

Andy Mrkva: Thank you for participating in Crossroads to Freedom digital archive. I guess we can just start with introducing yourselves and each other's background information. Did one of you want to go first?

Willie Bell Fulton: You want to go first? In addition your background and –

Andy Mrkva: Let's just start with your name and where you were born.

Walter Fulton: Name –

Willie Bell Fulton: Name and where you was born.

Daniel Saba: We want to know a little bit about you for the camera.

Walter Fulton: Name and – I'm born in Georgetown, Mississippi raised up around _____ and **Clarks**. Also, I came Mississippi when I was 21, leave, and I was _____ I came on this street and 14 I put _____, 14 of April I guess when I came on this street here also, and again I made quite a few friends on this street.

0:01:38.0

Walter Fulton: Not only this street, in this community. Next street, _____ and _____ or Hyde Park made friends, and then I found a lot of friendship with children, and there was _____.

0:02:10.1

Walter Fulton: On this street in this community. _____. At that time **Morris Chilston** there passed away, and the children moved different places to live, and so, places which was much quieter now than then. More friendly at that time years ago, and now it change. Them passed away, and most of those that were young then are old now are living, yeah, and it doesn't quiet different. It's – if you came up with people that are passed away now, much different now.

0:03:41.4

Walter Fulton: But I think this has been a relatively large historical place to live, on this street here. Working folks, folks at that time was _____ operating and going in business maybe before I was born, _____ stone and laying boulder that's 40 years, laying boulders.

0:04:27.3

Walter Fulton: [Inaudible comment] and we could feel a big steel _____ operating then, and also a place that wait – I can't think, and then in **Charlotte** – that's it. It's going. So, a great change has been made down through the years here, and it just don't seem like back in the old day.

0:05:13.5

Walter Fulton: When I pass it's empty now. The owners have passed away and gone. This is **lucky** to be here living. My wife and I we married 60 years, eight children, and all of 'em live and have their _____ **Hilton** Street and in here, Christian people. Many more things I have experienced. I haven't taken the time and my daughter she told me about you several times for me to prepare myself and present nice to say, but I – it's hard _____ for me. (Laughter)

0:06:37.4

Walter Fulton: So, I guess I'm going to do about the best I can what's going, you know, my wife. (Laughter) so, thank you all very much.

Elizabeth Saba: Mrs. Fulton, can you tell us when you came to Hyde Park and what you remember when you first came how the neighborhood was like? What was it like growing up here?

Willie Bell Fulton: I'll try.

Elizabeth Saba: Okay.

0:07:05.9

Willie Bell Fulton: My name is Willie Bell Fulton, at that time it was Willie Bell **Breswick** when I first came to this neighborhood. I moved on **Shannon**, two streets over, and this where – what were we? I met Walter coming from a store down here on the corner, still there. He had this container. At that time it _____ and he had – you had to take the ball back to the store and then you get a mobile. So, yeah, this is where I'm from.

Anyway, that's when I got a chance to first see him. I heard about him from my friend. She lived on the corner of Stovall, by the name of **Catherine People**. She's _____ on too, and he and I got acquainted. Believe it or not, at that time we had to – well, he went to the field, even try to make some income to come in, and you had people in the neighborhood down here on this street, had cotton pickers. You catch the truck. You get up early in the morning, catch the truck and go out, you know, to pick cotton, to make money to live on.

0:08:40.4

Willie Bell Fulton: You have to stop me. I might be going too far. When you say to introduce myself, I get going and I don't know where I stop.
(*Laughter*) But anyway, that was one of the things that – but at the time I was going to school. I came from – like I said, I was born in _____. Anyway, I was born there. My dad and momma separated when I was 18, and I have one sister and two brothers. So, I went on to school and finished eighth grade. Just like what my mom did, that's what my momma did. Washing, iron, cook. I get up, cook, go to school, come home, do whatever we had to do at home.

When they separated that's when we moved to Memphis, and my momma's here in Memphis right here on May Street, right off Chelsea. We lived in a coal – my brother's cousin lived in a coalhouse, and we had to cook on that coal stove. We took bathes in a tin tub, and that's how we heated everything on the stove. Not coal, it was the little made fire, but it was like a container, y'all'd probably say a bucket, but I can't think right now what it was made out of, but at least you could burn coals in it and make a fire.

0:10:17.9

Willie Bell Fulton: And at that time, you'd burn - _____. At that time you couldn't even find a room – I sometime pass now and see the home. It's unbelievable. Maybe you had two or three families living in one house. You all had these bathrooms; you only had this one commode. He had two children – three children, anyway, some children, and then the kitchen. We all had to use the same thing for cooking and stuff like that. Tell me when to stop.
(*Laughter*) I don't know. Keep going?

Andy Mrkva: Well, it's 3 minutes 'til 4:00, so maybe we should take a break?

Willie Bell Fulton: Okay.

0:11:17.8

Daniel Saba: Mr. Fulton, you mentioned you moved here when you were 21?

Walter Fulton: Twenty-one.

