U-115

Interview

with

GWENDOLYN CHUNN

July 17, 2004

by Gerrelyn Patterson

Transcribed by Cathy Mann

The Southern Oral History Program
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START OF TAPE 1, SIDE A

GERRELYN PATTERSON: Okay, this is an interview with Gwendolyn Chunn in Raleigh, North Carolina. It is July 17th and we're in her home in her kitchen. The interviewer is Gerrelyn Patterson and this is part of the Spencer Grants Project on school desegregation in the South and will be used as part of the Southern Oral History Program at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The tape number is 71704GC. And so we're going to get started if that's okay with you.

GWENDOLYN CHUNN: That's fine.

GP: Okay. Can you tell me a little bit about you and your family when you went to or worked, you worked at Hillside, right?

GC: Right.

GP: In what capacity did you work at Hillside?

GC: I was a student teacher at Hillside.

GP: Okay. And what year was this, what years?

GC: Nineteen sixty-four.

GP: Okay. All right so tell me a little bit about your family when you worked as a student teacher at Hillside in 1964, your family structure.

GC: When you say my family you mean?

GP: Just a little bit about your background, your parents, how many siblings you have, that sort of thing.

GC: Okay, okay. I grew up in a family owned business in Salisbury, North Carolina, mother, father, and six brothers and sisters, all younger.

GP: Okay, so you're the oldest?

GC: I'm the oldest, right. We grew up in the business and with a very structured home life with assigned duties and responsibilities at home as well as in the business.

GP: Okay and what was the family owned business?

GC: We ran a grocery store with a lot of other satellite businesses as well, a service station, a barbershop, a beauty parlor. And then we rented apartments also.

GP: Okay, so how did you get from Salisbury, and that's your family, how did you end up at Hillside as a student teacher?

GC: With a lot of careful planning because my father wanted me to go to Livingstone College because he graduated from Livingstone College. And that was the last thing on my mind. I thought that if I went to Livingstone I would be doomed to live in Salisbury for the rest of my life. I'd seen so many people go that way, and while I wasn't ready to catch a Greyhound bus to Washington, D.C., New Jersey, or New York, as was the habit during that time, I was convinced that I didn't have to stay in Salisbury for the rest of my life. Because my father was a successful entrepreneur, he taught us to be very conscious of not only our credit but also money management. He used to always say if you have good credit you can get anything. People trust you and believe you because they know that your history speaks for itself.

GP: That's even more the case now.

GC: Well, at any rate, I knew that he would only be sold from one point of view and that was it had to be a lot cheaper than Livingstone. It couldn't just be a couple of thousand dollars cheaper. It had to be dramatically cheaper. When I went to

North Carolina Central in 1960, in the fall of '60, tuition, fees, room and board, all of it was four hundred and eighty-eight dollars. At that same time, Livingstone I think was eighteen hundred dollars. What part of four hundred and eighty-eight dollars is going to dissuade your father from letting you go? Well, here was my advantage. As the oldest of seven, and everybody came up in the business, there were six other people who could take my place. So at four hundred and eighty-eight dollars he had realized he could do almost four years at Central for what he'd pay for one year at Livingstone for me to stay at home. Well, we grew up in a big two-story house that had four fireplaces, double parlors. It had one, two, three, four, five bedrooms and two full baths and it was built around the turn of the century. Full back porch, back yard, front porch, the whole bit. But even at that when you've got nine people in five bedrooms, it always means somebody is looking for a free bedroom. If you would leave I could have this bedroom by myself, you know.

GP: So you convinced him and went to North Carolina Central?

GC: Went to North Carolina Central. I remember him standing there scratching his head as he did whenever he was looking to not do something that he could see that he was probably going to have to do. So he kept scratching his head. I knew what that meant. I got six other kids to put through college. Why would I keep this one if I can get this kind of cheap out? Turned out that Coach Young was also one of his best friends.

GP: Coach Young worked at?

GC: North Carolina Central, he was the athletic director then. So he loaded me up, unlike most girls my mother did not go with me my freshman year to college.

My father took me, delivered me promptly to Coach Young over in the gym and Coach Young and my father were cut out of the same cloth, no nonsense. Coach Young let me know he would be watching me and I should come and see him routinely or if he had to send people to come get me that was going to be a problem for me. And that there was nothing that I could do on that campus that he would not know about. So he delivered me and then he went on his merry way.

