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DTB 007 Francis Thomas
Down the Bay Oral History Project (DTB), Acc. 757
Interviewed by Kern Jackson on January 7, 2022
1 hour, 41 minute audio recording • 65 page transcript

Abstract: In this interview, Francis Thomas is interviewed by Kern Jackson about his memories and reflections on the Down the Bay neighborhood of Mobile. This includes discussion of Black societies in Mobile from Down the Bay and Maysville in years past, most particularly the Sons and Daughters of Honor Hall. Mr. Thomas also mentions that his mother worked in photography with noted Mobile photographer Erik Overbey. His father worked as a molder for Mobile Pulley Works. He discusses the historic importance of baseball Down the Bay, and in the Black community in Mobile more broadly. Mr. Thomas describes some of the geography of Down the Bay, including landmarks such as the Tennessee Ditch. He shares a number of memories of Lemuel Keeby, the former principal of Williamson High School. Mr. Thomas also shares some memories and reflections on integration in Mobile and the complex phenomenon of being among the “firsts.”

The Down the Bay Oral History Project focuses on the historic Down the Bay neighborhood on the south side of Mobile, Alabama. Led by Drs. Philip Carr and Kern Jackson of the University of South Alabama, in collaboration with the McCall Library, the project took shape in conjunction with archaeological mitigation work for the I-10 bridge expansion. Down the Bay is a historically Black and Creole neighborhood, and a central focus of the project has been to document the constant threat of gentrification and the legacy of urban renewal.

Preface: This is a transcript of an oral history recording archived at the McCall Library of the University of South Alabama. Readers are asked to bear in mind that they are reading a verbatim transcript of the spoken word which has been minimally edited for readability.



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DTB 007 Francis Thomas
Interviewed January 7, 2022

This is a verbatim transcript of an oral history interview recording, composed and formatted in accordance with the McCall Library transcription style guide.

Verbatim transcription is a style of representing as closely as possible the exact wording and phrasing of the speakers on the recording, though false starts, repetitious phrases, and other minor edits have been made as needed only for the sake of clarity and readability. Readers of this transcript are strongly encouraged to listen to the recording.

Please note that if any text is **bolded** in the transcript, this indicates uncertainty of either spelling or accuracy of transcription regarding what was said. Italics indicate emphasis, or are applied to titles and similar proper nouns.

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Draft transcript:	Latresha Maddix May 25, 2022
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DTB 007

Narrator: Francis Thomas (and interlocutor Claude Thomas)

Interviewer: Kern Jackson

Date: January 7, 2022

T: —but, it's a memorial home.

J: Who's this, now? Ms. Patton?

T: Patton, Patton. That was Fred West's mother. Old Man Fred' mother. And she lived in a yellow house—the house is still there, right up on that hill. Right as you're going towards Prichard, like.

J: Let's get back to something you said earlier about—because, it sort of segways us into this discussion about Black folks organizing, and what these organizations like Federated Women, or like the churches, or like—you know, we talking about Heart of Mary school being closed down. Could you talk a little bit about why those institutions are important?

T: Because that was the only way the Black community had of being recognized.

J: But why they got to be recognized? What do you mean?

T: It actually started with what they call “societies” in the community. Down on Hamilton Street.

J: Down the Bay?

T: Down the Bay, on—what was it? Franklin or Hamilton? One of those streets, behind Cedar. They had what they called the **Salmay** Union Hall. It was a two-story hall, and these people would—they had what they called Black societies. And they kept their money in the community through a society. Out here in Maysville, they had Sons and Daughters of Honor Hall, up there where the church is, now; right where they just dedicated that new building.

J: What street is that?

T: It's on Weinacker Avenue; well, it's on Elliot Street, really. Place on Elliot Street. I got pictures of when my mother had her first daycare center.

J: Oh, your momma was an educator?

T: Yes, mmhm. She was one of the first Black women in her family to go to college. She went to Hampton Institute.

J: That's a long way away from Mobile!

T: Yeah, well she worked her way. Old Man Overbey helped send her there. [Laughter] She worked, as I told you, she would touch at the studio down there on Dauphin Street.

J: She would do touch up on the pictures?

T: Yeah, you know, didn't have color pictures. So, she had her studio set up in this dining room right here. And she had a machine where she would put the pictures on that frame, and touch them up. Put color to them.

J: Where—did she leave you a bunch of her equipment or pictures?

T: I got a bunch of pictures.

J: That she took?

T: Yeah well, that she took, but they not retouched; they just black and white.

J: Yeah.

T: But I got them. There's a whole scrapbook right there.

J: Because we need to begin our interview formally. First, Mr. Thomas, let me just say—because it needs saying, right?—that it's an honor to be here to talk to you today. On one hand, it's a oral history project about Down the Bay, but all these things is connected, see?

T: Well, that's where my mother come from; Down the Bay.

J: She did? What part of Down the Bay did she come from?

T: She come off of Maryland Street.

J: Well, let's start there. Could you give—first, give your whole name, and where we are sitting today, so we can document properly.

T: Ok, my whole name is Francis Leonard Thomas. I'm the son of Jesse Thomas. We are doing this interview at my home. I have a picture of me and my daddy on the front porch of this house. I'm going show you. When I was a little boy; he's got me standing between his legs. So, this is where I was born. I sleep in the room my mother had me in.

J: Now, we on Tisdale Street—what street is this?

T: 551 Tisdale.

J: 551. And today is the 7th of January, 2022. 2022, Mr. Thomas; we done seen some stuff.

T: I have.

J: You know? And you know, I'm in my mid 50s now, and every day I get up I thank Him for it.

T: Yeah, I'll be 82 my birthday.

J: That right?

T: Right.

J: Now, let's go back to your parents. Tell me who your parents were, and where they came from.

T: My daddy' name was Jesse Thomas Sr; mother' name Carrie Brown Thomas. My father was born and raised two blocks from where we are now, on Elliot Street. My mother come from Down the Bay; she belonged to Bethel AME church all her life. They never changed churches. My daddy belonged to Corinthian, she belonged to Bethel. They never changed churches. But he worshipped at Bethel, she worshipped at Corinthian. He was on the Christmas program at Bethel every year, my dad was.

J: What'd he do on the program?

T: Sing.

J: Singing?

T: Yeah, he sang. In the choir down there, had a **mixed** choir. And my mother sang in the choir at Bethel too. I got a family of women down there at Bethel that my mother put in.

J: In your life, who was the pastor of Bethel?

T: Bishop Bonner; I only remember his last name.

J: Bishop who?

T: Bonner.

J: And who was the pastor at Corinthian?

T: Reverend E.A. Palmer. [Laughter] Tough old man!

J: Why was Reverend E.A. Palmer tough?

T: Because he was a trailblazer for Black ministers in the state of Alabama. That Cedar Grove Academy, out in Prichard? He donated his land for that place, right across the street from where his homestead was. He gave them something like this with that land, for Cedar Grove.

J: Now what did his—

T: His wife was the principal at Council, Mrs. Palmer.

J: Mrs. Palmer was the principal at down here at Council?

T: Old Council, yeah.

J: Okay. See, that's what I mean: all of these things is interconnected.

T: Right, right.

J: See? You can be looking for information on Down the Bay, and then you learn about how people are connected to Down the Bay. Next thing you know, you done covered the whole Mobile.

T: Yeah, yeah. My wife come from Down the Bay.

J: Ok. What's your wife' name?

T: Yvonne. Shit, I'm a widower now; she dead. She died 13 years ago.

J: What was her maiden—her full name?

T: Yvonne Lacy Thomas.

J: Mmhm. And Mrs. Yvonne was from Down the Bay? Whereabouts?

T: Right where Martin De Porres is? Her granddaddy had a woodyard right behind—see, he was a Smallman. They called him “Turkey.” “Turkey’s Wood Yard,” right down—.

J: Turkey’s Wood Yard.

T: Yeah. And they had a cleaners Down the Bay.

J: Yeah, what was the cleaners called?

T: I don't remember the name of that cleaners; it was off Texas Street. And—New Jersey? It was on New Jersey first, then on Texas Street. But she was raised Down the Bay.

J: And she was a Lacy?

T: Yeah, mmhm. Her granddaddy was Old Man Smallman. He worked on the riverfront.

J: Old Man who?

T: Smallman.

J: S-M-A-L-L-M-A-N?

T: —M-A-N, yeah. They called him “Turkey.”

J: Turk for Turkey?

T: Yeah. Turkey, just Turkey. He had a rooming house in the back yard, of that wood yard. He was rented room down there.

J: So that'd been around what year?

T: Oh, man! My wife was born in [19]41. So, I'm saying the late [19]30s.

J: Late [19]30s?

T: Yeah.

J: What's did Mr. Jessie Sr. do for a living?

T: I got some pictures that I'm going let you see. Worked for Mobile Pulley Works. Matter of fact, I got a picture of him, and I think it's ten other men, when they retired. They had four hundred some years at that Mobile Pulley Works together.

J: No, they didn't!

T: Yeah.

J: I don't even know what—I might sound ignorant, but I don't even know what the Pulley Works is.

T: Mobile Pulley Works; it right there on Ann Street. Still there. They make parts for dredge boats.

J: For dredge boats?

T: It's a foundry.

J: Oh, it's a foundry. And what did—what did Mr. Jessie do there?

T: He was a molder.

J: What's a molder?

T: They make the mold for to pour the hot steel in, to form these impalers and cutting blades and things in. That's, he was one of the first—I got his last check as a Black molder, and his first check as a union molder. And the difference in the salaries. He was *a/so* the first Black international officer for the International Molders Union.

J: There was a International Molders Union?