Daniel Saba: Could you tell me why it was that you moved here from Mississippi?

Walter Fulton: It was in between Vance and Towell. *[Inaudible comment]* It was between Vance and Towell, about half the distance Vance, Mississippi, Towell, Mississippi. I came over there in '46.

Andy Mrkva: So, what was it like early on in this community back when you were first moving in?

0:12:04.3

Walter Fulton: Again?

Andy Mrkva: What was it like when you first moved into this community, what kind of _____ did you have?

Willie Bell Fulton: He said what was it like when you first moved here in Memphis, which Mr. _____ he want to know what it was like.

Walter Fulton: Oh, what was it – it was a very quiet and peaceable street that we live on, and most neighborhood church moms, and they were **working** people. There was a lot of new jobs, old jobs, _____, hard stone and _____. Men, _____ place they close out, and _____ and different place and everything.

0:13:15.5

Walter Fulton: It's not – I would say the progress now seem like it did then most people had jobs and they were working folks. Then it seemed people get along because families most of 'em, and they was church people. And they was churches have changed, and then they _____, down, I still considered it a pretty peaceable place. I do give it credit when I think compared to other places in the city and communities.

0:14:18.6

Walter Fulton: Hyde Park, Homeland and May, Hampton, Klondike, I consider them very peaceable place to live compared to in the city. In _____ more time, my daughter, she told me about three times that y'all was coming, and I could got more prepared for speaking, thinking like that.

Andy Mrkva: It's all right.

Walter Fulton: Oh, I see my wife, she – *(Laughter)*

Willie Bell Fulton: He's much better than I am. Used to be.

Walter Fulton: She must realize I been sick for four years.

0:15:29.5

Walter Fulton: And I have longer than she has. (*Laughter*)

Willie Bell Fulton: He tries to get by with that. Believe it or not, he can do real well, but he's been sick for four years. So, he just don't feel up to doing a lot. Before he would talk and have it all planned out. Me, I just talk. But I believe you asked the question, how you compare the neighborhood now then it was back when he came – when he moved here.

Well, I think very well he explained it quite well because people had less, but they love and care better. Now it's all about stuff, money and things. It's a lot different in that. At that time I think really people had a goal, stuff, but we didn't plan on staying that way, and people didn't. That made a big difference.

0:16:40.4

Willie Bell Fulton: I was listening to the minister last week saying where do you find peace, and I'm noticing – I know, if you all noticed news and so forth, rich people with plenty, don't even have to think about money, stuff and things, but they don't have peace. People had more peace. Don't get me wrong. I don't want to go back there. Didn't have no electricity, light and stuff like that, but they do not have the love and care for each other. So, if you have money and can get away with it, you do what you want to do, and that's not peace either.

Even struggling, that I think a lot, and I don't have a mind being hostile about everything we had to go through. We had to learn. We learn to live and still love and still ____ off our back if we had to. So, we got more of a balance back then than never I see what y'all having to go through with this very, very hard struggle, 'cause unless you want to walk on somebody to get up, then you going to struggle to try to make it.

0:17:58.0

Willie Bell Fulton: So, we all, and I tell my children and other young peoples that difficult time makes a person better or worse. Now, what you want to choose. I don't know what you all want people to make, but I going to mention Jesus 'cause that's how we had to survive. Other than that we couldn't 'a made it. We had life, but it made us strong. Each one of us the stuff we go through now, we couldn't have made it if we'd a been struggling. And we did. The hot sun out there is rough now, but sometimes I don't realize it's hot until

somebody says, "Do you realize it's 105? You better get in the house." Because I was tough. We pulled cotton, and I hated that. I reminded _____ now because if I wanted to work in Atlanta _____ if it's a man a lot of people think you know – I had a neighbor say, "Stop washing so much and sit down and go see with the children, teaching them as they go." He didn't realize I didn't know.

0:19:07.5

Willie Bell Fulton: So, washing and ironing and cooking was what we knew, and that's what I a lot of times what I did. I can see now what he was talking about. At the time he didn't know to break it down. He just told me to stop washing and ironing and go see with the children. What he meant I can get a better education, which I needed, but at the same token, now you got the opportunity to be educated, and you just don't care about it too much. You just do stuff. If your mind said do it, do it.

We had – that part we had – and we didn't know. People didn't know a lot about the bible, but it was something about the spirit that made us do right because it was right to do right. Now, our parents would want us to do things that was right 'cause all this whenever you have a difficult time, you learn form it. Think about it.

0:20:08.4

Willie Bell Fulton: Now, it's unbelievable. People care less about clothes, don't care about _____ clothes or not, and you dare to catch people today walk around with – I use my own words – no clothes. I'm just saying, you know, it was a big difference. You couldn't dare to catch young people say curse and do stuff around older people. They had respect. You know, it doesn't matter now, and if you go to talk to 'em, they probably talk back to you or whatever sometime.

That's what I said about this neighborhood, as Walter was saying, this neighborhood you could go out and maybe say something. Long as you said _____ you couldn't go out fussing and send 'em out but at least they just had respect, much more respect than that. Who cares about respecting anybody? Teachers can't teach.