So I did my trunk as best I could or whatever but I felt like, you know, it hadn't been done then at that time, hadn't even been conceived, but I felt like Martin Luther King's free at last, free at last. Thank God Almighty, I'm free at last! It was like I'm not going to bother anybody for anything. I'm just going to do it and it was no question about whether or not I was going to do it in four years. I mean during that time it was considered shameful if you could not complete college in four years. And very few people were paying for their education. Most of them were work-study students and shortly thereafter loans came out, federal loans came out. But I was one of the few paying for my education and I wasn't about to mess that up in any way, you know. So that's how I got to Durham, North Carolina. And after I got there I made the A honor roll my freshman year. That was to let you know how committed I was to doing well. My freshman year I made the A honor roll the second semester I believe and I got qualified for a tuition rebate because of being always on the A or B honor roll.

GP: Tuition rebate, is that like tuition remission, you didn't have to pay for it but the school paid for it?

GC: Yes, yes, yes. So that was even better because that reduced the four hundred and eighty-eight. I mean **let's get build in** some incentives to say here now, you know.

GP: Take me there how you got to Hillside.

GC: Well, it was the custom during that time for student teachers, and we were still basically as African-American people, teaching and preaching, few social workers but basically teaching and preaching. The doors had not opened because we were the sit-in generation. We were the ones that marched to St. Joseph's and to White Rock and down to the sit-ins. I sat in at the Palms Restaurant that was so dirty I could see through the glass that if they had opened the doors and said come eat I would have told them thanks but no thanks, it's not clean in here, you know.

GP: Was the restaurant in downtown Durham?

GC: The Palms Restaurant it was in downtown Durham, right. And it was on Chapel Hill Street I believe. But anyway I went to jail from there and, you know, we went to jail. It was the thing to go to jail. Jail was dirty though. It was also dirty and it had one little toilet with no privacy, like sitting in a corner and you know, who's going to use that. But you got to stay there all night. I mean until you got out.

GP: So it was a custom?

GC: So it was a custom to have people assigned to still lots of segregated school systems and you had to arrange for your transportation. The interesting thing too was you were told what you could wear and could not wear.

GP: This is as a student teacher at Hillside?

GC: As a student teacher, right, for example, I wore my hair long that year the way the girls are wearing it now, pretty much straight down. That was the fashion then. I was told in no uncertain terms, you will have to put your hair up. We weren't doing a lot of French rolls. We were doing a lot of little balls on the back. But you had to wear hose and heels.

GP: Who gave you guidelines for what you could wear?

GC: The teacher education professors would tell you.

GP: At Central?

GC: Right. What you could and could not wear. Now you have to remember too at Central we could only wear pants on Saturday afternoons before five o'clock. That was the only, one day.

GP: Before five o'clock?

GC: Before five o'clock. You had to be out of them. If you wanted to go to the dining hall you had to be out of them by the time you went to the dining hall. So we weren't accustomed to wearing a lot of slacks anyway. I ain't talking slacks—I'm talking pants, slacks, anything that wasn't a dress. And so when we had to accept those rules of how to dress that wasn't really a far cry from how we dressed normally anyway.

GP: Was there any other place you could have done your student teaching other than Hillside or was Hillside the place at North Carolina Central where you did your teaching?

GC: Well, Hillside got the best student teachers. By that I mean they got the ones who had the highest academic records and whatever. It was a real plum to go to

Hillside because all you had to do was walk across the street. That meant you didn't have to figure out where you were going to live while you were doing your student teaching, how you were going to get transportation from somebody's bedroom home to the school. It just was almost problem-free compared to what other people had to deal with. So it was just remarkable. I was very lucky because I had a double major in French and Spanish. But also Senator Jeanie Lucas who was then teaching at Hillside, taught French and Spanish. Yippee! Here comes a student teacher that's majoring in both languages and here's a supervising teacher that was also teaching both languages. Happy day, right? And, of course, from the very beginning we hit it off. It was a wonderful relationship. Unfortunately I think her mother or her father, somebody died in her family and got sick and she wasn't there a lot. But the time she was there was wonderful. I remember Principal John Lucas coming to me asking me did I want a substitute teacher or did I want to handle it myself. And I opted to handle it for myself.

GP: Handle the class when she wasn't there?

GC: All her classes, right, all of her classes. So I actually got thrown into deep water almost from the beginning and that was after, during that time you observed a few weeks and then you taught. You started with one class and then you added 'til you had a full day. But I kind of didn't go through that entire process because she had to leave because of family issues. And so I opted to teach right off. When you were observing you usually did bulletin boards and a lot of paperwork, corrected papers, that kind of stuff. I did that but I did the other things as well.

GP: So what was a typical day like for you then at Hillside as a student teacher?

