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Mrs. Christine Saunders: Well, I was born in Tampa, Florida, January 21, 1898. The daughter of Marion E. Rogers and J.W. Rogers. My first school was in West Tampa, Florida. I remember the school building was nothing but just a one room—nothing much to it. I remember my mother, she was trying, she went to try to get a better school building for all the children, not only for her children. Miss Span and Miss Moore, they were our schoolteachers. And it was hard for her to try get another school for us, so then she ask could she have her children transferred to Harlem. And they said no, but they would give us another building, and the superintendent, I think the superintendent at night, so far back there, see, ah, he told her to go and look at the Odd Fellows Hall.

Well, I remember her taking my sister, the older one, she was the oldest, my brother and myself, we were the two youngest. And we went to look at the Odd Fellows Hall. But we went and looked at the White Odd Fellows Hall. We didn't understand which one they meant, and come to find out they meant the black Odd Fellows Hall. And when we went back, they told mother that no, that was not the one. And said it was the black Odd Fellows Hall, I think the Odd Fellows Hall is right up here on Rome and La Salle.

Interviewer: What was it called?

CS: Odd Fellows Hall, well, that was—that was a two-story building and it wasn't falling to pieces, and she said this is better than what we had. And then, so we finally got that building. And at that time it was there, was still, I think we were involved in four or five months and she was always a woman that tried to get more, for not only her children, but for all—and she went back and the white children were having more months than we had.

And we, so she went in to see if the blacks could have a little more schooling. And then finally, I remember the first time, I think we got (inaudible), and honey, it was so fabulous. And then Mr. Lester was supervisor of (inaudible), but she would always go. And my sister, my sister, now if she was living she could really tell you all sorts. Because

she was like mama, because she go, you know, and they couldn't put her in West Tampa School, from the beginning she got into Harlem.

Interviewer: The name of the school was West Tampa School?

CS: West Tampa School. Yeah, that was the name of the school. And after that, well then, the school looked like they got together, having meetings, they got together and they interceded and finally we commenced to come out and the school commenced to growing, and from that we had seven months, we were still happy.

Interviewer: What did you y'all do after the five months of school?

CS: Well, I, you know, I don't what the other children did, but mother would always have us in the home in there. I don't know what the other children did. Well, they had to work, or I don't know. But I know mother always kept us, and see, my daddy was a cigar maker. They always kept us there, have us sewing or crocheting or something she did after school. And I know she was a pastry, she used to bake cakes and like that.

I remember there was an old lady, I'll never forget that old soul on Fortune Street, and my mama, she give us that basket and we go to Miss Fortune and she buy all of our pies and she give us a pie too. When she buy our pies and she says that she was godmother for some twins, those little white boys, and looks like she was buying these pies and stuff to take it to them, like that. But she was an old soul, and she lived in just a straight board house, by the riverside. The boards were up and down, that old house, you would think the old soul didn't have anything, but I used to hear on Fortune, say, "You know Miss Fortune, that's a rich woman." And we'd get together, children, like, "She's rich and staying in," something like that, and she be rich, but they said, she, they say she was rich. But she sure—we'll make our way when Mama give us that basket, and take Miss Fortune her pies. We didn't have to go to no other but Miss Fortune.

Interviewer: She'd buy all the pies?

CS: She buy every one of them. Well, you see, we wouldn't have but about, we have about a dozen pies, you know, those little round pies. She buy all the pies, and she give us some of the pies and we enjoyed those pies. But I don't [know] what happened to Miss Fortune. I think she died or something. These little, her godchildren, you see these two little white fellows were her godchildren. I don't know what happened to her.

Interviewer: What type lady was Miss Fortune?

CS: She was kind of short like I was, but she was stout. I remember she was crippled, kind of in her legs. And she liked my sister Beulah, 'cause Bea would comb her hair for her, go down and comb her hair for her. And then I never seen that Miss Fortune's family or anything. Looks like she just didn't have any kinfolks.

Other Voice: How did she get rich?

CS: Now, how did she? I don't know, how did she come about? And I've never heard. The old folks in those day back then, and their children listened. We had to go out and play, they never like children, now sit down and listen to conversations, like that. I don't know, but she was a blessed old soul. But she'd take these pies someplace, take these pies, but where she carried them I don't know, but she said had these twin boys.

Other Voice: Are these twins still living?

CS: I don't know, I really don't know. Well, now, you can cut that off if you want too, 'cause I want to give you two names of these—they tell me these are older people.

Interviewer: Two names of people that we need to contact?