0:21:08.7

Willie Bell Fulton: I couldn't believe it. This day and time I went somewhere to school, and I couldn't believe the teachers were having a hard time

with the young people, and that is in our neighborhood now. We didn't have that then. Of course, some people say – you know, and we was taught a little too much about whopping. You really didn't have to whoop children as much. Talk to 'em. Communicate with 'em. Show 'em you care and is concerned about 'em, and face it, you could get 'em to do. Now, if you poke 'em they set you out, and they keep on getting ____ they set you out, so you have two or three sets _____. So, it's a big difference, even it has been different within the time when I was here going to school, people just they matter to do stuff and things and who can do the biggest stuff. Even if it's bad, they say which one's going to be the baddest. I gone of again, haven't I? *(Laughter)*

0:22:11.5

Willie Bell Fulton: I'm like water, really, _____ told us and didn't stop. But we couldn't. Just from one situation to the other, but still, I really, really think it's all about God really brought us through all this stuff. It wasn't we knew. We used to talk about it with the children. I'd say what are we going to do with these children, and he wouldn't know what we were going to do with 'em either. *(Laughter)*

But he worked, he budget what he made. He didn't waste his money, and we took care of 'em through sharing and caring and we shared and cared. We always have. He had a mother and two daughter – a mother, a sister and two children when he and I got married. We lived in that little shack of a house, and we didn't do with our food. Sometime I go out and maybe work three or four hours cleaning hose, doing stuff like that. We take that money, we bought food, and they didn't never have to go hungry.

One time my daddy brought us a half of – not a whole ham, in country he killed it. He killed, all to his self and cured it, and he brought that. Somehow we had breakfast at home and go to my mom's house, had dinner. It's still okay. We move happy that it was in peace.

0:23:48.2

Willie Bell Fulton: Then the people seem to be more miserable now, even as time went by. The better things – we had less love. I don't dare want to go back there, but I'm saying it's different. Of course, you can hold it all if you get your priorities in the right place because you can love, and if you love, if you just can keep loving and focus on Christ, you ain't hardly go wrong. You going to do some things, but I just saying you got a guide. You got a spiritual control,

which people just don't seem to have that anymore. And y'all better stop me 'cause I just get to talking.

0:24:36.1

Daniel Saba: You mentioned that back then there was a goal, people – could you elaborate on that a little bit, maybe on what that meant, either of you?

Willie Bell Fulton: I would think the goal was we as a race of people wanted to do better. We saw what we needed, and we just wanted to do – I finish high school when I had all my children. I always wanted to finish school, so after marrying and they got in school, and I graduated from Central over here, but I went to Douglas night school over here, and I went some to night school. He always could have done well in school, but the same token, he took responsibility his mom and his sister gets married, and then we start a family, so he's always been. But somehow he survived. I mean, he was strong.

0:25:38.9

Willie Bell Fulton: So, then I went on back to school, and I didn't – one of the things stop me, I didn't feel up to – that I was capable of. I was not a good reader, so I didn't feel capable because the same Gloria she went – what is it that you have to take to get in college?

Daniel Saba: SAT, ACT.

Willie Bell Fulton: Yeah. She was going to make sure I'd taken it. She insisted I go to ____, but I backed off. *(Laughter)* Which I should have went on, but I don't know. I just didn't feel secure enough in reading. Was never the best type of reader. Never could learn how to read very well. I'm still struggling. I heard a song the other day at Mississippi Boulevard saying it's never too late to do what you want to do. They's singing that, never too late to do what you want to do. My son told me, "Momma, I think you better have common sense now." *(Laughter)*

0:26:45.2

Willie Bell Fulton: So, you know, those are – we had – it's different. Like I said, that was a goal. My husband used to always say we never been rich. I ____ little house right down on this street. We couldn't vote because we wouldn't allow to register right here, and I came over. I remember – do you remember, 'cause he used to keep dates and years too together, but I could never keep all of that.

But when we register, the park down here, we living in this little shotgun house, taking little time to register to vote. Remember what we did it was?

Daniel Saba: Do you know who was running maybe or –

Willie Bell Fulton: Huh?

Daniel Saba: Do you know who was running maybe or –

Willie Bell Fulton: Who was running?

0:27:37.8

Walter Fulton: _____ I believe. Short after we were married.

Willie Bell Fulton: Sure. We were married, what, in '49?

Walter Fulton: '48.

Willie Bell Fulton: Sure. Might have had one or two _____. I can't think of it, and I should. I can't think because that was kind of an exciting time for us to go to register to vote.

Andy Mrkva: So, what happened when you guys were registering?

Willie Bell Fulton: When we registered?

Andy Mrkva: Uh-huh.

Willie Bell Fulton: We could go vote.

0:28:24.0

Willie Bell Fulton: And I can't think – that's what we saying, I can't think who was running president.

Andy Mrkva: You said early '50s, was it Stevenson, Eisenhower or was it the '60s or – 'cause you said early '50s, or did you say '60s?

