

NOTICE

Materials in our digital Oral History collections are the products of research projects by several individuals. USF Libraries assume no responsibility for the views expressed by interviewers or interviewees. Some interviews include material that may be viewed as offensive or objectionable. Parents of minors are encouraged to supervise use of USF Libraries Oral Histories and Digital Collections. Additional oral histories may be available in Special Collections for use in the reading room. See individual collection descriptions for more information.

This oral history is provided for research and education within the bounds of U.S. Copyright Law (Title 17, U.S.C.). Copyright over Oral Histories hosted by the USF Libraries rests with the interviewee unless transferred to the interviewer in the course of the project. Interviewee views and information may also be protected by privacy and publicity laws. All patrons making use of it and other library content are individually accountable for their responsible and legal use of copyrighted material.

Otis R Anthony African Americans in Florida Oral History Project
Oral History Program
Florida Studies Center
University of South Florida, Tampa Library

Digital Object Identifier: A31-00046
Interviewees: Bea Rodriguez (BR) and Cheryl Rodriguez (CR)
Interviewed by: Ericka Burroughs (EB) and Ginger Baber (GB)
Interview date: July 21, 1993
Interview location: Unknown
Transcribed by: Unknown
Transcription date: Unknown
Interview Changes by: Kimberly Nordon
Interview Changes date: January 6, 2009
Final Edit by: Mary Beth Isaacson
Final Edit date: January 28, 2009

Erica Burroughs: Okay, Mrs. Rodriguez, what we're doing is a study an African-American history in Tampa. And it's a general study and what we're doin' is looking at the general different aspect of the community—African-American community—in Tampa.

Bea Rodriguez: Umm hmm.

EB: Right now we're focusing our research on Central Avenue. And if you could just tell me, you know, describe what was the black business district that surrounded Central Avenue. Can you name some streets for me that did that?

BR: I could name some businesses. Central Avenue was the main—we used to call it like the “main drag.”

EB: Right.

BR: If anybody came to Tampa to visit, the relatives of whoever came to visit would take you down to Central Avenue.

EB: Yeah.

BR: And they had places like Johnnie Grave's Smoke Shop, Kid Mason—all these people were owners of different little shops there. The Greek Stand. The Palace Drugstore is one that really touched my heart a little bit because we did not have transportation; we had to walk back and forth to our church. So, after church on Sundays—and we lived quite a distance from the church, but we had to pass by Central Avenue, Scott Street and then back—and if we were very good my mother would take us there and sit down to a beautiful little marble tabletops that we had never seen before. (laughs) Tall ice cream glasses—those tall old fashioned [kind]—and we would

have ice cream. So we really looked forward to that. I mean, this was really like heaven.

Cheryl Rodriguez: What church?

BR: Oh, we went to Allen Temple Church, which is still on Scott Street near Central Avenue.

CR: The old building.

BR: The old building.

EB: Okay. And their old building is still standing, right?

BR: It's still standing. Uh huh.

CR: Is this the original one? But the actual congregation now is over on (inaudible).

EB: Okay. Now, do you know how long Palace Drugstore was there?

BR: No, I sure don't. I know that it was there for a long, long time.

EB: Uh huh. Do you know when it closed or is it still open now?

BR: No. Oh, no. No, the whole thing is down now.

EB: Because it was on Central Avenue.

BR: That street is no longer— Right.

EB: Okay.

BR: See, the Palace Drugstore was on Central and Scott.

EB: Um hmm.

BR: That area doesn't even exist anymore.

EB: Oh, okay.

BR: See? So that's all gone.

EB: Right.

BR: They had quite a few, like—newsstands. I don't remember the people who ran the newsstand, but they had the newsstand. They had something called Moses White—

EB: Right.

BR: —Chicken. They had something called Cotton Club. This was run by a Mr. Joyner, Henry Joyner.

EB: Okay, I remember running across his name.

BR: His daughter is an attorney here—

EB: Right.

BR: —in Tampa now, Arthenia Joyner. Mrs. Harris had a place called Rogers Dining Room. Then there was another family who owned the hotel upstairs over the dining room and it was called the Rogers Hotel.

EB: Right. Because—at first wasn't it, like, the Pyramid Hotel?

BR: The Pyramid Hotel.

EB: And then—

BR: And they chang—

EB: —they changed that.

BR: The Rogers bought—yeah.

EB: Okay.

BR: The Rogers bought it.

EB: And was that on Central Avenue?

BR: Umm hmm. Yeah, it was an Central. And—

EB: Was that, like, the only hotel that they had—

BR: The only.

EB: .—for blacks?

BR: And it wasn't even as big as this room, I don't think.

EB: Oh. (laughs)

BR: It was very, very tiny. Cheryl's father had a office also, on Central.

CR: Actually it was on Harris.

BR: Yeah, Scott Street. No. No, when he first—

CR: Oh, I didn't know that.

BR: —when he first opened.

EB: Yeah, I remember readin' in Mr. [Robert] Saunders' memoirs that attorney [Francisco Junior] Rodriguez had an office on Central.

BR: Central—

EB: An (inaudible) with a Mr. [William A.] Fordham.