CS: Yeah, Julius and his wife Hawkins, Emma Hawkins, and they stay at 1320 Face Street, that's out in Hyde Park. And they, if you ask them more about Henry Harlem, he's an old, old man, but they say that he's not absent-minded or nothing like that. Say he's in a church, and he's stays out in Belmont Heights somewhere. But if you ask them about him, they can tell you where to find him. And Inez Dopey, well, she's a member of our church, and my son knows Inez. Now this lady told me this was (inaudible) . 'Cause her father, this school was named after her father, Dopey School. Inez, she know pretty good. She's older, I think she's older than me.

Other Voice: Where she stay at?

CS: I was looking in the phone book, but I didn't find it, but I think Bob [her son] knows her well. Now if he don't, you know she's still in her church now, and she can tell you plenty of it.

Interviewer: So Mrs. Saunders, you said your father was a cigar maker, right? Okay, do you remember anything about blacks in the cigar factories?

CS: Oh, there was just that one, they was only in the restaurant and cafeteria. Blacks, in those days, they were Latins, you see, and they didn't make any decisions about colored or that. 'Cause my daddy, he was he made those private class cigarettes, ah, cigars. He made good money, daddy did. But when daddy came there, there was black women in there, and men, and yeah, and the factories have pretty near gone down here in Tampa.

Other Voice: Did you have a lot migration coming in from Key West to Tampa to work in the cigar trade?

CS: To work in the cigar factory, coming from where you say?

Other Voice: Key West.

CS: I guess so, 'cause that was my mother and father's home, Key West, Florida, and

they came to Tampa after they married, then we all were born here.

Other Voice: What about the epidemic that they had here in 1918?

CS: The flu?

Other Voice: Uh-huh.

CS: Oh, that was awful.

Other Voice: How did it affect the blacks?

CS: Well, the black and the whites, there was a night I remember, my mother, see, we stayed right in black and white neighbors right there. Mr. Crawford and his two son, he had two son, Fade and, what was the older son's name? He had two boys, Mr. Crawford, and then there was, oh, I think we were the only black family in that vicinity. And during the flu time, my mama went in and she help take care of plenty of them, and helped them and everything. And my sister Marie, you had to go some place to get the milk, somewhere on Tampa Street. And Marie had to lug—my brothers know this address, but she would go and pick up milk and bring it, here she come with that milk, and they learn to love us. Oh, we got along just fine in those days.

Interviewer: Was that with—you were helping the white people with the flu at that time?

CS: The white people with the flu?

Interviewer: Right, were you helping white people with this flu?

CS: Did we help them, oh, yes we did. 'Cause we had two families in front of us. Behenea, they were Spanish. I think it was two died out of her family, and there were Roberts, Roberts City. It was named Roberts City, but is it Roberts City right on? I don't know. 'Cause the Roberts City Factory was up there. Mr. Roberts, he was so fond of us, he had a big cigar factory, right there on Robert City on Garcia and Roberts Street, I believe it was.

Interviewer: Did any of the blacks really get sick from the flu, or was it mainly white people that was real sick with the flu, or what?

CS: It was everybody.

Interviewer: So your family didn't get it?

CS: Well, I've taken it, and then my sisters, after my mother, look like everybody was gettin' up, but she was skillful, then she taken it, just mild. But they came in and everybody wanted to help us. With the flu, yeah, that was some flu, I'm telling you. And after they got up, they never forgot us. We were born right there in that neighborhood.

Interviewer: Okay, Mrs. Saunders, can you tell us anything about Mrs. Coreen Glover?

CS: Oh, yeah, Coreen Reed. I think she worked in Clara Frye, on, ah, it was on the water. She can tell you something.

Interviewer: She's living? Is she living?

CS: Yeah, Coreen, she's right out here on, is it Fremont? On the corner of Fremont, and she's a nurse, a registered nurse, on the corner of Fremont and La Salle. A big white house right on, it's on the backhand side, going down on the corner of Fremont and La Salle, I think it is.

Other Voice: By you living in the white neighborhoods, were you ever faced with prejudice among by the whites?

CS: Not in those days, no. Although we had separate schools, they didn't (inaudible) . But you know the Latins, they just commenced to be, you know, think they something, of course they done been around all the offices and everything. They had an office then, but not like they have it now. But it was prejudice then, we couldn't go on the street cars, you know, the front, down in the front. 'Cause there was a White lady in our neighborhood and she used to like to take us. Let me, let me, Miss Rogers take the girls such and a such place, but she didn't care, you know that, she was trying to fight, yeah, she was trying to fight for us, and wanting to take us in front of the car, and we came back and told Mama, I don't wanna go with Mrs. Fernandez anymore.

But yes, she was from Oklahoma, Oklahoma, yeah, but she didn't want us, she wanted us to sit with her, and as I remember, the motorman be on the car, and they, he pulled the shade down, the shade. "You know you can't sit in front with you niggers," and she got highly insulted. "These are some decent people, these are respectable people," oh, she'll tell them, "It's coming a day when it's not gonna be anything like this."