Willie Bell Fulton: Let me see. We married in '48. That's what you said, '48.

Walter Fulton: Yeah, '48.

Willie Bell Fulton: And it was after we got married. So, somewhere between '48 and '49 or something like that, but I can't think who – ain't that funny. Well, you see how you forget, don't you? *(Laughter)*

0:28:58.7

Willie Bell Fulton: But who was running president. We always could remember the first one, but it's a lot of stuff that could happen.

[Crosstalk]

Andy Mrkva: So, '48 that would be.

Willie Bell Fulton: Yeah. That sounds like it.

Daniel Saba: So, that was the first election you were able to register for?

Willie Bell Fulton: To vote 'cause you couldn't vote anyway if you couldn't register.

Andy Mrkva: Did you have any difficulties registering?

Willie Bell Fulton: Huh?

Andy Mrkva: Did you have any difficulty doing that?

Willie Bell Fulton: No. It was fine 'cause you know we won it, and older people encouraging you to go register and go vote.

0:29:51.6

Willie Bell Fulton: And they would – people didn't have cars then, but the ones that had cars would take 'em to register today. The supported it very well.

Daniel Saba: So, was this like a voter drive organization or –

Willie Bell Fulton: I'd think so, yes. Yes, it was. You didn't have many cars either in this neighborhood. You rode the bus and streetcars. You had streetcars then. You only pay seven cent to ride one way. You pay seven cent to ride. I think somebody told me now it's \$1.25 or \$1.50 I believe.

Elizabeth Saba: What were other things during that era from the '50s to the '70s, the civil rights era, big events that you remember like this registering to vote? Were there any other events in the community or things like that that you remember?

0:30:57.8

Elizabeth Saba: Just anything that pops into your head during that time period that you thought was significant? Or you could just paint a picture of what life was like during that time when you were raising your children and working.

Walter Fulton: Tell me 'cause I can't hear.

Willie Bell Fulton: Oh, she wanted to know what was going on that time just like we was happy to go vote and register to vote, so she was asking what else happened that was significant, something that was – we would be happy went on that time.

Walter Fulton: At that time.

Elizabeth Saba: Or hardships during that time.

Willie Bell Fulton: Huh?

Elizabeth Saba: Or hardships during that time. Anything.

Willie Bell Fulton: Anything. At that time I remember one year jobs like it is now, you didn't have a job. You got laid off, coming up to Christmas, and we didn't know how we was going to get the children something for Christmas. What am I trying to think about.

0:32:28.4

Willie Bell Fulton: Like I said, in that time, people were more sharing and caring. If anyone knew – of course, you have people know if you're taking about having a difficult time just like y'all sitting here, we wasn't communicating this well. If you were black, you – you have some people, like there were always some people like white would help, but they don't come out here, and if they don't know about it, you just wouldn't get help.

But you had black people who helped you better. So, those was some – it was just – it's so much different. It is a lot different now, but then it is a lot different in a lot of ways, lot of _____ too.

0:33:21.6

Willie Bell Fulton: So, either way, it's not all been resolved. It's like you get an opportunity to – like you all going to interview and come in and view our homes and stuff like that. At that time, we had to go to the back door. You couldn't go in the front door. Just out here we had – I know one particular insurance man he was trying to explain that to us. I remember saying, "Whatever you do, just put your husband _____ and council with packages _____." [*Inaudible comment*]

he's seen and talk to the neighbors and help, because people assume you have none, and you might not have it. You don't understand some things they tell you, but they don't know 'cause they think you know. I learn that too, you know, sometime they

don't know you don't understand. Then some is plain I'm better than you, so you can't have what I have.

0:34:29.0

Andy Mrkva: When did things start to finally change? How do they finally start to change is probably the right question?

Willie Bell Fulton: How did they finally start to change? Some people might say – I kind of differed on it some, but even when the schools were integrated, but I think that was a disadvantage for us all. We all needed the same type of stuff, you know, little too to study and learn, but not necessary we had to go to the same school because the disadvantage for our children, our people know how to deal with our children and not just beat 'em up. The point was once they got, when you broke it down to the integration, y'all's people didn't know how to deal with us that we are. Because we had to be strong to survive.

0:35:25.0

Willie Bell Fulton: Only way you survive, you had to be strong, whereas – see, I used to take care y'all babies, go to the **parent** home, you reading the babies books when they were babies. Our children didn't learn nobody reading book. But they learn. They learn they could be whatever they could be, and the same thing, ____ you had to learn they couldn't live in this world by themselves. We talk at you a lot the time, the maid and the cooking and all of that.

So, therefore, we needed each other, period. That's the way it was at the time.

0:36:10.3

Walter Fulton: The change was I think it really changed us to now be kind and caring as we should, and then it changed y'all to be better. I used to ride the bus, and the bus driver said, "I'd much rather the black kids to ride my bus," 'cause y'all was little brats. (*Laughter*) y'all wasn't. I'm just talking. (*Laughter*)

But you know, used to getting by and having your way, and whereas the black kids had to mind. They had to mind two way. Fit hey got in trouble they wasn't going to get out as well 'cause we didn't even know how, and there we were afraid to get in trouble because we didn't want our kids beat up and abused. Now, see that's the difference in it. Our kids don't really be bothered by nothing. Can't get 'em to do.

