

**Interview of Mose Yvonne Brooks Hooks. Interviewed by Francesca Davis and Rebecca Williams, of The Crossroads to Freedom Project, Rhodes College.**

**Mrs. Hooks is a professor at Langston University in Oklahoma, and she has experience teaching in elementary and high school. In this interview she discusses her childhood, and her activities in support of the Civil Rights movement while she was attending Fisk University. Mrs. Hooks also talks about her travels abroad and work with the Memphis in May festival.**

**This interview was conducted in 2006 to be included in the Rhodes College Crossroads to Freedom Digital Archive Project.**

**The transcripts represent what was said in the interview to the best of our ability. It is possible that some words, particularly names, have been misspelled. We have made no attempt to correct mistakes in grammar.**

*Interviewer:* Taking time out of your schedule to come and interview with the Crossroads to Freedom Project. So we're going to go ahead and get started and were going to begin very generally. So could tell us your name and where you born and raised?

*Mrs. Hooks:* My name is Mose Yvonne Brooks Hooks. I was born in Jackson, Tennessee. I moved to Memphis when I was four years old and grew up in Memphis, Tennessee before going off to the university to study.

*Interviewer:* And what is your current occupation?

*Mrs. Hooks:* I'm an educator. I'm a professor, tenured professor at Langston University and Administrator. I'm the director of Teacher Education and Basic Studies at Langston University, which is the only historical black college - or university in the west or in Oklahoma, the farthest west.

*Interviewer:* And how long have you been in the education field?

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*Mrs. Hooks:* All my life.

*Interviewer:* All your life?

*Mrs. Hooks:* I started teaching at immediately out of when I graduated from college. Taught elementary school, high school, the university here in Memphis and then of course I moved to Langston to teach there about nine years ago.

*Interviewer:* And where did you go for your undergraduate degree?

*Mrs. Hooks:* Fisk University in Nashville, TN, majored in Modern Foreign Languages, French and Spanish predominately. My masters degree is Columbia University, New York, majored in French took some education and then I continued with some **post masters**, working at Colorado State University in French. Went to Kent State University, really it was a fellowship, sort of a trip fellowship to Russia. And then my master's work I guess it was the end of the post-master's work and then I went on to the University of Tennessee for my doctorate and post doctorate also at the University of Tennessee.

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*Mrs. Hooks:* Then I continued my studies at – I've continued in different workshops across the country and I guess the most prestigious was the Harvard Institute for Educational Management.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Could you tell us a little bit about your parents? What were there names and what are their occupations?

*Mrs. Hooks:* My mother **is Ms. Lottie Thompson Brooks**. She was a teacher, graduate of Lane College. She was Miss Lane by the way, and her masters from the University of Memphis. And my father of course was a teacher too. He graduated from Lane College. That's where they met. And he did also graduate work at the University of Kansas. My father was also a minister and did theological study for his masters at different theological schools throughout the country.

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*Mrs. Hooks:* As a teacher, my mother taught English, Latin and Spanish. My father taught chemistry, physics and Latin as a teacher. And he was presiding elder and pastor of churches in the Jackson, TN area and of course here in Memphis, the major church was **Mount Olive Cathedral CME Church on Linden and Lauderdale**. So we had large churches, he did teach. When he was at small churches, he taught and was a minister because he had seven children. I'm third from the top. So he had seven children. We all were educated through master's degrees and doctorates. So he had to have more than one occupation.

*Interviewer:* So that's what brought you to Memphis?

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*Mrs. Hooks:* Yes at four years old. The bishop assigned him to Mount Olive Cathedral CME Church here.

*Interviewer:* So when you say you've been in education your entire life, then looking at your parents, we can definitely see that.

*Mrs. Hooks:* Yes, because our father had 13 brothers and sisters. And my grandfather was a Methodist minister too and they all finished Lane College. So education was very important in our family. And my grandfather even attended Lane and my mother's parents and relatives were teachers and attended Lane College in Jackson. So education was always very important in our life and it wasn't where you going to school, it was where were you going?

*Interviewer:* Can you share some of the most clear memories of your life, your childhood growing up?

