

[0:00:02]

Ashleigh Taylor: Well, good afternoon. My name is Ashleigh Taylor, and –

Cris Hoyle: My name is Cris Hoyle.

Ashleigh Taylor: And this is the Crossroads to Freedom Summer Project 2010, our second interview for the summer. So we're gonna start off with just a couple basic questions. So if you could please say your name, the year that you were born, and the city that you were born and raised in.

Doris Lewis: I am Doris Jean Smith Lewis. I was born in Memphis, Tennessee, July 6th, 1935.

Ashleigh Taylor: So what type of occupations have you had in your lifetime?

Doris Lewis: I have been in education. I spent 43 years in education, as a teacher in the elementary school, and I retired from Guthrie Elementary School as instructional facilitator.

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Ashleigh Taylor: Can you tell us about your parents and their occupations?

Doris Lewis: My parents were – well, they are deceased. My father, Eddie Smith, Sr.; mother, **Rena Vietta** Lee Smith – they came to Memphis, Tennessee in 1923 from Tipton County, Brighton – the little town – as farmers. Upon arriving – coming to Memphis, my father was employed at the Hardwood Flooring Company on Thomas Street in North Memphis, and my mother got a job at the Memphis Steam Laundry, cleaners, which was down on Madison.

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My daddy worked at Hardwood from '23 until – 1923 to 1972. Mother quit working at Memphis Steam Laundry in 1948 or '49, and she remained a homemaker and whatever little jobs that she needed to do, to assist the family income, but it wasn't on a permanent basis. Daddy worked and took care of us, but Mother would work to get some money, some extra money, for my brother and me, if needed.

Ashleigh Taylor: So you only had one sibling, your brother?

Doris Lewis: One sibling.

Ashleigh Taylor: Can you tell us about him?

Doris Lewis: Okay. He's Eddie Smith, Jr. He's three years older. And he was born in Memphis, and we were together.

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We've been together all our lives. He's – and my parents are deceased; he's still living.

Ashleigh Taylor: Okay. So now let's talk about your experiences growing up. Can you tell us about the neighborhood that you grew up in?

Doris Lewis: Okay. I grew up in North Memphis, and I guess in the past 20 years or so, the people who've been in my area call it "Scuttlefield." But it was – I would say the parameters of the neighborhood would be Chelsea to Firestone; maybe Morehead to Thomas – the Manassas School area. I attended Manassas, grades 1 through 12.

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Ashleigh Taylor: So how was your home life, growing up?

Doris Lewis: My home life was excellent. I had loving parents who nurtured me and made sure that I had everything that I needed. The values that I received was that I was – I could be anything that I wanted to be, and they assisted me. They provided for my educational needs and whatever – I was gonna say – well, they gave me the bicycles – well, they – what children need. They never said no.

They worked hard to provide for it, but they also taught me about being honest, working hard, and being good to people. And their example was that they loved their neighbors, and so I had that same respect for people.

CUT [0:05:02]

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Ashleigh Taylor: So was the Scuttlefield neighborhood close-knit? Did everyone know everyone?

Doris Lewis: Well, on my street, Manassas, we knew everybody on the street. And we knew what church they attended. And we were just very close. Also, there were the older – I would say, ten years older – when I entered the first grade, there were neighbors who were graduating from Manassas and going to college. So at six years old, I saw my neighbors going to college – to LeMoyne, Lane, Tennessee State. So I knew then that I was going to college. They were older, but I knew that I was going to college.

Ashleigh Taylor: And how long did you stay on Manassas Street, as a child?

Doris Lewis: All my life.

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I was born at 1018 North Manassas, and I remained there. I went to college, but when I finished college, I came back home, taught, and stayed there until – well, I married, and I stayed there until my husband and I bought a home and moved on Edward Avenue.

Ashleigh Taylor: Uh-huh. So what's the most influential moment that you had from your childhood?

Doris Lewis: That I am important and I have skills and contributions that I can make. I can make a living; take care of myself – and that I don't have to be dependent on anybody, because God has given me my talent and he's given me life. So I can make it.