T: There still is. They still there. And he was the first Black executive board officer for the International Union.

J: His parents must've been really proud.

T: I never knew my granddaddy, but they tell me my grandmother was a stern lady. She carried the family on, she was like the family matriarch.

J: What was your grandmomma's name?

T: Her name was **Etta** Thomas.

J: What did Mrs. **Etta** do?

T: Nothing; housewife.

J: But you spent a lot of time with her.

T: No; I didn't even know her. No, I didn't know her. I'm going on past history.

J: Why they say she was stern, you think?

T: Because, I think every family Black family had a matriarch. Someone—because my daddy finally took up the mantle. Anything that happened in this family, my daddy was summoned to it: somebody got in trouble; family got destitute. I never will forget, my uncle house burned down one time, and all of his children—my uncle had ten children. He had to bring all of them up here to the homestead on Elliott Street to stay with us until they rebuilt his house. And my daddy saw to them having somewhere to stay until they got his house rebuilt. My uncle also worked at Pulley Works.

J: What was your uncle' name?

- T: Nick Thomas. That was David's father.
- J: And David, David was one of those children who moved into the homestead while the house got repaired?
- T: Repaired, right. Mmhm. That house is still—
- J: What's the address of the homestead?
- T: I want to say 503—nah, 1703, I think, Elliott Street. I can find it right quick.
- J: 1703 Elliott Street?
- T: Yeah, Elliott. It's right behind the church. My granddaddy donated land to the church.
- J: Which church?
- T: Corinthian.
- J: How, did you ever find out how he came into having land like that?
- T: All four of those brothers came from Beatrice, Alabama.
- J: Beatrice.
- T: Yeah. My granddaddy and three of his brothers. And they all settled on the corner of Tisdale and Elliott at one time. The one in Prichard—I mean, in Trinity Gardens, you was talking about that block house that was made out of stone out there? That was one of my granddaddy's brothers' sons. The name was Henry Thomas. That was Roger Thomas's brother, he built that house. It's a house right here on Tisdale Street, got two big old lions on the—only house on this side of Virginia Street that's got a basement in it. It's three doors from here. Got two big old lions, stone lions on the porch.
- J: That 1703?
- T: Nah. No, that's five-something.
- J: Oh okay, okay.

T: That's five-something Tisdale.

J: So, they sort of settled here and made this like the Thomas area?

T: Thomas area. [Laughter]

J: Because sometimes you hear about family area—because I know I heard about Coleman Alley, and—

T: Coleman Lane.

J: Coleman Lane! Thank you. Because some stuff went down in Coleman Lane!
[Laughter]

T: Yeah, yeah.

J: And my granddaddy and them used to talk about walking to from Crosstown—

T: To Coleman Lane.

J: —to Coleman Lane, or walking to Hartwell Field, or—walking somewhere.

T: Yeah, yeah. They walked everywhere. They walked everywhere. I was telling you about my daddy was a baseball commissioner. I got a picture in this scrapbook right there that depicts Joe Bailey cutting the ribbon at Hartwell Field to give my father charge over the Mobile Baseball League. Right there at Hartwell Field.

J: Now I got somebody in my family, it's all—he sounds like he was a nefarious character, and wasn't particularly liked in the community. But this, he was involved in baseball, too. His name was Alex Herman.

T: Yeah, yeah.

J: I don't know what he did with the baseball.

T: Well, I got—I got some history. Them men owned those teams. Alex Herman owned the Post at one time, I think. Because they had a club down there on Mon Luis Island, where they had their own beach and everything down there. It was the postman's club. Because I had a cousin—Melzer Williams was a postman, he played on that team, and he also played on the Black Shippers. So, these men,

they were forming their own recreation, and baseball was one of them. That's why they had so many baseball to players come out of Mobile. That's where they came from.

J: I interviewed a man back in late [19]90s named Robby Robinson. He played for some team that was in Whistler.

T: Yeah, yeah.

J: And he told me—and he would eventually go to work in Chicago—and he said, man, there was the Negro League teams, but then there was the city team.

T: Right.

J: And, even my granddaddy used to say, “Yeah, even if we didn't have no money, we'd go through and look through the hole in the fence.”

T: That's right, at Hartwell Field.

J: Yeah, he said, “We was called the ‘Knothole Gang.’”

T: Knothole Gang, that's right. They had them on the playgrounds. That's why Willie McCovey and all these fellows that played ball, they played on the playground. Because they had leagues on the playground. They started off with softball, really; but Harmon had a baseball and a hardball field. At Harmon, it was one—and the one in Toulminville, Carver Park? It had both of them, softball and hardball. That's where Hank Aaron' brother Tommie and my daddy got inducted into the Mobile Hall of Fame together.

J: Where did they play together?

T: They didn't play together!

J: They just played in the same time.

T: Yeah, in Mobile. You know, they had this banquet every year where they induct somebody into the baseball hall of fame—or, sports hall of fame.

J: Sports hall of fame, uh-huh.

T: And they were one of the first inductees, when they first started that thing. Him and Tommie Aaron.

J: I'm going to pause one sec. I want to check, see how this thing is doing.

T: Okay.

[Break in recording]

T: His name was Leon Johnson. He went to Heart of Mary. His first cousin, Bubba Frank, was one of the first football players they had at Heart of Mary. He used to bring us old equipment and stuff, and we would play out there in the stadium before they even built that stadium—that was a cabbage farm out there. It was a big old field.

J: Over here—where?

T: Right there where the stadium is.

J: That was a cabbage farm, where Ladd is?

T: Yeah, Old Man Riley's Farm.

J: Old Man Riley.

T: Yeah, I don't know what his first name is; two-story house. See back where them oak tree is, clump of oak trees. They had a—it's an artesian well right there where the 50 yard line is.

J: Is it?

T: Yeah. That's why they can't never, when it rain real hard, the water stand there.

J: It sure do!

T: It runs to that ditch down there, at the railroad tracks. That Tennessee ditch. That's the ditch that take that water to the bay. But it come out right there in the middle of that stadium. [Laughter]

J: Well, help me—

T: I learned how to swim out there. [Laughter]

J: I don't understand something. Because the boundaries of the communities change over time. So, where does Maysville begin and end?

T: Maysville started right there at Houston Street.

J: Okay, Houston Street.

T: Well, my understanding is Old Man Mays, that lived in this area. And he gave the Blacks that settled in this community the name. Because they put that housing project, it was named the Maysville Housing Project. Birdsville was on the other side of Duval Street. Maysville actually didn't go no further than the railroad track. Because when you cross the track, they call that "in the Flats."

J: In the Flats.

T: Yeah. Old Williamson was on Rotterdam Street. Not where is it now.

J: The same Williamson the school named after?

T: Yeah. Now, that's where Old Williamson, old two-story building. And we had double session. That what I was telling you about the Sons and Daughters of Honor Hall? All the kids that couldn't go to Williamson in the daytime—because they didn't go no further than seventh grade—would have to go to Sons and Daughters Honor Hall in the afternoon for the double session.

J: Now, back up; now we talking about education, because the Sons and Daughters of who?

T: Honor.

J: Of Honor.

T: Yeah.

J: And what kind of organization was the Sons and Daughters—?

T: That's one of them societies I was telling you about.

J: Okay.

T: In the community.

J: And they started that because—?

T: Because they didn't have recreation center. These buildings was used for all the social activities; weddings and all of this stuff were held at these buildings, but the societies. People in the community died, didn't have no money to bury them? They would bury them. Because most of the people belonged to these societies.

J: So they were leisure activities and benevolent.

T: And benevolent.

J: All right, and these were places where you could pool your money together to do something.

T: Any resources in that community that were needed—

J: But I ain't never heard of no place called the Flats, man! This is new to me.

T: [Laughter] Yeah! Man, you cross that railroad tracks, that's down the Flats. Now, they had a bunch of projects that had flat tops on them.

J: Ah!

T: That's where that come from.

J: Okay. Now, where does—so, is Ladd in Maysville?

T: Yeah.

J: Ok, where does Mays—does Maysville meet Down the Bay?

T: Yeah, at Ann Street.

J: At Ann Street.

T: At the cemetery.

J: At the cemetery, okay. And everything on the other cemetery is considered Down the Bay. Okay.

T: Yeah. Because that's where—we used to have what you called the Blood Bowl there at Crawford Park on Sundays, Saturday and Sunday.

J: The Blood Bowl.

T: Yeah, in the park. At that park down there. Football game. And over in Orange Grove, they would play Campground and all that. They had a game, too. Each area had their own area. We used to have, have to have—if you go—Down the Bay and Maysville were in conjunction. But if you go Crosstown, you had to have a Pepsi Cola top as your pass. [Laughter] Or you was going be in trouble, unless you knew somebody in that area!

J: I thought that was—

T: Because gangs didn't just start, you know.

J: Man, I thought that was old wives' tale, when they talk about coming from—they, my granddaddy and his brother used to talk about, "Yeah, we would go Down the Bay, but then they'd chase us up out of there!"

T: Yeah; unless you knew somebody down there, or you had some relatives down there, you was in trouble. Now, my get-over down there was the Greens. [Inaudible 21:41] Green and them, because they—I got a picture there of my mother and their mother graduating in 1943 from Dunbar. I got the whole Dunbar class there.

J: Mm! Yeah, so that's interesting. Okay, so that's what Maysville is. Now tell me, what were the boundaries for the neighborhood called Down the Bay?

T: Ann—the cemetery.

J: The cemetery on this side, and to the east, toward downtown, what was the boundary over there?

T: I don't know, the Campground stop—I'm thinking Congress Street. Because that's where—

J: No, no, I'm talking about Down the Bay.

