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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: A31-00034
Interviewees: Francisco "Frank" Lopez (FL1) and Ferman Lopez (FL2)¹
Interviewers: Susan Greenbaum (SG) and Cheryl Rodriguez (CR)
Interview date: May 3, 1994
Interview location: Unknown
Transcribed by: MB²
Transcription date: July 13, 1994
Interview changes by: Kimberly Nordon
Changes date: December 29, 2008
Final Edit by: Mary Beth Isaacson
Final Edit date: February 3, 2009

Francisco "Frank" Lopez: The way I understand that part of history in Tampa was that at first, the Anglos, the blacks and Latins had control of all, you know, like the *bolita* and all that stuff like that. But then if you remember some of the movies that were coming out about the mafia, like Lucky Luciano, from that era on up, they were coming into power, they wanted part of what was going on, and that's why we had so many killings here in Tampa during that time up to about 1957.

Susan Greenbaum: I've seen a lot of references to that, but what were the specifics of it, do you know? Who was trying to take over what?

Ferman Lopez: Well, the man is dead now, we can talk about him. But there was Trafficante, Santo Trafficante's father was the real kingpin, and then his son took over for his father. From there came a lot of jealousy dealing with the number racket, where these guys wanted to govern this part of town and part of the next town, and these other guys were already here, and that's what created a lot of killings. Like, for instance, Charlie Wall, you've heard of him? The area, I don't know if the house is still there—

FL1: Yeah, it's still there.

FL2: But we used to go by that house, and it was so dreary looking that we were afraid of the area. So, as you probably read in the paper, when he went in, he went into a garage and there was—I forgot what you call it, it was bulletproof or whatever—and he went in and closed behind him, and the only people that knew the insides of the house was people

¹ Note: Research indicated that both interviewees have the same initials (FGL). To avoid confusion, Frank Lopez will be referred to as FL1, Ferman Lopez as FL2.

² This is an unidentified member of the USF Department of Anthropology African Americans in Florida research project.

that he allowed to go in there.

FL1: There was Scarface John.

SG: Now is Charlie Wall or Charlie Moon?

FL1: Charlie Wall.

SG: Charlie Wall, okay.

FL2: So the person that killed Charlie Wall was in the family, you know, because the dog—he had a huge dog and nobody could have gotten to Charlie Wall unless he knew that dog. So it's speculated, like you say, Scarface Charlie, Scarface Johnny.

FL1: Scarface Johnny. Anyway, he used to own the bar on Twenty-Second [Street] and Columbus Drive.

FL2: It's an open lot now.

FL1: And another guy got killed during that time, because we were coming from Middleton. I was in high school then and that's when (inaudible) got killed. But somebody had taken a shot at him on Nebraska [Avenue] and Columbus Drive but they missed, but eventually they got him. And he was sitting at the bar.

SG: So these were guys from Ybor City who were moving into Central Avenue and—

FL1: They wanted to take over.

FL2: Not necessarily Central Avenue. Ybor City, West Tampa.

SG: So Ybor City itself, West Tampa.

FL2: It was just a notorious group of people. If they saw that you had a good volume of business, they wanted to put a *piccolo* in there, they wanted to put a pinball machine, a music box, a *piccolo*, you know, they called them back then. These other people that already were there for years, that created a friction. So, therefore, that's where you get your killings and whatnot.

SG: So Charlie Moon was there before him? So they were moving in on him and he was resisting?

FL1: All the black businesses that were on Central, Charlie Moon had put all those people in business.

SG: How about your uncle? Was your uncle associated with Charlie Moon?

FL2: I don't think he was helped. I mean, I have the papers at home where my uncle brought the Chick's Lounge that you have seen there on Scott [Street] and Central. What was in the building when he brought it, and it was just prior to him going into the war, so—

SG: So this would have been the early forties [1940s]?

FL2: Yes, ma'am, somewhere thereabouts.

FL1: Yeah, the Chick Lounge, but then the other one was—

FL2: No, no, he said he bought it in thirty-eight [1938], because I was born in thirty-eight [1938]. So it was thirty-eight [1938] and then soon afterwards he went into the war—you know, the service. But with the little bit of furnishings and stuff that he had in the business, he was able to sell a little wine, a little beer. He couldn't get the hard liquor license until later.

FL1: There was a lot of bootlegging going on, riding by—

FL2: In one of those pictures you can see the inside of that place and you could see the wine that they used to have in there. But in 1951—I'm moving ahead, I don't know too much in between there—but in 1951 they were really making the business, the *bolita* business. I don't know who their backer was, who they were selling for, but they weren't backing their own businesses. My father was the bartender, and my uncle that's living now, that I'm helping to take care of every evening, he was the big *bolita* man. And they had a room in the back with a counter, it was round like that, and the people would come in through the back door, pick their numbers, you know. And they had codes that they would talk on the phone. Like if they wanted to talk about a spider, the number for spider was thirty-five, and the number 1, I think, was diamonds, you know; they had—I have it at home—all the numbers and what they mean. So if you dreamed of a number, if you dream of something, you look on this thing, and my uncle knows it by heart.

SG: Wasn't that supposed to be the essential skill of the numbers person was to be able remember them all because if you wrote them down that was—?

FL2: Yes, and he was good at that. When he would get on the phone, he would conduct a conversation talking about the spiders, an elephant, or whatever, and the policemen didn't know what they were talking about. Because in the first place, they had to get a Latin person to listen in, and they had to know what the numbers meant that they were talking about. So that's how they got away with it for years.

FL1: And back then the sheriff was Colbert, right? And that's another amazing story, because when one of them retired, or either didn't get elected, then the protégé would come after it. It bounced from Colbert to Blackburn, from Blackburn to Bear, and then to Walter Hendrich, and now Henderson. And if you chased that chain of command you would see that some kind of a way they were connected.