Ashleigh Taylor: So can you tell me about Manassas Elementary School?

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Doris Lewis: Well, Manassas Elementary School, at my – while I attended, it was one school, 1 through 12. So I knew the kids in the elementary, junior, and so forth. So I – it was just one big family.

Ashleigh Taylor: Was there a lot of students that attended the school?

Doris Lewis: In my class of 1953, there were 250 in the graduating class. From the 9th through the 12th, we had kids from Carnes, Grant, Hyde Park coming into Manassas, so that enlarged our environment, but as I said, from 1 through 8, the kids who attended lived in New Chicago, Morelandtown, Smoke – Bearwallow, ___ such.

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Ashleigh Taylor: Through our research of Manassas High School, we found that the school has such a long history, just of being the pinnacle of education. [Sound of chime] Can you just describe to us Manassas High School and the impact that it had on the community?

Doris Lewis: Yes. My – the principal during my – I was at 1 through 12 – was Mr. J. Ashton Hayes. And we just adored him and admired him. His ability to stand on the stage during assembly – and we respected him, and if anybody talked during that assembly, he could point you out. And as for –

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discipline, we knew that there are rules; there are laws. And you obey, and if you disobey, you will be punished. But the most important thing is to respect each other.

I was interested in music, so from 1st grade on, I always looked at the band. And as soon as I was able – when I got in junior high, I applied for an instrument. I wanted to get in the band, so I was able to get in the band after a semester, in the 8th grade. And I was in the band from the 8th grade to the 12th grade. I graduated as a trombonist, president of the band. And I was student director. And also, while I was –

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in the band, each year we played for graduation, and I saw those kids graduating and receiving scholarships. So in the 8th grade, I saw them receiving scholarships, so I said, "Well, my goodness, I can get a scholarship. All I've got to do is to work hard and be the best." So I worked to be the best trombonist. So, as I say, looking at the kids ahead and in the environment had a very important part in seeing what others can do, and if others can do it, I can do it too.

CUT [0:10:42]

Ashleigh Taylor:

So that influence that the students had – did that make you want to remain active in the alumni association, as you are currently?

Doris Lewis:

Yes. There was a motto, "Nothing is too good for Manassas." And our school song: "We Will Never Let Manassas Fall." Okay.

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Everything wasn't peaches and creams, but we know – we were taught in life that everything's not gonna be peaches and cream, and you've got to adapt and adjust. We competed with other schools. Booker Washington, at that time, was the big competitor. And we knew that there were differences – a little different – some differences in the things that Washington had, that Manassas didn't, but we realized that it didn't matter, because our principal, Mr. Hayes, had his philosophy of life, and Mr. Hunt, who was the principal of Booker T. Washington, had his philosophy. So we just accepted life as it was, and we did the best we could. And right now, we work hard to –

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assist the kids, make sure that those kids who are at Manassas now do well. If we made it, they can make it. We can do whatever we can to keep them going.

Ashleigh Taylor:

So how do you think that integration and segregation impacted your school?

Doris Lewis: As I look back, and during my – at my experiences, I was happy then, and all through life I've been happy, because happiness comes from within and not from outside forces. You take what you have and do the best that you can with it. We knew that there was a difference in the system: a white and a black.

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We couldn't go to the white schools, but that didn't matter. And in many instances, the books, materials, and so forth came to Manassas – had been used at the white schools. But still, we did the best that we could. It was no big deal.

My parents always bought my books and everything that I needed. When in the band, they bought my instrument. I took type and commerce, and so they bought my typewriter. But if they hadn't, I still could've made it, because there were kids who didn't have it, but they made it. So as I say, it's all in attitude. I see the difference.

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In the '60s, I started teaching – well, in '57. But I graduated from high school, '53; four years of college at Arkansas AM&N– now the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff – and I wanted to major in music, but I knew my parents' financial status took me – gave me four years, so I said, "Well, after four years, I need a job."