**Break 04:51**

*Mrs. Hooks:* Well being a minister's daughter you can rest assured we stayed in church. Church was very, very important in our lives.

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*Mrs. Hooks:* In addition to that we all took piano from the time we were four years old. I took piano through my work at Fisk University, for about 20 years. Took ten years of violin. So that took a large count of our life. We were part of fine arts clubs here. We definitely had study periods. So we had to study and the library was very, very important in our life. We had social life. We played with other friends and so forth but it was also purposeful. We read a lot. We studied a lot. We conversed a lot with each other and with our friends because when a family of seven children and parents, there was always conversation. I can remember at our dinner and our time to eat together, we always conversed about political issues, things we had read, things that happened in school, things of interest to us.

So in addition to our parents, we were mentors to each other.

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*Mrs. Hooks:* Because all of us were just a year or two years apart. So there were always three of us or two of us at college at the same time. We all went to Fisk University. So that means when I was a

freshman, there was a sister who was a junior and then one was a senior. So we were all very mentoring to each other. But we had friends but they were always – my parents were very concerned about everything. They were purposeful in our lives. So although in the schools we learned about African American history and literature, etc., but they also ensured that we read those kinds of books, like Native Song and Black Boy and those. All those were part of our own library at home. So we were very, very grounded in the history of African Americans, the history of the United States, the history of the world. We read Dubois and others like that and From Slavery to Freedom by John Hope Franklin. All of this was a part of our lives.

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*Interviewer:* Okay. Wow.

*Mrs. Hooks:* Also I can remember very well that my father **when** he drove us around an awful lot I can never remember riding a public bus until I was probably after college, after attending college. I think he did that purposeful because he didn't want us to experience the back of the bus. And so he always, with seven children in addition to being a teacher and a minister, he was constantly serving. Taking us, the boys to baseball or the girls to piano lessons, etc. And I can understand why because he probably didn't want us to have those terrible experiences. Even when we went to shop, I can remember very well that we always had to use our restroom at home before we went shopping because he didn't want us to experience the black and white restrooms. We went shopping together and always in the car. So I think we were very protected from some of the ills of racism by the way that he designed our activities, my parents did to. And really monitored very carefully how we were structured and worked within this environment.

*Interviewer:* So it seems like your parents were very active in your education and personal life and just very active.

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*Mrs. Hooks:* Oh absolutely. We went to Sunday School. On Sunday we played quiet games. We went to church. We were in the choir. The Teen Town Singers were a part – they were DIA and a couple of us were members of Teens Town Singers. We played for churches when we were old enough to play. My **father \_\_\_\_\_ was a presiding** elder and visited other churches, even as a minister, we went with him to churches. So I just knew all the churches throughout the

area. I used to love to go to the rural churches because they always laid out some excellent food for us. So we were always just very, very active as children. But it was always a learning experience and learning how to socialize with different people.

We worked very closely with elderly people in the church and we learned very early how to help people and that may be why I do so much service now. We are all very service oriented now. But I can remember other people would tell us maybe to go to the store and get this for them and we were always told don't take a penny. Just do things.

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*Mrs. Hooks:* So we are very service oriented. If you look at all my life and I've given service but it started in the home and the church, which I believe is very, very important to the home as far as how your child is reared or how they will continue during their life.

*Interviewer:* So who were some of your role models growing up?

**Break 09:53**

*Mrs. Hooks:* My parents, my mother and my father. I love to read autobiographies. That's what I tell my students now or students I have interaction with. Autobiographies tell you an awful lot so I read a lot of autobiographies. I can remember the Madam McLeod Bethune came to speak at my father's church when I was child. So we were able to communicate with her. All the bishops because at that time, when he was a pastor for a while at Mount Olive, there were not any hotels in this city where African Americans could stay.

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*Mrs. Hooks:* **Except the Lorraine Hotel**, and of course, they would come and stay at our home. So we were able to sit at the feet of people who made a lot of history in the country. Definitely I admire Mrs. Coretta King because what she has gone through and how she serves as a role model for her children and others in the community.