BR: Umm hmmm. That was his partner. And in that same building was Dr. Sauers, Dr. Irvin—

EB: Right.

BR: Uh huh. And this office is still—

EB: Now, he was a dentist, right?

BR: Dr. Sauers was a dentist.

EB: And Dr. Irvin was a dentist?

BR: Umm hmm.

EB: Okay. What about Dr. [Edward O.] Archie?

BR: M.D.

EB: Okay.

BR: He was on the corner—I'm glad you reminded me of that—he was on the corner from—just a wee bit over from where Cheryl's father's office was.

EB: Okay. Okay.

BR: And that same area, the *Florida Sentinel* had an office there. And my cousin reminded me this morning that they was really—if you could get with Kay Wells—

EB: Okay.

BR: She runs the *Florida Sentinel*.

EB: Who's Kay Wells?

CR: She actually is the—

BR: The daughter.

CR: —editor, and she sort of took over the business from her father.

BR: From her father.

EB: She's (inaudible) Jr.

CR: Right. She's Kay Andrews.

EB: Okay.

BR: (inaudible)

CR: I mean, actually—

EB: Is he still—?

CR: Oh, yeah, he's still around.

BR: Oh, yeah, he's still there.

EB: Okay.

BR: And the grandfather has a business now.

EB: C. Blythe Andrews, Sr.

BR: Right. And they had an office also on Central Avenue.

EB: All right.

BR: And they moved to the office where they are now.

EB: Right.

BR: But, Kay would have—oh, she would have lots [of] information on the—

EB: Umm hmm.

BR: —from her pictures.

EB: Now that building that your husband had his office in, is that owned by Dr. Anderson, or something like that? Seemed like I—somebody told me that he owned the building or something. Do you know?

BR: I thought Dr. Irvin was the owner.

EB: Dr. Irvin? Okay.

BR: Umm hmm. I thought he was the owner.

RB: Who was Dr. Anderson?

BR: I'm not sure.

EB: Okay. I think I remember running across that name and...

BR: I don't know a Dr. Anderson, but— Well, I was quite a young lady during that time that you—and some of it I can remember, but I don't remember a Dr. Anderson.

EB: Okay.

BR: Dr. Archie was very popular because in Tampa we have very few black doctors.

EB: Right. Right.

BR: Cheryl's father was and the man he practiced with were the only—the first two black attorneys here this area. Well, they had lots of— The whole street was just filled with businesses, all the way down. And most of them were run by black people.

Ginger Baber: Was the housing project there at that time?

BR: The housing project was there. Yeah, the housing project was there.

EB: The one that's there now?

BR: Umm hmm.

EB: Oh, okay.

BR: It was there.

GB: (inaudible) It was called—

CR: I don't know whether the name has changed now, but it was— I can't think of that name right now.

EB: Was it named after somebody?

CR: It had a name—um—and it may—like I said, it may still have that name. Do you know what I'm talkin' about?

BR: Yeah.

CR: It was called a—

BR: It was some kind of a— Some kind of a— Some kind of a Central Park (inaudible).

EB: You sure? Central Park Village?

BR: Central Park Village, yeah.

CR: Okay.

EB: What about that street that's over there, like Nick Nuccio Parkway or something, was that there?

BR: No. That wasn't there.

EB: So that came after urban renewal.

BR: That came after urban renewal. That's right. Umm hmm.

EB: So—

BR: That came after—

EB: Where's Scott Street?

BR: Scott Street is still there. Scott Street is the street that the church is, on Allen Temple.

CR: It crosses Central.

EB: Okay.

BR: Right, it crosses Central.

EB: So, is it like, behind a—not behind, but is it like—

BR: It runs through that project.

EB: Oh, it does?

BR: Uh huh.

EB: Okay. Okay.

BR: It runs through the housing project.

GB: And it goes to a—

BR: Down to Nebraska.

CR: It goes down to Nebraska.

EB: Okay. Yeah, because it's runnin' east and west.

BR: Yeah.

CR: Umm hmm.

BR: Right.

EB: Does— Okay. I forgot what I was going to ask. I was going to ask you does Scott Street—
So it's on the other side of Nick Nuccio Parkway?

BR: Well—

EB: Like, if you're standing where the—

BR: Nick Nuccio Parkway wasn't there.

EB: Yeah, but—

BR: Yeah, now it is, yes.

EB: —now. Like, if I'm standing in Perry Harvey Senior Park, it's on the other side of Nick
Nuccio Parkway.

BR: On the other side.

EB: Okay. Now, was there a park that was at the end of Central Avenue? Somebody said that
there was a park that was there. Or was it Perry Harvey Senior Park; was it there, or that came
after urban renewal?

BR: All of that came after urban renewal.

EB: Okay.

BR: When I was a little girl, Perry Harvey Park—that park was not there.

EB: Right. Did they have recreation places where black—

BR: They had one recreation center, which is now Kid Mason Center.

EB: Okay. He owned like a variety store or something.

BR: Right. He had a variety store and also a newsstand.

CR: And that building is still there, even though I don't know whether they are doing anything. But I don't know what they do. That Kid Mason Center is there.

EB: Is that on Harrison Street?

CR: It's on Harrison.

