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Christine Yolanda Rush

Jamila Jones

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Jamila Jones:

All right. Here we go.

Christine Yolanda Rush:

Okay.

Jamila Jones:

It is Thursday, December 8, 2022. My name is Jamila Jones and I am here with...

Christine Yolanda Rush:

Christine Rush, known as Yolanda.

Jamila Jones:

And Dr. Kelli Johnson from Marshall University. And we are conducting an oral history interview as a part of the National Park Service African American History and Appalachia grant program focusing on civil rights history. Thank you for agreeing to being interviewed. What is your full name?

Christine Yolanda Rush:

Christine Yolanda Rush. And Rush is my married name. My last name, maiden name, is France.

Jamila Jones:

Okay. What is your birthday and where were you born?

Christine Yolanda Rush:

I was born here in Huntington, West Virginia at St. Mary's. January 20, 1966.

Jamila Jones:

Tell me about your family.

Christine Yolanda Rush:

My family was very family oriented. We all was born and raised here. I have uncles, aunts, cousins. Probably I'm kin to everybody here.

Jamila Jones:

Multiple generations.

Christine Yolanda Rush:

Yeah.

Jamila Jones:

Okay. Tell me a little bit more about your childhood.

Christine Yolanda Rush:

My childhood was wonderful growing up around here. This was a great place to grow up. My elementary school, Sims Elementary, was wonderful. Our teachers were great. We all wanted to go to school. Enjoyed going to school.

Jamila Jones:

Do you remember some of your teachers names?

Christine Yolanda Rush:

Yeah. Miss Walker, Mr. Hayes, Miss Warren. So, yeah. I did too. I went from Sims to Kamag to Huntington High.

Jamila Jones:

Okay. What year did you graduate high school?

Christine Yolanda Rush:

1985.

Jamila Jones:

All right.

Christine Yolanda Rush:

And I wanted to talk about too how we had something to do every day. We all went to the Boys Club. As soon as we got home from school. We changed clothes, went to the Boys Club. And Pete Goodson was a wonderful leadership man.

Jamila Jones:

Okay.

Christine Yolanda Rush:

Yeah. So he kept us busy playing. We had basketball teams. We did something at the Boys Club every day.

Tiffany:

Softball.

Christine Yolanda Rush:

Yeah. Kickball.

Jamila Jones:

Always something to do.

Christine Yolanda Rush:

Oh my gosh.

Jamila Jones:

That's good.

Christine Yolanda Rush:

He kept us busy. We even went to other Boys Clubs and played against them in basketball.

Jamila Jones:

Okay.

Christine Yolanda Rush:

We had jerseys. He'd take them home and wash them. Yeah.

Jamila Jones:

That's nice.

Christine Yolanda Rush:

Well, yeah. We lived at the Boys Club after school because he always kept us busy and we would enjoy being there.

Jamila Jones:

Yeah.

Christine Yolanda Rush:

Yeah.

Jamila Jones:

What are some other things you used to do in your childhood?

Christine Yolanda Rush:

Well, I was always in the Little League. Cheerleader.

Jamila Jones:

Okay.

Christine Yolanda Rush:

So I did that up until I couldn't cheer no more.

Jamila Jones:

Okay.

Christine Yolanda Rush:

So, yeah. Even Tiffany. I taught her cheerleading.

Jamila Jones:

Okay.

Christine Yolanda Rush:

So I ended up being the cheerleader at Kamag. First black one or second black one.

Tiffany:

My story ain't that good.

Christine Yolanda Rush:

Yeah.

Jamila Jones:

That's awesome.

Christine Yolanda Rush:

And then, too, we wanted to talk about. Did y'all know over at Marshall, they used to have a program called NACP? You had to be 15. We couldn't wait until we was 15. But you had to be there at 6:00 in the morning. They fed us lunch. We had different classes like Field. Swimming. They fed us lunch and basketball. Miss Marlowe.