So I guess when I look at two women, Mrs. King and Madam McLeod Bethune were role models. I also admire persons like Jacquelyn Kennedy. She may not have been a sort of role model but her life. I admire people who met challenges and still were

able to take their lives further and those who were around them, made their lives meaningful.

*Interviewer:* I guess we're going to forge ahead in time a little bit and move to our target period of the 1950s to the 1970s and you mentioned earlier, when you were a child that you would go into the library.

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*Interviewer:* It was really important to you and your parents tried to protect you from certain ills in society at that time but have you ever in your childhood encountered or come across any maybe obstacles or anything that you've had to overcome in terms of segregation?

*Mrs. Hooks:* Not really and I guess since segregation was just a part of the total fabric of the community. I can remember that we could only go to the **Cossitt Library**, it's a library on **Vance now**. I went there everyday and so we had books there. I think that the librarians were able to request books from the other places, other libraries in the city. But now that I think about it, there was quite a segregate but I guess the way we were brought up that parents ensured that we didn't really harbor on what we didn't have.

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*Mrs. Hooks:* We were so thankful and that we were blessed with what we did have. So we took the negative and made it positive. And so really the first negative experience I can remember personally was after I graduated from Fisk University.

Even when I went to Fisk University, our teachers were very much from Europe and Europeans and Caucasians from this country so we – and we had exchanged students from **Oberlin**, from the Redlands and other you know universities, so we were integrated. And those teachers believed in where they were and what they were there about. So they didn't show any differences among any students and between us and themselves.

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*Mrs. Hooks:* But I can remember when I came back and I was taking a plane up to Fisk I think for Jubilee Day and we had to wait at the airport, and they gave us all a ticket to go and eat. So I just got off and started going to the place where everybody else was going to eat.

And I remember the lady said well we're full. Well I still thought that it was just full. It was kind like had to wait till the next hour or so. But it wasn't and they said well you can eat over here. And the little room where they wanted me to eat was a room where they were emptying the garbage and all. I of course said no thank you because I would not do that. But it was my first real experience in seeing just one on one because I guess we just didn't venture out too much on the other side of town. Now I can remember **the principal \_\_\_\_\_** used to say that you know that we knew that our books that we were using at Booker Washington High School, were books that had been used years before maybe at the East and the Central High Schools that were predominantly white at that time.

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*Mrs. Hooks:*

So we were getting the leftovers and books that probably were not as current as far as information and so now that you think and reflect back over that.

**Break 14:56**

I was one of the first teachers, they chose 13 teachers and that second year they chose a few more and put them in the school system to integrate. And I was sent to Central High School. It was the oldest high school here in the city. I was sent to teach French. And there were quite a few little experiences. The teachers were very, very nice. I can remember very well we had to meet the principal of the school.

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*Mrs. Hooks:*

He was at the time Mr. King and before school started so he came to me and I came to see him and he said how do you do, Ms. Brooks (I was at that time). He said you know we have reviewed everything about you. You're okay. And so now that I think about that statement, what he was saying. Sometimes when you think it's so positive, you don't see the negatives. That may be the reason why I've been able to do all the things I've been able to do in life because you have to hit me real hard with the negative in order for me to real delve on that because probably if you would have thought about it, there are a lot of things you would not have done, if you would have thought that people said it couldn't be done. You know, how can an African American young lady learn French because at that time many people didn't think we had you know very good language skills?

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*Mrs. Hooks:*

So you just don't let those things hit you in the face or become a part of your environment. I guess I've always looked at the problem was someone else's problem. But at Central it was okay. Although I noticed how the students were treated at that time because all the teachers did not accept the movement that was going on, what they had to do. I can remember very well that a student, the students were just beautiful. We had parent night and this child must have really talked about the French teacher, how much he loved the French teacher and the French teacher. So the parent came up and very interesting, the parent walked completely past me and said I want to meet Ms. Brooks. He says could you tell me where she is. I said well, I'm Ms. Brooks. Well you're Ms. Brooks. I guess the child had said so much. And there were many students of Jewish faith that belonged to Central or went to Central at that time.

