Treshain Norfleet: This is Treshain Norfleet and Missy Murray interviewing alumni from Northside High School for the Crossroads to Freedom digital archive on July 16, 2010. Could you each tell us your name, the year you were born, and the neighborhood you were born and raised in?

Stephen Pruitt: My name is Stephen Pruitt. I was born in 1951 and I was raised in Smoky City area here when I was attending Northside.

George Rutherford: My name is George Rutherford. I was born in Dixie Homes. In – 1951. I was raised in Dixie Homes when I attended Northside.

John Wainwright: I'm John Wainwright. I was born here in Memphis, Tennessee but I actually spent my first years, six years, in Cleveland, Ohio. My parents moved back here when I was six and we lived in several areas and, and here in North Memphis, so been all over the place here in North Memphis.

Jacqueline Bland: I'm Jacqueline Bland. I was born in Centerville,

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Tennessee but I grew up here in Memphis and Klondike and I graduated from Northside.

Garry Coleman: My name is Garry Coleman. I was actually born in an area that's called Germantown, Tennessee but my family moved to uh, an area called Dixie Homes and that's where I was primarily raised and I'm a graduate of the Northside Class of '68, the very first class.

Treshain Norfleet: Could each of you tell us a little about your family growing up? Who were your parents, and did you have any siblings?

Stephen Pruitt: Yeah, I had a – my parents actually were started out in Mississippi, in Hernando, Mississippi. They were sharecroppers there where they lived on land owned by Mr. Clarence Sparks and where our family did the farm work for him. I had nine other brothers and sisters and we

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moved to Tennessee when I was six years old. So we started going to the Memphis City Schools at that time.

George Rutherford: I was raised by a single parent. I was raised by my father. My mother died when I was five years old. I had two older siblings, a brother and a sister. They attended Manassas, which is where I wanted to go but when the segregation issue came up, went to Humes and then came to Northside.

John Wainwright: I was raised by my father, Albert Wainwright and my mother, Bernice Wainwright. As I said, we moved to several places here in North Memphis, mainly because we were having – they were having kids so fast, they were – I had nine other siblings, too, so as we grew, they had to move to a bigger place. So I think we lived in probably five different places from age six, here in North Memphis.

Jacqueline Bland: I'm Jacqueline Bland and

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I grew up with my parents, my mom and dad, and here in Klondike I had three brothers and I had one sister. She was the baby of the family but she has passed.

Garry Coleman: My family moved from Germantown to Dixie Homes when I was six years old and that was a result of a divorce between my mother and father. So my mother primarily raised myself and my two sisters. I have one older sister and one younger sister.

Treshain Norfleet: What were y'all involved in while at Northside?

Stephen Pruitt: When I was a student at Northside, I mostly was involved in work. I worked in the library. I worked at the library right next door to the school. I did have an attempt at starting a club called the Half and Half

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Club, which I tried to invite ten white students and ten black students to be in this club and we had a couple of parties and we simply tried to get acquainted with each other. I was a member of the choir while I was here and I worked on the school newspaper also while I was a student at Northside.

George Rutherford: Well I was involved in the football team, track team. Pretty much the extent of my involvement at Northside in terms of extracurricular activities. I was also a member of a group called

The Englishmen. It was a social club where they were trying to, pretty much, transcend young boys to be young men and that was 'bout the extent of my involvement in extracurricular activities at Northside; track and football.

John Wainwright: Primarily from ninth grade through senior year, I was actively involved in the high school band – marching, stage band, what have you – and also my senior year I was actually Student Council

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President, so that's pretty much the extent of my involvement.

Jacqueline Bland: I was a member of the choir, ROTC sponsors, newspaper, annual staff, guidance counselor assistant. That's probably about it.

Garry Coleman: Okay, my extracurricular activity was primarily in the area of ROTC. I was on the drill team and my senior year at Northside; I was the Executive Officer – the second in command of the entire battalion.

Treshain Norfleet: So I can tell from what Mr. Pruitt was sayin' with the Half and Half Club that Northside was integrated and was – and how did that affect your educational experience?