Cheryl Rodriguez: I remember my father talking about how the cops would stop somebody if they saw him with these little pads of paper in the car. And he would say, he was telling me about one of his clients that would tell the police officer, "Oh, you don't want me to carry this, I'll just tear it up. All right boss, I'll tear up the paper; you don't want me to carry this."

FL2: There was a gentlemen, his name was Metchie—do you remember Metchie? Who used to come and sell to Awilla, my grandmother. He would have one of those parasols, you know, an umbrella? He would dress in a tie and a coat and he would come to your house, [asking] what number you want? He would actually write it on these little tablets you were speaking about, but that was before they got smart to that and then they had to memorize.

FL1: Do you remember hearing about Lamear? Jimmy Lamear? He was killed in the estuary, around where the big oil rigs—

FL2: Nineteenth Street and Adamo Drive.

CR: I don't remember that.

FL1: Anyway, I was going to play a number for my grandmother that Saturday morning and I remember I never did get to Anester's. Anester was a bar on Twelfth Avenue and Nineteenth Street. And this gentlemen happened to be shot on Nineteenth Street, but way below Adamo Drive, and before I could turn in the alley to go up there to number, everybody was rushing out and driving towards that area, and then later on I found out that's what it was.

FL2: Another incident that was real keen also in remembering it was on Sixteenth Street and Seventh Avenue. When they killed a policemen by the name of Lopez. The gunman was down in the drainage ditch, you know.

FL1: The water going to the drainage.

FL2: That's where the man was hiding. So as the policemen walked his beat, that's where he got him. And now you are hearing about these, what do you call it—tunnels—this is in conjunction with that—

FL1: And the tunnels are only a block a way.

FL2: See, that's how that man got down there in that drainage ditch.

CR: Wow, that's amusing.

FL1: And see, later on they closed Fifteenth Street, but Sixteenth Street was an open street, because Casino—what was the name of that theater? Casino, right?

FL2: Yeah, Ritz Theater.

FL1: No, no, the other one, the uh—

FL2: Oh, Casino, where the big gambling house is?

FL1: No, no, the big theater.

FL2: On Sixteenth Street, but in front is where that, ah Centro—

FL1: No, in front of the Casino is that pizza place, and then there's a little Mexican place there now...

FL2: But the big building right next to it is where they had the gambling, you know, where they played dominos, and then behind was the Casino.

FL1: But the point I'm trying to make, that was an open street, Sixteenth Street.

FL2: Oh yeah, Sixteenth Street was open.

FL1: That was a theater, you know. Mario Lanza had been there when we were little.

CR: What was happening on Central as far as *bolita* was concerned?

FL2: There was my uncle that was selling, there was Little Savory, there was Kid Mason. Baby Fararugga had the 400 Club.

FL1: His wife still owns that building on Nebraska off Henderson [Avenue]. You know, that little corner there, and she's a beautician.

FL2: The Bossa Nova.

FL1: Yeah, Bossa Nova.

SG: The Vegas were Cuban, right?

FL2: That was right next to my uncle's place on Columbus Drive.

FL2: They were descendants of Cubans, these two brothers.

FL1: Lorenzo and—I forget his real name.

FL2: Lorenzo Vega.

FL1: They used to live on 6th Avenue.

FL2: But their parents, like our parents, came from Cuba, but the people that were mostly of Spanish decent that were on Central were raised either in West Tampa or Ybor City.

FL1: There was another supermarket that was Pularo, but I worked with his nephew or something. You ever seen a grocery store there? Pularo? Now you've heard of Goldie Thompson?

SG: Now, is this Central right here?

FL1: Yeah, this is Central and this Harrison [Street], but Harrison couldn't go right here, because the Lincoln Theater was there and then Johnny Gray, and then a beautician, but then you make that turn, and then you make another turn to go on Harrison into the project. Which is—see, that's Harrison, then it was another street here. Yeah, here it is right here, see. When you come from Harrison over there, then you have to come around, then turn in here and that would be the extent of Harrison.

SG: And what is this?

FL1: That's the Puritan Hotel. That hotel was built by the same man that built Plant—Plant University, the University of Tampa. You know, the same man that built that at the University of Tampa, H.B. [Henry B.] Plant, he built that.

SG: I had no idea that it was so large.

CR: It's like a whole block long.

FL2: My father splurged one year in 1947 and he let us go to New York. My mother, my sister, my brother and I.

FL1: And Lee Davis, when he moved from Central, that's the way it use to look, on Twenty-Second Street by the projects now, in Belmont Heights. But there was another guy that used to sell *bolita*, he was a slim barber shop. There was a man with a little arm—he had a half of a arm, and he would do like that and write them numbers, you remember that?

CR: You were getting ready to say something about Thompson?

FL1: Oh, yeah, this is very significant. You know that grocery store there? Goldie was the first guy there that I remember that had a lack radio show.

CR: Yes. I use to listen to that, Goldie Thompson.

FL1: And that's where he used to broadcast from, that grocery store right there, because that was his sponsor.

CR: Did he do—I remember him doing a Sunday show.

FL1: A gospel.

CR: A gospel. My grandmother would listen to that every Sunday.

FL1: But then through the week he also was on the radio.

SG: Was that Pularo's grocery store?

FL1: Yeah, you could see it right there. Doesn't it say that? Pularo? I can't see what—

CR: Pularo was Joe Pularo. Joe Pularo's Supermarket. And Goldie Thompson would broadcast from here?

FL1: And then you see right here on Harrison, around the corner here, was where the bench was for all the longshoremen; they'd sit down and wait for jobs and stuff.

CR: Okay, Harrison was when you turn the corner.

