

Interviewer: For the record, can you state your name?

Interviewee: I'm Dr. **Mattie Marty** Daniels.

Interviewer: And where and when were you born?

Interviewee: I was born in 1935, in Memphis, Tennessee.

Interviewer: Okay, and can you – who are your parents?

Interviewee: My parents were Woody and Juanita Daniels.

Interviewer: Okay, and what is your current occupation?

Interviewee: I'm currently retired. I retired from the Chicago Public School System after 32 years of teaching high school biology, and I'm currently working on a curriculum in agribusiness training for young people so that they can learn how to become farmers or work in grocery stores, supermarkets, to try to set up markets in our neighborhoods, because we have to go out of the city to purchase all of the fresh fruits and vegetables that we consume.

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So, I'm in the process of trying to develop, basic, hands-on skills and information to help them to access some of the monies that are available for socioeconomically disadvantaged farmers and ranchers and we like to create urban agriculture opportunities.

Interviewer: And did you have any brothers and sisters?

Interviewee: I had one brother and he died about six years ago. He was a diabetic and that was a little rough on him. I still have a sister living in **Everloin**.

Interviewer: What did your parents do?

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Interviewee: My mother was a housewife and she had three children, and my father had, back in the early '40s, and '50s, my father owned two buses, and he carried field hands over into Arkansas to pick and chop cotton. That's something I'll talk about a little bit later. And then he died around '57. Had a heart attack, but he worked for **H. Blackman** Company on, across from the Pyramid on Main Street.

Interviewer: Where in Memphis did you grow up?

- Interviewee:* I grew up in Hyde Park.
- Interviewer:* And what are your oldest memories of that community?
- Interviewee:* Pardon?
- Interviewer:* What is your earliest memories of that community?
- Interviewee:* Okay, I'd like to tell you a lot of things about Hyde Park.
- Interviewer:* Yes, let's just –
- Interviewer:* Dive right in.
- Interviewer:* Anything that you want to share about Hyde Park, go ahead.
- [0:03:00]
- Interviewee:* Okay, well, Hyde Park, I shared some information yesterday with an elderly person, Ms. Hortence, Carolyn Scribbins, who's 96, and she wanted to share some things. She was born in Paducah, Kentucky and moved to Hyde Park in 1993. She was married to a minister, who married Mrs. Scribbins in the late '40s and he was pastor of St. Stephens Baptist Church.
- There was another elderly person that remember, everybody was kind of fond of, because he raised vegetables over the levy in the fields over there, and he would give vegetables to all of the neighbors that wanted them. His name was Brother Yarborough. He was a farmer and he furnished the neighbors with fresh vegetables.
- Most of the early homeowners were members of Homeland Church of God and Christ, COGIC.
- [0:04:00]
- They moved over on James Road about three years ago. Mother Caribbean started a childcare center in her home on Stovall. She has a house across the street from the place where she started the childcare center, and it's now rented, but she was also active with Shannon School.
- Shannon as built in the late '40s. Hyde Park was started, Hyde Park School was also started, but it was torn down and the post office on Trinity is on that spot where Hyde Park School was located. Ms. Caribbean organized the first PTA at Shannon Hyde Park.

Shannon School, Hyde Park, Cypress Junior High, there was a principal named Mr. Barber that lived on Davis and everybody was proud that the principal lived in the community.

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And there were a lot of teachers that came out of Hyde Park. There was a registered nurse that lived on Hyde Park Street. Now, there are quite a few houses that are busted open and abandoned on Hyde Park. Some of the permanent citizens in early Hyde Park where Alice Portis is still living, a person named Mrs. Jamie Winfrey.

It was a drug store called Stroger's Drug Store right at the corner of Hyde Park and Chelsea. And it was also an ice cream parlor there at Hyde Park and Chelsea in this drug store. The Stroger's Drug Store, there was –

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There's a young man named Frank Stroger, who went to Manassas. See, we left. I was at Manassas. I went to Manassas the whole 12 years. It was 1st through 12th grade out on Manassas and Firestone. It's been moved over, but a lot of us from Hyde Park went to Manassas, and some of us went to Douglas, before Douglas was closed down.

There is now a new Douglas High School, built on the same spot where the old Douglas was. One of the citizens who's now deceased that lived in Hyde Park started Hyde Park Women's League, Hyde Park Housewives League. My mother was a part of that group. The founder of that group was Ms. Georgia McCain.