T: Yeah, going back that way would be Congress Street. You know? Or Government. Because Government Street was the dividing line. Really. Prichard was 45.

J: And how far south does Down the Bay go?

T: To Oakdale.

J: To Oakdale.

T: The railroad track.

J: Oakdale starts at the railroad track. What's the street associated with the railroad track?

T: Tennessee.

J: Tennessee Street. Okay. So, over here where Harold Sledge mechanic shop is, off of Broad, that's not Down the Bay?

T: Nah, that's Oakdale.

J: That's Oakdale. Chevron, that's Oakdale?

T: Right.

J: Okay.

T: Yeah, that's Oakdale. And then when you get on over, it's South Booker. Yeah, South Booker. Then you got Birdsville on this side to Dauphin Island Parkway. Yeah.

J: Okay.

T: Now before it was Dauphin Island Parkway—where the Blacks lived on Dauphin Island Parkway, it was Cedar Point Road. Cedar Point.

J: And Cedar Point is one of the schools' names? It was a school?

T: They got Cedar Point Elementary, I believe.

J: Yeah. Because I know David, little David momma and them, they people was all educators.

T: Right.

J: And they was teaching all over.

T: Everywhere, yeah.

J: Where'd you—?

T: My teacher—I went to Williamson. I come out the first class of Williamson 1958.

J: Who was your principal?

T: Mr. Keeby. Mr. Keeby, mind, that was some man! And that, it was a group of them: Dr. Baker, Mr. Keeby, Mr. Gaines, and a couple other more principals around all went to Tuskegee. Dr. Baker got Mobile County Training School. All of them fellows taught up under Dr. Baker, and he put them in these schools. He was the head nigger in charge in Mobile, far as education was concerned. So he placed—Mr. Keeby started off teaching math or something. Then when a principalship came open at Williamson, that's where they placed him.

J: Did you go to school in a Quonset hut, or was there a building?

T: It was a building. It was a building.

J: I talked to a lady, Mrs. Mildred Johnson's her name. She said you never saw Mr. Keeby standing still.

T: No, he'd walk in a teacher's room, take over the class. That's how smart he was. But math and English was his subjects. But he would go in any class, any teacher, and tell the teacher sit down; he'd take over the class.

J: And she say he knew every child.

T: By name.

J: By name. Yep.

T: We used to wear a tie to school every day! I don't consider myself dressed now unless I wear a tie. I got boxes of them.

J: How was he able to be—the thing about these principals is like, how were they able to instill such discipline over so many kids?

T: Well, he didn't sit down in his office. He met you at the door. In the morning when that bell rang? If you were tardy or come up with excuse, he had a saying: "Excuse ain't nothing but a doctored-up lie."

J: A doctored-up lie.

T: Doctored-up lie.

J: Doctored-up lie.

T: Ever see you come in there five minutes late—because what he do, what he'd tell you, "Go see Mr. Travis," who was the janitor. You had to either pick up paper, or mop the halls, or—. You had some discipline. Mr. Keeby had tubs in the boiler room; the kids that wouldn't take a bath coming out of practice, he would make them take a bath, man! In that boiler room. And if they didn't have a shirt or a tie, he'd give them one. And if you wore a shirt like you got on, he'd cut out a piece of paper made like a tie and pin it up under your neck. [Laughter] So you don't forget that tie the next day! Like I told you, I don't consider myself dressed right now, unless I got a tie on. He instilled that in boys! And all us turned out to pretty good men. All of us. You know, I can't remember—if you mention Mr. Keeby name out here in Maysville now, man, people come to attention. And he been dead 10 or 15 years, you know? But he carried that kind of ambience about him, that made you *want* to be a man. Made you proud, of yourself. And it wasn't that much detention. That little house over on this end was called detention hall, that's where they used to send so-called "bad kids." Wasn't too many kids out of Maysville went to detention. You were real bad if you had to go over there. You know, nobody couldn't do nothing with you.

J: What's was his, what was their—Mr. Keeby and his teachers, what was his relationship to people like Mr. Jessie, Ms. Carrie?

T: My mother was the president of PTA almost till she died. And my daddy was his— I got pictures of him and Mr. Keeby everywhere they went. I got pictures of them up there at the Sons and Daughters Hall; you know, together at a function. That was his ally in the community, was my daddy. Any time he went to school board for something, he took Mr. Thomas with him. Because my daddy had that kind of— my daddy told me a long time ago when I was a little boy, “Don't never let a politician pay you for nothing they do. Always keep them owing you a favor.” And I go by that right now. I can call Stimpson on the phone, on his private line. I got him on speed dial. “What you need, Mr. Francis?” I had a friend of mine had a man die in one of his rental houses out here? It was going cost him about 14 thousand. That man stayed dead about a week or so. It was going cost him about 14 thousand dollars to get that house cleaned out. I called the mayor; he said, “Give me the address.” I gave him the address. He say, “I'm going send a man to meet you”—on a Sunday!—”down there on Atwood Street.” This man was part of the **Newsome** society at the city. He said, “Which house is it, Mr. Thomas?” I showed him the house—two houses, really. They tore down both them houses, and moved them; didn't cost that man a dime. That's the kind of pull that I got with the city.

J: And your father taught you—

T: My daddy—that's his name I use. It ain't me. They just know I'm Jesse Thomas' son. But when Stimpson ran for mayor, I drove trucks for a living. I was working for one of his nephews. You know what his nephew told me? They own Gulf Lumber. So he say, “Mr. Francis, I want you to go around there to Gulf Lumber to see if— it's pretty expensive.” And, so I went around to the secretary; said, “Sit down in the board room, Mr. Thomas.” But his nephew told him, said, “Now, if you want to run for mayor, and you want to win, I think there's a man live in Maysville, south part of town, you need to talk to.” And that was me. And he been the mayor ever since we had that conversation.

J: It sounds like your father was very practical.

T: Very. Very. Very practical. Very practical. He started as a young one at the Pulley Works. Wound up getting a credit union and everything else down there. Because my father—they went on strike one time: I'mma tell you what happened. They had a meeting up there at the Sons and Daughters of Honor Hall. There used to be a step right here on the side of this house, before I added this part on; I added this on. Mr. White' name was Vernon White that owned the Pulley Works; came up here and told my dad, said, “Jesse, you can get them men to go back to work, you can name your price.” You know what my daddy did? Waited till they got in a

meeting. [Laughter] And the reason I know this because he, my daddy took me everywhere that he went, just about. And he stood up in that meeting with the International Union. That's how he got to be a international officer. Because one man, one white man—name was **Draper Doyle**, who was the president of the International Union—he took my daddy up. But he told Mr. White, he said, “No wonder y’all tried to bribe me!” [Laughter] Right in front of the whole crew. “But I can't be brought.” And do you know when my daddy died, Mr. White called me from Hawaii? He had moved to Hawaii. He said, “Frances, I heard your father died. Anything you need, you just let me know.”

J: So, he had respect for him even though he tried to buy him off?

T: Yep. He told—when they tore down Hartwell Field? He told **Dan Alexander** and [inaudible 32:26], he said, “All y’all going to jail!” They say everything in that meeting going to jail. “Y’all going tear down this landmark and put a bunch of houses on it.” He said, “But I’ll die and go to Hell before I support it.” [Laughter] Right there at that little school on [inaudible 32:46] **Ave**. I was in the meeting. And everything he told them, happened. [Laughter]

J: You know, people, I don't think, in 2022—I know I have very little appreciation; but for Mr. Jesse, your father, to be in the room for those discussions was something.

T: Him, Mr. **Crown** Montgomery, John LeFlore, your granddaddy; them men were real men. That’s why Martin Luther King never—

J: Came to Mobile.

T: —came to Mobile. Because them men handled everything they needed to handle. I got a picture of my daddy in the room with George Wallace. He told George Wallace one time, he said, “If it hadn't been for Wille Mays, it wouldn't be no New York Giants. If it hadn't been for Hank Aaron, it wouldn't be no Milwaukee Braves.” He just named them all. And he say, “If it hadn't've been for you, Mr. Wallace, it wouldn't have been no civil rights bill.” [Laughter]

J: He gave him credit for—

T: Yeah.

J: For assing up!

T: Yeah. That's the way he would talk to them, man! Now I, like I said, I didn't know my granddad. But then, I never found out why all of them left Beatrice at the same time. All of them settled right up the street there. And I asked my daddy one time, I said "Why you don't never take me up the country?" Know what his answer was? "Papa didn't take me; I ain't taking you." [Laughter] That was the end of that! I've been to Beatrice, I went there and found my great-grandmomma's grave and everything. Up there in Stallworth Quarters. But my daddy never went back up, and as far as I know, my granddaddy and his brothers never went back up there. I don't know whether they killed a white man up there or what they did, but they never went back there. [Laughter]

J: That's fascinating.

T: It is. It is. Me and my cousin Leroy; Leroy worked at the post office, too.

J: What Leroy' last name?

T: Thomas. [Laughter]

J: Your cousin.

T: And we tried to figure it out. But we could get no further than the Monroeville house. That's where, Monroe County is where the hall of records; we didn't find no records of them Thomas men. None of them.

J: See, this is the thing that I always come up against. Because you know, a lot of people in your generation left Mobile.

T: Yeah.

J: You know, because they had opportunities and things; school, whatever. Jobs. And this is why I brought up my Uncle Elliot. One of the things that always made me wonder, particularly about the men—when you say you did meet Martin Luther King coming to Mobile.

T: They handled it!

J: Because you had these men who were organized, who had developed these relationships. But there was some of them that, you know, people didn't even come

to their funeral when they died. Right? Because they were friends with Frank Boykin.