FL1: And then old recreation center, where we use go to dance, across the street.

FL2: That's Jenkins.

FL1: Right, Miss Jenkins, Miss Hamilton.

FL1: That's a lady that should be mentioned, and she's not mentioned. Miss Jenkins, she was instrumental for us kids, you know, teenagers.

CR: Yes. She was still around when I was growing—

FL1: Her son is still living; her son just retired from the school system in Fort Lauderdale.

CR: Oh, okay.

FL1: Purcell Houston, and he was a good athlete and he's a good speaker, man, he's a good speaker.

FL2: He's here in Tampa?

FL1: I think he retired in Fort Lauderdale or either Palm Beach, somewhere down there. But he is good. I saw him when Abraham Brown retired. Yeah, I think it was Abraham Brown, and he was the speaker. He is good.

FL2: During our era, nobody was rich. I mean, if a guy had a car—like Mr. Carrington

was one of the people that had cars, and Mr. Jenkins used to live right behind them. Herbert Carrington lived on Bass [Street].

CR: I know Carrington. My mom was good friends with their—I'm trying to think, maybe it was his daughter. He had—

FL2: Martha?

CR: Martha, yeah. Martha, yes.

FL1: Martha is in Miami now.

CR: In fact, I think Martha was one of my teachers, if I recall correctly.

FL1: She probably was when she first got out of school. Now she's teaching in Miami. She's got grandkids now.

CR: Oh, listen, yeah, my mother keeps in touch with her.

FL2: In fact, I just came from Tallahassee this weekend and I went to see Herbie's son graduate and he was outstanding in Military. He had a 4.0 [grade point average].

FL1: Herbert's son?

FL1: Yeah.

CR: And so they had something on Central?

FL1: No, not the Carringtons.

CR: Not the Carringtons.

FL1: No.

CR: Oh, you were saying that he had a car.

FL2: Yeah, he was one of the people that had a car, and the rest of us walked.

CR: And Goldie Thompson had a car?

FL1: I know Goldie had one, and the senior Blythe Andrews, I know they always had a car. My uncle always had a car.

CR: What happen to Goldie Thompson?

FL1: I don't know. See I left here in fifty-eight [1958] or fifty-nine [1959]. My, brother

left also in—A lot of stuff happen when I was away. I didn't even see the tearing down of Ybor City. I had some stuff in the drawer there. I had an Elvis Presley program, I had a menu with Columbia Restaurant, when they celebrated their fiftieth anniversary, and it was all in gold lettering. You know, my mom and them—Lilly said they was just throwing things out the window. But I had a lot of things and stuff. I had a program with the Harlem Globetrotters with Goose Tatum³—and everybody thinks that the Globetrotters started with Meadowlark⁴. The Globetrotters started with Goose Tatum. Sam Cook. The Apollo upstairs, they use to come every Easter. The Easter program. It was like a gospel program. That's where everybody used to put on them hats and dress real nice. On Sunday, it was for a gospel. All through the week, it'd be rambling and rolling there.

FL2: It was really different than what it is today.

FL1: Remember when we drove from Washington?

SG: Describe it. How did it look on a Saturday afternoon down on Central Avenue. Or whenever the time is that things were really—

FL2: On Saturday, the black folks, that's where they had to go. You know, back then, we were called Negroes.

FL1: From Cass Street to Kay Street, that was it, and there was something going on in every place.

FL2: And believe it or not, we had a library. They elaborate so much about College Hill getting a library; we had a library on Central.

FL1: Right next to the [*Florida*] *Sentinel*, next to Dupree Press.

FL2: And Central Avenue, Friday night, Saturday night, that's where everybody went. Sunday was tamed down a little bit. There wasn't no rioting, there wasn't no fighting—there were fights in the bars, you know. We couldn't go in the bars.

FL1: But even teenagers were allowed to have a good time, because around the corner from Central on Kay Street was the YWCA and they would give little dances for teenagers. And then you had the North Boulevard Homes on Main Street, they also utilized their administration building for teenagers to have a dance, and then of, course, the recreation center on Harrison. So teenagers, even though the adults had their thing going, we had our little things going on.

FL2: That one little lady, Miss Jenkins, she controlled the recreation center there and we were all mannerable.

³ Reece "Goose" Tatum, 1921-1967.

⁴ Meadowlark Lemon, b. 1932.

FL1: She didn't allow more than three people to be in that bathroom. If she found there to be about five or six, she would come in there and break it up.

CR: Yeah, I remember her when I was a little girl. Because I remember going to Kid Mason to dance, so she was still around.

FL1: You had to be respectful, even when you walked in that front door.

CR: It wasn't Kid Mason then?

FL2: It was just the recreation center.

FL1: Well, Kid Mason was on the other end, by Scott, which almost directly across the street from the Little Savory. Then you had MacArthur Studio, you know.

FL2: He had a sign on his menu there that said he sold everything from hardware to ice cream.

FL1: To me, he had what 7-Eleven's got now. But Kid Mason had the original 7-Eleven, and Johnny Gray. Johnny Gray used to have a soda fountain and you couldn't even move in there, you know, like I say twenty people come in there. I doubt if twenty people could move freely in there, but he had a soda fountain, he even sold some meals; he had women's stockings, things that ladies needed like cosmetics, powder, all that stuff.

FL2: He had the picture here that he loaned out with these four policemen. There was the Lincoln Theater, and next door was Johnny Gray. That's another man that sold everything in there, plus he had a little kitchen where he sold food. I don't know how all that was in that one little store. And they sold records.