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And she also helped to start the City Beautiful Organization that you know about. My mother was Mrs. Juanita Daniels. Another lady in the pioneers starting this group was Lucille White and they were also active in the community relations.

Okay, there was a group called Breakfast For My Lady, that we used to dress up and put on pretty hats and things and we celebrated community activities out at the old John, old Johnny Curry's Supper Club on Thomas. It's now defunct. It's a garage, but that was a popular place.

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That was the only place that we had to go to dances and I'm mentioning some of this because a lot of the people came from Hyde Park also went to school together at Manassas and Douglas, and there were a lot of permanent musicians, like Hank Crawford came from Hollywood over here on one of these streets here.

Hank Crawford and the late Hank Crawford was a musical arranger for Ray Charles. So, he finished Manassas in '52, the same year that I did. Frank **Soldier** is a jazz artist out west. Charles Lloyd also came out here, and they were members of the Rhythm **Bombers** Band at Manassas School. So, when we used to go to study hall, rather than study, just waste time.

[0:09:00]

We had to go to the auditorium. We packed the auditorium and we had to listen to jazz. (*Laughter*) So, most of us are very fond of jazz, because of this, and we were proud that we were on the scene with people like Hank, Soldier and **Frank** Crawford. I remember the Stovall Black Club and they're a few elderly women in their 80's and 90's and they're sort of like burned out now.

So, a lot of the things that could be done, need to be done in the community sort of neglected now. A minister named **Chi O'Neal Privins** and the Reverend **Melda Lee**, both of them are living, but they started the Hyde Park CDC.

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And they started it and First Commercial Bank gave \$25,000.00 to fight the drug, crime and drug activities in Hyde Park, but a lot of things are still going on, and a lot of the people started like, they got old and they don't have the energy and then really can't come out directly and fight drug activities all the time, because it might be unsafe.

One time my brother got on the bullhorn Woody Daniels, and he was going around in a truck saying come out and trying to get people to come out to meetings and get, be active in the drug activity, fighting drug activity, and his home, at that time, was firebombed.

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Fortunately, he was not hurt and his family, but that's one of the things that did happen. Reverend O'Neal said that they threatened him that they would harm his mother if he didn't stop his efforts to run them out of Hyde Park. Okay, now, as far as Hyde Park CDC, there are two Hyde Park CDC's. I still have an active older group, and we try to do a few human service things.

There's another person, so, who decided – I set up Hyde Park CDC in a small church. I took the choir room, and I made a CDC office out of it and they liked it so well, they decided to take it over.

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So, unfortunately, many things that could be done to improve the community goes undone, and you might notice all the time that

they are young people continuously on the corners, maybe gambling on the porches. When they leave school, they may go by some of these vacant houses, and then there's some older guys that are encouraging them and they have their backpack and they go in and out of the community store and the gang guys stand on the, in front of the store.

Okay, now, about Hyde Park CDC, I got a group of people together and we were supposed to build 12 new houses.

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And I applied, I got a study done, neighborhood revitalization study done with the University of Memphis, and it was very good, and another person decided that he wanted to build houses. So, he accessed our neighborhood revitalization study and he built the first new house, one of the first new houses. And so, I have, I was approved to become a charter. You know what a charter is?

Interviewer: _____ makes _____?

Interviewee: It's a community housing development organization, and those are granted by the city, whereas money can be accessed to build or rehab houses and the like. And so –

Interviewer: So, some funding was provided by the city to build the houses?

[0:14:00]

Interviewee: HUD and the city –

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: Can do that. Okay, there was one thing I'd like to remember is before fast food chains, my father, Woody Daniels had two buses, and he had as many as 40 or 50 people on each one of the buses. And he would take people over to Arkansas to chop cotton all day for \$3.50, \$3.25. That was good money for us. (*Laughs*)

I was a teenager and my dad took us over there on the bus. We could go on holidays, but we couldn't stay out of school. Sometimes we had perfect attendance. But he just went around the neighborhood and the people piled onto the buses and went over to Arkansas –

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Like, **Huey's**, nearby cities over, across _____ West Memphis and the like. So, I said he created jobs before fast food chains. In the late '40s, there was cotton. _____ cotton was grown also in

the community, in Hyde Park over the levy, behind the levy, cotton was grown over there.

Some of the jobs that people had were like at the Peabody, downtown, and waiters as waiters and waitresses. And there was some, most of the people in Hyde Park, some of the men that built the houses before a lot of housing programs.