GC: As a student teacher I would come in and put my things, during that time, put you things in the classroom or in spaces in the teachers' lounge. It was at that time, at the very first day, she told me stay out of the teachers' lounge. And I believe I gave that same advice to you. Do me one favor, stay out of the teachers' lounge. The teachers lounge is nothing but negativity. It always is. It's people talking about ain't it awful, ain't it awful I'm here, and they can really just crush your day. They can make you think you'd rather be any place than here.

GP: So I take it you did not put your things in the teachers' lounge?

GC: I think I walked in the teachers' lounge maybe twice just to see what it looked like. But I never spent any time in anybody's teachers' lounge after that.

GP: And so you came in and you put your things down?

GC: Put my things down and then usually we greeted the students. She taught me from the beginning not to have students seated in rows. The students were seated around three of the four walls in the classroom in a U shape. She said it allowed you to move around and always know what was going on. You could see who was not attentive. You could see who had homework, who didn't. You could see who was passing notes. You could see everything. But mostly it gave you an opportunity to see what was going on, who was cheating, who wasn't, and I have never deviated from that since that time. Even when I was doing staff development situations I never got away from people being in a U shape or circle shape and would get most annoyed if I had a room with bolted down seats and you couldn't move them,

you know, because she was so right. There's no way people can avoid you when you are in their face. You're literally in their face. She also taught me a lot of things about respecting the dignity of students no matter how you feel about them, saying the right things that encourage them to be positive and to be productive. And then we went into the move during that time.

GP: Went into the?

GC: Move, when I said move, let's get it on. Let's have school. She always advocated that you have your lesson planned but in so many words suggested that you ought to almost know it. You don't need to be running up there to your desk going, let's see now, what's next? We did that. Check that off, you know. No, you should know it. If you wrote it you should know pretty much what you're going to do. And you should not be afraid to deviate from it when teachable moments suggest that students can benefit from that deviation. So it was on then.

GP: How were the students?

GC: Oh, man, the students were inner-city Durham. What are you talking about? The students were a problem. (Laughter) The students were a problem. I had one girl, one of my students, that was hitting on my boyfriend. It was like please!

GP: Your boyfriend at college?

GC: At college, please. I didn't even know what was going on until the other students had to tell me. Do you not know, you're supposed to be, I think I may have been even, no, I wasn't engaged then. But I was close to being engaged to this guy and they were going like do you not know she's trying to talk to your boyfriend. She's trying to talk to your man.

GP: In your class, she was in your class?

GC: She was in my class. Of course, I didn't know what was going on but the other students did. They knew, you know. And they finally had to tell me. I guess they figured that I wasn't getting it, didn't know. They were right. I didn't know. Anyway, it still didn't change to me our relationship. I still had a responsibility as a teacher. But anyway, the students were inner-city. They had their minds on everything except learning. It was stressful. I was dedicated. I wanted them to learn French and Spanish.

GP: And they weren't interested?

GC: They said things like students say today. I ain't never going to France. I ain't never going to Spain. I don't need this.

GP: Why do I need to learn this?

GC: Exactly.

GP: That's interesting because that seems contradictory to what we've been led to believe about how students acted years ago.

GC: People always remember it better than it was. And I know that I remember this correctly because your teacher from Central who came to observe your student teaching—

GP: Dr. Maynor?

GC: No, not Dr. Maynor but my teacher education person who came to—

GP: Your clinical supervisor?

GC: Yeah, my clinical. I didn't know what the term was now. But the clinical supervisor who came to judge my teaching ability, because you know, the

supervising teacher at the school has some input and some evaluation but also you'd get observed. They often came unannounced or with very little lead time. You would find out at the end of the day that they would be there the next morning. I was absolutely terrified because I got that kind of notice. She'll be here the next morning, and that particular clinical supervisor at Central was not a person that was beloved by me. (Laughter)

Now let me say this. Most of my professors I really enjoyed and liked at Central and Maynard Jackson's mother, Dr. Jackson, Irene Jackson was head of the department but was just, oh, she glowed in the dark as far as I was concerned. She was the greatest thing in the whole world and she treated me like I was great too. And so there were other people. She was not the one that handled cadet teachers so the person who came was not one that I was just thrilled about. And I didn't feel like I would be given a lot of benefit of the doubt.

GP: Because of the students in the class or just because?

GC: Because I had never had any classes with her. I almost went to Dr. Jackson. It was like, what are you teaching so I can sign up for it. I just thought she was so wonderful. She was wonderful. And so I neglected to take any classes with this other person.

GP: And you were concerned because she didn't know you?