T: Right!

J: And they never understood the why or the relationship.

T: But it benefited them!

J: But it benefited them.

T: Yeah. [Laughter]

J: That puts a whole new spin in Mobile County being a Republican or a Democrat.

T: It does; because it was all—it was all done, I call it “under the table.” But they called them “city fathers.” That was the name that the mayors down through the years gave these Black men. Mobile was the first of everything, man! First Black policeman, first fire department; Black. I was the first Black bus driver that drove the Trailways bus out of Mobile. You know? My daddy would use me as a guinea pig on a lot of jobs, you know. I was the first Black switchman to throw a switch in the railroad yard. You know, things like this. But they did it so, such a technique, that it was a—**Sonny** was a, **Perkins** was the first Black yard clerk. Me and him went to railroad school together, my dad sent both of us to Atlanta. To Southern Railroad school. [Laughter] We the first ones they hired when we come back from school, you know?

J: To open up the way for other folk.

T: For other people! You know, everybody used to tell me, “Man you done been everything but the mayor of Mobile!” I say, “Yeah, but I ain't never been without a job.” [Laughter] You ain't looking at that part! I ain't never drawn no unemployment. I've always had a job, because I left one to go to another one. I never had any space in my resume. I've always worked!

J: That's interesting, because Old Thomas at the Knights of Peter Claver Hall used to tell me, “Always have your next job lined up, so you can—”

T: Before you leave one?

J: Before you leave one.

T: Yeah! Know you got another one standing by! Don't have a gap in there. Frank **McClure** was one of your old Knights of—

J: Knights of—little short?

T: Yeah.

J: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

T: Yeah, next door! Him and my daddy was like this, you know?

J: That's funny. I mean it's funny, but that's just—I think we need to revisit those relationships that they developed on behalf of the broader community. I see these men as race men.

T: Yeah!

J: And they were trying to figure out or navigate racial relationships, and benefiting everybody, while trying to keep they own family fed and housed, blah blah blah.

T: Robbie's granddaddy owned a shoe shop out here, but he trained down there at Dauphine Shoeteria! I got a picture of that place. My cousin work down there. They had that on TV yesterday.

J: Robby Runderson?

T: Yeah! His granddaddy could make a shoe!

J: What is Robby Runderson' granddaddy name?

T: Bill Runderson.

J: Bill Runderson.

T: Yeah. Them boys out there at the mall now?

J: Ramos.

T: Ramos, they first cousins. They granddaddy and Mr. **Dill** were brothers. You know, so these things ain't just happen. My mother borrowed the first money to build that Federated Women's Club. I took her to [inaudible 23:02]. She borrowed the money.

J: Where was, where was Federated Women's Club located?

T: Where it is now! On—well, you don't know? It's right there on Catherine Street, right across from Thomas Recreational Center. That park up there. Yeah, right across the street. She borrowed the—if you see them chains and things around there, that building over there? They come from the Pulley Works! [Laughter]

J: Tell me about your momma and her—you talked about Mr. Jesse, now tell me about Mrs. Carrie. You said she—

T: That recreational center named after her.

J: Is it?

T: Yeah. Carrie Thomas Harmon Recreational Center.

J: Huh! And she was a Federated Woman? Tell me, what did the Federated Women do?

T: Black women working in their community. That's a national organization, ain't no local organization; it's national.

J: When you say “working in the community,” what did they do?

T: Whatever was needed. I seen my momma take her money and pay people' rent. Buy older people a refrigerator. She just didn't let—the need be known, it just was *done*. I've seen her do. I gave my mom some money one time, to go on a cruise. She took three other women with her! [Laughter] You know? Because she wanted them to experience the same thing she did. They was friends, and one of them worked as **director in the park**, and the other one was a neighbor across the street from the recreation center, Mrs. Isom. She made sure she went! I got a picture of them in Holland. These women probably would never would've got to Europe. You know? But she—

J: Where'd they go?

T: Europe, on cruise. Yeah, went all over Europe, you know. I got a picture of them in Amsterdam.

J: And what did the PTA do at the school?

T: Everything Mr. Keeby needed; all he did was tell that PTA. He never go to the school board with nothing.

J: Like, give me an example.

T: Her and my daddy had them projects tore down. Down there.

J: What was the, why did they—

T: Because it was a nuisance to the school. They moved the school in that project? Everything you could name was in that project. And they just didn't think it was conducive to education. So, it had to go. They shot in this house, right through that dining room window. Negroes did! Because they thought it was bad; Mrs. Carrie raising sand about getting rid of the project. But every one of them Negroes that lived in the project own they own houses now!

J: Self, to be self-sufficient.

T: Right!

J: Not to be on the government dime.

T: Right! They was adamant about that. These things you can do yourself!

J: And so, when y'all would meet over here at the Sons and Daughters—

T: —of Honor Hall.

J: —of Honor Hall.

T: Or meet right here in this house like you see us, me and you meeting. They done had a lot of meetings right here!

J: To reinforce the community values.

T: Right! The lights they used to have on that place when they started up the baseball thing? They didn't have no lights down there. My daddy couldn't be the president, but he named Clarence Cooke as the president, and he made hisself the executive director. I'm the executive director of the Alumni Association now at Williamson. I ain't never been no president. But I tell them what to do. And how to do it. They call me all the time; there was one just called me on the phone. The principal down there call me, "Mr. Thomas, what you think about so-and-so and so-and-so?" He call me or he'll come up here. Right now. But I keep myself connected to the community. The reason how I got up with you? I was talking to Steele—

J: Phillip.

T: —about getting some young men in that program he got over there. He mentioned you.

J: Oh, my goodness! That program he got going over there at Bishop State is fantastic!

T: He mentioned you; I ain't know nothing about you. He the one text you.

J: Mhm, he sure did. He said, "I need you to go talk to Mr. Thomas." I say, "Okay." But, and you know, you got—

T: Well I got, because I'm trying to get somebody to help me write this book, man! You see that box over there, and that book there? That's tons of Black history, man!

J: Let's talk about this book. Because we ain't mentioned the book the whole time. Because its start here, but it has—

T: Goes way out, yeah.

J: Yeah. First of all, describe the project. Describe the book project.

T: I want my father and his two brothers, who were stamps in this community.

J: Who came from Beatrice.

T: No, they was born here.

J: They were the sons of the men who—

T: Men who came from Beatrice.

J: Got you.

T: To be known what stamp they put on Black history! Not just in Mobile; this is my uncle's passport. It say "baseball player" on there. That was his job. Now ironically, he worked for the New York Police Department; but ironically, David first job, David Sr.' first job was at Brookley Field, on that gate. As a policeman.

J: Right.

T: You know what I'm saying? And that ain't no coincident!

J: Oh, I can remember Davis Sr. meeting people over to Best Grill and plotting out their careers. "You going do this, you going do this—"

T: Yeah!

J: "—then we going do this." I mean, one of them boys ended up being on Secret Service up in DC.

T: Yeah, for customs and all that!

J: All that.

T: He worked way up in the government; he wasn't just no poo-pot joker. He had top jobs. He, when they first had that food stamp investigation over there in Mississippi? David, initiated that investigation, for the federal government! I know this. But don't nobody else know it! They thought he was just down there; he helped start that drug court down there.

J: Oh yeah, yeah.

T: You know why? Because I got busted for drugs. [Laughter] That's why he started it. Everybody say, "How you and **David Lee** get to be the best of friends?" We first cousins! My daddy used to go sit on his daddy porch, his older brother' porch, every Saturday morning. They had a family meeting. Me and David did the same thing. Because people would come to us. Tell them, if you tell somebody in this

neighborhood, “Frances, he did time,” they’ll say, “When?” [Laughter] Because when I got locked up, the first job I had was over there in Kaiser, do you remember Kaiser Aluminum?

J: Mhm, Kaiser Aluminum.

T: I was the only inmate working at night running the crane at Kaiser Aluminum. Doing time.

J: How long’d you do time for?

T: 4 years, 5 months, 25 days and 3 hours. [Laughter] But don’t nobody know it! I was in jail when they broke ground for that Jesse Thomas housing project, but they took me out to take me over there for that groundbreaking.

J: I think that your nephew is here.

T: Oh, white?

J: Big white car.

T: Jaguar? Yeah. Yeah, that’s him.

J: Oh, he my age!

T: Yeah—no, he younger than you. [Laughter] He younger than you. Very talented. A whiz!

J: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

[Knock at the door]

T: Come on man!

CT: Hey y’all.

J: Yes, sir! How are you. We was just talking about you.

T: This is another Mr. Thomas.

J: Mr. Thomas, I'm Kern Jackson. He was just saying your praises about your work, man.

CT: Man! [Laughter] I was trying to get here as fast as I can. Hey, how you doing?

J: Nice to meet you.

CT: Happy New Year.

J: Happy—man, I'm just glad to be here.

CT: Oh man, I'm burning up!

T: You ought to be, with all that you got on!

CT: Boy, I had to be at the doctor at eight in the morning.

T: You called and told me you were leaving the doctor. And what else you done did since then? [Laughter]

CT: Helped somebody move a couch and all this stuff.

J: Always something.

CT: Yeah. How y'all doing?

T: We doing alright. We doing, we just talking, you know what I mean?

J: Talking about the importance of the role that race men played in the 20th century.

CT: Oh, yeah.

J: Men of the community.

CT: Yeah, oh yeah. Because it was like the whole community was like a family. Like, if you get beat; before your folks find out about it, everybody in the neighborhood beat you. Your elders.