So I majored in elementary education, because at that time, with only four or five high schools, I might not have been able to get a job in music. So I majored in elementary education because I knew I should be able to get a job in the elementary school. So that's –

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That was my focus. And then after my undergraduate work, I had in high – some high school teachers in the 9th – well, I had – and I found out that they had received master's degrees from the Big Ten, one of the Big Ten schools such as Illinois or somewhere. So I said, "Well, now, when I finish AM&N" – which was black – I said, "Well, I know I'm going to go to one of the Big Ten schools and see if I'm not as good as those folks are – compete with them." So I went to Indiana University and got my master's degree. And I had no problem. So what I'm saying is that you can work hard; it doesn't matter whether you in a black school.

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You can still make it in a white school if you just apply yourself and work hard. You might have to work a little harder, because there were some courses at Indiana University that I took that was some information that I had to go way back, because I hadn't been exposed to some things. But that didn't deter me. I still got my –

received my master's degree, and all the courses I took, I had As and Bs.

CUT [0:16:37]

Ashleigh Taylor: So looking at the history of Manassas and the track records that it has, and also the other schools in the surrounding areas, like Douglas High School, do you think that integration was worthwhile?

Doris Lewis: I have pluses and minuses.

Ashleigh Taylor: Would you like to expound on that?

Doris Lewis: Okay.

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With the pluses, the doors were open. And when I say "doors were open" – there were jobs that were not available when I graduated from college in '57, 1957. But by '64, '65, there were jobs open at the Post Office; all these things opened up. And those kids who came through in the late – in the '60s were able to apply for those.

And then, also, it – you didn't – if you had the ability, a college degree wasn't the determining factor of whether you got that job. I remained in education, but I could've applied, if I had wanted to, to some other, because all the departments – ____ the Department of Agriculture – all of those jobs –

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opened up – the federal government – that weren't available before integration. So I would say it did open doors. That's a plus.

But some of the minuses are: as an African-American, I have come to the conclusion that some of us, as parents, didn't instill the same values that we had been taught, in our children.

Ashleigh Taylor: What type of values?

Doris Lewis: That you don't have to look and see what somebody else is doing. Stick to what you're doing. Stick to your own. Can I get some water?

Ashleigh Taylor: Yes, ma'am.

[0:19:02]

Doris Lewis: Can you cut it off?

Ashleigh Taylor: Yes, ma'am. So we were talking about the minuses –

Doris Lewis: Okay.

Ashleigh Taylor: – that integration played.

Doris Lewis: Okay. So as I said, sometimes we forget who we are. An example: some of the children – and also the parents, when they would come to the school – there were some who wanted their children in the white teacher room. And so I felt a little funny –

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about that. I said, "Well, what is it – some folks think that white is better than black." And so that was one of my minuses, because I just feel that my people are just as good as – okay, my race is just as good as the Caucasians. And just because it's white, or the white folks got it, doesn't mean that that's the best. And sometimes I just felt that sometimes people – they didn't have the right attitude, or they didn't – to me, didn't feel good about themselves –

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because I feel if you feel good about yourself, you don't have to try to be like somebody else.

Ashleigh Taylor: So being a schoolteacher for so long, did you see that impact on students continue, or that influence on students?

Doris Lewis: Well, I know there's controversy over spanking and the type of discipline African-Americans used before integration. And then after integration, the Caucasians had a different lifestyle. They didn't believe in paddling. And then in the school system, everything – that changed. The black folks didn't want their –

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children paddled. So, to me, it's a farce, because it didn't hurt me. And my parents weren't abusive. So if you tell a child, "No, no, no," three or four times, and they don't get it, well, you can be creative, but still, there was an old philosophy that if it didn't reach the mind by talking, it could go from the rear to the head, and they might remember. But as I said, in discipline, parents have to recognize the fact that to discipline a child, that parent has to be disciplined, too. You can't just tell a child –

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"Don't do this," but you have to show the child that in order to be disciplined, you have to have control over yourself. You don't do whatever you wanna do, when you wanna do it. And if you're gonna teach this to your child, then you have to have the same principles and mode of operation.

CUT [0:23:29]

Ashleigh Taylor: Okay. I think it was the ____ ____ ____ now.

Cris Hoyle: All right. Let's talk about – a little bit about the period from the 1950s to the 1970s. Are there any stories in particular that you wanna try and share with us?