Stephen Pruitt: I guess Northside was integrated to the point that there was some black and some white students, but I really didn't feel the sense of

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integration as far as being assimilated with each other and doing things and that was one of the reasons that I tried to make the Half and Half Club happen because I wanted to be familiar with my classmates and get to, you know, get to be familiar with them. And that was a feeble attempt but it did not really happen.

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Treshain Norfleet: At least you tried.

Stephen Pruitt: At least I tried. *[Laughter]* For then.

George Rutherford: But the integration really started before Northside. It started at Humes High, which we transcended over to Northside; I know my junior and senior year. At Humes, it was – the percentage was a little bit even, pretty much 50/50, 45/55, somewhere in there, but

by the time we got to Northside, it had dropped drastically. My involvement with the other students – it was good. I didn't have any problems.

John Wainwright: Well I can only

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expound on what George said. The biggest impact, I guess, was in what, '65, '66, when I guess integration first hit for us. Most of us actually had to go to Humes High School at the time, ninth grade. At that time, the majority were – kids were white and so it was a new experience for all of us. Probably us and them, too, now that I – in retrospect. I think it was just as impactful for them as it was for us. And also as Leslie said, I guess you could call it integration but there wasn't very much of it. In fact, I think almost immediately things like high school proms – you had the white prom and you had the black prom. So there wasn't very much integration. So early on, I made up my mind is, you know, I've got education goals and far as extracurricular activity and other stuff, it really was secondary.

Jacqueline Bland: I, too, am in agreement that the real force of integration occurred

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before we came to Northside. One of my weirdest experiences happened one day – early part of the first year. We had gone into the school and ready to sit down in class and it's like there were no seats for the blacks because there were many white parents that were accompanying their children to make sure there would be no problems. So we were there for the purpose of education but for a while we didn't have seats and, you know, the principal did take charge and got on the PA and had the parents to know that they had to leave but that was kind of real different.

Garry Coleman: Well I can add to what John said

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about integration naturally occurring at Humes. I think most of us came from Humes to Northside and in my situation, I was attending Manassas but we actually had to walk past Humes to get to Manassas from where we lived in Dixie Homes. So when integration occurred, the two years before there, I talked to my

mother about why am I walking past a school to go to a black school when I could get an education – and of course, the school system back then, the black schools, our textbooks were – would have pages torn out, the crucial parts of the lessons. So, you know, we decided that I would attend Humes after the first year because there were so many problems or potential problems during the very first year of integration. So – and then from Humes, we all came to Northside. So by the time

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we got to Northside – at least in my case in '68 – a lot of the emotional problems in dealing with integration had kinda subsided. Of course, and I think I'm different from the other panelists in the respect that by graduating in '68, we never had a prom because on April 4, 1968, Dr. King was assassinated. So with our senior class of almost 50/50 with African-American and whites, the school's staff and I guess the Board of Education decided we would not have a prom.

Stephen Pruitt: When my – when I first started Humes – I wanna add this – I remember being out on the playground and there were two students about my same age, two male white students, and they pointed at me, "Jungle bunny, jungle bunny!" Well I had never heard that term before and I really liked animals and I'm thinkin' about, "Wow, this school is great. They've got some exotic rabbits here."

[Laughter]

These students looked at

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me and they pointed and made faces and they walked away and I'm still looking 'round, under the little plants and all, looking for the rabbits that they had and it was only several years down the road before I recognized what that term meant and it hurt then, but at the time I had no hurt at all because I had never heard that term at all.

Treshain Norfleet: So what do you all remember most about the civil rights movement and is there a particular event you remember the most?

Stephen Pruitt: The march. It was the march. It was the garbage strike march that happened when Dr. Martin Luther King was here. My father was a

really conservative guy and he wanted to protect his kids and he didn't want us to go to the march. He wanted to keep us there but I knew this was a big thing and so I sneaked away. I got punished for it but I was in the march.

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John Wainwright: I think even more than that about that same time

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Dr. King's killing – even before then, there were the demonstrations and like Leslie's parents, mine were aghast because they felt like we would probably get hurt if we went. But I remember some of the protests. They would have what they call Black Mondays. That's when all of the black kids would not attend school and rather than going to school they would go downtown to the marches or where they had rallies. And for those who didn't go downtown, they went home. We still would participate. I remember that cohesiveness between the students during that time. And that probably had the biggest impact. I do remember, too, that there was a lot of other stuff going on – integration was a big thing. You had the Vietnam era war, which was – may have been even – I won't say it's bigger but right up there on the scale with that. So those were pretty confusing times and pretty stressful times, I would imagine, for most of us.