T: I just told him about me doing time. He had no idea that I had been in prison. That money I told you my momma took and took them ladies to Europe? That's where it come from!

J: Oh, Lord!

T: [Laughter] That's where it come from, you know.

CT: But it was put to good use. It was put to good use.

T: Because I gave it to her! And they weren't taking, they weren't confiscating drug money during that time. So that was the safest place for me to put it, was in her hands. My first wife, who you probably knew—Myrna Pratt—come to jail to see me one time. She say, “Why your momma know more about your business than I do?” I say, “You just answered your own question. My momma don't ask me nothing.” [Laughter] That lot back there? I bought and put it onto this, so they wouldn't take it. That's why I got this whole [inaudible 50:29] now.

J: But what we're talking about, it's just—we're also having like a subconversation about the practicality things.

T: Right.

CT: Yeah, the importance of—yeah.

J: And you ain't got to do a whole lot of talking. This Sons and Daughters of Honor is an important place. What's there now where that used to be?

T: **Carrunti** just put a million-dollar building up there.

J: Okay. Okay, so—

CT: You from Mobile?

J: Nah.

CT: I didn't mean to cut you off.

J: Nah, I'm from Washington DC.

CT: Oh, okay, home of the Go-Go.

J: Yeah.

CT: And Chuck Brown.

J: Oh my God, Chuck Brown!

CT: Rare Essence and all them folks. I play all that music.

J: Oh you do?

CT: I play a lot. See, I used to play, I used to live in Atlanta, so I used to play it in Atlanta. Some people didn't know nothing about it, but folks from DC, they would get down to it.

J: Go-Go very unique to DC, and while everybody else was getting into hip-hop, Go-Go—

CT: Was doing its own thing. I had a neighbor that lived down the street from me. And I don't if you familiar with Atlanta, I used to live in the West End. The historic West End? And some dude was playing congas. And I walked by and I heard, I'm like, "Man, you from DC?" He's like, "Yeah, man! How you know?" I'm like, "Man, how can I not know?" I was like, "Man, I love Go-Go."

J: That beat, that beat.

CT: Yeah, you can hear the beat; it's almost kind of like the same rhythm, but it don't switch up. It's like, if you know it, if you hear it, you like, "Oh, that's Go-Go."

J: Yeah, I got some partners, they're ethnomusicologists, and you actually—I mean this hasn't been written in a book yet, and we're talking about your book, but you actually can trace that beat to Blues in North and South Carolina.

CT: Oh for real? Oh yeah, because I've—you know, it's crazy that you mention that; me and a friend of mine, we was in North Carolina. And we went to go see Rare Essence performing at this college. Man, I was on my feet from eight o'clock till one that morning, dancing.

J: Oh yeah, dancing!

CT: Because it's that beat, it's that rhythm that just, I guess it's like the roots in us or something.

J: You get in a trance, man.

T: You know what I heard, when I worked in DC to Joe Bonner's office? Blues everywhere.

J: Oh my God! But this is the thing, right? People didn't want—okay, at school, I'm not one of the people—and I'll put this on tape, I don't care—I didn't want Joe Bonner to get the job.

T: Okay.

J: Because, not only had he not run a university—

T: Never.

J: But there people out there super qualified who been working they way—

CT: To get to that.

K: —to get to that point.

CT: Yeah.

T: Yeah.

J: And that—

T: He just walked in. [Laughter]

J: Hey, and it was a done deal. They said they had a job search—that wasn't no damn job search. They just gave them **20** people that money.

T: Yeah.

J: That was already decided.

- T: Only told him how much he was going make and everything else. [Laughter]
- J: And my colleagues—I'm a professor at South—and all of my colleagues are very liberal, and they don't come from here; and they were like up, "Oh, my God! How—" I said, "Well, shit; you been living in this stuff already. So you can't really get in a uproar." I mean, and the man ain't from here, and he from Camden.
- CT: From Canada?
- J: From Camden.
- T: Camden.
- J: Camden, Alabama.
- CT: Camden. Oh, okay okay.
- J: And he, you know, is part of the political structure of the state.
- T: He involved in the University of Alabama; his sister was.
- J: Hey! I said—
- CT: See, I don't like stuff like that. [inaudible 54:12] See, I look at it as favoritism.
- J: It is favoritism!
- T: It is favoritism! But it's always been like that.
- CT: I know it's always been like that, but see, that's—I guess it's up to the new generation now to change those type of—but it seem like it will never change.
- T: They got to fall in line.
- CT: It's power, its power.
- J: Man, once you wrap your head around the amount of money.
- T: Money, yeah.

J: Like, I can't even imagine the amount of money. You was talking about Fred Stimpson and the Mayor?

T: Yeah.

J: When you see the lumber they own!

T: It ain't just Mobile.

CT: And I can't never understand that: why do people that come from money get into politics, like the Kennedys.

J: To maintain it.

CT: Like, I found out any time you break a seal off some whiskey, they get money for that.

J: Yeah, man!

T: Yeah!

CT: I didn't even know that. So I'm like, "Well, if you got that much money, why would you get into politics?"

T: To keep it!

J: It's the rules. They—

CT: That's blood, that's blue blood rules, sound like.

J: Well, this is why Trump is important.

T: That's right.

J: Because he's a major example of this.

C: But his history. Like—

J: It was never about founding fathers, and freedom.

CT: Oh yeah, but see, when you—I ain't trying to cut you off, but when you go into that, it gets deeper than that. Because people think about, when this country was founded, the people left so they couldn't pay taxes. You know the people that come from England and all those other places that came to America, they were prisoned. They was in prison. The queen, they let them go. They said, "Well y'all can come here."

T: How you think all these diseases and things come over?

CT: I know; like, I know, but when they came, the thing was—

J: That's the thing about Mobile.

CT: Washington and all them was trying to fight the revolution—

J: Before then, before then!

CT: —about taxes, it's about them not paying, not they keeping they money so they won't pay it to him.

J: Wait. Before then Mobile—

CT: But see, people, can't tell them that.

J: Mobile, what it was—it was five flags, right?

T: That's right.

CT: Yeah, but I'm—yeah. I remember we used to see that, yeah.

T: When the Native folks, they had pushed them away from this area. They didn't have no women.

CT: The Native Americans?

J: Nah, no no, the white Colonials. The Spanish and the French and all.

CT: Oh, oh okay.

J: So what the French did, they opened up the prisons in Paris, the women prisons.

T: That's right.

J: And put them on boats, and gave every one of them a little suitcase with a little something in it. And sent them to Mobile—because New Orleans didn't exist then.

CT: Oh yeah, because Mobile was founded first before New Orleans.

J: Mobile was New Orleans. Mobile was New Orleans.

T: That was our territory.

CT: That just, that is that what happened.

T: I'll tell you what you can do—

CT: —with Louisiana Purchase.

J: Well that and the fact that the Mississippi River is so powerful and is such a main artery. More money could be made coming down from Wisconsin to New Orleans, than can come down the five rivers that feed into the Mobile Bay.

CT: Oh yeah.

T: All the streets named the same.

J: So all that cotton, all that—

CT: Oh yeah, in New Orleans, too; in New Orleans—

T: Pensacola too!

CT: Oh, for real?

T: Yeah!

CT: I heard that ah—

J: Galveston too!

T: Yeah, Galveston too.

CT: I heard all that stuff was owned by Black people. I heard a lot of Black people owned all that stuff.

J: Nah, nah.

T: No, nah.

J: That's, but that's just a myth that perpetrated intentionally. But what we're talking about is the fact that capitalism—you right; every time you break a seal. Well, that's gangsters.

T: That's right!

CT: Oh yeah, that's what they were known as, gangsters.

J: Gangsters.

T: This man, this man they just put in the baseball hall of fame, that I showed you his picture with **Uncle Bo** on it? He come from Cuba as a gangster.

CT: Well, a lot of them used to—

T: No, I'm just saying: the money, man! It's all about money.

J: It's always about the money.

T: It's always about money! The money that this man had, that he brought from Cuba, they kicked him out of Cuba!

CT: Because he had so much—

T: No, because he had to come over here and spread the wealth, to take it back to Cuba.

CT: Oh, to liquidate the—yeah, to—

T: Take it back to Cuba! I got, that's why **Uncle Bo** had to get a passport. They went back over to South America. That's how them boys over there in South American

got to playing baseball here; they didn't know nothing about no baseball. They sent out all this [inaudible 58:21] over here! And he's in the hall of fame, my uncle in there!

J: So, the sports was an avenue for the money.

CT: Just like y'all say, it's all about money.

T: Yeah!

J: Always come back to the money.

T: You talking about that president out there? This man ain't—I don't even if Bonner even went to college. You know?

J: He was a C student.

T: [Laughter] Yeah. He's the president out there now! But he's got degrees. This man here's got degrees; they ain't consider him!

J: Oh no, no, no no no. The Bonner thing is about the largest industry in Mobile, Alabama, and that's healthcare. Hospitals.

T: Yeah! Right! USA! [Laughter]

CT: Farmer.

J: That's the largest industry in our city.

CT: It is?

T: Yeah.

J: It's the most lucrative industry in our city.

CT: I thought shipping was?

J: What do they teach at LeFlore right now? All them children over at LeFlore High School are getting degrees to work in healthcare—high school diplomas, to get in healthcare.

CT: But that probably why they won't never let healthcare be free in this country.

J: Of course!

CT: Because in my wife's country, it's free. Because my wife's from Argentina.

J: No, it's lucrative, man.

T: It's money, man!

J: Its lucrative.

T: Don't you know they have tore down Providence over there?

CT: Yeah, I saw when they tore down Providence.

T: You know who owns it? You know who owns it? You know who owns it?