0:37:07.7

Willie Bell Fulton: So, I think really the big change was trying to make things better, and in some cases it really did, and in some cases it didn't. I think to me 'cause I never get too much – I'd rather for them to go because each person either need to be taught how to deal with each other and love, not just 'cause I got to do it. That's a big different in something you got to do and when you do it because you know you should and you care. There's a lot of different in caring and doing 'cause I have to do it. And I think as one – as a thing, I don't know whether I'm right in this or not, but I think so. We were basically brought up as love because that's all we had, and it was important. See, people don't think love is important, but if you don't love them, how you going to deal with 'em? That's one of the thing me and my daughter talk about every morning.

0:38:08.9

Walter Fulton: You got to love 'em even if they treat you bad. You have to love. As for skill and guidance, everybody – and I'm not a real old religion, but I do believe people should treat you right regardless of who they are, what they look like or whatever. You know, and love 'em. I kind of think that was one of the mistakes we had. We really – I say we 'cause I be black. At that time black peoples was struggling to do better, open the doors for us all this kind of stuff. So, therefore, we were fighting for that, and I said we all was feeling the same thing. If I was even qualified to do something, I'd have to teach – I work in a daycare center ____.

I would have to teach the white teachers how to deal with incidents where they ____ you miss nothing.

0:39:19.9

Willie Bell Fulton: You wouldn't like that. I tell you. *(Laughter)* You wouldn't like it, but you dealt with it, and you wouldn't go off like the people do now. Just wait. It has come around, and if you can do it and know what to do, you still going to have skill now, but the same token, you can get it without destroying yourself and anybody else, but it's not like that.

Andy Mrkva: Mr. Fulton, you mentioned that people here were churchgoing, and Miss Fulton, you brought that up as well. Could you describe the role that played in this community and how that has changed, if that has changed?

Walter Fulton: I mention church, church people, the church had moved out of this here West _____ vicinity, moved – we moved east part of Memphis and maybe build in different communities, like that, and left old buildings vacant like that. So, that did make a change for this community, the churches did.

0:40:48.0

Walter Fulton: I listen to television preachers, and everybody listen to 'em sometime, name **Jesse**. He's I think _____, but I sure enjoy it. He just – he believe he get something out of all churches, Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian. He don't make no different, and he teaches love and care, and that's what the world really need is the love and care with one another, love and care.

As I said, sometime that the world need more Christian and less churches.

0:41:57.6

Walter Fulton: And I enjoy Jesse **Holmes** _____. So, people really makes a difference in their minds and their ways. They move it out and move it away and left that building vacant like that. So, I just wish people would put what their purpose are, and it is to bring men to Christ – people to Christ. Change their ways.

0:42:56.6

Willie Bell Fulton: You ask the difference, speaking about this neighborhood.

Andy Mrkva: In the role it played in the community, yes.

Willie Bell Fulton: To add what he's saying, basically – the churches have changed a lot, most cases go back to less buildings. That's what they did. It's all about being real, begin truthful, so that is how it has tainted even the neighborhood. So, for instance, we have a bunch of churches, but for some reason they're not effective because I'm fairly educated. I really need the real trust, and come to be – let me say that the way it come out – main center, it's not about – see, when you're down, more than likely, if you don't know, you going to try to do right because somehow there's always talk, "Do what's right."

0:44:01.8

Willie Bell Fulton: And basic common sense teaches you that, but then we got some people there's cleanliness, some not. Not **clean**, they don't mind. They can do it, so they leave the truth and go where everybody's

getting – as I said, climbing up on top of each other and pushing everyone down.

So, in our own neighborhood that happens. You got better manners too and they might – just like I said, common sense. You can hold that and then deal the education part. Then you're okay, but as a whole that hasn't fit this neighborhood. Most these houses they're from the – we had a dump over this way. It's called Hollywood, that dump there, right? Lot of these homes – not these homes. They have been redone.

0:45:03.6

Willie Bell Fulton: Basically, when we came in this neighborhood, these houses built from scrap from the dump, a lot of the homes. People told me when we come in the neighborhood they were built from scrap, stuff they got off the dump, but it kept shelter over them, and like is aid, you didn't have – no, 'cause we had to burn lamp. You didn't have electricity. You didn't have light. Didn't have that here, and you didn't have gas. So, in order to live in little – maybe you call it chicken coups, and then that made them steal – and it's not like they had to be down like that here 'cause they still had pride. People didn't walk around with their head down and whining near as much as they whine now. They felt I guess good about themselves because unless you know how to make people ____ and unless it bothers you, the more you come into more knowledge of it, then the more you get disturbed about how you being treated.