George Rutherford: I think, too, along with what has been said there was a new

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awareness among African-Americans, a lot of the entertainers start addressing the civil issues that were going on. Their songs were more relevant to the times than just pure entertainment. You know, you had people like Marvin Gaye and James Brown and, "Say it loud, I'm black and proud," and I think a new sense of pride jumped off – not that African-Americans didn't have pride, I just think it just kinda – it was enhanced by all the things going on, particularly the, again, the sanitation strike. My father was a sanitation worker so I'm very familiar with what he had to deal with. But also, as John said, the Vietnam war and a lotta our friends were drafted because they had the lottery system and some of 'em fell in that upper quarter and they had to go to Vietnam and a lot of 'em were killed – a lot of African-American were killed – and it was a situation that was so drastic that the Congress had to step in and mandate that

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be reduced because other percentage of the population of the country, African-American versus others, and that was the most memorable parts of that era to me.

Treshain Norfleet: Well, I know Mr. Pruitt said that he was part of the march – that he snuck off and was ____ part of the march. Was anybody else involved in any civil rights groups or activities, inside or outside school?

George Rutherford: Well there were marches, you know pretty much on a consistent basis. Some of 'em you made, some of 'em you didn't.

John Wainwright: Right.

Garry Coleman: Uh huh.

George Rutherford: I know I attended a few but you know.

John Wainwright: It's a little bit different in high school. Of course, parents had more control so what they said, went.

Jacqueline Bland: I have to say that.

John Wainwright: Right. It was after that and going to Memphis State in '69, of course it was a little bit different. Then I was a little bit older and had a little bit more freedom, so I participated more in my college years, early college years, than I did in high school.

Treshain Norfleet: So what did y'all do after high school?

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Stephen Pruitt: After high school, I did go to college. I went to David Lipscomb and then I went to graduate school in Knoxville University of Tennessee and got into my career as a helper because in my life, you know, there had been lots of struggles, economic struggles, just acceptance struggles, and I got into – became a helper for individuals who were disabled and became a advocate and became a rehabilitation counselor and I've done that for 30 years and I've also done some training of individuals to be helpers for the disabled.

George Rutherford: Well after I left Northside, a year later, I attended LeMoyne College and graduated.

John Wainwright: I think I said earlier, after I left Northside, I went on and spent four years, graduated from the University of Memphis or Memphis State at the time, class of '74.

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After college, of course the whole reason I went to college – one of the primary reasons – goes back to what George said earlier. In order not to go to Vietnam for a kid coming out of high school, you either got a 2S deferment, meaning you were still in school and passing, you know, making your grade. So you – that kinda deferred when you may would have to go into the war, so you're hoping you go to school and by the time you got out it was over. Or after that they gave you that lottery system where they pull your birthday and compare it to a number from 1 to 366, I think it was.

George Rutherford: Yeah.

John Wainwright: And if you fell from 100 below, you may as well have enlisted. My number was 249, so I didn't have to worry about military. So I went to college. After college I worked retail management. I also worked retail sales for Procter & Gamble Company for 7 years and then I – for the last 25 years, I've actually worked with the U.S.

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Treasury Department, IRS. So I've worked probably seven, eight different jobs, which is the luxury of a, you know, the federal government, you can do everything from human resources to real estate management, which is – I'm in supervisory real estate management now with Internal Revenue.

Jacqueline Bland: After graduation I attended University of Tennessee at Martin and graduated, came back home and began teaching in elementary school. Started in kindergarten and did that for 17 years, then my principal decided I had the personality for sixth grade.

[Laughter]

Out of the clear blue. So I couldn't afford to quit so I had to learn to like sixth grade and I did. And I did that until they

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moved sixth grade to the middle school and I thought I was going back to kindergarten – no. I went to fifth. Fortunately, fifth grade retired me.