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They worked at Firestone on Manassas, and Firestone Rubber Company, or Fisher Body was a plant that my father worked at and they was spray-painting planes. There was a place on Thomas Street called Homco. There was the Hollywood Post Office, and most of the new homeowners accessed loans on their own.

Tri-State Bank was, and continues to be a viable financial institution in the local community. You know about that, Tri-State Bank up here on Hollywood?

Interviewer:

Can you tell us a little bit about that?

[0:17:00]

Interviewee:

Pardon?

Interviewer:

Can you tell us a little bit more about that? Could you tell, could you expand on that or tell us a little bit more about the Tri-State Bank?

Interviewee:

Could I tell you a little more?

Interviewer:

Just for the record, yeah.

Interviewee:

Well, Tri-State Bank is the only Black bank in Memphis, Tennessee. And there are several branches. There's one, the south side out in Whitehaven. Tri-State Bank is also located her on North Hollywood Street, and I, of course, am a participant. I have a mortgage with Tri-State, a beautiful mortgage, and a beautiful place that I moved into about three years ago.

It's 21,000 square feet. It's on an acre and a half. And so, I have my mortgage and I'm very pleased with doing business with Tri-State Bank.

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Well, let's see if I left anything out. There was a shoe shop; a couple of shoe shops. It was a beauty shop on Hyde Park and it cost \$2.00 a head to get the hair done.

BaShawn Hardy, who is now deceased, opened up a grocery store on the corner of Nedra and Hyde Park. It's now a beauty shop called Concept 2000. Nina Garrett was one of the popular beauticians. Junior Patterson – there was a grocery store at Davis and Nedra that's now torn down. There was the Woods family, active in the community affairs.

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Now, I can give a pitch for my college Des Moines College. One of the things I did was, right out of high school, I got married, but I took the exam for licensed practical nursing, and we had a class over at Booker T. Washington to do our theory, first part of the course.

And the place that we went to was Memphis Vocational School For Practical Nurses. So, I was able to work my way through Des Moines as a licensed practical nurse at the old John Gaston Hospital.

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And I was in the second class for African American LPNs. The second class of LPNs. Later on, at John Gaston Hospital, they opened up a wing which is now the Women's Hospital, and that was opened, it was Edge, it was called Edge Cromp Hospital. It was opened up to, as a training school for African American nurses to take RN training.

But I just took the LPN and worked five years there. So, I was able to work my way through Des Moines, as I said. Those schools were not open to us. And so, that was good experience. I learned a lot.

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And then after finishing in Des Moines, of course, I moved to Chicago. And I taught there until retiring. One good thing about now, the old John Gaston Hospital is now called the Midplex. And the Trauma Center is one of the best in the country, I believe. A family member was injured one time, and he was airlifted from Mississippi to the, by helicopter to the Trauma Center.

And he never lost consciousness and that's a very excellent hospital, in the emergency and it was more or less a hospital where people without insurance had to go to. And the Trauma Center is named after Jesse Turner, one of the founders of Tri-State Bank.

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Almost done. I mentioned that the first commercial bank donated \$25,000.00 to fight drug activities in Hyde Park, but it certainly is still alive and well. Many of the houses and stripped and boarded

up. When they are boarded up, the boards are pulled off, and people still go in and do activities – some of the homeless people.

Children roam the streets and shoot dice on the vacant porches. They are encouraged by the older men – there are a few fathers in the homes.

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Many properties are frequently vacated. Some of us are still interested in helping make the living better and reach out to our current residents involved, too.

Mrs. **Privins** sends you greetings and wishes to remind you that the Lord is the leader and she is currently writing a book. And that's all I'd like to report today.

Interviewer:

Okay. Is there anything else that you would like to share, or can we ask you maybe one or two questions?

Interviewee:

Yes, you may.

Interviewer:

What is your, one of your proudest moments?

Interviewee:

What is my what?

Interviewer:

One of your proudest moments?

Interviewee:

I guess when I obtained my Doctorate Degree. I wrote a dissertation on developing model geriatric health care education planning program.

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And I wanted to focus on – I wanted a nursing home at one time, but I have since then become interested in agri-business, because it's a trillion dollar business annually in the United States.

And there's so many things that can be done around food systems when people are not interested in degrees, they can still learn about food safety and marketing and it gives me an opportunity, since I retired to also work with young people, as I like to plan things for them and wind them up and let them go.