C: Who?

J: USA.

T: USA.

CT: They bought—oh yeah, they did buy—! Man, I just—

J: And you know what USA, Fred Whiddon and them started?

CT: No.

J: Lumber.

T: Yeah!

CT: So they own the Infirmary too, then, they probably—

J: No, no, they don't own—that's the whole, nuh-uh, that's part of the—

T: [Inaudible 1:00:09]

J: Infirmary's a whole different medical organization, that has different types of bigwigs. But two things you can do to find out about money in Mobile and the Chamber of Commerce: you overlay the Chamber of Commerce with Mardi Gras organizations.

T: That's right.

CT: Well, is that a reason why—I found out, I did some research too—is that a reason why they didn't want Walt Disney to bring Disney World here? Or was it because of the Bible Belt?

J: I don't know nothing about Walt Disney coming here, but you know—

CT: Yeah, he did.

J: Walt Disney was very pragmatic, too. Because you know, he had, he was friends with the Nazis.

T: Nazis, yeah.

CT: The Bushes too, was with the Nazis. Prescott Bush and all of them.

J: But you friends with other people who have wealth.

T: Money, man!

J: And it's about sustaining the wealth. We were just talking about Mr. Keeby at Williamson High School. Mr. Keeby, Mr. Keeby was his principal.

CT: I remember that.

J: But Mr. Keeby come up out of Africatown.

T: His granddaddy was Cudjoe Lewis!

CT: Oh, for real?

J: Mr. Keeby's granddaddy was Cudjoe Lewis—and now, Cudjoe Lewis was brought over here by the Meahers.

T: That's right!

J: The Meahers still own Africatown—Plateau.

CT: What?

T: Yeah. Yeah, they own! The white folk.

J: The Meahers still have Black people renting—

CT: So no Black people don't own Africatown?

J: No.

T: No.

J: Some of the property, yeah.

CT: They just a front.

J: No, it's not like they're a front; the people, the Africans was different from the people in the Quarters.

T: Right.

J: The people in the Quarters had been conditioned, because of enslavement, to—you know, white man come in the room, you lower your eyes.

CT: Oh yeah.

J: Cudjoe and them didn't know nothing about all that.

T: No.

J: So when they saw that they had to plug into the capitalist society earlier on—this goes back to what you was talking about, your parents **flattening** the projects—they were like, “Oh we have to control our own; we ain't going back to Africa, we got to control our own stuff as best we can.”

CT: Was this during the time of Marcus Garvey, when he was like—

J: Marcus Garvey would come a generation later from Jamaica.

CT: Oh, okay, okay.

J: Interestingly enough.

CT: I thought this was at the same time when they told him to leave the United States.

J: I think you're onto something, because I think you have been exposed to Black nationalism when you wasn't in Mobile.

CT: No, I'm from Mobile.

J: When you *wasn't*, though.

T: He said when you wasn't here.

J: When you wasn't in Mobile.

CT: Oh, because I found out that the reason why they kicked him out of America was because W.E.B. DuBois got him out of America.

J: Well I mean, yeah, there's always crabs in the barrel. So let's look at the three figures: Marcus Garvey, Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. DuBois. Marcus Garvey is all about, "We got to create an economic engine. We got to support it, and blah blah blah. We going build ships, and we gone send Negroes back to Liberia. And we going take the wealth we established here back." DuBois was like, "Nah, we going to assimilate in and get some of the bigger money. Assimilation. And there is ten percent of us that got this education that going to have to uplift the other ninety percent of us." Right? Industrial revolution; everybody wasn't book literate.

CT: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah.

J: Booker T. Washington's like, "Yes, we're not going to worry about the ten percent. Wherever you is, you put your bucket down and you make it. If you making bricks, you be the best brickmaker you can."

CT: Do what you can, yeah.

J: "You keep your body clean, and you educate your children. And incrementally, as separate as the fingers on the hand. But eventually, the fingers of the hand have to function as a hand."

CT: Well, why was it so separate? Why they just couldn't become as one? Like—?

J: Because white people crazy.

CT: That's when they remade segregation laws and all that stuff, to keep us—.

J: When you dealing with white folks—we just talked about Beatrice, Alabama, and the Pulley Works, and the union. You have to do what you have to do to make it. You can't just sit by—I mean, if you sit by and let people do whatever they want to do—now, Mr. Thomas' momma works for Overbey.

CT: Dude, well I'm sorry, don't let me cut y'all off from what y'all talking about. I don't want to cut—

J: Nah, listen we going back to—I'm a teacher. I can make it go back.

CT: Oh good, because I didn't want to cut you off from what you was doing.

J: Nah, nah, nah.

T: This is a professor, man.

J: Overbey, Overbey is the documentarian of Mobile—photographer.

T: That's right.

CT: Photographer?

J: He's a photographer. He take pictures for a living, Overbey. This is his momma's boss.

T: Your grandmomma worked for the dad.

CT: Yeah, I remember you telling me about she did photography.

J: Right. Okay, so she, too, is a documenter of Mobile. She has access, because she's working with the white man. And this what we as Black people—my people from Mobile; I'm not from here, but my people from here—this is what we do in Mobile. We will work for a white person, not just for the job, but for what we can benefit from being in that proximity to the white folk. Right? So you may be a writer, and you have a typewriter, and you get you a new typewriter. But I work for you, I put your pages together, and I make sure your calendar is such and forth. I'mma take that old typewriter, I'mma give it to my child. My child going to be a writer. My child going do better than me; but I got to be the conduit for them to get the tool they need. Now it may seem bad—"Oh, it's other people's stuff"—like going to Salvation Army. And if that's what I need to do for my child, to make it in the world—

CT: You do what you got to do.

J: You do what you've got to do. But it's sophisticated. Not only that—

C: It's what you make out of it.

J: It's what you make out of it. So, we got a whole generation of people on the first half of the twentieth century trying to set him up for success. Right?

C: It's grooming and making—molding.

J: And some of it ain't cool. Some of the decisions are not—we were just talking about my uncle—some of it is not cool. It ain't cool when you publicly sell your people down the river. Right? It ain't cool.

CT: But some of them look at it as a greater purpose.

J: No, I think they just did the best they can, and some of them was good and some of them was evil.

CT: Yeah. You right.

J: Right? So, you know, we talking about race men of the 20th century; we're talking about Black folks—shit, I was born in 1965. I was born 100 years after slavery. And 1965 is right smack dab in the middle of the Civil Rights. And look how far Black folks came in them 100 years, right? Working in the—even in urban slavery

in Mobile, right? Where you had to have a—it's like South Africa, you had to have a pass in the 1860s. To go from one end of the city to the other. In the meantime—

CT: I was wondering if that was true or not.

J: You had—yeah it's true! You had freedom in the urban slavery to do other stuff. So, you may be loaning me out and collecting on my labor, but I'm collecting a little bit for myself, because I got a field pea patch over here that I'm grooming in the evening time. And I'm selling them on the way to work. So urban slavery had a little bit more freedom than them people up the country who was—man, they were catching it.

T: Sharecropping.

J: Even before the sharecropping; it was just straight-up, terroristic slavery.

T: You almost broke even. [Laughter]

J: Yeah, sharecropping was a way to—if you can't read and all you can do is make an "X," and you dealing with the man at the cotton gin, then you got to do the best you can. And sometimes that meant you barely covered your bill at the commissary—Stallworth.

CT: Yeah, I heard corporations was like that—

J: It's still like that.

T: They still like that.

CT: They said they owned the store, they own where they worked—

T: Everything!

CT: They owned the bank. They owned—

T: Everything! They owned you, too!

CT: And that's probably why they put that law. That's probably why they put that law into place in that the copper cooperation is being sued—

J: Well, you answered your own question. That's why rich people put their people in politics: because politicians control the law.

T: Yeah, they control it!

C: Lobbyists and what—yeah, all right.

J: They control the law. But—

T: It ain't got to do with no law, it just got to do with who you know!

J: And it's very tenuous; as you could see yesterday, we had the year anniversary of the insurrection of the capital.

T: Yeah!

CT: Yeah.

J: That's how tenuous—the whole thing could be jacked up, we could be back in civil war.

T: That's right; easy.

J: Easy. And first thing Trump said when he was elected, he was like, "I got the generals on my side."

T: That's right.

J: He got the generals on his side. He got his finger on all of the technology that could blow this puppy up. We going try to oppose him through the principles of democracy.

T: He don't know nothing about that; don't care about it. That ain't even where he—he ain't making a statement now. He ain't doing no talking. [Laughter]

J: And everything he did he tried—and if you come to DC to see the president, you got to stay at his hotel.

T: Yeah, yep.

CT: Oh yeah. [Laughter]

J: If you go to a conference, you got to go to one of his golf courses.

T: Yeah.

J: If you buy something, it's got to say "Make America Great" on it, which he got the copyright to. So, every time them people wore a jacket—

CT: Or a hat.

J: Or a hat—and you know, this is people with no money.

T: He still owe Mobile. He still owe Mobile from being over there in the stadium.

J: And where does he announce—

CT: He still over what?

T: He still owe the city of Mobile.

J: Oh, yeah! Where did Trump announce his candidacy for president? Do you know?

T: That's why he had it over there at Ladd Stadium!

CT: Yeah, but how do he owe them?

T: He ain't pay them nothing.

J: He ain't pay them. He announced his candidacy.

T: And now he owe them.

J: Young man: he announced his candidacy for the president of the United States right across the street.

CT: Oh, for real?

T: Yeah!

CT: Mobile got power! I ain't know Mobile was like that.

J: Does Mobile have power, or does it represent something?