[Laughter]
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Garry Coleman: After graduation from Northside, I attended LeMoyne-Owen College. At the time it was LeMoyne College. I was there during the actual merger and graduated with a degree in business, actually was the first person to graduate with a business degree from LeMoyne-Owen. I like being first.

[Laughter]

And started a career with General Motors; worked with them for about ten years and moved back to Memphis and I've been with FedEx ever since then and now I'm actually starting on my second career as the head tennis coach

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at my alma-mater, LeMoyne-Owen College.

Treshain Norfleet: Can you tell us more about your family at this point? Did you get married, have children, grandchildren?

[Laughter]

Stephen Pruitt: Yeah, I got married. I got married, I had two daughters. One of my daughters right now is a teacher at Vanderbilt University and the other is a human resource director who has worked for the Memphis Grizzlies as their first human resource director here. I have two wonderful granddaughters right now and – and you know, it had to be college for me to change the dynamics of my family. My parents had a third- and fifth-grade education and they did domestic work and I remember the year before my senior year, during the summer time, looking for work all summer long and it was two weeks before school was about to start and I'm still looking for work, just walking all over town, knocking on doors, looking for work and work did not happen.

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And I just knew if I'm gonna change this pattern for myself and for my kids, I had to do some different things.

George Rutherford: Well upon leaving LeMoyne, I met my wife at Un- it was Memphis State, I wanna say University of Memphis, but it was Memphis State at the time I was in graduate school and that's when I met my wife. I was about 35. No, I'm sorry, excuse me. I was 32.

[Laughter]

And –

John Wainwright: Young man.

George Rutherford: Yeah.

John Wainwright: A younger man.

George Rutherford: I was 32 when we married and we had one daughter, Alicia, and she's 23 now at this point. She just recently, last year, graduated from Middle Tennessee State with her degree. Carol, my ex-wife, she died in 2000, so it'll be ten years, this year, and I've never remarried and don't really plan on remarrying. But basically, I come from a small family anyway. My sister,

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she's deceased. My brother's deceased. So, it's just basically me and my sister – I mean me and my daughter here now. Yeah. Lotta cousins, but you know they don't count.

[Laughter]

Not as much.

John Wainwright: Well I'm married. It'll be 34 years come end of October. I met my wife – she was a – came into Memphis State as a freshman. I was a sophomore and we met, we dated for five years, got married after both of us finished school. We have one daughter. I wanted six kids because I was from a large family, nine of us, and –

[Laughter]

- and of course, we had a pretty difficult time with that one, so we decided we'd be happy with what we, of course, we had. So, we stuck with that one, but then later on found out I wasn't gonna have more than two anyway, according to my wife.

[Laughter]

I made one in six but –

Jacqueline Bland: You wish.

[Laughter]

John Wainwright: That was my wish but I do have one

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daughter, 30 years old. She's a flight attendant with Air Tran Airlines in Atlanta.

Jacqueline Bland: I did get married. I have two sons, one 37 and one 29. The 37-year-older has blessed me with one grandson and the youngest has three, two boys and a girl.

Garry Coleman: Oh, okay.

[Laughter]

I ____ my grandkids so I was _____. I married my college sweetheart and we were married 18 years and from that union we have two daughters. Their ages

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around 30 –

[Laughter]

- and I – we were divorced and now I'm remarried and I have a son in that union, so that's it, though. Because I also have, from my two daughters from my first marriage, five grandkids. So that's it.

[Laughter]

Treshain Norfleet: Well at this point, I would like to pass it over to Missy and she can continue or finish this set of questions.

Missy Murray: All right. I know some of you mentioned living at other places. What other places, other than Memphis, have you lived and how would you compare the two cities?

Stephen Pruitt: I live in Donaldson, Tennessee right now, right outside of Nashville, and I really – I went there

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to go to school in '69 and I found it to be a much more inviting place for African-Americans to live. I went there and, you know, I just found the environment much more inviting. I found the people much friendlier and more trusting. So it was a place that I decided to live. Of course all of my family continues to live here in Shelby County and I enjoy coming down here to visit with them, but I thought this was probably a place that I didn't wanna raise my kids because it's really easier in Nashville.

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George Rutherford: Well I'm home-grown and I visited other places but I've never actually lived for long-term in other places. I just love Memphis.