Other Voice: Really?

CS: Uh-huh, back in those days they—

Interviewer: How old were you then when she would take you all off?

CS: I must have been about eight years old, just about eight.

Interviewer: So did you teach school or anything like that?

CS: Well I've been (garbled audio)

Other Voice: What type of work was available for the blacks other than the cigar factory? What kind of work was available for the black people other than the cigar factory?

CS: Well, they worked for the Latins people, as servers in the home. Those Latins, they were the, ah, just like one in the family, wasn't any prejudice in those days.

Interviewer: Did you know Miss Etta White?

CS: Ella White?

Interviewer: Etta.

CS: Etta White.

Interviewer: Etta White, she's about ninety-two, she lives over in College—

Other Voice: Tampa Park.

Interviewer: Tampa Park Apartments.

Other Voice: Etta White.

CS: Etta White, she's a very old lady.

Interviewer: Uh-huh, she's about ninety-three.

CS: Oh, yeah, Etta White, where does she live, old town, or—?

Interviewer: Old town in Tampa Park.

Other Voice: Do you remember anything about the troops coming to Tampa?

CS: The suit?

Other Voice: The troops? The army troops coming into Tampa with Teddy Roosevelt.

CS: The Spanish, the American War? Oh, I was just born then, yeah, I was just born.

Other Voice: What about the boom?

CS: Oh, the boom, oh, boy, everybody, oh, they had a good time when the boom was there.

Interviewer: Was growing up in Tampa?

CS: Huh.

Interviewer: Was growing up, was your growing up in Tampa exciting?

CS: Yeah, 'cause out here was nothing but a pond. We use to come out here and pick blackberries, this was growing up, yes, Lord, I should say, considerable. Now look at Fortune Street, it's just about two or three blocks, now, isn't it, and that used to be right on through, right cross the bridge, back here to the Boulevard. It certainly has grown.

Interviewer: Can you describe the boom, how was the boom here in Tampa?

CS: I know there was plenty money made. And everybody, I just knowed everybody was happy. And they made a plenty of money and instead of saving some of it, they just happy it came easy, I guess, and they said, I guess they expect it all to continue.

Interviewer: How was life during the Depression?

CS: Now that Depression, that's something. That was hard, really hard. The bread line—I'll never forget it, and buying stamps and food, and given commodities, commodities foods like that. That was hard. People was starving in those days, it was hard.

Other Voice: What was the bread line?

CS: Well, they had a place you go to and they give out food. Like potatoes, apple, yellow grits, just give out commodities, you see now. Oh, my, my, my. I hope we never have another depression. I don't think we ever will, because President Roosevelt, that's where social security came from. Yeah, because I was a seamstress, I sewed and I worked in the sewing factory. They had a factory here, sewing, and that's when we made garments and clothes for children and—

Side 1 ends; side 2 begins

Other Voice: Miss Saunders, did you ever have to go to Clara Frye Hospital, for any type of medical assistance?

CS: Did I ever have to go there, I think I was operated on three times there.

Other Voice: What was the doctors' names?

CS: He was named of Dr. Thompson, Dr. Marcey Smith. I had spur taken out. They called it a spur up in the heel. I was operated for that, and that was Dr. Marcey Smith and then, I had a growth right under this breast, that was taken out, and something else I had. It was four times I had to go there to Clara Frye.

Other Voice: Was Miss Clara Frye still living?

CS: She was dealing with two hospital, you see. Now, Coreen can tell you all of that, because she was head nurse at the hospital. 'Cause she came from Lamar, that's when she first started and to Clara Frye. Then she was working at Tampa General too.

Interviewer: Is the Lily White, that was a different name—right, Lily White Hospital? Did you ever go there?

CS: No, all I've been to was Clara Frye, that's the only hospital.

Other Voice: Have you ever come in contact with Dr. Archie?

CS: Dr. Archie, yeah, he sold everything. You know where he stay, on Ross off Palm Avenue. Now Miss Miller, now an old lady, but she sick, stayed sick kind of often. But her daughter is there and she knows plenty. Eloise, but Eloise is now, I think Eloise in her early seventies [1970s], just beginning.

Other Voice: What did you all do for entertainment, say, like, in the thirties [1930s]?

CS: We didn't do anything, we didn't have malls, like, we stood around in the parks and visit. And we had church affairs, church socials, Sunday school. They had society affairs, the young men of the Odds, and they would give us Thursday afternoons, entertain them, and had to be (inaudible), 'cause you couldn't be out, and we had a nice time. 'Cause we went to our church, and they always furnished us with chaperons and all this. We enjoyed them, you know, right along with us, but now you can talk about those men, oh, it's pitiful now. I don't know what's going to become of this year.