0:46:16.9

Willie Bell Fulton: I got to find me some way to ____ too. That's just the way it is. This is you got enough, well, we don't great, but _____ we destroy it. So it is all about still leaving Christ out of it. The whole deal is leaving Christ out because you could – I mean, Christ would be the center, and you'd think perfect, but you know we're going to have much more happiness, peace and love if you have more people love, but it's all about money and prestige and who you are. And you want people to look up to you. So, that's what made a big change in our neighborhood. We didn't have a lot still, but we got lights on the street. We didn't have all of that.

0:47:13.5

Willie Bell Fulton: And you know, you have people beating up on you and taking and just it was – young man over here, seven _____ and a lot of time

sometime he just – think to take advantage of people, and that's not necessary at all.

Andy Mrkva: You mentioned the Hollywood Dump. Could you tell us a little bit about that, what you know about that?

Willie Bell Fulton: That's – okay.

Walter Fulton: I'm trying to think. (*Laughter*) I thought it would –

Willie Bell Fulton: That's like okay if they tell homeowners like now, but we don't know **where to go** they have place where they would take and dump all the stuff that wasn't wanted. It's – you know where Hollywood? Y'all know Hollywood. That used to be a dump and now it's clean. That's where they dump all the stuff they didn't want. They dump is all around. The neighbors and things could go and pull out a lot of good stuff to build their homes and stuff. Maybe some of them now they'd be little shacks because this whole area has been changed over to being a _____ getting people's opportunities to be able to make their house more comfortable, like this house. I told you how it started.

0:48:49.6

Willie Bell Fulton: With just a little wood and stoves, and now it has air in it, where we didn't have that then. Nothing like that. We didn't have lights. We used lamplight like that. So, the dump carried the people from then until they could step up more and more.

You know, one of the puzzling things, I know it didn't make sense to y'all, how can you be successful – and some people is, not saying they're not – and still do what's right? You know, and you still do well, but somehow people lose that. It's something about the mind that you feel like you got to be better. I tried even thinking that this house across the street, my friend had it and the people passed away, so she let us have it, and I was working at a daycare. When I started off, I just wanted a few children to just have a home life because what I saw mother's having children and for the children leave mom and dad at the babysitter. I never did thought that was too good.

0:50:13.0

Willie Bell Fulton: I thought mommas supposed to be taking care of their own childrens and the dad work and all that old stuff. But I can't see – I believe you all could run a business and do what's right and be okay. So, that's what I try, and it worked. I had about four different families of children, but in the beginning I worked at a

daycare, and I saw people doing stuff I didn't like. That's one thing. One person can make a difference if you carry the right spirit in you. You might have a hard time now, nobody now come along with ____ and discernment and all of that and how to do it, but I just start out letting 'em know because I learn from where I was that it wasn't necessary maybe you are doing real well, and maybe your child is more advanced then this child or somebody else's child, but you want to help them all.

0:51:20.2

Willie Bell Fulton: So, to help 'em all you got to feed 'em all. Each one is important where they are, and when I – with the parents, I let them know if there's something you don't like what I do, you tell me. You don't have to tell no neighbor or nobody else, and if I think I should change, I will change. If I don't, I won't. That's being honest. I never had any trouble. I think I had those kids about three or four years. I didn't have no trouble. I think I had one or two didn't pay – they paid me, and I was in – I end up grandma to all of them like they were my own.

So, trust me, I know people could do right, and we'd still be able to do well. I don't think we'd have the chaos that we're having now.

0:52:06.9

Andy Mrkva: Can you think of examples of people doing right during the Civil Rights Movement?

Willie Bell Fulton: Well –

Andy Mrkva: Especially any o in the community.

Willie Bell Fulton: In here, okay. Well, one of the things – let me see, Frasier. They didn't – I'd say natural because we had the big problem during the Civil Rights Movement like trying to be want to be accepted as a human like peoples should be, regardless of what color we were, and in that way, you had your older people trying to – and we had some older people that knew and could. They would basically tell you how to do 'cause sometime, like I said, we didn't know a lot what to do either.

0:53:06.9

Willie Bell Fulton: We had parents and basically our parents come along the way they were, and that was whopped a lot. People don't need all that beating. They just need the communication, caring. I mean the children. That made a big difference with our children 'cause it

taught them to be hostile too because parents are beating ____, so what did you do as a child? And you had older peoples. You had – what was it? At that time, made the shoes, Mr. Miles up on Briggs. We had two shoe places, and from what I could understand – and we had barbershops. Those to me you don't teach young ____ like my husband know, they had conversations talking to them. They didn't have fathers that tell them what to do or how to do.

0:54:09.7

Willie Bell Fulton: So, that was an asset, and even like I said, he was talking about even the churches. They did what they knew to do, but you got everybody need to learn, just like you all here. You're learning in a way. You're learning what you don't like, and you're learning what you like. You have people take you in their homes and tell them some ghost stories and have some fun, but you learn.

I had a neighbor come in from church. Every Sunday night he would go to listen to them.

Andy Mrkva: Can you think of like any specific discussions with them?

0:55:02.4

Walter Fulton: [Inaudible comment]

Andy Mrkva: Can you think of any specific discussions or talks that happened?