John Wainwright: I spent my first six years in Cleveland, Ohio but needless to say, I don't remember a whole lot of Cleveland so for the most part

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I've lived here in Memphis all of my life and like George, I've probably been to every major city in the country. I travel a lot and have traveled a lot in my past jobs and had a chance – traveled so much to cities like Atlanta – God more than I ever wanted to go again – so I spent enough time in some cities to see a difference and of course, Memphis, it's really pretty polarized – even more – not even necessarily from a racial standpoint, even blacks have their own cliques that they pretty much hang out with, and I guess even myself. Not out of any reason not to want to be with others but you get this group that you're comfortable with and that seem to be circles that they run in, here. When I look at the politics of Memphis, you – there's definite polarizations and people use the race factor or the card to get what they want, or what they're seeking. So Memphis is a little bit different but when it's all said and done

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I guess you know I still love it here. This is where I wanna be.

Jacqueline Bland: After graduation, I did attend UT Martin and so basically I was there for four years. I would come home, you know, on occasions but on a whole, during that period I was there and needless to say, after having been there for that amount of time, I could not wait to come back to Memphis and call it permanent. But then when I first came back, I always thought it would be fun going somewhere else, not back to Martin but somewhere else. And I was able to travel and visit other places and I soon decided no, Memphis is where I really wanna be. So I've been here.

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Garry Coleman: After I graduated from LeMoyne-Owen, I worked for General Motors, actually the Assurance Division of General Motors and I was domiciled here in Memphis for five years and then I was transferred to Richmond, Virginia. Well a lotta people in Memphis really, you know, we talk about the polarization but when you go to other cities, especially in the south, you're still in the deep south and I was kinda surprised that in 1980, when I moved to Richmond, Virginia from Memphis that Richmond was a lot like Memphis in term of the polarization. In fact they were still burning crosses on African-American's yards who moved into elite suburbs of that city. So you think that Memphis is this polarized separate

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and unequal city but there are other cities in the south that have a lot of the similar problems that we had back then and, of course, I don't know about now 'cause I moved back to Memphis in '84, but you know, it's – Memphis is a great city and it just, you know, it's up to us as the new leaders of this generation to change what we can to help the next generation.

Missy Murray: How would you say Memphis has changed over time?

John Wainwright: Well, and I guess to kinda pick it back on where we started with the polarization part. Of course, with us growing up, you know, in the City of Memphis, the majority of, you know, population were white – but integration hit and you wonder where all the white kids

went but I think if you go back a little bit, you'll find most of them and their descendants

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probably in Horn Lake, South Haven, Olive Branch. No schools down there, they've got – perhaps they used to have one for each town. You can't even count on both hands and both feet. So I would imagine most of those kids have left, so now you've got the majority population of black, when you look at your City Council, County Commissioners and stuff like this, still, it's reflective of just that. So that is probably the biggest changes. Now there is a sense of control, of power, by the black base here. And which from my standpoint, you know, it's a good thing. I would much rather see it not looked at along color lines and everybody go for their merit, get elected in position what have you, based on that but the reality of it is is that that has changed and that's the way it is now.

George Rutherford: Could you repeat that question?

Missy Murray: *[00;29;57]* How has Memphis changed over time?

George Rutherford: Well, I've seen the pendulum

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swing out and swing back in. East High School, I'm thinking about East High School when we had a track meet out there and it was an all-white school and we were black kids coming from here on ____ to an elite prestigious school in East Memphis and now East High School is a predominantly black school. And in the inner city, places like Hurst Village, Lamar Terrace, those were public housing developments ____ along with the others. Lauderdale Court, Hurst Village – those places now have white tenants and they're pushing the black tenants out east. So it was white flight and now there's white flight back to the city. Black flight out of the city and I think a lot of it has to do with the development of downtown

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the businesses, the arena, the Grizzlies. It's all about the infrastructure and it's all about economics. So I've seen the

pendulum swing backwards and forward. Dixie Homes, right now, is a new place called Legends Place but I was by there the other day and I looked at the plot of land that they were building when it was vacant and I said, "Man, all those people – all the families that I could remember were just in this little square block of land. Garry, you were –

Garry Coleman: Uh huh, right.