GC: Yes, she didn't know me.

GP: And your history?

GC: Yeah, she knew my history but I've always had a problem with people thinking, oh, she must think she's all that. She must think she's really something.

And so I've more often that not been challenged by people in terms of does she think she's got it all pat. And so I thought well, you know, she's probably heard my reputation and by that time at Central I think I had only made two B's the whole time and I was about to graduate, you know. It was like, oh well, let's see how great she really is. And so I felt that sort of emanating nonverbally from her. And when she came I thought, my goodness. It was like you have six periods or so. I think we had seven periods during that time. You got one free period. You got six periods of classes and there are always one or two periods that you would just rather the earth would open up and swallow you.

GP: (Laughter) No, I haven't had that experience.

GC: So, of course, she came—

GP: During those two.

GC: Oh yes. I was so nervous. I was so nervous that I taught the class in Spanish and it should have been French or vice versa. And do you know those students went along with me.

GP: That means they liked you.

GC: I know but I didn't know it until then.

GP: So they couldn't have been as bad as you—

GC: Yes, they were, but it was like we knew you were kind of in a bind. We started to say that's the wrong class but, you know, like my friend over here said no, man, let her go on, let her do what she's doing. Just do what she say, you know. And I would, you know, and I had all these cues, you know. Like I'd say ( ) and they'd go so-and-so and then they'd go so-and-so, like call and response almost, so-

and-so, so-and-so. So we did stuff like that. We were doing it right, it was just the wrong class. (Laughter)

GP: So they obviously felt some loyalty to you though.

GC: Oh, man, I remember how absolutely I felt like I know I failed. But she didn't know.

GP: So it turned out okay?

GC: Yeah, it turned out okay. I think she thought maybe the schedule had been flip-flopped because the kids didn't give off any indication. They went right on like, we tell you, like didn't we take care of you. You take care of us. Oh, man.

GP: Okay, so after classes were there any other things you had to do as a student teacher?

GC: Unh-uh. I spent most of my time on everything related to curricular interests. There were people who got involved in extracurricular activities, but that was not my thing. And I think it had a lot to do with Senator Lucas. She felt like the preparation for classroom management and for the actual teaching of the content area and the feedback to the students and that kind of stuff was paramount. So she sort of guided me in that direction and kept me under her wing pretty much.

GP: Did you have to contact parents and visit parents at home, anything like that?

GC: No, there were some of that that happened but it wasn't really a problem. Now most of the problem you had was when parents felt like students didn't get the grades that they deserved. And she taught me too about keeping your roll book straight, making sure that they understand how they're going to be judged, sharing

with them on a routine basis where they stand. And we'd have seat work. I learned how to do seat work. And you called people up while that is going on, where nobody can hear, and you say now these are your grades right here. And see what you do is you have these papers almost like an overhead projector. You put a paper above it, a paper below it, so only their grades were showing. This is what you're doing and this is the average that you have. Now if you are going to get such-and-such a thing, you're going to need to make so-and-so-and-so. You were never surprised because you could also document that you had shared with the student where he or she was.

I must admit, you know, as I reflect on this, the fundamentals that she taught me from the practical end about teaching have stood me in good stead throughout my professional career, even when I was running juvenile justice. I knew how to tell people with performance evaluations, now let me tell you what you have here and this is—

GP: Where you need to be.

GC: Exactly, and the rate you are going you will not qualify for a merit incremental, you know. So people didn't get surprised. That was also valuable because later on when people decide to sue you, you can also document that you told them, you know. So it was great training.

GP: I think I have a general understanding of your experience at least as a student teacher at Hillside. Can you tell me a little bit more about what it was like to live in Durham and what maybe if Hillside played any kind of role within the Durham community? What was its place within the community?

GC: Oh, Hillside and Central were the preeminent places in terms of influence, Hillside and North Carolina Central, in terms of education. Now during that time there was Durham Tech too.

GP: Oh, really?

GC: Well, it was Durham Business College, DBC as it was called during that time, you know.

GP: Was that for African Americans? Was it segregated or was it integrated?

GC: Yeah, it was down there across the railroad track. That's where it was.

GP: Durham Business College?

GC: Durham Business College, across the railroad track where I think now they've got a new food market or something. It's been a number of things down there but it was DBC then. And there was also Lincoln Nursing program. So there were entities like that but none had the prestige that Hillside and North Carolina College, it was at the time, had.

GP: Why do you think that is?