Willie Bell Fulton: I tell you some things. You used to go up there on Sunday nights and –

Walter Fulton: After church I'd go up the street here and hear them ghost stories.

Andy Mrkva: What were the ghost stories about?

Walter Fulton: Well, really they were about nothing. (Laughter)

0:55:52.1

Walter Fulton: It wasn't nearly nothing, just some old thing that people – I guess a custom that old people would do about people would die and go, die and cease to be, they still bodies would be seen and heard like that. And it was well believed by many, you know, and everywhere. I never forget my mother she always said she seen a ghost, long as she lived, she had seen a ghost. It was someone that she knew when she was a child, you child.

0:57:07.2

Walter Fulton: It – down in Mississippi. In _____ Mississippi and she would see him closer to home. His place was _____, their place where she lived, where her uncle came to Mississippi and in Louisiana that she raised up and became grown, and when she came back to Mississippi, and sometime while she was away, the interim, and _____, this old man died. Sometime before she got back.

0:58:07.9

Walter Fulton: Then one day she was _____ visiting, wasn't at home, _____ and she heard a scream as an animal pressing against trying to get the green grass on the outside, but she didn't _____. After she done look around, she heard a bush shake. Woof, woof, woof, and she look right around at that old man's face and dressed in light and dark clothes, and she pulled up to him, look in his eyes and see his eyes looking dim, and it scared her.

0:59:08.0

Walter Fulton: She was _____ and she asked this woman what she visit where was her husband, and she said that he went log rolling, _____ done in them days, cleaning the land, log rolling. She said, "Where is Lou, his brother?" "They are together." With no more said about the man she seen when they got to her house, but she heard who that man was. It was an old man that she knew when she was a child had left Catherine, Mississippi and went down to Louisiana.

1:00:12.6

Walter Fulton: And she came back that she was full-grown when she seen him. Anybody could see him. Anybody. That's the only case my mother mention a ghost the whole time, and it was an old custom. Lot of people did it. You all ever heard that before, something like that, like ghost? Never heard that? *(Laughter)* It used to be an old custom, ghost stories.

1:01:00.8

Willie Bell Fulton: May I say, from that, that was – she was telling stories like it was entertainment, just it was later there was telling. He and I figured it out 'cause we wondering why you don't see ghosts now? We have movies, so that's what they telling. We don't hear them stories now. He go up there, and he enjoyed those ghost stories. Just think a cow not having a head, walking in the house. *(Laughter)* So, that's why different stories, people would go and

hear those kind of stories. You don't have to do it anymore, but that was what it was. They just telling stories.

Daniel Saba: You mentioned integration in the schools. Were your children going to school at this time?

Willie Bell Fulton: Yes.

Daniel Saba: So, you remember any experiences with that with integration going on in the schools as your children were going to school? Any sort of personal experience with that?

1:02:20.4

Willie Bell Fulton: No. It got better. Without our kids in the beginning – wait a minute, trying to think. It was when the children were at Hyde Park, but it was better. It wasn't like they was afraid to go to school or they couldn't but you had teachers who – actually, stronger black teachers was moved to the white schools, and inexperienced white to deal with our children. It wouldn't help a thing. They was kind. They did what they knew to do, but it would not help the thing to be done because our kids still, for example, when I worked at **McLain**, they black and white there both, and we taught more strong _____. It's kind of tender like.

1:03:35.2

Willie Bell Fulton: So, that made a difference but it worked, but would I – a whole black school and inexperienced, maybe somebody just coming out of college started teaching, and they don't know how to deal. The kids would disrespect them, but that was a blessing. In this neighborhood people were interested in their children being successful in their life, wanted them to be teachers, principal, whatever, you know.

1:04:09.3

Willie Bell Fulton: And the parents if their children were doing something that was disorder or not being in that way, it did okay in our neighborhood, because this was a neighborhood, maybe it had less, but their children had to mind them. That was just the bottom line, no getting away with just what they want to do like they can now.

Elizabeth Saba: I'm really interested to know can you guys both share what do you feel is your proudest moment either about yourself or about your community, and I want you each to share your proudest moment.

[Audio Break]

1:04:52.5

Andy Mrkva: All right. It's recording again.

Elizabeth Saba: Hi. So, to get back to our question. All right. Again, we were asking the question: In your opinion, what are each of your proudest moments?

Willie Bell Fulton: What was your proudest moment.

Elizabeth Saba: What are you most proud of.

Walter Fulton: My father.

Willie Bell Fulton: No, what was you yourself personally most proud of. You know, experience you had that you very, very proud of something. Something, whatever. What was you proud of? I tell you what for myself, I'm thinking maybe it was first baby. I thought you'd be so happy seeing your first baby. Now, what would you be proud of?

1:05:52.1

Walter Fulton: Let's see.

[Crosstalk]

Walter Fulton: Well, I guess first child.

Willie Bell Fulton: You taking mine. (*Laughter*) Y'all have something to laugh about. There be something else. You seem to be happy to be getting married.