George Rutherford: - over there and it just seemed like Dixie Homes was the biggest place in the world.

Garry Coleman: Right, yeah.

George Rutherford: But when you drive by there now and look at it, I mean it's just like a little small lot. But those are some of the changes I've seen. White flight, I think is – but again, Memphis is a place – there are a lotta opportunities. You just have to find 'em and take advantage of 'em. And if you don't, you know, you just fall between the cracks.

Stephen Pruitt: Piggy-backing on what George says, when I come to Memphis and I come a lot

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I see this large group of blacks who are living very affluently and living very well in very nice, large homes like you didn't see 20, 25 years ago when I was a student. But then I see this big ol' cluster of blacks that are very poor and that they're struggling with both of the parents working or maybe led by, a home led by a female and the kids kinda left on their own. So I still see Memphis as a problematic area for the vast majority but I do see this group that lives really well, live on Mud Island. They got those beautiful homes and live in some of the other affluent areas African-American individuals. So –

John Wainwright: But I don't think it's any much different than any major or large inner city. You've got those who have got certain skillsets that are gonna be those – they're gonna be probably a little bit more successful and then you've got those who probably in a repeated situation

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where the parents were uneducated. But that is a big difference though. My parents were basically uneducated. I think my dad went through to 12th grade, which is pretty unusual for a black man back in those days. But if you've got a skillset and a certain amount of education, you can usually do pretty well in most of the major inner cities and – but you still got all those other ills, too that need to be addressed.

Missy Murray: How would you guys compare race relations from when you were in high school and to now?

George Rutherford: I pretty much think they're about the same. I mean that's just my opinion from my experiences. I think it's – as I said earlier, Memphis is just a large enough place now where you can find your niche if you want it. In terms of politics, I've seen, you know, the downtown infrastructure go from white to black

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to a mixed set and I see it now going back to an all white set because of the voting districts and the way they are re-routing and re-changing things. I just think it's the same. I don't see a lot of difference.

John Wainwright: Well I guess I kind of do. You know, you've got problems but as a kid growing up in North Memphis, there wasn't very much exposure, as a black kid, you know, with white – and so it was somewhat restricted, but now that I've gotten out into the world and my job actually pushes me into situations where I actually have exchanged and my attitude now, you know, then it was just a scary kid out there trying to make his way. Now my attitude is, you know, I'm just as competitive and skilled as anybody else, so there is no fear, so maybe that's just all a part of growing up.

Stephen Pruitt: What I see

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is I see my – and I have two granddaughters – I see them living in a diverse situation having sleepovers with individuals of all diverse background ethnicities and I see it as preparing them to do anything, go anywhere and, you know, to be with anyone; preparing them to be comfortable with that. Because of the racial buildup of Memphis, it's mostly a black city now and so you just

don't have that kinda exposure just because of who lives here right now.

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Garry Coleman: I think that it's kinda goes back to what George was saying about how the pendulum is swinging back and forth. Now when we were growing up, most of our competition was with each other, was with other African-American because that's who, you know,

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everything was segregated. The big rivals we had in football, Manassas, Melrose, BTW, Manassas and all of those schools – okay, when Northside opened, now we have an integrated system but we don't have those rivalries anymore. You know, but now we're looking at the fact that our kids – I'm thinking about a situation happened with my daughter – when she was in high school and she was in the orchestra and she was going to compete to be in the what's called the All West Orchestra and she was frustrated because she said that she was not going to be able to compete against the white kids who had tutors who were in the Memphis Symphony and I had to talk to her and explain to her

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that well, I said, "You've seen me compete in tennis," I said, "and I have competed against other people who have professional tennis coaches. I won some matches and I lost some matches but you got to give 100 percent in what you're trying to do." So she went out at the competition and made the All West Band. But see that's – we don't have a lot of that, I think now, with our kids. That's why I said earlier about reaching back and as parents and leaders, getting our kids who are coming up now to realize you can compete because basically we now have a segregated educational system again. Like someone said earlier, the Memphis City School System is basically all black. So we're back to that again and we've got to be able to get our kids to understand that you can compete with anyone regardless of what their skin color is.