Doris Lewis: Well, in the '50s, the late '40s and the '50s, in our environment, in our neighborhood –

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our black African male – African-American males, to me, were abused by the police. And in our neighborhood, I remember the police car, number 21. And my brother and his friends would go downtown, on Beale Street, to some event, and when they would get back, at Thomas and Wells, the police car would – about 11:00 – would be sitting there. And then those boys, when they got off the bus and started walking home – the policeman would harass them. And I just thought it was terrible.

Also, when my brother graduated from high school, and the year before he went in the Army, he would –

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go to the pool room on Thomas and – near Firestone; Firestone near Thomas. And one of our neighbors would come – came home one – or called my mother and said, "Where's Junior?" So we said, "Well, we're waiting for him to come home for dinner." So she said, "Well, I was told that we were – we heard that he's in – down at – the police took him to the station."

So Daddy went down to get him, and he paid whatever it was. But he was arrested for loitering, when he was only in the pool room, shooting pool. But the policeman said that he was loitering; he shouldn't have been in there. So that happened three times. The second time Daddy went and paid to get – and got him out, but the third time, my brother –

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told Daddy when he went down there, "Don't pay no money, Daddy. They gonna let me out tomorrow about 9:00." So Daddy came back home, and Junior spent the night. But to me, that was just terrible. But as I said, other than that, we – I don't know why, in growing up as a child, I – we had a fear of the policeman. Our yard had – was separated from the sidewalk with hedges. And when we saw the police car coming down the street, we would hide. And I guess it was just from fear. So this is just connotations of how we felt toward the law enforcement officers.

Cris Hoyle: Do you feel like it's gotten any better –

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since back then?

Doris Lewis:

Maybe so. Well, in these – well, in the '50s, when we first got the black policemen on the – you know, the force – they were allowed only to arrest black folks. They couldn't even deal with the white folks. So, how unjust is that? But that's life; we lived through it. And so now you look at the way things are, and as I said, some of my friends say, "Well, things are different today. You know, "We're in a different society and so forth." Well, we are –

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– simply because of our attitudes and behavior toward each other. But the basics are the same: treat your neighbor as you would want to be treated. That's if you believe in the Christian faith, because there are some philosophies, you know, "Just live and let life, you know, go." So – but it's all in your philosophy of life.

CUT [0:28:36]

Cris Hoyle:

What was it like, trying to – what was it like, living during that period? Like, besides the police brutality.

Doris Lewis:

I had a very good life. As I said, that just stood out – those two, about my brother ____ _____. I had no problems. I was able to –

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accomplish and do whatever I wanted, because if I hadn't been so interested in – well, my parents were more mature when my brother and I were born, because I think they had been married, maybe, about – between 15 and 20 years before we were born. So I would say they were doting parents and – maybe not "doting," but they were mature to the point where they were able to understand and give us the time.

Yes, they worked hard, but we were able to adjust and do – for example, during the – in growing up, we didn't have a car, but on holidays and special days, we were allowed to ride the bus from one end to another. So each time –

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we went a different route, and we were able to see the whole city. And also, we were able to go to the baseball games at **Rushwood Stadium**. Okay, that's all – you know, no more. But as I said, we had a very good life. I mean, as I said earlier, happiness comes from within and not the outside forces.

Cris Hoyle: Did you have any kids?

Doris Lewis: My husband and I had one son. He's 46. He started out going to school with me, public school, but during the integration and so forth, I was transferred from Douglas Elementary to Guthrie. So I decided –

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We decided that, rather than him being transferred, too, from school to school or whatever, we moved him to a parochial school. And so he graduated from a parochial high school – elementary and high school. But he attended our alma mater, Arkansas AM&N – University of Arkansas. So he has some of our same values. He might not be the hardest worker. My husband is a farmer, and my son majored in Ag, Economics, but he's – my husband grew up on a farm, so he went and worked for the family farm _____, so –

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But the son is not the farmer – and it might be because he didn't grow up on the farm. But he has our same values.