FL1: And like, you know, when those guys used to come to town, that's where they used to go and have breakfast, and, then Charlie Green, also across from the Savory on Scott. But I have seen the teenagers in Johnny Gray's place, and you know, they use to wear those black stockings and keep their hair neat. I seen those guys in there, I seen Little Willie John, a lot of prominent guys that later on made it big—and like me and my brother drove all the way from the lady that I'm married to now, from Marshall, Florida, just to come back home to see Ray Charles. You remember that? Because we knew we could get in free because my uncle was on the door.

FL2: We were crossing the street over there when Johnny Ace—you all ever heard of Johnny Ace? He sang "The Clock on the Wall."⁵

FL1: Man, I wish I could play it for you, I got it.

CR: How long was the Lincoln there? I remember the Lincoln, but people have trouble, people have different stories about the theaters that were on Central.

⁵ This song is actually called "The Clock;" Ferman is quoting the lyrics.

FL2: That was Central Theater.

CR: And that was on Central?

FL1: Right across the street from the Cotton Club.

CR: Okay, right across from the Cotton Club.

FL1: That was the Central Theater.

FL2: Next door to the 400 Club, you had the bar and then you had a movie theater, and the Central Theater was really bad, because it was not as well kept as the Lincoln Theater. The Lincoln Theater was the newest one.

FL1: I think the Lincoln Theater came around the late '40s, right? It had to be, because I remember Jackie Robinson and Don Newcomb being there.

FL2: But I didn't go to the Central Theater that much, but I do remember that the seating wasn't that elaborate, you looked like you were sitting on wooden benches.

FL1: And it was kind of run down, because you could even see— But I used to go movies for \$.14. Five cents to the Central, I go over there and see some series, then I walk back to the Lincoln for \$.9, that was \$.14.

CR: See now, I remember the Lincoln. I remember going to the Lincoln. I was born in 1952 and I remember being in the eighth grade and going to the Lincoln Theater. I remember the Lincoln and I remember the Carver across town, in West Tampa.

FL1: See, that was around fifty-eight [1958]. Right on the corner of Main [Street] and North Boulevard.

CR: Right. Right where you—right where Main ends and you would have to turn.

FL1: Right, you had to turn, because see, it was two bridges. You had the North Boulevard bridge and then you turned and made that little turn and go up to the Garcia bridge.

FL2: The main thing is to get in the middle of the thing and turn it so the boat could get out.

CR: Right, yeah. I used to be scared to walk across that bridge when I was a kid. But I remember the Carver Theater being there. But I guess the main thing is the Lincoln Theater, which was right there at Harrison and Central. So that was there—that had been there for what?

FL1: I think it was probably built in the late forties [1940s], don't you? Because I know that Jackie was in the major leagues in forty-seven [1947] and I remember seeing him. It could have been forty-nine [1949] or fifty [1950], something like that.

FL2: It was the most elaborate thing they had on Central.

CR: The Lincoln was?

FL1: Right.

CR: And who owned it?

FL1: I don't know who owned it, but I do know that Oscar Lee Foster, his mother used to be the manager.

FL1: And then Bernice Mahoney used to be the ticket person. I'll tell you, you know where Lake Avenue and Belmont Heights, by the projects—Miss Williams across the street, that would be Twenty-Sixth [Street], Twenty-Sixth and Lake [Avenue], the first two houses there—it's right on the corner, and then there's one next to it. I don't know if Miss Williams is still living, but those two families were part of the Lincoln Theater. Because, I think her husband used to be the manager, the projector, clean up everything.

FL2: See, we're committing everything that we're telling you, because we have it up here. It's memory, you know. But this is a good thing, what we need to do is record the things that we know.

FL1: Just like last night, I was at a meeting with Robert Saunders from the NAACP [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People]. He got it up there, too.

CR: Well, we think it's really important to get this down and to document it, put it on paper, write books, put programs on. Because a lot of people really don't have what you had. I mean my children know nothing about this.

SG: And when you go there you can't tell that anything was there. I mean they just obliterated it for all purposes.

FL1: So you know, when you come off the—you know, when you make a right on Florida Avenue, on Scott. Let's say you are on the interstate and you see Central and Scott and you come down that ramp and that used to be the Florida Health Department, right there, on Tampa. I remember getting off right there and walking straight into the building and getting shots. My mom use to take us. But coming on down, that's Scott Street. And then that Tyler Temple Church used to be right there where that bail bondman and all that is right now. And then across the street, that was the Little Savory, Greek Stand, and then. the Palace Drugstore, DuPree Press, in that corner right there, Scott and Central.

FL2: I wonder how much history does...

FL1: Now, Mr. DuPree should have something and he is still living.

SG: Mr. DuPree actually donated the contents from his press to the [USF Tampa] library.⁶

FL1: But no pictures of it.

SG: There were no pictures and a lot of it was very recent. I mean, he didn't have stuff going back. We want to ask him to be interviewed, but was, he's taking care of his—

FL2: His mother.

FL1: How about Evelyn Jones and Goosby Jones? They may have some history too?

FL2: I met with them the other day.

FL1: I mean Evelyn Wilson, Goosby Jones' sister, Evelyn Wilson. That's Charles Wilson, the judge's mother. She should have some records of some form of history because they had a business on Central Avenue. Goosby Jones's Little Sundry—in fact, it was in the *Sentinel* the other day. Did you see that old picture? He used to have like a little soda corner right across the street from the projects. The other part north of Main Street was nothing but businesses back then. Joe Blandhouse Bar, and then Goosby Jones, of course. I don't know the places. Anthony's Drive-In further down on Oregon and Main.

CR: Yeah, I remember them on Main, Anthony's Drive-In.

FL1: That was a nice little business.

FL2: They used to make all the money.

CR: What about the—yeah, they had good barbecue.

FL2: We use to buy it from them.

CR: What about the professional people? The doctors on Central?