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You can compete.

Missy Murray: All right. I guess we'll start wrapping up, now. Is there any advice you would like to share with younger Memphians?

Stephen Pruitt: I guess the advice that I would give is have a goal in your own heart and regardless of where you've come from or regardless to what you have, realize that you could go to where you want to if you have the drive and the desire to do so.

George Rutherford: I would just like to say I used to hear it growing up, you know, learn your history, know your history and a lotta people think that's just going back, you know, from Africa and coming forward but you don't even have to start at that point, but you do need to go back and really look at the history of anything to know where you are before you can plan to know where you're going. A lot of kids, lot of times when you ask them what they're gonna be – when they're kids, you know, they wanna be doctors and lawyers, and pretty much it sound like it's a script that they're, you know, being forced to tell you and

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they wind up doing something altogether different. I'm just saying know your history, know where you are, to know where you wanna go and pursue it and don't be afraid of failure because failure's a part of the formula for success. You can get down but you can get yourself back up, too.

John Wainwright: Well my advice to, I guess, to all kids whether be white kids or black kids, you know, a lotta times, as George said, what do you wanna be when you grow up, and though in my case, heck, I was all the way through college and didn't know what I wanted to be when I grew up. But the best advice I can give is that get yourself a good basic education. Learn how to read, write a complete sentence, understand what you read. At that point, develop a skill. Learn some skill whether that is what you truly want to do or not, do the best at that, until you come across something else you want to do. Because you may find out 25 years later, "Well I'm still not

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doing – this is not my most favorite but I've become pretty successful because I have honed and developed a skill that somebody's willing to pay for."

Jacqueline Bland: My advice would be to definitely secure a good education. The second thing that I would advise young people to do is to try to put a goal in mind because I found out two years short of being able to

retire from 30 years of service that I had a goal in mind but unfortunately I ended up dealing with a health problem that prevented me from being able to follow through on my goal. So you may have those obstacles to occur that can

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shatter that dream but you need to be prepared to be able to survive beyond that point. And that would be very important because I found in dealing with a lot of young people nowadays; it's almost a day by day thing. And there are no plans, no idea of where they're going, why they're going, it's just going.

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Garry Coleman: Well, I'm, like I said, the head tennis coach at LeMoyne-Owen College and I'm – so I'm around a lot of young people and couple of months ago, I had one of my players to tell me that, "Coach, my teammate and I in doubles, we realize that every time we

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prayed before we played, we won." And what I got out of that was to tell my students that whatever it is you wanna do in life, whether it's tennis, education, you want to run your own business, pray before you do it and watch God bless you. Thanks.

Missy Murray: All right. Is there anything else you guys would want to add that we've left out? Anything?

John Wainwright: Well, you know, not knowing what we were gonna be asked when we got here, I'm sure all of us probably was trying to anticipate what may, may have been asked and one of the things that came across my mind was you might ask do you think integration benefitted or hurt and of course,

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again, I have mixed emotions on that and in some cases I think it hurt because my first eight years of school were in an all-black situation. I remember sitting in class as early as fifth, sixth grade and realizing that myself and most of the kids around me, we could read and write. And now I'm hearing that you've got kids going no, graduating high school and all the way, all the way through college and they can't read and write. But I remember that first experience in ninth grade when I went to Humes and I'm sitting in

this class that's integrated. The teacher's white. As the school year went on, the black kids, many of 'em, gravitated to the back of the room. The teacher spent time actually teaching to those in front as long as the ones in back didn't create any disturbance. Of course, I stayed up front because I wanted to hear what was going on. I don't think it was prejudice from the teacher's part because I didn't sense any animosity when we had interaction.

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She may have been afraid. She may have been indifferent, I don't know but I do know that we lost a lotta kids that didn't have the same drive that I had seen early on in an all black situation and then when I got into an integrated situation. So in that respect, I think it hurt us. And – or the benefit probably was it was just the right thing to do. I mean, if your country and your constitution says that all men are equal and should be treated equal then you should be dealing with the education system from an equal perspective. So in that respect, it changed things toward that kind of future, but I think we lost a lotta kids.