BR: Oh, yeah. It's on Harrison.

CR: It's on Harrison.

EB: I'm gonna have to check that out.

CR: And I'm not— Like I said, I'm not real sure what it's (inaudible). But I remember going.

BR: I think they do have—

CR: I remember going there.

BR: —some— They do recreation with the children still, I think. And they still have—

CR: They used to have dances there.

BR: Yeah. It's right across the street from the Longshoremen's Hall.

CR: Longshoremen's building. And the cemetery is on the—

BR: The cemetery is on the opposite side.

CR: Umm hmm.

EB: Okay. Somebody told me that there was another newspaper besides the *Florida Sentinel*, called the *News Reporter*. Do you remember that one?

BR: I can't remember the little street it was on. But they did—I think they had like a little office

on the Central Avenue area, and it was run by a man called Mr. James Jackson. And I think he died last year.

EB: Oh.

BR: But on the corner of Main and Howard, in West Tampa, they moved there. And I think that little— I think they still run it but it's not like a big newspaper like they had it before, because the *Florida Sentinel* bought them out.

EB: Okay.

BR: But they still— Some of the people who ran that little newspaper saw that as too much (inaudible).

GB: Didn't your father do that?

BR: The *Florida Sentinel*, the— I think it was called the *News Bulletin*.

EB: Okay, your dad had a newspaper? What's your—

BR: No. He used to— He used to deliver it.

CR: No. He delivered it.

EB: Okay. What's your maiden name?

BR: Bea Tabor.

EB: Your maiden— What, Temple?

BR: Tabor.

CR: Tabor.

EB: Tabor.

CR: T-A-B-O-R.

E B: Okay.

BR: And my father used to, in order to support us, because there was four of us, he worked at the—he worked as a train—how do you say it? Anyway, he worked for the railroad.

EB: Oh, okay.

BR: So, like a little second job, he would deliver newspapers in the afternoon. And all four of us

would help him.

EB: Oh (laughs).

BR: The four of us would help him. We didn't like it, but we did it anyway. And believe it or not the paper was only, like, five cents. And people would have us coming back, "Please come back next week, come back."

EB: You didn't get the quarter.

BR: Yes. And— Well, they would get the paper—

EB: Right.

BR: —and, you know, they wouldn't have the nickel to pay us. So we had to go back the next week.

EB: Oh.

BR: And sometimes the little kids would come to the door and say, "My mama says she ain't home."

EB: Oh...

BR: (laughs) But we would leave the paper anyway.

EB: Oh, that was sweet.

GB: Were there any other—this is just sort of an aside, but were there any other business districts like Central as far as the black-owned business? Because that's part— One of the reasons why Susan and Harrison and I are—why the people are interested is—one of the reasons why we're interested is because of the fact that it was unique because it was all—it was primarily black-owned. And so people had a sense of being able to participate in their community and you just—you know, you did business. Like you said, when black people came to town they would want—you took them there.

BR: Oh, yeah. That was the first thing—

GB: You know, you patronized—

BR: —was take them...

GB: —the black-owned businesses and that type of thing. So were there any—I know that in West Tampa, on Main Street, there was a bunch of stores that I remember we used to go to, but those weren't owned by black people.

BR: Those weren't owned by black. After the— After they tore down for the urban renewal—

GB: Right.

BR: —came through and Central Avenue was no longer there, Mr. White, which was Moses White—

EB: Moses White.

BR: —moved to West Tampa.

EB: Okay.

BR: On Main Street.

EB: Okay.

BR: There were some other people, Mr. Becksley, a few other black people who were—they were there too. But it was not like Central Avenue, because most of the businesses on Main Street were owned by white people.

EB: Okay, so they just worked there for the white people, or managed the stores for the white people?

CR: Sometimes they didn't even work in the stores.

BR: No, sometimes they didn't work in the stores.

EB: Oh, okay.

BR: Sometimes—

EB: So it was just, like, scattered from that.

BR: Yes, like the grocery stores, you could go there—

CR: You just went to 'em and you give 'em your money but—

BR: —and buy your food.

CR: Black people didn't work there.

BR: They didn't work there. But when Central Avenue was no longer there, then Mr. White and a few other black people started a business out in West Tampa. And some of them spread to Twenty-Second Street. There was a black man, his name was Lee Davis, and he has the Lee Davis—

CR: A lot of things are named after him.

BR: —the center. The center that—

CR: You know the Lee Davis— Well, maybe you— You know it.

BR: Then (inaudible). This man used to own a club, you know, like the people on Central Avenue used to have a little club. Mr. Lee Davis had his on Twenty-Second Street.

EB: Okay.

BR: So some of the people after Central Avenue left, Johnny Gray and some of the other people went to Twenty-Second Street.

EB: Okay.

BR: I don't think they have it any more. I'm not sure.

EB: Right. Well, that's no problem.

EB: No. There's no problem; it's always easy to look up. But—

BR: Most of the businesses on Central Avenue were run and owned by blacks.

CR: Right, so that was the primary business district for—at that time—for blacks. And I don't think that there's anything like that ever again.

EB: Right.