Walter Fulton: That might be the first thing. (*Laughter*) First thing, married. That was first thing to be proud of. So, that was a blessing. Lord really had something to do with our marriage. Then I make – I was raised mother raised me to have peaceable for her and not be ____ no weapons, 'cause she feel like I would have got in trouble. By all means, stay out of trouble.

1:07:25.0

Walter Fulton: And as I ____ my mother, no trouble at home, and basically, the Lord blessed me with this wife, eight children and they all met no trouble. They're peaceable. So, I have so much to be thankful for. Then you start talking like (*Laughter*) –

Willie Bell Fulton: I don't know what to do with these. (*Laughter*)

1:08:21.8

Walter Fulton: I was real thankful to get married to him because he was tall and handsome and very intelligent. He was. And I was real thankful to be able to get married. We really never had any real hard, 61 years. Basically, he was just – and we did have problems lot of times because _____ and even today people do, and I think about him being sick. He makes – he tries not to worry. If he's thinking, worrying, I hear people who say they get sick and they get old and blah, blah, blah, but so far so good.

1:09:17.0

Willie Bell Fulton: But I always goes back to – 'cause I feel like I knew less but God knows everything, and I trust him. So, I just have to be here and me, and I can be free. So, that is real. That's what I'm really proud of. You can be right, you let me be me and without dismissing me. I'm real happy about that. I enjoy life. I don't have a whole lot, just let me be free.

1:09:56.5

Daniel Saba: I did want to ask you about the sanitation strike that happened in Memphis.

Willie Bell Fulton: [Inaudible comment]

Andy Mrkva: [Inaudible comment]

Willie Bell Fulton: Pardon?

Elizabeth Saba: The sanitation strike that happened in the '60s was a big, historic moment for Memphis and Dr. King coming. What are your memories at that time about the strike, about Dr. King coming to Memphis? What was that like for you?

1:10:23.6

Willie Bell Fulton: And Kennedy getting killed, president. I forgot all that. It's there, but yeah. That was stressful. Very stressful. Did you hear?

Walter Fulton: I didn't quite understand.

Willie Bell Fulton: She was asking what was it like the sanitary strike and Dr. King getting killed, and I thought of President Kennedy. That was a really depressing time because everything still – at that moment when it come through, I can't remember who brought the news, but you know you don't get news like you do now.

1:11:06.6

Willie Bell Fulton: And everything look like it stopped. I remember that now, brought it to my attention. Also, the strikers and so forth, Dr. King, that was rough. Looked like your leader was gone, and that was a leader for your world really, especially in a lot of us because they seem to have to know. And Dr. King he was – he tried to – it cause trouble, but you can be peaceable, you create a problem because that's just the way it is. It's a fight.

Elizabeth Saba: And Mr. Fulton, do you remember any – do you remember that time when Dr. King was in Memphis and the garbage workers were striking? What do you remember?

1:12:11.6

Walter Fulton: It was a time for me and seemed like for me when _____ the people just seemed to me that a good person not in _____ of _____. Man who served Christ himself was murdered, his life taken from him, and then it was he died for us, poor man. He paid the price, and **fighting for us**. We suspect _____ can't pay the price for _____ we paid it. Man going to suffer. Man going to suffer.

1:13:35.4

Walter Fulton: I think the history should – it was prepare us for and understand the thing of the suffering or back was Adam in the New Testament, Old Testament, our people get on to the present time, _____ prayer for this _____ of this. [*Inaudible comment*]

Andy Mrkva: Was – I think that's all the questions that we brought, but we were wondering if there's anything you both would like to share, either about your own lives or about the community to add to this?

Walter Fulton: What?

Andy Mrkva: Is there anything you'd like to add yourself?

Willie Bell Fulton: Add to? No.

1:14:50.8

Daniel Saba: Anything we didn't ask that you think –

Willie Bell Fulton: For the community, you know.

Walter Fulton: This community this is very _____, this community. Just the whole city was. There was a time when it was calmed down and it was peaceful.

1:15:34.2

Walter Fulton: Beyond that, those things going to be far back and read about it on the _____. I have to consider that.

Elizabeth Saba: Well, on behalf of Crossroads to Freedom, we'd just like to thank you guys for participating in the interview. Thank you so much.

Willie Bell Fulton: Well, thank you all. Hopefully we were some help, but I guess it's like we _____ actually we're not. I'm not really worried about it because, like I said, we're free to live. So, appreciate you all wanting to come and listen to our chitchat. That's what it is, chitchat, and I still love – I like our community even – I love our community. I mean, I would like to have a great big house with closets and not be crowded, but that's all right too at this age. I'm just going to take one day at a time and enjoy life and thank the Lord for letting us live here in this neighborhood. I'm very thankful to live in this neighborhood. We have one 95-year-old lady there, two or three streets – I mean, two or three houses on this side.

1:17:14.7

Willie Bell Fulton: She would have been a great one because she knows everything. *(Laughter)* I mean, experience, and we have another one up in age

—

1:17:23.7

[End of Audio]