FL1: What was the doctor right there by the library? Wasn't that doctor—the doctor that I remember mostly was Norton. You know where Allen Temple is on Scott? Across the street was Dr. Norton's office and then there was another business, I forget what it was, but then on this side was a cleaners, across the street from St. Peter Claver [Catholic School] was a dry cleaners, and then Mr. Johnson's little grocery store; remember Mr. Johnson?

⁶ The DuPree Press Collection is part of Special Collections, and consists of publications printed for many of Tampa's black organizations between 1958 and 1992.

CR: Wasn't there a couple of dentists on Central?

FL2: Dr. Howard, I don't know where he was. Dr. Irving was on top of the library.

FL1: Yeah, that's right. But there was another one though, I forgot. Some of these people are still living—the Jordan family is still living, the people that use to run the Greek Stand. In fact, the grandson runs a lot of little businesses now, these little beer joints on Twenty-Ninth [Street]; a lot of winos.

FL2: I'm gonna have to split. I have to—I'm on the clock. I have to stop here.

SG: Well, I really appreciate you coming by.

FL2: No, I wish that we could really reminisce one day and possibly we could do it again, and my sister would be—very likely she knows a lot too. While Frank is talking and he won't let me talk, I thought about it, I thought of a lot of stuff that I wanted to say, then I forget.

CR: We would like to talk to you again. We have to go to graduation today, so our time is limited, too.

SG: So we're on a short time too.

FL2: You said you copied the pictures from that book? What did you, you put them in booklets like this or—?

SG: No. I, ah—the book that you gave me, I just made a Xerox of that so I would have a copy. But we did—I don't know if you have seen this⁷?

FL2: No, ma'am, I haven't.

SG: This was something I did at—oh, it's been a long time ago now, eighty-six [1986]—about [Sociedad La Union] Martí-Maceo and I got a lot of photographs from your father..

FL2: I think that's Diana Blanco?

SG: Yeah that's who it is. And that's Evelia Mallea's mother right there, and there are some of the Blanco kids.

FL2: Could we possibly get a copy of this?

SG: That's for you.

⁷ They are discussing Greenbaum's pamphlet *Afro-Cubans in Ybor City: A Centennial History*, copies of which are available in the USF Tampa Library.

FL1: What do you want to borrow from me?

SG: We made a thousand of those and we're down to four. There are a lot of them around somewhere.

CR: And people want those. I have to hold on to mine like crazy.

SG: We should reprint them, because—

CR: Every time somebody sees my book, they want it and I have to say no.

FL1: And you know, this morning I called Simon Studio to see what Simon had from Central and Ruth, his wife, said she can't recall because they way they do it—see, a lot of these pictures that I had done over, like somebody want a copy, all they got to do is say, Can you give me a copy from Frank Lopez, whatever. Because she has them down.

CR: Oh really? So we could go to her and get—so that way we don't have to take this?

FL1: Like all that stuff I had redone, I had that redone there. I had this redone.

CR: So in other words, they made a negative? Is that what you mean?

FL1: Right, she has a negative but I have like a little file in my name. And even St. Peter Claver's picture—you know the original picture to St. Peter Claver?

CR: So we could go there and get pictures?

FL2: And when did this come out?

SG: Eighty-six [1986] it came out; it was the centennial year

FL2: Yeah, eighty-six [1986]. I see. Now, you know it says Sotero, courtesy of Sotero Gonzalez. That's Robert Gonzalez's father. So I guess he wanted to put something in the name of his father.

SG: No, he wasn't Sotero, that's—

FL2: He got run over right there at—

FL1: Sotero at Fourteenth [Street] and Seventh.

FL2: No, Fourteenth and Eighth.

FL1: Oh, 8th Avenue.

FL2: Outside of there.

FL1: See that that's around 1920-something; that's my dad, my uncle, my aunt, my aunt's husband. And that was his first car. And see this right here. I was at the Tropicana one morning, and this guy was just drawing by memory. That used to be the old fire house on Ninth Avenue and Eighteenth Street. We used to play with the firemen and that used to be like home base and we had a game. We'd call out one, two, three, click, click. And we had to bust in there, you know like a jail, then if we could crash that, then we'd start the game over. You see, this was like houses—it was a road, a group of homes all the way to the corner, where Fallo Pizza is now, and they were all in white. Licata grocery was across the street, Tony Licata.

SG: But if you got all of these on file at a photo studio, it would be easier and less risky.

FL1: But, see the way Ruth was explaining it to me, because I said, "Well, do you have anything on Central Avenue?" She said, "No, we wouldn't have it by Central Avenue. When we make pictures, we make pictures like yours and anything you have ever had done here, it's in your name." I don't know. But it's worthwhile going to her and saying do you have any names like Lee Davis, Betty Jordache, Summer Wilson, or whoever, you know.

SG: So that's how she has her negatives filed? Under the names of the person that—?

FL1: I'm not saying that she has these names, but it's a calculated risk. Maybe you can go there and say do you have anything? Maybe this person had this person had something done here.

SG: Where is her studio?

FL2: On Benjamin Road. It's way out there by the airport, off of Hillsborough Avenue.

SG: And her name is?

FL1: Simon Studio.

FL2: That guy there is still hanging around; he was in church a couple of Sundays ago.

FL1: But she told me to go to the Tampa Library.

SG: Yeah, we've been there. A lot of the photos down there were real—sort of public photographs, you know. Here a building or here's a parade, but they don't have things like this. Where you've got people doing things, and a lot of the things that we are interested in they just don't have photographs of.

FL1: I forgot what I did with the little picture of my brother coming down Central Avenue in the parade. Do I have it in there? And see, that's another thing I wanted to show you, my uncle was the first guy to bring black college football to this town.

FL2: He brought [Mary McLeod] Bethune.