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*Mrs. Hooks:*

And the kids would come back and say oh they just love you. They're around you so much. The one said you know I wish I could invite you to my school or to my church but I can't because I don't know if they would accept you or not. So the young have a tendency to transfer a little quicker than the older people that may be while we really tried to integrate the younger grades first. As the older you get, the more set you are in your ways and your beliefs, etc. But you know I can remember also, I think I rode the bus. I do remember this. We rode the bus I think to school one day at Fisk. One day we were riding up there and it was Waverly, Tennessee. I'll never forget Waverly, Tennessee because we could get off to use the restrooms there. I do remember that.

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*Mrs. Hooks:*

And all the Caucasian people could but we could not use the restroom in Waverly, Tennessee. And then one time I rode the bus, I think up there. So I went thinking, I guess I was thinking. I just went and set, it was after I'd finished college, I was going back up to Nashville for some reason. And I wanted to sit on the third seat or the fourth seat and so the bus driver said you have to move back. And I just really didn't catch it at first what he was saying, so I just moved on back two more seats and came back again, you have to move back. Why? So I'll never forget eventually he just wanted me to sit way back in the back, right by the long seat. And



there was an elderly gentleman, very interesting. He had on his overalls. African American gentleman. He said now baby, why you trying to act ugly. He said you know you shouldn't have sat up there. How some people believed in what went on. I had to take the trip so I didn't make any commotion.

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*Mrs. Hooks:* But I immediately thought you know hey at that time I think I had even been up to Columbia for a while and then come back. And then so there were innuendos and things that were happening here. I guess you knew you couldn't eat in certain places. You just didn't go there to really eat. But what I did here in Memphis, I became involved with things that had an international flavor to them. For example, the Memphis Council for International Visitors, I became a part of that group. I became the president of that group. The U.S./China People's Friendship Association, Memphis in May, and what I found that people who accept diversity, they pretty much accept everybody.

**Break 20:19**

So I kind of moved my volunteerism that way.

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*Mrs. Hooks:* And I did it on purpose because you can go out now and still meet these kinds of things in the community in 2006. So with people who have a tendency to have traveled and have studied customs and cultures and have interfaced with people as volunteers from all over the country, have a tendency to look at life a little different. So I have moved in that way and have as many friends at this time in all the communities of Memphis and even going abroad to see that people are more alike than different. I remember when I first went to China back in '76 and the Chinese, I was the only African American on the trip, but when we flew into Shanghai, I can remember that airport. There was one plane on the airport but on the mural on the wall had African people, African American people, dark people, people of all colors holding hands.

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*Mrs. Hooks:* But they really wanted to know how I was being treated. They just watched me and watched me and watched me. They were very interested in me. As they got to know you, the guides, said Yvonne do you have a car. I said yes. Do you have a house?

Remember that now, this was before **normalization**, this was when President Bush (the father) was over the liaison office. They didn't even have an embassy. So it was just opening up China at that particular time. But we tell people a lot when we go abroad how we feel about different people by how they see how you are treated within the group. We're constantly being observed and they noticed I wasn't treated any differently so they were wondering. But this was a special group that went over. Probably another type of group, it would have been different. So I've had those kinds of experiences.

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*Mrs. Hooks:*

I can remember when I was at Fisk University, that's when the movement had kind of started. We used to go and sit in at the little shops and so forth on Saturday. And at first people were just sitting in. One of our professors said now one day, said y'all putting y'all's little blue and gold hats on (these are the colors of Fisk) said but hopefully you are very serious and you know what you are getting into. Said because many of the people have been trained. At that time we had the Jesse Jackson. They were older. They came on our campus, etc. And I was never arrested. Just happen the day they did the first arrest, I was not with the group. I think I was still studying in the library. So everybody found what they could do in the movement and I did most of the correspondence and things like that.

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*Mrs. Hooks:*

You have to decide how much you can take as an individual. But I can remember waking up many a night, we had to get out because we had bomb scares on the campus and we probably every night we had to get up and go out with our night clothes on because – and I used to ride to the courts with attorney **Leblue** – he's a well known attorney in Nashville. He was teaching on Fisk campus and so he would pick up some of the students. I started thinking how dangerous that was but we wanted to ride because our friends were in jail many of them and some of these were very innocent young ladies just like I was. Doctor's children. Lawyer's children and they would let ten out. Keep all the others and kept doing the mental thing, working. The young ladies had to get up so they would say at night and early in the morning, with the ladies who may have been incarcerated for some terrible kinds of things.