Cris Hoyle: What values do you believe that those are? Like, did you –

Doris Lewis: Yes.

Cris Hoyle: And did you add any other values besides what your parents had taught you?

Doris Lewis: Well, honesty; treat people the way you wanna be treated; love people; love your neighbor as thyself. And if you see any injustice, tell it. And we really found out that when he was in elementary school, he saw one of his peers, when the teacher left the room, go and take something from her pocketbook. And he told the teacher after school. He knew that that boy might get him, but –

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he still told it. So you don't see something going on wrong and not tell it. So that's a principle that I have grown up with and I deal with it. And sometimes I'm criticized for speaking out. And in my teaching, I would always hold up – you know, sometimes children are put down, but I always defend the ones that are put down, because I know that they aren't being treated fairly.

CUT [0:33:40]

Cris Hoyle: During the 1950s and '70s, what kind of activities were you involved in?

Doris Lewis: Okay. With the – I've been involved with my church; I was a Sunday School teacher.

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And – what else? I've been a member of a sorority. And as I say, within the church, Sunday School teacher. And then also I played trombone with the choir and – during worship services. Member of the NAACP and neighborhood block club. I think that's – that's most important.

Cris Hoyle: Did you feel the same kind of unity, like how you did living on Manassas Street, at your church?

Doris Lewis: Yes, because –

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on our – on Manassas, we had – as I said, we had AMEs, CMEs, Baptist, Catholic, but we were all together. And whenever necessary, we attended church together. I mean, within our church, Trinity Christian Methodist Episcopal Church – been there all my life – we had the same unity.

And during that time, you could walk down the street from our house to church, and you knew everybody along the way. So that was no fear. Somebody would tell your parents, if you did something wrong. But nowadays, some parents don't have the same philosophy. They feel that – they believe the child –

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and think somebody else is lying on the child. And if people really think about it, they know children will lie, because they knew as they were children, they would tell a lie if that would save them from a whipping. So, you know, that's just common knowledge – that folks not gonna tell the truth all the time.

Cris Hoyle: Are you still active in the NAACP?

Doris Lewis: Yes.

Cris Hoyle: Do you – what kind of activities do you work with? 'Cause I work with the **youth** NAACP sometimes.

Doris Lewis: Well, no, not on the ___ – I just do whatever I can to help with membership. I make sure that I try to get people to become members. And –

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I support any NAACP activity, but as I say, I really spend a lot of time in my sorority, Alpha Kappa Alpha. And I was an officer – I held most of the major offices – for over 20 years. And within that context, there were programs – Operation Big Sister – that dealt with children; a teenage improvement club that dealt with young women. And there was a reading program that dealt with tutoring. So within the sorority's context, I've been involved in the community and working with children. Also, in –

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the '90s, within the North Memphis and Manassas community, there was a program that was developed and chartered, the Community Youth and Business Partnership. And I worked hard with that program in getting – helping kids get jobs with the Kroger company, and what – mentoring and whatever. But those kids got jobs, and the other kids saw that they were getting jobs and from then, they went on and got jobs. But this – see ____ **BP** ____, we would go to Kroger's and find jobs for these kids, and then we would mentor them on how to keep a job.

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So I would say I've really been involved.

CUT [0:39:13]

Cris Hoyle:

Did segregation or integration shape your experiences with those activities?

Doris Lewis:

I've adjusted to the changes. And with my experiences, yes, I know that people are people. The skin color does not matter. People are people. And you must understand where people are coming from, because our environments and our experiences are different, but still we have to learn to accept our differences, because it's for sure we're born –

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into this world and we're gonna go out, but how we treat each other and accept each other as humans then – you know, life ain't worth living, if I can't treat you the same way I wanna be treated, even though your skin color might be different or even though your beliefs might be different, because all the different religions in the world – but still the bottom line is that we live and we die. And none of us know where we're going after we die. But we're bigger and broader, and our environment is much larger when we learn how other people live, their culture, their mores and so forth.