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So, I sort of like put my dissertation on the back burner as far as care of the elderly, because I've developed another interest. It's still as important, and as a senior citizen, I realize that healthcare should be improved and more accessible at a reasonable cost. I do have a beautiful pension. However, I don't want to spend it all out

on healthcare. So, the fees, the costs could be better, but if one has a decent pension, then they like to take a big chunk of the cost.

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So, I think it could be more fairly _____ our president is advocating. So, that's one of the things, I suppose.

Interviewer:

Okay, and another question. You've had the opportunity to live in both Memphis and Chicago. What do you feel – how are the two different places different or similar? How would you compare with this growing up in Hyde Park to your experiences in Chicago?

Interviewee:

Well, I was active with Operation Breadbasket and Operation PUSH and we were kind of radicals, like. We got together and we went to neighboring cities. We had Black Expo and I saw – every week, there was a superstar at Operation Breadbasket.

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And I was in the choir with most of them were high school kids that was in the choir, and I was in the choir. So, we got a chance to see Quincy Jones, Michael Jackson, the Impressions. We got a chance to see Bill Withers, we got chance to see the superstars every week, you know, Saturday morning at the Operation Breadbasket movement, program.

And I like Chicago, because there was always something to do. I still like it, and I have some of the students that I taught and they still get in touch, some of them, a few of them. And they're like family, surrogate family members. I'm looking forward to going to Nevada pretty soon. One of my former students, she's doing a community garden with a small church there.

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And so, I'm gonna get out of the city, but I love Chicago, and I worked at a number of schools. So, well, what I like about – it's just always something to do, and I'm interested also in performing arts. And getting something going for the north side, and getting some new people interested in doing some things like **Stack** is doing on the south side. My son has made a farmer out of me is also a musician. He went up to Tennessee State for a while.

Interviewer:

How many children do you have?

Interviewee:

Pardon?

Interviewer:

How many children do you have?

Interviewee:

I have two.

Interviewer: Okay.

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Interviewee: But my mother also raised a grandchild for me. She's a biracial girl, and she finished Des Moines also two years ago, and she's working on her Masters now. And so, I'm trying to encourage her to take marketing, some of the courses in marketing. She's in system management for Wal-Mart.

Interviewer: Before we end, are there any experiences you'd like to share, being a teacher? I'm wondering were the schools you taught at, were they integrated schools, or –

Interviewee: Well, I only, at the time, it was very much segregated when I started in 1961. I worked a year in nursing when I first went to Chicago, and then I got the job teaching, and I taught at _____ Green High School.

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I have a niece that's now teaching at Richard T. Crane Vocational High School, and she's doing the community gardening right around the football field and on the rooftop and so, I like teaching and because I always felt that if a child was given enough time, if they were having difficulty, and there was a period that I had problems in the early elementary school.

So, I always try to be a little patient or maybe express something several ways and maybe they could get one of the ways. And there was a person teaching in Chicago called Marva Collins, and they discovered that some basketball player had gone through college and he couldn't read good.

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And she worked with that person, and so her expression was if you give her lemon, she could make lemonade. Well, I was a teacher at the time in Chicago, and I felt that I stayed and I worked with the children that they'd send me around to various schools – especially the troubled schools.

If they were gonna send like 500 Black students across a certain street where the schools, and they were not welcome in the neighborhood, they'd send me to that school as a troubleshooter. But I ended up starting Afro American Club, sponsoring the clubs and all that. I usually got in trouble and, but I had some students that were brave and we got together and we made a difference.

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Now, one period, one troubled school was John Finger High School, and we had a lot of racial problems, because I had a lot of White students and Black students and they were kind of sharp, and I gave them a lot of lessons, and they did a good job. They wanted good grades from me, and their parents wanted them to do well, as well as the Black parent.

And so, I kind of, when the Board of Education first sent me there, I kind of resented it. I wanted to work with Black children, cause I had come up in a segregated neighborhood, and I really didn't have interaction with White people until I went to the hospital to work. At that time, UT was very much segregated, and they didn't have spaces for –

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But nonetheless, because the students, I gave them a lot of work to do, and they did a good job of giving it back and they earned the A's and the B's. And so, I said, "These students want to learn from me, and if I don't want to work with them, then I'm a hypocrite." And so, I decided whatever student came before me on their ID number, those were the students that I was gonna work with.