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*Mrs. Hooks:* So they were jailed right in the jail with those. Had to get up and clean the floors and things like that. One time we all went down, I can remember, and they started putting the water hose on us because they didn't want us. It was a large crowd of students. All of us couldn't get into the jail. So we had those kinds of experiences there. Then coming back here, King was killed, I was teaching at Central at that time. I was a part of the marches, etc. Was not in the march when he had to come back. But I was at his last speech. It was raining very, very hard then when I heard his last speech. And of course had an opportunity to participate in the march after his assassination. That's when Mrs. King led that march here.

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*Mrs. Hooks:* Of course, went down to the funeral. Flew down there in the Governor's plane with the leadership of that time.

Break 25:33

But if I look at what we have done in this community, Memphis in May has helped a lot to integrate Memphis. Memphis in May really began from the Chamber. The first president, originator, **Laman Aldridge**, who is still living and lives in **Cordova**, businessman out there. But in addition to bringing economic investment to Memphis, it was designed to bring the city together too. So around an idea of economic investment, they developed a festival and in turn by developing the festival they had able volunteers from all over Memphis to work together.

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*Mrs. Hooks:* So you had young. You had old. You had rich. You had poor. You had whites. You had black. You had internationals. All came together under one idea. And it was very interesting to see these people sitting around the table, at the barbecue, at the run, on the river, whatever that they were working together and forgot that we were different. So you can take an idea and cause it to happen. That's what Memphis in May had done. Because when people understood and the kids in the schools, I developed the education programs of the schools for Memphis in May. So that whole program where the students were going abroad, where they are researching ideas about the countries and their schools, the curriculum, all that was a strategic plan that I put together. But if a person can understand some one from Italy, South Africa or Russia

or Mexico, or Brazil, they are more open to understanding the differences in their own community.

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*Mrs. Hooks:*

And that's what Memphis in May had done. So you see I took some of those things that I learned in the movement and moved it to another arena here in our community. But there's a lot still out there that has to be done. But these things cannot happen overnight. People in Memphis may not know but we are a model for the world as relates to after such a terrible thing, the assassination of Dr. King, we were able to bring the community together as it has. For example, I volunteered with the United States Information Agency for these international visitors, ministers, teachers, librarians will come through this city, through the USIA. And when South Africa was trying to rid themselves of Apartheid, even during the first phase of Mandela and before, they were trying to plan, they were sending their planners to Memphis to see how we pulled this city together around an assassination, and around turmoil.

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*Mrs. Hooks:*

So we are really a model and we really have, I can tell from traveling all over the United States, even living in Oklahoma, when you see what has happened in Memphis, when you see leadership from all nationalities and ethnic groups. And another thing that Memphis in May did, there's a lot of internationals in Memphis. You look at the history of Memphis before the yellow fever epidemic; it was very international at that time. And now it is again but we didn't know that all these different groups were living in Memphis until Memphis in May.

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*Mrs. Hooks:*

They came out the wood works it seems. For example, we honored Egypt. There were many Egyptian students who were going to the University of Tennessee and professors over there. So we honored their country. They came out. Then they continued to stay involved. And the same with New Zealand and the same with Australia and those countries. So people coming from those countries are living here, right here in our city. So we are very, very diverse as a city. And still have our growing pains.

When I go to other cities, we have accomplished an awful lot. So, as I work with young people, it's not being bitter because things

just happen, you know inherit from a part of our history. But everybody can find their own niche in the community where they can make it better. Everybody would do it in their own little corner; it's going to happen.