T: Nah, it represents something. Ain't got no power. They been trying for 20 years to put that bridge over there. And now all of the sudden, they going put it in.

J: Oh, they going put in.

T: Yeah.

CT: I didn't even know he announced the—

T: You know what Stimpson told me? I didn't finish telling you that, when he called me in that boiler room? "Mr. Francis," said, "I don't need no job." [Laughter]

J: That's what you told him?

T: That's what he told me.

J: Oh, nah! It's all about the money.

T: That's right. He let me know right off, he didn't need a job! I wanted to tell him "I don't either. But I need you; you need me." That that's the way it is. And like I say, I can call him right now, you know, and if for some reason—

J: Yeah, don't talk about, don't talk about "they" and "them" if you don't understand.

T: Nah! Mm-nm!

J: If you don't understand who "they" and "them" is? Be quiet.

T: Don't say nothing.

J: Be quiet. If you think it's pie in the sky, or you got romantic ideas about politics, be quiet. You a liability.

T: You know what he told me?

J: What?

- T: Two ears and one mouth. [Laughter]
- J: One mouth. All them brothers—I mean, all them brothers over here in metro.
- CT: Most folks, when I talk about politics, don't know the things that I know. I don't know a lot of the things that y'all know, but—
- J: All them brothers. Wait a second, I'mma blow your mind: all them brothers in Metro; ain't no white people in Metro.
- T: Nah. All Black.
- J: Ain't no white people up there in Atmore, at the at the prison. Why? Your uncle had ten children. Who had ten children?
- T: My uncle, yeah.
- J: His uncle had ten children. That's 10 voters. Baby mommas; where the daddies?
- T: There ain't none.
- J: If I can rip the seed from the situation, I can shift the balance of power.
- CT: Power, yeah.
- J: If I can get you more interested in where your next high is coming from, versus joining the union—. So you going be in a motorcycle club, but you won't become a pipefitter. Really, which is more important? Generational wealth, or feeling free? You know? Look at your girl from Baker High School.
- CT: They thinking they free. Yeah.
- J: Look at your girl from Baker High School: Flo Milli.
- T: Flo Milli, yeah.
- J: Flo Milli ain't—at 18, she left Mobile; she ain't never coming back to Snow Road.
- T: No.

J: Ain't never coming back. Now, would a video in the hood, because that's the language of, you know, her art.

CT: Who is Flo Milli?

J: She's a rapper from—she's a 20-year-old rapper from Mobile who's hitting it. Her and Yung Blue. Right? They're playing the game of hip hop. She bought her momma a house; they ain't never coming back.

T: Not here.

J: It always been about the money.

T: That's right.

J: Them boys is in jail because it's intentional. We ain't going have no more; we got voting rights, but we ain't going give you the block of voters, and then we going to change the districts around.

T: Because you got a fool pulling down a bleacher down Davis Avenue to get the scrap metal out of it, on the back of the car. [Laughter] He stole a whole bleacher out of Lyons Park, put it on the back of a Lincoln Continental, and pull it down the middle of Davis Avenue!

J: And that's—

T: You know he ain't own no bleacher!

J: And it's not just that he's a criminal—but you don't know what aggravated situation in that brother's head.

T: No!

J: He could be—he could be bipolar.

T: Yeah.

CT: PTSD, whatever.

J: Narcissistic.

T: Yeah.

J: I mean you got to be a narcissist to drag a damn bleacher down the middle of Davis Avenue!

T: Crazy.

J: So, we're talking about—Mr. Thomas was telling me about these people who used to go to meetings, these principals who used to make you wear a tie to school, that used to instill values. Not just wear—. You got kids?

CT: Yeah, I got a daughter. And a granddaughter.

J: How old is she?

CT: She's 19.

J: Okay, you know, I got a daughter, she's 33. And I got younger son who's 12. And if he ain't in the right school in Mobile Public School System, he going get worksheets. Because the teacher not trained well enough to teach him. So, I'm going warehouse you, and give you—my daughter, when she was 16 at Murphy, when she went, she played spades every day. Right? And every day, I had to, like, "Baby, you got to get up. You got to go to school." But she was like, "But nobody care if I'm there." You know, "I'm good." She get out to South Alabama, she on the dean's list. I'm like, "Who is this? Where was this at the high school?" "Well, you know, they wasn't teaching me nothing, so I didn't do nothing." It wasn't that she couldn't do. It ain't like the kids at Williamson now, or LeFlore, or Vigor, or Blount now. It ain't like they can't do. But if it ain't no Mr. Keeby there, if it ain't no Lillian Thomas there—. See, if I can keep you illiterate, I can control you.

T: That's right.

J: If I can reduce the population of potential leadership, you ain't going vote. You going be living—we going move you from Orange Grove out off Azalea Road, into one of them apartments that white people have abandoned. And there's one way in and one way out. If you're saying Alabama Village: Alabama Village is just a representative example of how people are being forced into certain types of terrible living conditions. Right? Where there's no values, nobody working.

CT: No dad in the house.

J: Momma's in the cut, trying to get paid.

T: Grandmomma on TV talking about, "I don't know what you mad with me about, shooting up in my house"; come to find out her son is the one that doing all the shooting.

CT: Shooting, yeah.

T: It's just—.

J: So when you hear old folks talk about Maysville, Down the Bay, Birdsville, Crosstown, Campground; these were all places of safety, and these were economic engines.

T: Right, kept Mobile' wheel running.

J: But now—I mean, what part of Mobile are you from?

CT: I grew up over on Hurtel Street.

J: Hurtel Street—well, that's Maysville, isn't it?

T: Yeah.

CT: Then I well moved, my parents moved out to Moffett Road. Out to West Mobile.

Ja: Out to West Mobile, where the opportunities were better. Well supposedly, the schools were supposed to be better, right?

T: Yeah, he went to Shaw.

CT: Shaw.

J: Yeah, Shaw a good school! It's a magnet school now, though.

CT: Yeah. I don't even know if it's open now, though.

T: Yeah.

J: Hold on—it's a magnet school. Who gets to go to the Magnet school?

T: White kids. It's for white kids.

J: You got to be in a lottery to get to the magnet school. Well, how is that public education? Why can't my child just have as good an education as another person's child? Well, you got to know about the lottery, and you got—because we don't send no school buses to the magnet school—you got to have enough money and wealth to be able to pay for a car note to take your child to school, and pick them up! Which is childcare time. You got to get—you got to leave your job at 2:45 to pick up your child in a carpool line.

T: Can even get down Virginia Street.

J: If I'm riding down the bus, or if I make less than 40,000 dollars a year, I can't afford to put my child in magnet school, because I can't afford the time to take off from work to take them and pick them up!

T: They got to get in a line down there at Council.

J: So, Council is like UMS Wright.

T: Sure is!

CT: For real?

T: Yeah.

J: Council, and Mertz, and Dunbar Magnet, is like St. Paul. "We got to make sure that the classes are racially balanced." You should make sure the *school* system is balanced! Not just the magnet school. These folks like your great grandmother, who was PTA president at Williamson, would've never allowed that to happen. You not going take our children out of the school where the good teachers are.

T: Nah, unless you want to have—.

J: And bust up the neighborhood support for the school. Heart of Mary just closed today.

T: Closed it up, mmhm!

J: Historic Heart of Mary School.

C: Why they closed it up?

T: Because they wanted to.

J: Because there ain't no Black Catholics to support it.

T: Yeah. They got this—just built a new Black school, Catholic school over the bay.

J: No, no it ain't Black; St Michael's ain't Black.

T: I mean, a new Catholic school. And imported a football coach.

J: From the National Football League. That just shows you how much money they got. I mean, this is the part—talk a little bit more about your mother and Overbey.

T: Well, because she had a talent, he just put her in a place where she could go to college.

J: Where'd she go?

T: Hampton Institute.

J: In Hampton, Virginia.

T: Hampton, Virginia.

J: The cousin school to Tuskegee.

T: Right.

J: That's where Booker T. Washington went to school.

T: Yeah.

J: And she got trained in—?

T: Recreation, in recreation. She retired as one of the Black recreational supervisors in this city, and got a park named after her. But they said they couldn't put her name on it till the foundation fronted the money to build it with. Harmon Foundation.

J: Oh, so that's why it's the "Harmon?"

T: Yeah.

J: Now, I understand Mrs. Carrie was a Lacey.

T: No, Mrs. Carrie was a Brown. My wife was a Lacey.

J: Ok, I'm sorry; Carrie Brown Thomas.

T: Right.

J: Tell me about the Browns Down the Bay.

T: She had a one, two, three brothers and one sister.

J: Where was the homestead?

T: On Conception Street. Old railroad houses between Texas, where the—you don't even remember; there used to be a chicken farm down there. It was a bunch of railroad rowhouses.

J: Wait, what street's there now?

T: Conception.

J: Conception. What's the cross street?

T: Texas.

J: Okay.

T: They lived right there on the corner. And they had a store down there name Argiro's. That's where all of her nieces and nephews—well, one niece and a bunch of nephews—worked for this Jew named Argiro. He owned the grocery store, the main chain of liquor and grocery store down there on Texas Street. And he also

had the Bay Breeze, a club over the bay over there for Blacks. He owned that. So my cousin, one cousin worked at the Y. He was a masseur; one of my first cousins there. He worked at the Y.

J: Downtown.