FL1: So it used to be called the Tilt of the Maroon and Gold.

SG: So was he the originator of that Classic? The Tilt is different from the Classic right?

FL1: Right.

FL2: Right, my brother's got the letter there that Bethune wrote to my uncle, thanking him.

CR: Yeah, that was read at that program.

FL1: And now you see this here man, right; he must have published this in the early '40s or something. But he made one mistake, he didn't put a date, can you imagine that? Look at all the old names, these are all black businesses. His name was King.

CR: Oh, this would be—

SG: Yeah.

FL1: Where is his picture? Well that's Kid Mason there. Roberts City Hotel. That's another man that could tell you about my uncle.

CR: We could enlarge these and put them as part of our—

FL1: And see these people were a part of our community. Silver Bar Ale, Tropical Ale. That's him right there, Mr. King.

CR: Can I see that?

FL2: See, this gentleman here could tell you about my uncle, the ball player.

SG: I haven't seen him in a while. (inaudible) is getting up there.

FL2: I haven't either.

FL1: See that's David right there.

CR: You remember Molina's?

FL1: Yeah, Molina's, yeah. You remember Molina's?

CR: I remember that.

FL1: I can't find that piece of paper. See right there, this had to be around the forties [1940s]—I mean thirty-nine [1939] or forty [1940]. Now see what it says?

FL2: That's the man that could really talk.

SG: This title "Mayor of Central"—

CR: That's what a lot of people—

FL1: See, every three years there was—

SG: Was there an actual election?

FL1: I don't know how they did it, but they actually—all the businesses, they had enough guys that were in business and every two years they would alternate. And my uncle happened to be mayor in thirty-nine [1939] and forty [1940].

SG: So is this part of the Chamber of Commerce?

FL1: Yeah.

FL2: They had a receipt, they called it—you called the clinic if you got sick, you would go to the clinic and they would pay for it.

FL1: Now see, this book is from 1940 and this is from 1939. The Tilt in Maroon and Gold, see?

SG: Is that the first year, thirty-nine [1939]?

FL1: Somewhere along in there. And see, these are all the originals of black businesses.

CR: Thank you so much.

FL2: I would like to do this more better.

SG: And if you wouldn't mind, we would like to come back or work out a—

FL2: Certainly, it would be a pleasure, because there's a lot of things that, you know, I'm just partly talking about without really getting into something. Real stuff, you know, you stop to think about it if you have time.

FL1: See this right here? This was before the *Sentinel* took over the *Tampa Bulletin*. It was two separate [newspapers], *Tampa Bulletin* and *Florida Sentinel*, but these were all the businesses, see, and they united together to put this, you know. And I would like to also mention that back then we didn't have guys with master's degrees, B.S. degrees, Ph.D.s, but they had more unity. To have businesses together without animosity, division.

They had a vision. Now we got these guys with Ph.D.s, *cum laudes*, can't even get a shoe shine stand on Seventh Avenue. I mean think about it, these guys were men, things that you could be proud of.

FL2: It was a pleasure talking to you, and we'll get together at a later date.

CR: Nice talking to you, and I look forward to it.

FL1: Thanks for coming by.

FL2: I'm off the clock. Okay, Frank, I'm going to go.

CR: Thank you very much, goodbye.

FL1: You know who else? Joe Bolten's family may have some stuff too.

FL2: Joe Bolten works with me at the sheriff's department, communications dispatcher.

SG: But we are—I don't know if we ever explained what this is all about. Maybe it would be a good time to do that. We have a grant from the Humanities to do a photo exhibit and a public program. And we are going to do like a walking tour of Central Park, where everything used to be and we're going to put up placards and. we're going to have somebody that can tell everybody what used to be there and we're going to come around the corner into Kid Mason Center. There's going to be a photo exhibit in Kid Manson Center, and then there's going to be a program of some sort. We are not sure exactly what it will be. It's going to be in October, so we've got some time to do this.

FL1: How about Big Jim? Did you ever get in touch with him?

CR: Big Jim, who used to be the coach?

FL2: James Williams. He used to be the coach.

SG: Oh, no, we haven't.

FL1: Because I heard the other day that he borrowed some pictures from the guy that used to own the *Tampa Bulletin*, James Jackson, and he passed away and this guy that goes to church with us, Big Jim, borrowed a lot of the pictures that were in James Jackson's house. And what happen here—you won't believe this—what happen here is this young man moved into his house. You know how young people, they want to throw away everything and start from scratch? And he didn't realize the value of those pictures. Can you believe that man? I wanted to go through the floor.

SG: Oh, I heard so many stories like that when we were interviewing—

FL1: Well, he was able to save some, and this man used to own the *Bulletin*. Man, can

you imagine how many pictures he had? Oh, man, I could have gone through the floor.

FL2: We had a similar incident to this. We had two uncles to pass right behind the other, two days apart, right? Well, we have a couple of aunts that they are half sisters, so there's a lot of mixture in our family. Well, these two girls are on the other side and she went into my uncle's room and she tore up a lot of these pictures like this. Because she didn't want to be seen with the black folks.

SG: Oh, no, this is terrible.

FL1: These are our two aunts.

FL2: See, my grandmother, when she married the first time, there were five children and my mother was included. I'm not casting no stone, this family that is gone and forgotten, but what I'm trying to say is that then in need of necessity, for necessity's reasons she got along with this gentlemen from Spain, who was from (inaudible) and they had two daughters, they are on the other side. Right now—

FL1: But this was my grandmother's first husband, Infamio (inaudible), and he died at the age of thirty-two and left five kids. And the way he got sick was going back and forth to Havana. He was in the movement, whatever they were doing then, and he would take money back, come back, make some more money, go back. And he used to work at the factory—the wooden factory on what used to be Tenth Avenue, and now it's Palm [Avenue]—that's where he used to work.