Other Voice: How was religion?

CS: Huh?

Other Voice: How was the religious life?

CS: It was good, all the young folks, they was in church, you know. In fact, they had to go to church, and they enjoyed it. They know they had to go to church back then, because mother and father went ahead, and the children, they made sure those children were right there. Sent us to Sunday school, now we'll be to church, and everybody would be there and you have your Bible, boy, wouldn't we have a good time. Everybody shouting, we had a good time in church.

Other Voice: What church do you belong to?

CS: St. Paul.

Other Voice: St. Paul?

Interviewer: A.M.E.?

CS: Huh?

Interviewer: St. Paul A.M.E.?

CS: Yeah, uh-huh.

Other Voice: Is that around Central?

CS: That's on Harrison, on Marion and Harrison, right there. And everybody went to church. They'd have a few drum players, they were fine men. 'Cause I remember there was a old man, he had about six or seven children, and he had a way, he'd get drunk, he'd work all week, and when Saturday afternoon come, instead of coming home with his money, he would not come home. And my sister tells me things, she said, "Now, Mr. Willie don't come home," and his poor wife would there waiting with those children. She say, "Now, Miss Davis," because she say, "We know where we going Mama. Nobody is going to bother us," say, "We know the street he come down," and sure enough, we met Mr. Willie. We told his wife, Now don't you worry, you stay here, Miss Davis, 'cause we going to bring Mr. Willie home. She said, "Well, all right," and she tried to do a little laundry in the home to keep the rent.

So sure enough, we went to look for Mr. Willie, and when we got down there the police had him. And you know then they'll beat you up, and throw you in the paddy wagon, and they had him by the back of his pants, and searched him and they take the money, I guess. So my sister say, "Now listen there, please stop and listen." I said, "Yeah, let's run home and tell his wife." She said, "No, let's get him away." I said, "Get him away from the police?" She said yes. "And so we," she said, "now we going to tell them that's our daddy." I said, "We can't do that," oh, yeah.

And sure enough, she went and I went with her, and she said, "Oh, let us take our daddy home," say, "That's our daddy." And he looked at us, "This y'all daddy?" "Yes," she said, say, "We looking for him now, let us have him please." And Mr. Willie looked, yeah, and he was drunk too, and the police say, "What's the matter with you?" "Drunk, that's what." "Well, I'm going to let you all have him, are you all going to take him home?" "Yes, we'll take him home, let us have him." (garbled audio) And we carried him home, and we had his money there, and you know that stopped him from drinking. That stopped him from drinking. Oh, I'll never forget that.

Interviewer: How old were you all?

CS: Well, I must have—I was older than my sister, see, I must have been about ten and she was like, mama had steps, she was like nine, ten. I could have been eleven. But we carried Mr. Willie home and that stopped him, Lord have mercy. They've had it up and they've had it down, but thank God, it soon will be till the end of my journey, oh, yeah.

Interviewer: Did religion play a great part in black folks' life during your time?

CS: Parts?

Interviewer: Did it play a great part in the life of black people, when you were coming along?

CS: A great part?

Interviewer: A great part?

CS: Part.

Interviewer: Part, was it great, was religion really a thing that motivated blacks, during your time?

CS: Oh, yeah, and they were more faithful, they had more faith in God. Now, you take the white people, more faith than the colored, than the blacks have now. They worship God, but somehow blacks is just gone wild. They don't understand that God is still alive.

Other Voice: Did you have a lot of false prophets during that time? People coming trying to get your money saying that they were ministers and this stuff?

CS: No, not like they are now.

Other Voice: No.

CS: No, people feared God more back then. They don't care about doing nothing now, they do anything. 'Cause back then, look like they feared God more than they do now.

Other Voice: Was the shipyard in existence?

CS: Huh?

Other Voice: Do you remember anything about the shipyards?

CS: The sheep yard?

Other Voice: The shipyards?

CS: The shipyard?

Other Voice: Yes, ma'am, could you tell us about it?

CS: The shipyard, 'cause I had a brother that worked in the shipyard. I think J.W. did too, 'cause they let them work when they met a ship and like that. Oh, they made good money, the shipyards. White and black worked to the shipyard.

Other Voice: What kind of work they did there?

CS: Huh?

Other Voice: What kind of work did they do there, at the shipyard?

CS: They heat rivets—something they had to do. Rivets heater and they did, they had skilled workers too, they came from different places. That was a boom time too. That's the time I remember we were building St. Paul Church, we got so much money to help put the church up there.

Other Voice: How do you feel about the politics here in Tampa?

CS: That's all it is, I don't know.

Interviewer: Okay, thank you, Miss Saunders, 'cause we don't want to tire you out.

End of interview