Tiffany:

Track.

Christine Yolanda Rush:

Yeah, all of that.

Tiffany:

We had about eight classes.

Christine Yolanda Rush:

But it was a summer program. And if you was low income or whatever, it was free.

Jamila Jones:

Okay.

Tiffany:

Then at the end of the year. See, I'm telling you my story too.

Christine Yolanda Rush:

Right. She said should we be together.

Tiffany:

Yeah, we should. Then at end of the year. People that would attend. Whatever. They would take us to a special event. They took us to the Cincinnati Reds baseball playing and everything.

Jamila Jones:

Okay. That's awesome.

Tiffany:

Yeah, it was lovely.

Jamila Jones:

Yes.

Tiffany:

It was a good program. They shouldn't... You know what I'm saying?

Jamila Jones:

And how old were you guys whenever you... About that time?

Christine Yolanda Rush:

Well, we was... You had to be 15 to go.

Jamila Jones:

Oh, 15. Okay. Nice.

Christine Yolanda Rush:

And then too in Sims. I used to be in every Christmas play and stuff. I had leads in plays.

Jamila Jones:

Okay.

Christine Yolanda Rush:

And one time I had a solo of violinist. And Marshall still should have those tapes. Because one time they played it on TV for Christmas. So yeah, they used to tape all that stuff. I guess too the people that was in class doing... For advertisement or whatever.

Jamila Jones:

Okay.

Christine Yolanda Rush:

Yeah.

Tiffany:

You going to listen again. Crazy. She silly.

Christine Yolanda Rush:

No, you got to tell your own story.

Tiffany:

No, because I'm already talking.

Jamila Jones:

Any other stories you want to include about your childhood?

Christine Yolanda Rush:

Yeah. I guess that we all became a family around here because... You know what I mean? You would go through the same. Hey, you had the same friends in junior high. Elementary, junior high, and high school. So yeah, we all became family. We all know each other. You know what I mean?

Jamila Jones:

Yeah.

Christine Yolanda Rush:

And we all played. And we could go outside and play without being worried about somebody snatching us up or anything like that.

Jamila Jones:

Right.

Christine Yolanda Rush:

But then too, we was old school. We got our ass whooped if we got [inaudible 00:04:44]. Then we had to beat the street lights home. Be home before the street lights came on.

Jamila Jones:

Yep. Do you remember any popular restaurants? Grocery stores?

Christine Yolanda Rush:

No. Let me see. We all used to go to Big Bear. There was a Kroger's right there on... Right across from Tudors before, too. That was kind of. Yeah.

Jamila Jones:

Okay. I didn't know that.

Tiffany:

Burger King down there. We had a parade.

Christine Yolanda Rush:

Oh, yeah.

Tiffany:

And the Burger King used to be on the corner. And everybody would meet in there. Somebody go there and save us seats somewhere. When we was young, we had a parade down there. And actually our whole family would go into Burger King there. And they see. They'd go save a seat. You know what I'm saying? Down there?

Jamila Jones:

Yeah. Okay.

Christine Yolanda Rush:

And then too. Look, I was going to bring Toni Kaye up. Because our first year cheerleading, she made our uniforms, y'all. Overnight. Literally. The skirts was kind of wool. Old fashioned. But she made them all.

Jamila Jones:

They were homemade.

Christine Yolanda Rush:

They were, yeah.

Jamila Jones:

Yeah.

Christine Yolanda Rush:

But they were something we all had alike.

Jamila Jones:

Right.

Christine Yolanda Rush:

But we didn't go out there looking all crazy. They made sure of that,

Jamila Jones:

Right.

Christine Yolanda Rush:

Yeah.

Jamila Jones:

Oh my gosh. That's impressive.

Christine Yolanda Rush:

And then too, we always made it to the turf. Almost all our teams.

Jamila Jones:

Okay.