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*Mrs. Hooks:*

And how I did, I took my major area, which was international foreign languages and all and became involved in a city movement, Memphis in May, U.S. China People's Friendship Association and brought those kinds of venues to wherever I was. And enabled the young people and people with whom it was nothing for me take international visitors if they wanted to see about the different cultures in Memphis. So I would take them to the housing projects to have a dinner there at a home. And also be with a Professor at Rhodes College so they could see the difference. So I felt it was a part of what I had to do to volunteer and where I had some kinds of knowledge to help people to understand themselves, to understand our city and then to see the world understand Memphis.

Break 00:31:26

*Mrs. Hooks:*

So I think that's what everybody has to do. So the bitterness that occurs, I don't think people have to accompany. I also believe that coming from a strong Christian background, you know father minister. If you look at the bible and you read the bible, all these kinds of wars and rumors of wars and all, the bible is a history book that everybody should really thoroughly read regardless of their religion because it tells you that some of the things we're experiencing now, they have been experienced before. So it's just a matter of knowing that everybody has a responsibility, wherever they are, to make it better. So you know I go throughout – right now, I go throughout the country and do workshops with teachers related to culturally responsive practices that in order for a child to learn, you've got to understand his culture.

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*Mrs. Hooks:*

You must understand his background. And that's why some teachers can't connect with their students. Culturally responsive practices, diversity, inclusion, all of those things are still very important. So it's not where we are living in different parts of town but people have jobs and businesses where they still don't quite understand. They haven't connected yet. So I think that's our job now to ensure that diversity is appreciated. Social justice,

inclusion and look at the culturally responsive practices and try to pull all of that together. I think that's why a lot of children fail in school because the teachers can't connect there. If you can't accept that about a person, they don't get your goodies that you have to give to them as a teacher.

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*Interviewer:* So that would be your advice to I guess young adults growing up is to be more open to experiences and learn what we can and use our talents to help others? Would that be your advice?

*Mrs. Hooks:* Oh absolutely. And one thing I may say that just looking at my generation and maybe the generation that I'm teaching that we dealt more, a lot with community service and that's why this area of service and learning is so important. And many universities are really emphasizing that for their students and they are making that a part of the curriculum because you have to get out there first to connect the theory and the practice. I don't care what the area is. And therefore by giving service, whether you are working with the elderly, the international, or in the social issues that's very important.

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*Mrs. Hooks:* In doing that, you can find the niche where you can give back without it being a strain or something you are not enjoying. So because there is so much out there to do, and that's what I think we must still do. So we still are passing with the time. It's a relay race and it's not over until the last person understands. That's a long way out. So I would think that's what young people would do. I've enjoyed it so. I mean it's just been – because every experience opens up another. As a result of my being a foreign language major, somebody asks me to be on an international, which took me all over the world. I've been to multiple countries with them helping them in negotiations. Then also, then I became involved with Eisenhower Foundation, People to People Program. One of my last trips, I led a group of educators to Beijing, China.

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*Mrs. Hooks:* To actually work with teachers over there in instructional strategies, we shared Beijing, Shanghai, **Xian, Guangzhou** and all those countries and then I told you about I belong to the Leagues Incorporated. So I've been gainfully involved in the – we have built schools in the townships of South Africa. I've been there

three times, going into those schools, working with those children. Even right now, I had an opportunity to go in and teach English in China. I said I might do that next summer. It's just it never stops. You keep wanting to. The more you do, the more you want to do, and because I had an opportunity first, I was in my career I couldn't. But I still have the desire to go over there and teach English to the Chinese and Chinese children.

**Break 36:17**

And then, there's just so much out there. So I think as we go with family, with children, even with our own personal lives, we can find other things that we enjoy doing.

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*Mrs. Hooks:*

And I think the beauty of living and the beauty of enjoying our lives is to share with others. So the more of this that you do, the more you know your life is – I just wish I was younger because the more you do, the grass is so green out there. It's just more I want to do. I can't even live a lifetime of the kinds of things that one door opens up, another opens up, another. But if you hold your hands tight, it never happens. You've got to open it up and give and give and there it is. I take my students with me. I send my students abroad. Where I work – we send about 50 students to South Africa every summer. 50 to the Dominican Republic. About – we have some that are going down to Belize now. We send about 50 to West Africa and we've sent some to South Africa. A few, about 25, went to Malaysia and China and Thailand.