T: Downtown Y, yeah. He was a masseur, because that where I first learned that wrestling was a gimmick. Because he used to practice down in the basement at that Y downtown. [Laughter] He did! He took me down there and showed me how they practiced how to fall and all that stuff. Because you couldn't tell me that wasn't real; you know, somebody beat somebody in the head with a chair? Wrestling started the Hartwell Field and Ladd Stadium; that's where they used to have wrestling, there. But we always—**supposedly** through family. If you remember, I don't know if you remember, but Alex Herman and most of the fellows from Down the Bay that worked at—you remember they had a fire station, that Creole Number 1. That was a all-Black fire station. That's where they started. The first Black cop walked a beat downtown; it was Big Walter. They eased him in there—

J: Big Walter, what was Walter's last name?

T: I'm trying to think his last name; I can't think of Walter' last name. Bell! Bell was one of the cops, too.

J: Joe Bell?

T: Hubert.

J: Hubert.

T: Yeah, the old man.

J: Old Man Hubert.

T: Yeah. He was one of the first Black cops. So, you had to be of a certain **ethnicity** to get these jobs. Because your people did—and you didn't even know it—his daddy might have worked for the Marzettis and drove them around. People couldn't understand why after I finished—or, retired—that I worked for the Marzetti.

J: I got to stop this!

T: Yeah.

[Break in recording]

T: They would get them out different neighborhoods. That's how I got to be king. My momma the one who put me in there as king. And my queen was Kitty Sylvester; she was from that Sylvester family out there in Prichard; in Whistler, really.

J: Whistler, yeah.

T: She's in California now. I ain't heard nothing from Kitty in a while.

J: What was Mardi Gras like in Maysville for you?

T: What, in Mobile?

J: Yeah—well, in Maysville.

T: Oh, that was, that put me, all of my knights and things were from Maysville. I put all of my knights, it was young men that I knew, in my court—except for one. Boy, his mother used to run the club over on Davis Avenue. Knight, he was a knight. He went to Houston. He died out there in Houston. He was the only one that wasn't from Maysville. The rest of them was fellows I knew. I really was the only king, I think, because my mother's first cousin in Connecticut was a big numbers man. So, he sponsored—I was the only king that had two parties. [Laughter] And the reason I had two parties, because my daddy was a big union man. He got all my liquor out the riverfront. Isom Clemon was the president of ILA. So he furnished all my liquor, and Frank paid for it. My cousin from Connecticut. Now, me and his son—his son has got a multi-million dollar business now; they work out of Atlanta. Matter of fact, he going be down here next month.

CT: Who, Frank?

T: Yeah.

CT: Okay. Because he told me he was coming down.

T: Yeah, I talked to him yesterday.

CT: Oh, for real?

T: Yeah, he's making plans to come down. Well, he got—his partner has got a son who's in the fire department; come to find out the boy worked at number nine round there. So, he called me—

CT: What's his name? I might know him.

T: I don't know. His momma just married up—the other Frank. Frank Myles is Frank's partner. So, I don't know.

CT: Oh, because the guy I know that work for number nine, his name is Stan Smith. You met his brother that time you—

T: Oh, no, no, no.

CT: Okay, okay. Because his son, he coaches a soccer team.

T: Yeah, I know who you talking about.

CT: Okay, okay. Yeah.

T: Yeah, I know. But this boy only been in Mobile for a year. So, Frank sent me around there to meet him yesterday. I met him yesterday.

J: And when somebody sends you around to meet you, or—

T: Well, they called me; he let the boy know that he had somebody in Mobile he could call.

J: You have to make connections.

T: Yeah.

J: On your behalf. I mean, that's still—

T: I don't even know his mother, but he let me know yesterday he got eight children.

CT: Whoa!

J: That's a real commitment.

T: Yeah, yeah. He got eight kids.

J: You want to show me some of your pictures?

T: Yeah, take that book out, Claude. I want you see the ones about daddy first. I'm gone show you this one here. I wanted him to see the one about Daddy first.

CT: Now, Mrs. Riddick did a lot of stuff with Charles Smith, the man I was telling you about. For like Africatown and stuff. This book; this the book, right?

T: Yeah.

CT: Okay, okay.

T: That's me and my daddy, I was telling you about; on this front porch. This is when my mother retired.

CT: What you want me to show him?

T: Turn the page, get that picture out of there of them men from the Pulley Works.

J: She had a *big* retirement ceremony!

T: Yeah, this is her retirement book right here. Got all her pictures in it. That's me, that's the job I retired on. I worked for **All** Chemicals.

J: Which chemical company?

T: **Praxam.**

CT: You probably have to show me. Because I don't want to, like, put things—take things out of order.

T: No, turn over; you'll see in the back, back there. You'll see some pictures of all them men on there from the Pulleys Works.

CT: Oh, there's several in here of him.

T: No, that one right there.

J: That's who?

T: Showboat.

J: Showboat.

T: That my dad's baby brother. That's the one that played baseball. That's a picture there of the groundbreaking ceremony. Show him that one.

J: So Showboat played at the Polo Grounds?

T: Yeah, that was at the—that was the only—

J: He was a Met?

T: No, Cuban.

J: Cuban. I think what we going to have to do is, we might just stand up.

CT: [Laughter] That's what—that's why it's on the table.

T: Turn that light on, Claude. On the wall. Unh-uh, over here.

CT: Right here, or right here?

J: I better put this one—

T: Over here.

CT: Over here?

J: I'm going put these right there, put this one back. Yeah. Okay.

CT: Let me see. Let's move this out your way.

J: Hm. Turnkey.

T: [Inaudible 1:30:50].

CT: Oh this, here it is. I think this is—is this the one right here?

T: Is it a bunch of men on there? Oh, unh-uh. It's all Black men on it.

CT: Oh.

T: It's probably further back.

CT: This one. It might be this one. Is it this one right here?

T: No.

CT: Or this one right here?

T: No. By ourselves [inaudible 1:31:38] docks, for **years they worked**.

CT: This is a union one, too.

T: Yeah, that's Dad on there. Union men and officers.

J: This is the union?

T: Yeah, that's the one that—that's the executive board.

CT: Here's one from [19]51 to [19]56.

T: Hm? Mm-nm.

J: Which one your daddy?

T: The only Black one.

J: No, it's two Black men!

CT: Its two Black men.

T: Right there. That's him, the one you just pointed at.

J: Okay. Okay.

T: That's them in Yankee Stadium.

J: Showboat?

T: Showboat there, my dad there.

J: Shoot. So, did Showboat play in Cuba?

T: Yeah, mmhm. Yeah, he played over there. That's why I got that—

J: Passport?

T: Passport, yeah. That's him when he was on the board out there on Josephine Allen project, that's where he is. That's him when he was Mobilian of the Year.

J: Who's that in the picture with him?

T: That's Joe Bailey there, mayor of Mobile. That's my mother.

J: This is Joe who?

T: Joe Bailey, the mayor of Mobile.

J: Oh okay.

T: That's them cutting the ribbon down down at Hartwell Field when they was **codifying it**. Trying to find that picture, that's when they signed Willie McCovey.

J: Where was Willie McCovey from?

T: Mobile.

J: I didn't know that.

T: You didn't? Yeah, down right there—

CT: I didn't even know that, either! [Laughter]

T: I told you, all them boys come off the playground.

CT: That's the one with Wallace. No, right here, the one with George Wallace.

T: Oh yeah. Where that picture? There it is. That's when he was Mobilian of the Year. Sam Jones gone and told that lie about he was the first Black to ever been Mobilian of the Year.

J: Not true, huh?

T: Not true. That's right there at Ladd Stadium.

CT: It might be in the front.

T: It must be. See here? Turn it back, that, see if that—. It's got to be in there with them **others**. These are all them [inaudible 1:36:43].

CT: Yeah, it's got to be back here somewhere.

T: It's loose, see there?

CT: Which one?

T: No, it's loose. It ain't got no—

J: It's not connected to the—

T: It's not connected in there.

CT: I thought it was this person, bunch of [inaudible 1:37:12] white guys on there.

J: What neighborhood was McCovey from?

T: Down the Bay.

J: Down the Bay?

T: Worked at Malbis Bakery.

J: What bakery?

T: Malbis.

J: Malbis Bakery?

T: Right there on the railroad track, where Broad crosses over? That big building to your left there? That's old Malbis Bakery.

J: A lot of people worked at that bakery?

T: Yeah.

CT: Where's it at?

T: No, unh-uh. It's all Black men. They sitting down, and on the back of it, it got the years they worked there and everything. It might be in that group you holding. It's the big picture right there. Mm-mm. Yeah, that's it. That's it. Mr. Joe Durette got the most years down there.

J: Nick Thomas, 45; Jesse Thomas, 34—.

T: That's 400-some years. Put that picture back in that file.

CT: I'm going put it back in order the way it was—because it went into the front. And this one too, we'll put that with the labeled pictures.

J: Where's he at, on the picture?

T: My daddy? That's him, that one.

J: On the end? On the table?

T: No, that's him and his brother. That's Nick, that's him.

J: Mhm. Nick is standing and he's sitting.

T: Yeah.

J: Okay. So, tell me some more about this book, now. Because that's the point, right?

T: Yeah.

J: You want to sit back down?

T: Yeah, I'm going sit back down.

J: All right.

T: I got to; I'm old now. [Laughter] Yeah. I want to get this book together for that young man there and his children.

J: Well I mean, I think that this, this is the—.

T: Showboat went to the Dodgers two years before Jackie Robinson did.

J: What happened?

T: They said he was too old. Him and a fellow named Mike **Duffy** out of South Carolina. Went to Bear Mountain to try out for the Dodgers two years before Jackie Robinson.

J: Who did Showboat play before he went to—

T: I got a—take that top off of that box, Claude, and give me that book out of there? The Black Negro League book. I could tell you—I'll call out all the names of the teams he played for and minored.

[End of recording]

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