FL2: Palm and Nineteenth.

CR: Now, when he died, that's when she married the man from Spain?

FL2: Right.

FL1: And had those other two girls, my aunts.

CR: They didn't want to be associated with—?

FL1: They don't want to be associated—well, see, they married guys that—I guess they didn't want them to know about us. They moved away.

FL2: Bailey wasn't like that. One of the aunts, her husband Julio was really a kind person. But there is this other guy who lives—they live right now in Hollywood, Florida. . .

Side 1 ends; Side 2 begins.

FL1: . . .and by her playing piano, and when new sisters used to come to town, they practice for her.

FL2: She was our music teacher and taught second grade at St. Peter Claver.

FL1: Taught me in fourth grade, taught me how to play; she was good. And she wasn't a Catholic, but she still taught religion just like she was a Catholic. She was good and strict right along with the nuns, she was good. But we appreciated all that, you know. By being a good person—

FL2: See, this is the uncle that's still living. He's in the back tending to the *bolita* now. And he's the only one that's still living.

SG: How old is he?

FL1: He's 88.

FL1: Going on eighty-nine, right?

SG: How does he feel?

FL2: Well, he's the old stock, they don't really believe that they're sick. The only thing that's failed him is his legs. I have to help him get up.

FL2: He's the guy that knows all the numbers from 1 to 100.

CR: Oh, that's the one that you take care of?

FL2: Right.

SG: Do you think we could get together, all of us?

FL1: You may want to talk to him. You know why, because he could name you some of those projects. Because I asked him to give me the names of all the businesses from where the new TECO [Tampa Electric Company] building in Ybor City to—I went to Nebraska, and he named them all. All the way down. This baker was here, this person was here.

FL2: Have you ever ate at Don Quixote? Upstairs in the old cigar factory? Ybor Square.

SG: No, I don't think so.

CR: Oh, yeah, sure.

SG: Oh, yeah.

FL2: There's a picture there that shows this area that he's talking about from about Ninth Street all the way towards Nebraska.

FL1: I don't think that's in that picture. Right up there at the restaurant?

FL2: Yeah.

FL1: Yeah, I got to check it out.

FL2: Because it shows where Nebraska dead ends.

SG: But he would remember a lot further back.

FL1: His mind is good. Because he—see, when we first move to Ybor City there were actually a few of us that if we know anything, so I went to (inaudible) and said, "Hey, tell me everything that was from Nebraska all the way to Twelfth," and he could name all these businesses by name and where they were. Where there was a bakery, where there was that, I couldn't believe it.

FL2: See, this is when they moved from Scott to Constance and that was their grand opening. You see the flower in the background, that's my father there.

FL1: Yeah, these are the two aunts we were talking about right here.

FL2: See this guy here, they accidentally got his picture in the back there, because we couldn't get a picture of him in the front.

FL1: See, these are the two aunts we're talking about; they were young then. That's me, this is my brother and this is my sister, my mom, my grandmother. So we had segregation within our family—that's tough, you know.

SG: I've encountered a lot of cases or stories like that among the Cubans. Like Evelia has cousins who are Chinese, her father was half Chinese.

FL1: You know Chino who used to live on Seventh Avenue—man, and she still looks good for her age. Man, I couldn't believe it, you seen Chino? And there's another cousin they tell me—

FL2: They're really oriental looking, their eyes and everything.

FL1: I don't know true this is, but Summer Wilson and Clarence Wilson, some kind of way they are related to the Boza Funeral Home people.

CR: Oh really? A.P. Boza?

FL1: I don't know how, but some kind of way. Their great-grandmother Wilson—on the grandmother's side, not the father's side. I know when they used to live on Buffalo [Drive]—well, it was a dirt road back then; you know anything on the other side of Twenty-Ninth [Street] was dirt.

FL2: You know, I keep listening and I want to stay but I have to go to now, so I'll talk to you all later.

CR: All right, thank you.

FL1: Thanks for coming, you hear? It's so interesting. You know, I wish that—it's like a puzzle, you try to figure out how to put it together; you know it's a headache, really. I didn't want to say this in front of my brother because I don't want to hurt his feelings, but like a lot of times when we were small and they would take him and leave me. And when you are a little kid, you don't realize what's going on, but then when you grow up and you say I wonder why they always left me and took him. But now I realize why, you know—but I don't hold it against my brother, I hold it against them for doing it, because we were brothers.

CR: Did you—the week after we had that program at the Museum that I saw you [at]—a week later there was a film that was shown. It was called *A Question of Color* and it talks about—the film is very well done and it talks about color prejudice among black people, and it talks about what you were talking about there, where we punish each other because of lightness—

FL1: In fact, my son had to make a report like that at Tuskegee [University]. The color of your skin or something like that. And luckily I had some *Ebony Magazine* and in fact, if I search I'm pretty sure it's there.

CR: Well anyway, this black woman who's very, very, fair made this documentary. It's very good and it stems from her own personal feelings, the kinds of things that she grew up with.

FL1: Well, that's what my wife—I'm laughing because my wife reminds me of this. She says, "You got too much hate in you, you ought to let it out." I say, "Baby, I'm all right." But it does come into place sometimes.

CR: Well, you know, the healthy thing to do is to talk about it, but I know that growing up in an Afro-Cuban family, particularly where there are all these different colors of people—I mean, it is difficult sometimes.

FL1: And then even when we were going to school, we caught it from both worlds. Even the other kids in school used to tease us because we were light and you come home and you catch it because you were darker. It was rough, that was rough, but we lived through it.

SG: The thing that I've always been interested in is how the Cubans in Ybor City and the folks on Central Avenue got along with each other, particularly the Afro-Cubans. Was there a lot of interaction there; did people go to Central Avenue?