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*Mrs. Hooks:*

So we've got to get our students out there to see and those, I can say, all of those students not a one is the same when they come back. And it's a class. And the ones who are in education, they work in the schools while they are there. The ones in business, they work somewhere in the business or observe. The ones in social may work with some kind of social agency or if they are not working, they are observing, field experiences – international field experience. Because everything is global now. All companies are that way. You know it's important to know different languages. You know then you must do – I was going to China so much. I've been to China People's Republic so much, six or seven times. I said well I can't keep going over there unless I know how to speak some of the language. So I took Chinese right here at Rhodes

College one summer and learned how to at least say hello, goodbye, how are you.

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*Mrs. Hooks:*

You know just keep going on because you connect with people when you can speak some of their language and understand their customs and culture. Learning a language, you learn their customs and culture. So part of, I think when I see the separatism, the segregation, those kinds of issues it's because people don't know. I find as I travel abroad, anywhere in the United States, people are more alike than different. I saw the socialist versus the people who were not socialist. All mothers of their children, all parents, you know have some of the issues with their children to succeed. So if we could learn to connect people to people and that's what I'm hoping. And although ideologies may be different and we believe differently, we can connect people to people.

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*Mrs. Hooks:*

We can get along in this world a lot better. But to leave those governments alone up there so when we go into China, we never did discuss those ideologies. We were dealing with how do you educate your children? I first went to China in '76. We went over to look at early childhood education. We were wondering what were the Chinese doing with their children that we could learn and do over here too and vice versa. And one thing that all the mothers were working, so therefore you had all kinds of daycare centers connected to the world of work. That means that at a factory, you may have an elementary school close to it, a middle school, a toddler lab and a daycare center so a mother could go and have lunch with the child at lunchtime. That connection. I see that we are doing more of that then we were in '76. So there are things that we are doing more alike than different.

00:40:26

*Mrs. Hooks:*

And I think that's what we have to really, really, as a people, connect with. And I think if we would do this that we can probably not have as many wars and rumors of wars as we are having now. So the world is just beautiful out there. All the children of the world just beautiful. I just love it. In fact, next year, I belong to the – on one of the national committees of the Association of American College Teacher Educators – ACTE – and we are planning a stellar trip. We want to take 15 educators, adults, and 15 of the students and go through out Ghana. But also



we had a conference call the other day and we are planning and may not occur but to connect with some of the national conferences in Beijing and Shanghai in 2008 as it relates to teacher education.

Break 00:41:27

*Mrs. Hooks:*

I think ASCD, the Association of Curriculum Development, had a joint meeting this year and AERA, the American Education Research Association, had one a few years ago. So did the ACTE – so I'll be a part of that whole movement to help to plan to do that to go there. So you see I'm gonna be around here a long time because I have even decided what I'm going to be doing the next two, three, or four or 10 years. So it's all out there. But it all started with first accepting people and although there were a lot of things going around me and those who grew up with me, we didn't become bitter. And that's what you have to tell the young people. There is good everything and you have to extract the good out of it. So out of all of the diversity and the separatism, there were groups in Memphis that were getting together to try to bring Memphis together.

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*Mrs. Hooks:*

So I found those groups and moved with those groups. I didn't get with the groups that still were involved in separatism and segregation and there were some on both sides. So it depends on where you are in space and time and what you want to do. So it's been a beautiful journey. And I never knew how I was going to use my foreign languages. In fact I wanted to work at the United Nations. I wanted to go abroad. So I really wanted to be an airline stewardess on Air France and was one of seven children so some of us were going on to graduate school, while some were in college. My father said now he'd be very proud to go. So I didn't get to go to the United Nations but you see how I took it and moved through education and still used all those experiences. So I think that's what King was saying you know. That these are non-violent movements.

00:43:27

*Mrs. Hooks:*

And the movements that are non-violent can be and some of the things that we are doing and such activities as with Memphis in May and learning of the cultures, that's a non-violent way of getting there. And I'm looking at all the issues now around borders and all of that and somewhere, we've got to solve these

things without always wanting to go to war about them. That's what I really hope. If I had a wish for the world, it's that we could live under the same sky with different ideologies and be able to be diplomatic and negotiate and to talk through things instead of all this brutality that's going on that we see right now because I think that there are other ways of getting there. There are a lot of ways to get to Rome as the old saying used to be. So I've really enjoyed it and I'm so happy that you asked me to participate.

