Charlotte.

Kelli Johnson: [inaudible]... Okay.

Joe Williams: When I went to Charlotte, she just got a better job making \$20,000 more a year.

Kelli Johnson: Good for her.

Joe Williams: That kind of company. Yvette in Birmingham, she's not doing very well, but I just... I wondered. [inaudible] you be so and so. Well, I haven't been able to buy anything, because the title of the ex-mayor [inaudible]. So, economically, it just depends, I think, but... We've done okay, but I think we could have done, with the same amount of effort... Even my business. If I'd been in any states surrounding West Virginia, any of the five states, there's no doubt in my mind that we would have done much better. Number one, the universities and hospitals, they would've been far more likely to support us than those have in West Virginia. So, everything's a trade-off. It's like the shot, [inaudible].

Kelli Johnson: Well, I thank you both so very much for spending your time with me. I appreciate it. I learned a lot.

Joe Williams: Yes. Well, we're folksy.

Kelli Johnson: Well, I love it. Any final words before I shut this bad boy off?

Shirley William...: God bless America.

Kelli Johnson: She summed it up. Thank you, ma'am.

Joe Williams: And also, as I said in church one time, God has blessed America. I hope God forgives America for the time when it hasn't lived up to what it claims to be.

Shirley William...: Amen to that.

Kelli Johnson: And you know what? That's why you guys are the perfect team. Thank you so much. Okay.

Joe Williams: And people are trying to somehow justify that.