And I just was determined to do the best with all my students. And I was rewarded and they were happy. They were happy with the grades that they got, and I didn't care what color the student was. It just so happens that I worked at Hyde Park Career Academy, Hayes Park Career Academy –

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And I worked at one south side school named Carver. I almost quit then (*Laughs*) they we so bad. And I, going back to Marva Collins. They were just bragging about Marva Collins all the time, and I said, "Well, she left and went to California." I said, "I stayed and I made lemonade over and over again." (*Laughs*)

So, and I used to say, there's no such thing as a bad child, but I changed my mind. (*Laughs*) So, this summer, I had about 12 students on and off. We bought a building down on Walker and Douglas next to the junkyard there.

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And for about five weeks, I had some students down there, and I gave them some work to do outside the building, right around the building, planting some vegetable seed, and a few flower seeds and some pots up on some pallets raised some wood man, the man gave us some pallets, and so, I had them out there planting.

They're not with me anymore, but they were there five weeks and they had to kind of like chop the grass right around the edge of this

building. It was designed to be a service station and Laundry mat. So, we gone make it a Farmers market, eventually. It's open now. It has metal beams and 6,000 square feet of concrete.

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It's going to be a service station and a laundry mat. So, we're gonna have to make some adjustments there. We are going to build some a number of raised bed garden boxes to – most of the soil is kind of clay, rock and sandy in the area where we had it bulldozed, and so, we're gonna make probably 20 raised bed gardens. Have you been to the garden site over on Heard?

Interviewer: I haven't.

Interviewee: Mary Norman?

Interviewer: Yes, I have been to that garden.

Interviewee: Okay, I took the students over there a couple days.

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And I was requiring them to go to the Easyway and the other stores, Piggly Wiggly's, Kroger's and look at the produce, see how it's displayed, how it's sold. And so, when I wanted them to work early in the morning, up to about 10:30, before it got to hot, and most of the days, the temperature was 90 something degrees, up to 104 index.

So, I would talk to them a little bit about those, and the fact that being out in the sun after about 11:00 or so, when the sun is highest, and then when the heat index is higher, then it's a good, it risks that a person will get sick.

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So, I tried to design some activities that they could even review what, some kinds of rock and the fact that rocks are broken down into soils and leading up to understanding some of the chemicals that human beings need in the diet and some of the chemicals that plants need for proper growth and the like. So, as I said, I had to design activities for them to come out when, come out of the sun.

Do certain activities at first in the morning, and then I kind of added a little teaching to it. It's hard to get a person to work, say straight work, work, five hours straight, and these are young adults and they were, sometimes they were a little resistant.

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But then they got to the place that they kind of liked what they were doing, and I took them, as I said to look at the raised bed

gardens. So, we're gonna build – I'm in the process of looking at – I looked at the raised bed gardens over on Angeles, you know, what Angeles is, on Madison? That Piggly Wiggly? And the street is just east of –

Interviewer: _____, correct?

Interviewee: Of Cleveland on that lot over there.

Interviewer: By the Piggly Wiggly? Is it by the Piggly Wiggly?

Interviewee: Yes, it's by the Piggly Wiggly. It's on the north side on Angeles Street.

Interviewer: Yes, I know where it is.

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Interviewee: I took some pictures of it, but any rate, they had some raised bed gardens built by some of their assisted living. I have not met those people, but I did ask the gentleman a little over a month ago who made the boxes. So, we are probably going to get some used wood.

Looked like they got some new wood, but we're going to get some used board, and I'll probably recruit some young people from 38103, young people that work with me the early part of the summer. They were from 38127, and this is 38108, and we, also 38107, I'd like to recruit some young people.

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I determined that I'd rather have older persons when I go further with the court, starting in September. I'd like to receive some funding, and sometimes we receive funding from a group called **Southern Echo**, down in Mississippi, but I'm gonna try to get some funds from the United States of Agriculture that are available to us for urban gardening, urban farming here.

And in a few days, we'll get somebody to help us by putting these boxes together, 8 by 20, a number of them. We have an acre and a half that is being cleared, but the grass has grown up again, but we have to have it bush _____, and that's what I'm doing now.

[0:42:00]

Interviewer: All right, well, on behalf of Crossroads to Freedom, we'd like to thank you for participating in this interview.

Interviewee: You're quite welcome.

Interviewer: We look forward to speaking with you again.

Interviewee: I hope you figure some of the things out. (*Laughs*)

Interviewer: So, we're gonna send you, we're gonna –

[End of Audio]