Stephen Pruitt: I'd just like to say one final thing. Especially for a young black man – for those black men or men of any color who are successful, if you could reach out and mentor one of those guys and tell them that you can make it also, and model the way of how it happened

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of course, the same will go for a black girls also, but I do see more black men just really not walking the walk and I think if they saw and were close to someone who had been there and if they were able to walk with them for a while, I think we will see a greater degree of success in the African-American community.

George Rutherford: One last thing on me and I just wanna piggy-back on something John said about integration. I have mixed feelings about it but it's a little bit more to the fact that I think integration hurt the African-American community more than it helped but it was something that happened. I think the busing, when you start taking kids out of their district to put 'em in schools on the other side of town, it makes it where the parents, a lot of 'em, didn't have transportation to get to the PTA meetings or get to the schools and I think there was a breakdown. If I had to do it over – and I know they always say hindsight is 100 percent – I would like

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to see a world where it wasn't an integration, it was just fairness across the board and I think all people should be treated equally and fairly and all people given a chance – but I also think that with those freedoms come the personal responsibility to reach out, embrace and be as successful as you can be.

Jacqueline Bland: And along that line, I think my last comment would be to communicate with the parents how important it is for them to take a hold and lead. So many of our children right now are the leaders of the home. So if the youngest is the leader and they have no foresight of where they're going, then you know ultimately where they will probably end up. A

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long time ago, during our time, our parents probably didn't have the greatest of education but they had that power.

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Garry Coleman: Yeah.

Jacqueline Bland: And we knew it. So, I mean all of us, as far as, you know, we graduated from high school, graduated from college, and that was the weight – that was what we had to do. That was what we wanted to do because it made our parents happy. And consequently, our children it's being bundled on down. But if you have a parent that is not taking hold and leading and creating that atmosphere, "Well so-and-so, you have to go to school and do this," then the children may be making some bad choices.

Garry Coleman: And my final comment kinda piggy-backs off of what a couple of people have said. You know we look back in retrospect at what we did in the

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integration movement, that crossroads where schools became integrated but there was so much white flight over the years that now we're back to a separate system. Now I think I mentioned that I have a son now – my son is nine years old, so you do the math –

[Laughter]

- that makes me an old parent but I'm involved in things at my son's school and I see a lot of parents not being involved, you know. So that is part of our problem now with this young generation coming up now is parents are too busy working two and three jobs when really the most important thing for a child is to have a parent or guardian or somebody

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to come to the school, talk to their teachers, let the teachers know that I am concerned about my son or daughter's welfare, their education. That's what we've got to do as a community, to get more parents involved. So I would say parents, you have to get involved. Our parents got involved. Anything happen at the school, they were there, okay, and most of us, I think we've said over the course of this discussion, we were probably the first in our families to graduate from high school. And, you know, and we all went to college. We were the first in our families to get a college degree. But it's because our parents supported us and pushed us and made us do it where the young parents nowadays, they don't have that same commitment and drive

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for children that are coming up, now and that's what we've got to do in our community.

John Wainwright: In most cases the community as a whole served as parents. Anybody who was an adult, to some extent, had a certain amount of control and would report on you if you did something out of line.

Garry Coleman: Oh yeah, uh huh.

John Wainwright: And they looked out for your interest. They weren't necessarily preying on young kids. They were actually looking out for our interests, because they really wanted you to succeed. Even – I remember a situation where I was up at the corner of Dunlap and Mosby, I think it was, and probably one of the biggest winos on the corner was saying, "Boy, what are you doin'? Why aren't you in school today?" I think I was out sick or something that day. So, even, I guess what you would consider the worst of the lot, if they were grown adults, they pushed and they wanted you to go on to be successful. So –

Jacqueline Bland: And that could be looked at as one of the downfalls of

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the integration because before integration, adults were the leaders. They had the power, they had the authority, they did not have to call the parents and see if it was okay to discipline the child. They did what they had to do, you took that whuppin, went on back to the room, and that was it. And when you got home, a phone call had been made and mom or dad, if not both, were waiting on you to get there. So that is no longer because through integration, some choices were made that nobody would be doing this. We call it against the law now, so there is no real authority figure beside maybe the police. So we have an altogether different situation to have to deal with.

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Missy Murray: Well, thank you –

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