00:44:31

*Mrs. Hooks:*

But yes it was out there. The experiences were out there but I can even remember growing up in Jackson, Tennessee, I was young, four or five but I can remember because I always had a photographic memory. There was a little young lady named Nancy, she was a Caucasian girl. I can see her red hair now. We played together. So there was still communities, especially in smaller towns, where people still lived together and played together. As I said I don't remember anyone in my family really working in anyone's home or working for anyone. I can go back four or five generations, at least four. My grandfather was a minister. My grandmother was a homemaker. So if there was one thing that we always, was important – it was education.

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*Mrs. Hooks:*

We must keep emphasizing and that's what bothers me now about what's going on. We have cities even right here where you have half of the children in junior high school are not in school, a large drop out rate. You see until we get on top of those kinds of issues, we can't really do some other things and it's getting worse and worse. Many of the people that you see now that grew up in segregated schools, whose parents were people working in homes and other places, etc. but teachers first gave them hope. And they are principals now. They are superintendents now. They are doctors now. They are lawyers now. That's why the role of education and teachers is very important.

Break 00:46:26

*Mrs. Hooks:*

And so these people made it all happen. That's what anybody over 50 can tell you some of these things. That somebody in their life, and usually it was education, and so we've got to take all of these little children, that seem like they're not making it, because we keep building up jails, incarceration areas for that. We need to find a way to bring them back where during segregation those teachers

were really interested in the students. I can remember very well in my class of algebra, we had maybe 20 or 30 students, and some of us would learn faster than others, but the teacher knew how to diversify and **divisualize** and all these terms we use in education that I think we've overdone and overused. But we went home, she gave us books and we did some others things and we didn't have technology. While she still worked with that one child who could get that problem.

00:47:31

*Mrs. Hooks:*

That's where it is. And it's the same thing in the community. That home that needs something. Somebody must take time to do that. So all of that to me is what's going to change and you can pass laws but until it gets to be people to people, till it's heart to heart, words and laws can't do it. You have to, as I call it, get your hands dirty, get down there with the people and help them and then understand that the world may look different but basically people are the same. They have the same issues, families, education, some form of religion. We won't all have the same form of religion. We have to understand that and then going all over the world, I am a Methodist but I have read all religions because I wanted to know because I travel, the customs and cultures.

00:48:34

*Mrs. Hooks:*

I have read them, pretty much all of them, the tenants of all of them and these are different beliefs and they are not radical when you look at what's in the printed book. Individuals make it radical and that is what happened even in the Civil Rights Movement, that some individuals made it radical but there were those, and I want to emphasize this, that there were those from all walks of life, all nationalities, all ethnic groups, that helped these thing to get through because African Americans could not have made it without the Caucasians and vice versa. There were good people on all sides that caused this thing to happen. I think we have to thank those people who believed that it could happen. So we could all go to the Peabody and sit down together and have a good time and other places.

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*Mrs. Hooks:*

So it's been, I don't know if I've expressed it as you thought I would but it's not bitter. It's not negative. The bitter part, the negative part is when I see the young people who somebody has forgotten and in this struggle we've forgotten the unfortunate ones

sometime. And when we don't try to be diplomatic and negotiate. We'd rather use arms to solve things. Those are sad issues I think. But I think basically, when you look at it we've made a lot of progress. I think we'll continue to make progress. We'll continue to make progress. As long as I'm living I'm going to be part of it.

00:50:27

*Mrs. Hooks:* It's a beautiful experience. I've made beautiful friends. I have friends of nationality, every race, color and creed. And they are my friends and I'm their friend. And it can happen.

*Interviewer:* I want to thank you so much. You've given us so much information and just really appreciate hearing your story. Thank you.

*Mrs. Hooks:* Thank you very much.

*Interviewer:* Thank you.

00:50:54

[End of Audio]