CR: I don't think that any place in Tampa has been able to dupli—you know, recreate that type of—

BR: A lot of people were—

EB: Right.

BR: —angry when the urban renewal—

EB: Right. I was gonna ask you, when did urban renewal start? Or, you know, I don't know maybe when their plans—municipal government started, but I mean when did they actually start tearing down businesses and people having to sell their property?

BR: That, Miss Harris would know more about—

EB: Okay.

BR: —you know, that part of it because she was involved in that—

CR: It might have been like in the sixties [1960s], don't you think?

EB: The reason why I'm asking these questions is because somebody had proposed that the riots—the 1967 Central Avenue riots—was responsible for the businesses being destroyed. And I don't know, you know, urban renewal plans had happened before then, were they starting to sell out before the riot or not. Do you remember? Do you know?

BR: Do you know Erica, I don't remember that. But, I'm not sure. I remember the riot, but I can't remember—

EB: And I know there were some businesses there because I remember reading in the newspaper that businesses were destroyed by the fires and looting. But—

BR: Yes, but—

CR: Do you remember that?

BR: What?

CR: The riots?

BR: Umm hmm. I remember that.

CR: What set it off? Do you remember how it happened?

BR: I can't remember what set it off, but—

CR: I was— It was tossed—

BR: I would think that some of the— Well, let me say this to you. Many times black people would get angry if a white policeman or something of that nature would take place with a black person. They would set the place on fire and start looting, you know, that kind of thing. They did have some riots during the civil rights movement.

EB: Oh, really?

BR: Yeah, they had some. Not very many, but they had some.

EB: Oh, (inaudible).

BR: But they had— Really, some of it I cannot remember. I should be able to remember back that far.

CR: But a big part of the elimination of all that area had to do with the highway.

BR: Oh, yeah.

CR: When the highway tried to—the interstate—

BR: The interstate—

CR: —was being built. And they used that as a way of—my father called it "urban removal."

EB: (laughs)

CR: That's what he called it, my father. He really did. He called it "urban removal."

BR: Because people were disrupted.

CR: That's right. You know, people's lives were greatly disrupted.

BR: A lot of people were very hurt by this. In fact, one man, that—he helped with urban renewal. One place was for sale, and this man just could not— He knew that he was going to have to leave—

EB: Oh, yeah—

BR: —and he kept holding on. He kept holding on. So I remember asking him, you know, did the person finally make up his mind to move? All the other places were empty and this man finally—

CR: Held on to the house.

EB: Oh, it was a house.

BR: It was a house, uh huh. And he didn't want to give it up.

EB: Yeah.

BR: He finally gave it up. He got the check, because they pay you the amount of money that—you know, and at the hospital we handled a lot of that. So after he got the check, he died.

EB: Oh.

BR: He never got a chance to—

EB: That's terrible.

BR: Because he was in love with this area. "My home, I've been here for years and years and

years. I don't want to go to West Tampa. I don't want to go to Ybor City." But they start tearin' down and, of course, they're tearin' down everything around you, and—

CR: And there were not that many choices for black people on the—

BR: Right.

CR: There were not the choices like at—you know, I was telling them the other day that, as an example of how limited the geographical space was, we didn't know anything about Temple Terrace and—

BR: Yeah.

CR: I mean, even if we knew about it, there was no way we could move there.

EB: Right.

BR: No way.

CR: Right, but the point was that our lives were really restricted to certain geographical areas in terms of where we could live and where we could have businesses and things like that. So people didn't have a lot of choices. And you could live in West Tampa in that small little area there that's called North Boulevard Homes. And not just the projects but there were others; there was—like extending from that there were some homes—because we lived in West Tampa. But— And then there was parts of Ybor City that we could, you know, live in. But it was really limited.

BR: But we couldn't pick up and say, well, okay the urban renewal took my house or they're havin' us to move we're gonna move to Temple Terrace. We couldn't do that.

EB: Right.

BR: We couldn't do that.

CR: Yeah. And then everybody that you knew lived in, you know, in that little—in those certain areas—so that was your community, that was your— This was your support system. These were the people who supported your business. So—

BR: Yeah.

CR: And these were the people that you were accustomed to.

EB: Was Central Avenue—did it have any residential homes? Did it have any? Or it was just mainly businesses?

BR: They had some little huts—

EB: Uh huh.

BR: —for houses. And when— Oh, they finally tore them down—

EB: Right.

BR: —and this is how the project—the Central Avenue—or Central Park Village project came up.

EB: Okay.

BR: When Central Avenue was first there it had little tiny homes. People had little private homes there. Very tiny. Very small. Little huts like this.

EB: Wow.

BR: And I think this is why they (inaudible) putting that project because the project would—you would have a larger space for people to—

CR: Do you know which one was built first that one or the one in West Tampa?

BR: I think the one in West Tampa was built first.

EB: The North Boulevard Homes?

BR: Uh huh. Because when I was a little girl the North Boulevard Homes—I was five years old.

EB: Oh, they were built.

BR: Uh huh.

EB: Okay, I was thinking they were built like, in the '50s.

BR: I was a—

EB: You— Your age.

BR: Yeah, oh—okay.

EB: I'm sorry.