Christine Yolanda Rush:

And I had my little sister, Draina. She was only two, so she was called our mascot. But she was in the paper and everything because she knew all the cheers and everything.

Jamila Jones:

That would be fun to find those pictures.

Christine Yolanda Rush:

Yeah.

Jamila Jones:

That'd be cool.

Christine Yolanda Rush:

Yeah.

Jamila Jones:

All right. The civil rights era in the US was the 1950s, 60s, and early 70s. Do you have any recollections from this time period?

Tiffany:

1960s and 70s.

Christine Yolanda Rush:

In the 70s? No, but I remember too, how... Well, when the plane crashed and all that stuff. So we still remember that.

Jamila Jones:

What do you remember about it?

Christine Yolanda Rush:

About that? It seemed like the whole city was dark. Yeah. And everybody was sad or whatever.

Jamila Jones:

Yeah.

Christine Yolanda Rush:

But then too, that was another thing. Pete used to get us in Marshall's games. Every game if it was home and stuff like that. So we always was at the games. I know.

Jamila Jones:

When did you first vote? And what do you remember about people organizing around voting?

Christine Yolanda Rush:

I probably voted when... Well, when I turned 18. And then just listening to TV. You know what I mean?

Jamila Jones:

Yeah.

Christine Yolanda Rush:

Yeah.

Jamila Jones:

Were you really excited that first time?

Christine Yolanda Rush:

Yeah.

Jamila Jones:

What specific events happened in your city that had to do with civil rights?

Christine Yolanda Rush:

We used to have... Go downtown to parades and stuff like that. For civil rights. We always was... We had things for Hal Grier.

Jamila Jones:

Okay.

Christine Yolanda Rush:

Stuff like that. Yeah, did. Remember we had a program and stuff for that?

Tiffany:

And mothers [inaudible 00:07:36] their days. See what I'm saying? You know what I'm saying?

Christine Yolanda Rush:

Yeah.

Tiffany:

You know what I'm saying?

Christine Yolanda Rush:

And that was our cousin.

Jamila Jones:

Okay. And you would hear about that on TV?

Christine Yolanda Rush:

No, we did that at the Boys Club and stuff.

Jamila Jones:

Okay.

Christine Yolanda Rush:

And we used to go down to Douglas too. Now it's still... I don't know. It was called Douglas Health Center. Right down from the Boys Club.

Jamila Jones:

I'm not sure.

Tiffany:

I think might be [inaudible 00:07:58] Health Center.

Jamila Jones:

Yeah, it's a health center. Oh, yeah.

Tiffany:

I don't know. Might be.

Jamila Jones:

But it was...

Tiffany:

I think it is. I don't know.

Christine Yolanda Rush:

It's the old Douglas School.

Jamila Jones:

Okay.

Christine Yolanda Rush:

Okay. So yeah.

Jamila Jones:

Making sure that's true.

Christine Yolanda Rush:

Thank you.

Jamila Jones:

What was the role of boycotts of businesses, schools and transportation in Huntington?

Christine Yolanda Rush:

Well, transportation. What you mean? Like the bus? CTA?

Jamila Jones:

Yeah. Do you guys remember any boycotts?

Christine Yolanda Rush:

No.

Jamila Jones:

Okay.

Christine Yolanda Rush:

No. I don't remember.

Tiffany:

I couldn't live through them guys there.

Christine Yolanda Rush:

Right?

Tiffany:

Yeah.

Jamila Jones:

How did you get your local and national news?

Christine Yolanda Rush:

My local and national news? On TV.

Jamila Jones:

TV.

Christine Yolanda Rush:

And the radio.

Jamila Jones:

Okay.

Christine Yolanda Rush:

Yeah. Because we listen to WKE 24/7.

Jamila Jones:

Okay.

Christine Yolanda Rush:

With Casey Kasem.

Jamila Jones:

Which newspapers did you guys read?

Christine Yolanda Rush:

Herald Dispatch.

Jamila Jones:

Okay.