FL1: Oh, yeah, we all used to go to Central Avenue. In fact, you see how my brother looks—but yeah, it was like an understood type of thing. Like her grandfather, he was fair but he was still classified as a colored person. But it was like a "U" in the center, it's understood.

SG: So there was this commonality, even though you had a different language and things like this.

FL1: Even had a (inaudible) from the cleaners—looked like a White guy, but it was understood—he went to school with a certain group of people, they knew he was one of them. And even it was so many of us, like Yolanda—God, Yolanda was a beautiful girl, just one of those things I guess. (inaudible)

CR: Well, you think that, so what you're saying, the question that you are really asking is did Afro-Cubans—were they as active on Central as other black people?

SG: Were they more likely to stay in Ybor City? Both to (inaudible) and also to patronize?

FL1: Yeah, the majority of the Spanish speaking people, they live in Ybor City but you had a few that still lived in Belmont Height. West Tampa was just like Ybor City.

SG: But Martí-Maceo was down on Sixth Avenue and it was fairly close to, or at least in the direction of Central Avenue.

FL1: Where St. Peter Claver is now, right in there, you know. Yeah, the majority of the Spanish people that are living now, that we are children of some of the originals, that's where we all lived, in Ybor City. Second Avenue, Third Avenue, Fourth Avenue, Eighth Avenue, Tenth Avenue, and then you're safe on Twenty-Fourth Street to Nebraska. On the other side of Nebraska, there was another set of folks, but they were still Spanish. But within that parameter there, it was mostly the Afro-Cubans.

CR: And just like you and your brother and other Cuban friends, you all would go to Central Avenue?

FL1: Yeah.

CR: Other black Cubans would do the same?

FL1: Oh, yeah; on the weekdays—Schunda would tell you—that's the only place we had to go unless we wen— When we was very little, Mama and them would go to other peoples' houses and they would have their own music. You ever heard of Ramon?

CR: Ramon and Julia. He was married to Julia.

FL1: Right, Julia. He was married to Julia, right and they had their own little band,

congas and all that, and the kids would come and the kids would go in the backyard and play while the old folks did whatever they were doing.

CR: Ramon and Julia had a hotel.

FL1: Right, that was on Twelfth Avenue, across the street from that dance where I was telling you about the guy got shot. He had a—must have been a half a block long, you, know, like the building where Cafe Creole is now? It was (inaudible) a little bit. It was on Twelfth Avenue and Nineteenth Street.

SG: So he was here in Ybor City?

FL1: Ybor City. In the heart of—that's what I call the heart of Ybor City. Yeah, I don't know, that's the best way I can describe it. But I mean, you can get more than one opinion and they're going to all be different. But it was like an understood thing, you know.

SG: It wasn't until I started working on this project—and I don't know why, because I should have—that I realized that there was this closeness. I mean physically, there was this closeness.

FL1: It was very close, it was. Ybor City was a unique place. I'm not joking. Even when I was working at the Columbia—it's funny now, but some days the guy really relied on us and we were working for this Italian guy, Joe Valenti, but the Columbia was owned by Casa Medra and his brother. But Joe, he gambled a lot and he relied on us. And let's say sometimes we may not feel like going to work, this guy would come over to the house and get us. And I mean that's how much—I don't know if it was respect or understanding or he liked us or whatever, but we were right there. I mean, we used to handle all the liquor—and we were underage, really, so when the inspector would come by, we would act like we were working the kitchen or something like that. But we would handle all the requisitions for the bars, and at the time, the Columbia was booming, man. They had a front bar, they had a kitchen bar, they had Siboney Room, they had a bar in the patio, and then banquet rooms. We had to fill all that out, like so much bourbon, gin, rum for the bar, mixed drinks, and all like that. It was fun.

Frank use to work with us. Frank Reynolds, David Jenkins, and then after we left, then my brother and some of his friends took it over. Then after they left, then the barber that died not so long ago, Alfonso, his son took it over and then Frank Crousea. You know Frank Crousea? That's Gomez's brother. He died about two years ago. Davy Gomez.

SG: I didn't know him.

FL1: Do you know Martha Gomez? Gloria Gomez? Well, it's Gloria Gonzalez now.

SG: I may. I know people by nicknames and I don't know what their real names are.

FL1: Yeah, me too. I'm like you. Then see, they used to work at the drugstore, Freddie's

Drugstore on Thirteenth and Seventh Avenue, right around the corner from Pedroso's house and it was unique. I'm not, I mean—man, that was—you had to be there to believe it and see it, you know. You can close your eyes and just imagine where everybody was and it was— We had black people, we had Italian people, we had Spanish people. Like the block I lived on, we had everything in that one block.

SG: You left before urban renewal, you left in fifty-eight [1958]?

FL1: I left around fifty-eight [1958], fifty-nine [1959], and then I went to live in Sarasota.

SG: When did you come back?

FL1: I came back the latter part of sevety-six [1976].

SG: So that was when Ybor City had been wiped out and Central Avenue had been wiped out. What did you think when you first saw that? Did you know it had happened before you got back?

FL1: Well, I had read where it was happening but whenever I came home I didn't even bother about going anywhere. I just come home to see my mom, go back. And then we may stop in my wife's home in Archer, spend two or three days with her, then we go back home. We did that about ten or eleven years. The only things that was of interest was coming back home and seeing Mom, I wasn't—

SG: So the other stuff had been torn down?

FL1: Yeah, I guess. I never did venture out to see, I just stayed over with Mom.

SG: Let's talk about which photographs we might be able to use.

FL1: Yeah, okay; well, you are welcome to them, really.

SG: I'm going to turn this off now, I want to ask. . .

end of interview