BR: Back in sixty [1960], this was. I'm gonna say the sixties [1960s].

CR: Then nobody wouldn't ever guess.

BR: About 54-55 years ago.

CR: That those were—

BR: And my family was the first family to move in those project homes—on that particular street, was Union Street. We had Main Street and then we had Union Street. And we thought we were— See, when we moved in that project, we thought it was like moving over to Temple Terrace.

EB: Right. Well, I'm sure it was very nice.

BR: Or moving to Davis Island.

EB: I'm sure it was.

BR: Oh, beautiful. Beautiful.

CR: Um hmm. It was.

EB: All projects are nice when they're built.

CR: But I remember the projects and I was born in 1952. And my grandmother— Well, actually, we lived there for a time and it was—

BR: It was nice.

CR: It was nothing like—

BR: That's right.

CR: People had—it—

EB: No, they were built nice.

CR: People had their own yards.

BR: Oh, yeah.

CR: And people took care of things.

BR: Right. I was gonna tell you—

CR: And there was no such thing as drug dealers—

BR: —that her grandmother—

CR: —and guns.

BR: Right. We never had that.

CR: It was nothing like that. Those same projects that—

BR: Her grandmother used to—

CR: Yeah, those same ones that you wouldn't dare—

BR: They would give—

CR: —that you don't even want to ride through now—

BR: I'm scared to (inaudible) of 'em—

CR: —I used to play right there, right there—

BR: Right in the—

CR: —in the little courtyard.

BR: Beautiful—

CR: —and thought nothing of that.

BR: —grass. Grassy street. In fact, Union Street was just—

CR: Big, beautiful.

BR: —grassy. Beautiful.

EB: Okay, now I don't know where you say that—I don't know—

BR: Right next to Main Street.

EB: Yeah, I haven't been to West Tampa so I'm still—

CR: She's not from Tampa, so—

BR: Oh, okay.

EB: I mean, I'm familiar with Ybor City and that area, but I haven't gotten over to West Tampa yet. I will.

BR: Yeah. Lots of people.

EB: I hear lots of people talk about Main Street on Saturdays. "I'm goin' to Main Street." What's on Main Street?

BR: It's a little bit dangerous. If you want a little danger you go down there. If you still want to live in the danger zone, then you go to Main Street.

CR: It's not a little bit. It's a lot dangerous.

BR: A lot, that's right.

EB: Isn't it kind—?

CR: And it wasn't like that; it wasn't like that. And that's what's so sad.

BR: That's what's so sad about it.

CR: You could walk down Main Street and get—

BR: And I remember.

CR: I mean, I remember it well. Just— We would go to the stores—

BR: To the store—

CR: —to August— There was a grocery store.

BR: Oh, yeah.

CR: There was a little restaurant. And those weren't black-owned, but the point is that you could go to those places and you could walk down Main Street and not have any—

BR: No fear.

CR: —fear.

BR: Right.

CR: Because it was—it was fine. And it wasn't that people were not poor, because they were, but it was that we didn't have the kinds of—

EB: Crime problem, for one.

CR: —we didn't have the crime problems.

BR: Yeah, the crime problems.

CR: We didn't have this escalating crime, so the danger wasn't there. So, anyway, I'm sorry you were—

EB: No, that's okay. I was gonna ask that. West Tampa, that's far away from Central Avenue, right?

BR: Yeah.

EB: So, did a lot of people walk?

BR: Yeah, we used to walk.

EB: Oh, okay.

BR: Umm hmm. Once in awhile we would get a ride with some relative—

EB: Oh, okay.

BR: —but a lot of it was walking. We used to walk any—you know— And I can remember so well, we used to cross a bridge. It was called Garcia Street Bridge. And I was so scared.

EB: (laughs)

BR: Scared to death lookin' down at that water.

EB: Right.

BR: But I walked across that bridge long enough to have gotten used to it.

EB: Umm hmm.

BR: Never got used to it.

EB: Oh, you're not (laughs)

BR: And I mean, it was really scary.

EB: Really?

CR: And then when I was born then we used to walk to downtown Tampa. Remember? We lived in West Tampa—

BR: Yeah.

CR: —and then we'd go— I mean, we had— By then—

EB: But wasn't that kind of a far walk? Because, I mean, if they had the interstate—they have two different exits for it.

CR: It didn't seem far then.

BR: Yeah, it didn't seem so far.

CR: I mean, it was just something that you did. Because we lived in West Tampa and it really wasn't that far. It's really not that far.

EB: It's just when you get used to driving—

CR: But we walked.

EB: —and that's why, I'm used to driving.

CR: I remember my mother pulling me across the bridge sayin', "Come on."

EB: (laughs) You wanted to get off too, right? (laughs) Right.

BR: Walked across the bridge.

CR: .—to go downtown. Because we didn't have—

BR: —we called malls.

CR: Yeah, we didn't have them.

EB: Right.

BR: We didn't have no place. We didn't have any of them.

CR: So we would walk across the bridge and go downtown—

EB: Yeah.

CR: —subject ourselves to that.

BR: Finally her dad built—her dad got a car so we put that part behind us, and we would get in the car and—

EB: And go out.