Christine Yolanda Rush:

Yeah. And we used to be in the magazines like Ebony. You know. I'm laying you down, baby. Okay.

Jamila Jones:

How did you learn about the issues involved in the civil rights struggle?

Christine Yolanda Rush:

From, like I said, being around the Boys Club and stuff. We even would make bulletin boards and stuff. Especially Martin Luther King.

Jamila Jones:

Yeah. Who are the most important people in the Huntington community?

Christine Yolanda Rush:

Toni Kaye. Pete Goodson.

Tiffany:

Pete Goodson.

Jamila Jones:

Okay.

Tiffany:

My mom.

Jamila Jones:

What was her name?

Tiffany:

Rowan. Her name's Rowan Hyacinth [inaudible 00:09:30].

Christine Yolanda Rush:

Yeah.

Tiffany:

That's mother. Yeah.

Christine Yolanda Rush:

Who else do we? Well, like I said too. The elementary teachers and stuff.

Tiffany:

Yeah.

Christine Yolanda Rush:

They kept us motivated.

Jamila Jones:

Yeah.

Christine Yolanda Rush:

Yeah.

Tiffany:

What was our gym teacher? He's still around here. I think he may have ended up...

Christine Yolanda Rush:

Benny Thomas.

Jamila Jones:

Benny Thomas?

Tiffany:

Yeah. I think he might be... I don't know if him going to be in town or not.

Christine Yolanda Rush:

Yeah. And the music teacher. What was his name? Matthew Plain.

Tiffany:

Miss Forwood.

Christine Yolanda Rush:

Yeah. See, and we had a couple of black teachers and stuff. Yeah.

Tiffany:

Yeah. Miss Stump. It was like you can go around because we being close knit.

Jamila Jones:

Who were the important black national figures at this time?

Christine Yolanda Rush:

Martin Luther King. Malcolm X. And then too, we always like that's when too Roots came out and stuff.

Jamila Jones:

Okay.

Christine Yolanda Rush:

Yeah. Cicely Tyson and stuff like that. So, yeah.

Tiffany:

You love her.

Christine Yolanda Rush:

Right.

Jamila Jones:

How did the Civil Rights movement affect your life personally?

Christine Yolanda Rush:

We just would talk about it, especially after we seen Roots. We knew that we glad we didn't live in that era because we probably wouldn't have made it.

Jamila Jones:

What were some of the differences you encountered growing up? Like school, being out in public?

Christine Yolanda Rush:

The only differences I would say was once, I guess we got into junior high. It was always school. Because we didn't get to go to Oley. Oley closed before we got to junior high.

Jamila Jones:

Okay.

Christine Yolanda Rush:

Yeah. So that was kind of different. You know what I mean?

Jamila Jones:

Who was fighting for segregation?

Christine Yolanda Rush:

What you mean? Here in Huntington?

Jamila Jones:

Do you remember any groups?

Christine Yolanda Rush:

Oh, no. You going to be here or you going to bother?

Jamila Jones:

Got to get comfy. What role did women play in the movement?

Tiffany:

Let me see. Just like Rosa Parks and whatever. You know what I'm saying? She's used to sitting. Get off the bus. You know what I'm saying? That's one that kind of stick my head. You hear me?

Jamila Jones:

Yeah.

Tiffany:

Yeah. You remember? You know what I'm saying? She pushed it forward. You know what I'm saying?

Jamila Jones:

What about churches? What role did churches play in the movement?

Christine Yolanda Rush:

Oh, we used to get them go to church every day. I mean every Sunday. And I think I've been to every church here.

Jamila Jones:

Okay.

Christine Yolanda Rush:

So, yeah. They played a big part. You know what I mean? Especially introducing us to Jesus.

Jamila Jones:

Right.

Christine Yolanda Rush:

At that time too you was seeing... Even my friends at that young age, they were having the Holy Ghost and stuff. So they were just wearing dresses and all that.