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So, yes, it has broadened me, and I have traveled. I've spent time in – spent six weeks in Africa as a part of a people-to-people

program, Winrock, based at USAID in the Côte d'Ivoire in Africa, in a village, working with the people, trying – dealing with the skill of the women in a village, trying – giving them skills of producing better crops. And with that experience, it's still the same: people are people. People are people, no matter where they live. And I found out that those Africans are just as happy, even though their –

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environment and their access to things that – you know, the so-called world that we live in, you know – different, but still, they're happy. And they use what they have.

I've said if I could take some of these African-American children over there, when they come back, they'd have a different idea on how to live and how to use their talent, because you have to work to survive. Here, our kids don't know anything about work. You tell them to go out there and cut the grass; "It's too hot." You understand what I'm saying?

Cris Hoyle: Yeah.

Doris Lewis: Does that make sense?

Cris Hoyle: Uh-huh. Were there any other kind of experiences you had during that time period that stand out to you?

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Doris Lewis: _____. There's – well, change, change, change. Nothing remains the same. And whereas I would have – okay, in the '60s, before integration, we could only go to our nightclubs or our hotels. But then once integration – so-called integration – came about, we were able to go to the Peabody and to all these other places. And we abandoned our nightclubs. And I just thought that was terrible, but –

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I couldn't influence some of the groups that I was a part of to go to our nightclubs rather than to the Peabody or the **Chisga**, _____. But as I said: change, change, change. Make the best of what you have. And you have to accept that even though people don't agree with you, take that into consideration.

Cris Hoyle: Do you think that people not going to the neighborhood kind of nightclubs ended up causing any change in the unity between the neighborhood?

Doris Lewis: Yes. Yes, because the neighborhood's, you know, being changed. They – and as I said, there was no need –

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for – the neighborhood clubs and so forth didn't – couldn't prosper. But as I said, "That's life."

CUT [0:45:24]

Cris Hoyle:

Do you remember when you started hearing about sit-ins or civil rights demonstrations?

Doris Lewis:

Yes. That was in the early '60s. And I was teaching at that time, and then in the summers I was away in school. So I didn't march in the parades, as such, but I did participate – for example, the downtown stores were boycotted –

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at that time: **Bree's** and **Gold** – they said, "Don't shop where you aren't allowed to do certain things – treated fairly," because there was Gerber's – there were some stores downtown on Main Street that blacks couldn't – or African-Americans couldn't try clothes on. So we were boycotting them. And so I saved some money for about three years, by not – I know at least two or three years – by not shopping downtown. And then they opened it up, where we were treated in the same way.

Cris Hoyle:

Do you remember hearing about or witnessing any civil rights movement ____ things?

Doris Lewis:

Yes. I know – but there were kids at LeMoyne College who –

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participated in the – what is the marches or whatever. And afterwards, when they applied for jobs to teach, they were not hired. They had to go – I found out later on, they went to Arkansas or Mississippi to teach, and then gradually they came back.

But another experience in – after Dr. King was assassinated, our sorority was hosting the – a regional conference at the Rivermont. And you was – we couldn't go out. Once you were in the hotel, you couldn't get out, you know? What is it, a blackout or whatever? And the police – law enforcement – they were manning everything. And if you were out on the street, they – you were arrested. So I thought –

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that was terrible. And those of us who were staying in the hotel couldn't go home, you know? We weren't going home anyway, but there were those who attended the conference – had to spend the

night because they would've been arrested if they had been out on the street. So that was '68 or – '68 or '69.

Cris Hoyle: Were there any people that caused – that kinda shaped your thinking about the civil rights movement and how you **interact** in it?

Doris Lewis: Well, whatever viewpoint the NAACP brought to the community, I went –

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I tried to participate or do whatever was necessary, but as for shaping or influencing – I've always been a thinker, myself. And I try to evaluate whatever is going on according to my philosophy of life. So I'm not one to do because everybody else is doing. I'm – I operate according to my own viewpoint. So there were things that happened that I agreed with and things that I didn't agree with, but as a larger part, I'm a part of the African-American community and a part of the city of Memphis.