BR: My father never had a car. Never. He had a bicycle. He didn't ever have a car. I remember so well. We used to get a little spankin' for even touchin' his bicycle.

EB: (laughs) That was his only mode of transportation.

BR: That's right, because that was his transportation.

EB: Right.

BR: And he didn't want anybody to touch that—

EB: Exactly.

BR: —to touch, you know. Her grandfather had a bicycle, too.

CR: Umm hmm. My grandfather.

BR: And my husband and we used to—

CR: My other grandfather.

BR: Yeah. Right.

EB: Umm hmm.

BR: He remembers that his father used to spank him for touchin' the bicycle.

EB: Umm hmm.

BR: Because that was his transportation.

EB: So, where did Mr. Rodriguez grow up at? Because you grew up in West Tampa, right?

BR: Yeah. He grew up in the Ybor City area. He was born in Cuba, but he grew up in Ybor City.

EB: Okay.

BR: As a youngster he came to the United States. His parents worked at a cigar factory.

EB: Okay.

BR: So they didn't live too far from the cigar factory. Do you know anything about Ybor City?

EB: Yeah, I know some.

BR: There's a great big factory there called Ybor Square.

EB: Right. Right. I know that.

BR: That was a cigar factory. It used to be a cigar factory.

EB: Right.

BR: And Cheryl's grandmother used to work there.

EB: Oh, okay.

CR: Grandfather.

BR: Umm hmm. Grandfather—

CR: Well, both of 'em did. But mostly he did.

BR: Umm hmm.

CR: Oh.

BR: And the cutest thing was that—

EB: Yeah, I love Ybor City.

BR: —that her father was never allowed to go inside the cigar factory.

EB: The cigar factory.

BR: Never. If he went there to speak to his mother he could just go to the front door. Because his mother and father decided years ago that—

EB: That he would never—

BR: —he would never be a cigar maker.

EB: And they didn't want him to be influenced at all.

BR: They didn't want to see— They didn't want him to see it at all. So they were not allowed to go inside that building, never, never. You could stand on the outside, but you couldn't go inside.

EB: Umm hmm.

BR: Because she decided that her father—grandfather decided that all three of the children would go to college and they did. And, you know, it worked out beautifully, but they just didn't want them to be inside the factory because they didn't want to have any—you know, have the children have anything they wanted to do with the cigar factory.

EB: Right.

CR: Well, anyway they didn't have. . .

Side 1 ends; side 2 begins.

BR: Mrs. Anderson used to tell about— They had one called Charlie Moon—

EB: Right. I wanted to ask you now, Charlie Moon had a nightclub, sort of?

BR: Just like a little nightclub.

EB: Okay. What was the name of it?

BR: I don't know. I was asking my customer this morning and she couldn't remember either. It was very small.

EB: It is? Okay.

BR: He was very smart and—

EB: (inaudible) Okay.

BR: Umm hmm.

EB: (inaudible) Okay.

BR: Yeah, it was very— He died at—God, it must have been—he was only 45 years old when he died.

EB: Oh, so he had one of the older clubs. Okay.

BR: The club still stood for a while—

EB: Okay.

BR: —even after his death.

EB: Okay.

BR: Then they had one called— Oh, I gave you the Moses White diner.

EB: Right.

BR: And Mr. White (inaudible). Arthenia Joyner really could give you some good (inaudible).

EB: Right. She's the attorney and—

BR: Umm hmm.

EB: Okay.

BR: Her dad had a big club there. He had a kind of a little nightclub.

EB: Right. Right.

BR: Umm hmm. So she— As a young girl—so she had a—

EB: This is great. You're doin' very good. Wonderful insight.

BR: Yeah, some of the things I can remember, but I really want you to meet Mrs. Harris.

EB: Harris. Yeah, we'll do that.

BR: She is a wonderful person. And she had this business there. And really and truly, whenever we wanted to, like, show off for our relatives, we would go to Rogers Diner. Because they had not only good food but it was just a really nice place to take a family. We wouldn't have that many, you know, families—

CR: We didn't have Shoney's and all these other places.

EB: Right. (laughs)

BR: So the Rogers Dining Room— Whenever someone came to town we would take them to Rogers Dining Room.

EB: That's great.

BR: And not only that you were gonna get a good meal but it was really nice (inaudible). Really, it was just real, real, nice.

CR: Is that where we used to go? For example, sometimes I remember we would go to Dad's office and meet him for lunch, then we'd walk over—is that where we would go?

BR: Umm hmm.

CR: I remember going—

EB: You remember the food?

CR: I just remember walking in and—

BR: She was quite small.

CR: I just remember a restaurant. And we used to go—remember, we used to go to my father's office a lot.

BR: Right.

CR: In fact, I have— We have pictures of when we would go because some— My father used to take a lot of pictures—

EB: Oh, good.

CR: And some days we would go to his office and then he'd take pictures.

BR: And we'd stay there sometimes and wait for him because he would, after he would finish work, he would take us to a place called Rogers Park—I'm not sure if that's the same name from Rogers Dining; I'm not sure of that—but it's called Rogers Park.

CR: You know Rogers Park?

EB: Where's that?