Jamila Jones:

Do you remember some of the names of the churches?

Christine Yolanda Rush:

Yeah. Oh, no. I don't remember the names, but I remember my friend's name.

Jamila Jones:

Okay.

Christine Yolanda Rush:

Diane Coles and Renee Brown and all them.

Jamila Jones:

All right.

Tiffany:

And I know I got baptized at Antioch.

Jamila Jones:

Okay. And where's that?

Tiffany:

On 10th Avenue.

Jamila Jones:

All right. Was there an NAACP in your community? If so, do you remember who belonged?

Christine Yolanda Rush:

No. I think Mama did, didn't she?

Tiffany:

[inaudible 00:13:33].

Christine Yolanda Rush:

Right. Yeah. We are not really sure about that one.

Jamila Jones:

If you could go back to the 60s, is there anything you would do differently regarding your actions or attitudes toward the civil rights issues?

Tiffany:
I would.

Christine Yolanda Rush:

Yeah, I would. Yeah.

Jamila Jones:

Okay. And what do you remember about Civil Rights Acts being signed into law?

Christine Yolanda Rush:

I don't know. I think we just celebrated.

Jamila Jones:

Yeah.

Christine Yolanda Rush:

You know what I mean? We was all happy that things were changing and women had a voice. You know what I mean?

Jamila Jones:

It makes all the difference.

Christine Yolanda Rush:

Yeah.

Tiffany:

It does.

Jamila Jones:

Those are all my questions.

Christine Yolanda Rush:

Okay.

Jamila Jones:

Thank you. Thank you for talking with me and answering them.

Christine Yolanda Rush:

Okay. And then I was thinking about... I don't think I got no pictures. But I'm sure, like I said, over at Marshall they should have a lot of stuff-

Jamila Jones:

Okay.

Christine Yolanda Rush:

...that has to do with our community.

Jamila Jones:

Are there any other stories about Huntington that you can think of that you'd like to share?

Christine Yolanda Rush:

No. It's just too where I know. When I evaluate my life from growing up. I guess too where... I don't know. I know I started having kids young, so that was a factor. It wasn't that we ain't had nothing to do. I just guess that's what. You know what I mean?

Jamila Jones:

Yeah.

Christine Yolanda Rush:

That we just end up getting into it because... But, yeah. I would change that though.

Jamila Jones:

Okay.

Christine Yolanda Rush:

You know what I mean? Even though I still graduated. It didn't stop me. But yeah. 15 was a little early. But one thing about it too, I can say that's how you can tell our upbringing and the values and morals of our family. Because it wasn't like they shunned me or put me down or anything. She was like, "Okay, we going to do this." You know what I mean? So yeah. It wasn't nothing about no abortion. It was like, "Yeah, you going to school. I got the baby. See you later."

Jamila Jones:

That's nice. That's really nice.

Christine Yolanda Rush:

Yeah. So I had support. Real great support.

Tiffany:

That's the main thing. Yeah. Support. Back of day when we had support with whatever. It wasn't no... We wasn't scared to go outside.

Christine Yolanda Rush:

Right.

Tiffany:

Shooting everybody now. Everybody. Listen, no support.

Christine Yolanda Rush:

Right.

Tiffany:

You know what I'm saying? People, listen, they killing each other.

Jamila Jones:

Yeah.

Christine Yolanda Rush:

Right.

Tiffany:

Know what I'm saying? All the people killing each other. Whatever. So you know what I'm saying? It's dangerous.

Jamila Jones:

That wasn't a worry.

Tiffany:

No, absolutely not.

Christine Yolanda Rush:

No, it sure wasn't. Like I said too. We could be outside and playing and stuff. And be around the neighborhood and come over here to the games and all this stuff. And we wouldn't have to worry about nothing like that.

Jamila Jones:

Yeah. All right. Well, thank you guys again.

Christine Yolanda Rush:

Thank you.