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So I do whatever is necessary to be in compliance. And as I said, there were riots, and – but as I – the viewpoint was, there should've been more education as to what – educating rather than just abruptly – our young people really abruptly just going out and setting fire to things, 'cause I remember I was – when I would leave a school, the kids would be all out in the street. And then there were Black Mondays, back in the – in – and there was a reason for it, but the way our young people reacted was negative.

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But then once you try to explain it to them – another way to react – was very difficult for them to perceive and understand.

Cris Hoyle: So do you believe the NAACP being, like, a kind of central organization to helping civil rights – do you think that helped to speed up movement?

Doris Lewis: Yes. And the NAACP was a voice that we could go to, to let them know what was going on in our lives. And then they could speak for us. So yes, very important.

Cris Hoyle: How –

Doris Lewis: They addressed the issues. I would say that.

Cris Hoyle: Uh-huh.

Doris Lewis: Inequality.

CUT [0:52:04]

Cris Hoyle: How would you –

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compare race relations in Memphis then and now? Like, what do you think has changed, and what hasn't changed?

Doris Lewis:

Hmm. With integration, back in the '60s, _____, of schools, the movement in neighborhoods – African-Americans wanted better housing, so within the schools, being integrated as such, and the environment – okay, I'm gonna give you an example.

[0:53:02]

At Guthrie Elementary School – I grew up in that area, and Guthrie was white. And all 'round there, white people lived. **By the** time integration came, the people who lived around Guthrie moved, and black people – time black – moved in and bought the houses. So that area ended up being totally black. If I – in **Smokey** City, there was Gordon Elementary School. That was a white school. And the kids who lived in Smokey City had to walk to Carnes or to Grant, whereas Gordon School was right there in that neighborhood. By the time integration – the white folks moved out and the black folks moved in.

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So when – you ask, "Is there really integration?" Another example: Hickory Hill. What happened? Black folks moved in; white folks moved out. Frazier. Okay, in my neighborhood, they – the project was there, and then when they tore the project down, those folks moved to Frazier. Now, where did the Frazier folks go? So, now, you asking questions – and what in the world is happening? But, as I say, we have to recognize that we are all in this world together. Now, we have the city of Memphis – okay, there's a problem with the Memphis City Schools.

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Always, you know, needing funds. But then the Shelby County Schools – you never hear any information about them. Everything is publicized about the Memphis City Schools, but nothing is publicized in – about Shelby County. Shelby – and I find out from some of my friends who worked in Shelby County – those schools aren't any different from Memphis City Schools. Memphis City Schools – their programs _____ unavailable in the Shelby County Schools.

But as I said, you just look at it so – when you really ask yourself, "What's the difference?" – you make the best of what you have. It's supposed to be integration, but –

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still the bottom line is: you're successful according to your own values and what's important to you. It's not a matter of where you live, but: how do you treat the person next to you? You can't put yourself off on somebody. I can't make you like me. But I can like you and accept you. Now, if I don't like the way you operate, I can still be cordial. If I don't like your activities, I don't have to participate, but I can still be cordial. And I know race has –

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nothing to do with, you know, really how we act.

Cris Hoyle:

Is there any advice you would want younger Memphians to know?

Doris Lewis:

Know yourself. Know who you are. Accept yourself. Know what your skills are, what you're good at, and work on those. And what you need to improve on – work on that and accept yourself as you are. But always try to do better. Climbers never quit, and quitters never climb.

Cris Hoyle:

Is there anything you'd like to add onto that, that we haven't covered?

[0:58:02]

Doris Lewis:

I repeat: happiness comes from within, and not from somebody else trying to make you happy.

Cris Hoyle:

If you could go back in time and give yourself a piece of advice, what do you think you'd tell yourself?

Doris Lewis:

Just know yourself; accept yourself; love yourself; and treat yourself as the temple of the Lord. I think that's about it.

[0:59:02]

Cris Hoyle:

All right. It was nice talking to you.

Doris Lewis:

Okay.

Ashleigh Taylor:

Yeah, you gave us a wealth of information.

Doris Lewis:

Okay.

Ashleigh Taylor:

Thank you so much. And this concludes our interview for Crossroads to Freedom Summer 2010.

Doris Lewis: Okay.

[End of Audio]