BR: And he played tennis there. And he used to take all of us, you know—

CR: It was the only place that black people could play tennis or golf.

EB: Oh.

CR: And, actually, it was really one of the—I'm not sure if there was any other parks that we could go to, but that was one of the few parks.

BR: That was the only—

EB: That might be the park I was talking about earlier.

CR: That was the only park that we could go to.

EB: Where was that park at?

CR: And it's still there.

BR: It's still there.

EB: Umm hmm.

CR: People don't go to it as much. Have you been there?

EB: No.

BR: No, they go a lot.

EB: Why is that?

BR: I think mostly white people.

BR: And mostly white people go there.

CR: Because it has a real nice golf course.

BR: But it's—

EB: Oh, I see. I see.

CR: I remember that.

BR: It's close to Sligh Avenue.

CR: Yeah.

EB: Oh, okay.

CR: It's off—I mean, you can go—I remember going down Hillsborough [Avenue]—

BR: (inaudible)

CR: Yeah, I know.

BR: And go down Waters [Avenue].

CR: What's that street? What's that street that you turn on?

BR: It's Thirtieth, isn't it?

CR: It's Thirtieth, because we used to call it Thirtieth Street Park.

BR: Right. Used to call it Thirtieth Street Park.

CR: And you just go on, follow Thirtieth Street going to the north until it runs out and then you'll—the park is there.

BR: The park is right down there.

CR: But it was— Really, I remember we went there a lot. We used to go there almost every

afternoon. My father was very—

EB: Athletic?

CR: Yeah. He used to like to play tennis. And so he played tennis every afternoon almost. And that's where he could go to play until—

BR: He finally got the bright—

CR: Years passed—

BR: —idea that he would file suit against Hillsborough County.

EB: (laughs)

BR: And he did. The park, the schools, everything. He did it. And we finally got a chance to play on Davis Island. There's a tennis court right across from Tampa General Hospital—

EB: Oh, okay.

BR: —and he's— No black kids could play there. He made it a point to make sure they could play there.

EB: Okay.

BR: So, it was possible. (inaudible)

EB: Was Bill Fordham working with the NAACP too, or just—

BR: Yes, uh huh.

EB: Okay.

BR: They were partners.

EB: Okay.

BR: And—

EB: And they were both members of the legal counsel then, NAACP?

BR: Umm hmm.

EB: Okay. Because I can't seem to find much information an him.

BR: Okay. Now, like I said, Mrs. Fordham is still alive, but from what I can understand she's in

the—

EB: Nursing home. Yeah, I'll check with—

BR: And they have three children and I think—

EB: Were they born before your children?

BR: I think they—Cheryl? I think they were.

EB: Okay, they might be able to remember (inaudible)

BR: But they have a family home out in West Tampa. It might be Grace [Street] or Nassau [Street], or one of those streets like that. I'll find out for you.

EB: Great, okay.

BR: And they still live there.

CR: Grace.

BR: One of the daughters still lives there on Grace.

EB: Did he—

BR: No. Mrs. Fordham is from California and—she will remember how they met.

EB: Okay. Okay.

BR: But they decided, you know, to be partners. And then as the office got busier then he decided to split and Cheryl's father took an office down on Harrison Street. I think that—yeah, it's still there. It's another kind of office. But it's—

CR: The building is still there.

BR: The building is still there. Right.

EB: Which one had the library? The one on Central Avenue? Was he in the building with the library?

BR: That was on Central Avenue.

EB: Okay.

BR: That was in the same building with Dr. Ervin—

EB: Okay.

BR: —Dr. Salas and, as I can remember, a lady ran the library; her name was Mrs. Paine.

EB: That's right. Somebody else told me that.

BR: She ran the library. Right.

EB: And then for awhile Bob Saunders' office was there.

BR: Right.

EB: And then he moved to the Longshoremen's Hall—

BR: Yeah, he's a— Uh huh. He did.

EB: —building. And that's the one that attorney Rodriguez moved to, too?

BR: Right.

EB: Okay.

BR: He moved there. Uh huh.

EB: Okay.

BR: Did you have a talk with him? Because he knows a lot—

EB: Bob Saunders? Oh, yeah, I'm working directly with him.

BR: He knows a lot of stuff about—

EB: I'm help editing his manuscript.

BR: Oh.

EB: The manuscript that he's done. He's doing a memoir on the civil rights movement.

BR: Oh. All right. Yes. Yes. He knows a lot about Central Avenue.

EB: Oh yeah.

BR: A whole lot.

EB: Yeah.

BR: Much more than I do.

EB: No. No. He's helped us out a lot. Thank you.

CR: Well, you know, she's talked to Mr. Pride too. I told her to—

EB: I sure did.

BR: Oh, you talked to Mr. Pride.

EB: And he was helpful.

CR: —to talk to him—

BR: Umm hmm.

CR: —because he's lived in Tampa for so long.

BR: A long, long time. (inaudible)

CR: Yeah, I told her that. You know. And that's why, you know, Mrs. Pride was one of the first—I guess she was one of the first—

EB: She was the first—

CR: —black person to work on campus.

EB: Yeah, she was.

BR: USF. And they—

EB: She was.

BR: They were the first couple, black couple, husband and wife to work—

EB: Because he said he was the fourth person that come. She came like three years before he did, or something like that.

CR: He told me something that I forgot to ask you about. When we were in Africa we were just sitting down talking and he said that he and Dad were the first black people to get mortgages in— What did he say? How did he tell me? He said that they were the first black people to actually get mortgages from—to own their houses, to buy houses—it was in a certain part of Tampa. Do you remember that?

BR: Uh uh. I didn't know that.

CR: He told me that. I'll have to ask him about that again. But he was telling me. He was saying

how difficult it was, and that's not hard to believe, how difficult it was to get a mortgage.

BR: Oh, yeah.

CR: You know, to get any kind of loan. He was sayin' that he and Dad—

BR: These people just didn't think you were (inaudible)

EB: Was there ever a black bank here?

BR: They had one black bank.

EB: Oh, really?

BR: Reverend Lowry was the president of the bank.

EB: Okay. What was the name of it?

BR: I don't know.

EB: That's okay, I—

BR: (laughs)

EB: I mean, I just thought about that when Cheryl said there was something about the mortgages I'd never thought about that one.

BR: Reverend Lowry was the— He would be a good person to talk to.

EB: Oh, yeah. We have already; one of his names—I mean, interviews that was transcribed that was done by Otis Anthony.

BR: Oh, yes.

EB: And I've read two interviews with him and I still have questions. Because he knows so much, I mean, he can never get it all in one interview. So there's still things I need to ask him.

BR: Otis knows a lot about Tampa too.

CR: Umm hmm. I was tellin' Erica that. (inaudible)

EB: It—

CR: He brought over a lot of information. He's helping with this project.

BR: Oh. (inaudible)

EB: It's big. It's getting bigger—

CR: He knows about it.

EB: —and bigger.

BR: Yeah, that's (inaudible).

CR: Since he's— I was telling Erica that even though he and I were in the same grade and we grew up together I left for a while, for a few years, but he's always been here. So he's real connected with the people. And he works in, you know, for the city—

EB: Right.

CR: —for city government so he really is in touch with a lot of people. So—

BR: Umm— Mr. Alton—

EB: White.

BR: —White would be a good person—

EB: Right.

BR: —because his dad was the—Moses White—business—

EB: What else did Moses White leave us? I mean, I heard that he—I don't know. I mean, is that the only business he ever had, basically? Or—

BR: He ran a funeral home—

EB: Okay.

BR: —but this was later on in years.

EB: Okay.

BR: A black lady; her name was Mrs. Pughsley. She died.

EB: Right.

BR: Anyway, she passed away, she left the funeral home to him—

EB: Oh, okay.

BR: So—

EB: And was Pughsley and Stone the only two mortuaries?

BR: Uh huh. Years ago. And the people that run Wilson Funeral Home, they were two young men who used to work for the Stone family.

EB: Oh, okay.

BR: And this is how they got interested.

EB: Oh, okay.

BR: I guess it grew out of—

EB: Stone is pretty old though, right? Weren't they around, like, in 19—like, in World War I or something?

BR: Yeah. Yeah. I don't think they have the business anymore.

EB: Or they came about—

BR: I don't think so.

EB: Okay.

CR: But Wilson is still—

BR: Wilson is still—

EB: That's a different one.

CR: .—the largest or the most—

BR: I think so. I think it's the largest—

CR: —funeral home.

BR: That's right, in the section. Yeah, Central Avenue was really a— So many people were— they were very disturbed when the urban renewal came through there. I mean, this was—

EB: They totally wiped out the black business district.

BR: Yes.

EB: That's what happened.

BR: It was just like a big bombshell that, you know— What are these people doin', but I said, you know— And, of course, the white people always win, because they decide on something and they sit—you know. . .

Pause in recording

EB: . . . wrong about this. They didn't bother to say anything about it, protest or anything?

BR: Yeah. They did. Yeah. Yeah. They did. They didn't like it one bit.

EB: And they just didn't—or was—it didn't help.

BR: Yeah. Growth is painful and— They just had to, you know— The urban— The I-4 [Interstate 4] and these other—

EB: Right, [Interstate] 275—

BR: —highways were coming through and—the urban renewal, that program— Well, see, there were a few blacks who were very glad because Central Avenue was started getting kind of a— Well, you know, how people act sometimes around a lot of beer—

EB: Umm hmm.

BR: —a lot of wine. Then some of the older residents decided, "Oh, this is gonna be a saving for us because we'll—"

CR: Eliminate the bars and things like that.

BR: Yeah. And— See—

EB: Oh.

BR: They got money for their homes, and they didn't have to stay there. They moved to West Tampa and a few other areas. But a lot of those people were attached to— "I 'm not leaving here."

EB: Yeah, well, they'd been there all their lives.

BR: "This is where I've lived all my life." And they were very upset, very upset, by havin' to not be there.

EB: Let me ask you. What street was the Lincoln Theater on?

BR: Central. Central and—

EB: Did it close?

BR: I think they had the Lincoln Theater and the Carver Theater.

CR: The Carver theater was in Tampa—was in West Tampa.

BR: Oh, was it—it was?

end of interview