GC: Well, those were the most highly educated people that you had. And the promise for preparing people for a better world because by that time we'd been through the sit-ins. We could see that things were going to change. Even though Kennedy had died by that time it was clear that Lyndon Johnson intended to make good on some of his legacy. And that was smart on his part. He was noted as a very shrewd politician. When a president dies under those circumstances that is beloved by all, national mourning, last thing that you can say to the general public is get over it,

now we're going back to doing what. No, almost have to ride that wagon and that's what he did. He got on it and I'm going to see that we, you know, and it was the right thing to do.

GP: And so how did that play out in Durham while you were there?

GC: Well, still it meant that there were lots of folks who still saw themselves as activists, as the struggle is not over. We've got to be ever vigilant and then those who were being prepared. See I was one of those being prepared and by that I mean, yeah, I was in the sit-ins and all of this. But some of my contemporaries don't remember that I was one of the ones, one of the first ones of that group to go to UNC-Chapel Hill. And they can never know the abuse that we had to endure being the first. I mean I went into Spanish and I was greeted with a statement from my advisor that said most black people cannot speak English, what are you doing here in Spanish. It was that kind of thing. I couldn't live on the campus because, as Catherine Carmichael said to me, we couldn't hope to expect any of the white students to share a room with you.

GP: Who's Catherine Carmichael?

GC: Catherine Carmichael was dean of women I believe at UNC-Chapel Hill in 1964. So I mean and lots of things have been named after her and all of that. I mean I'm sure she did some other wonderful things.

GP: But that's not one of them?

GC: No, she did not ease things. The chair of the Department of Romance Languages, Jacque Adre, he was.

GP: Jacque Adre?

GC: Adre, right, he was at the time said to me, now we don't want any of that militant stuff out of you. How many times does an entering graduate student meet with the chair of the department for no reason? But I had all of these kinds of challenges. I was told that I come from North Carolina College and I was not going to be able to keep up with students at Chapel Hill, not in a graduate program. And that I should do the best that I could for as long as I could, but I should not feel bad when I wasn't able to make it. Of course, I made them all a lie out of that. But the point is, the racism and the constant abuse and insults that many of us took during that time was not any less easy to bear than being spat at or having dogs or hoses, because it was mental abuse. I was told by one French professor who was amused that I was able to do well, he said, you know, you've been such a wonderful student here. That was in French. I was minoring in French. He said you've done so well. He said but you can't expect to get more than a P out of this course. It wouldn't be fair in the scheme of things for other students who have come from more prestigious universities to make the same, for you to make the same grade that they made. So I'm telling you, I want you to do your best on this exam. You're already doing above a P but I want you to know that's what you're going to get. Now today's student would sue him for that. Of course, he would probably deny it but he said it to me. At that time I felt, gee, he told me I'm doing above a P, isn't that wonderful. So I went in and I wrote everything, just blue books up, you know, from one side to the other, you know. And now I look back on it and realize how absolutely racist the whole thing was, how it was almost set up to undermine every confidence that you had and to make you take yourself out.

GP: Now I hear you saying that was your experience at Chapel Hill. Was that your experience in Durham as well, living in Durham before you went to Chapel Hill?

GC: No, well, let me tell you this. When I graduated number two in my class at Central, my graduating class, I was told, there were two of us who had like a percentage of a grade point difference. We were both summa, right, but he was number one, I was number two, in that classification. I was told by the dean of the library science school you've done fairly well here. Now go to a white institution and see if you know anything. So I think that whole notion that we weren't on a par with other institutions, particularly in the South, was generally accepted. Well, we knew that. If you looked at their library and looked at our library, the one we had at North Carolina College and the one they had at North Carolina, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, well, let me say you can look at them both now and see—

GP: See the difference?

GC: Yeah, it's a world of difference, you know. So in that regard, I think it was generally accepted that we do the best—

GP: With what we have?

GC: With what we have, you know, and the test was, see what you can do. But Central, North Carolina College, and I'm using those terms interchangeably. I hope that doesn't confuse you. But North Carolina College and Hillside were considered the leaders, educational leaders.

GP: For black education?

GC: Oh yes, no doubt about it.

GP: So what was it like to live in Durham?

GC: Well, it was like living in a fishbowl. You see there were no places to live off campus unless you knew somebody.

GP: Okay, let me stop you, because from the little bit of research that I've done and I admit I don't know a great deal about it, but there's this image of Hayti being this self supportive, self sustaining community.

GC: I'm getting there.

GP: Saw videos of people shopping and barbershops and it looks fabulous.

GC: And I'm getting there, but it's a fishbowl. You can go up to what is now the health department.

GP: Lincoln Community?

GC: On Main Street. You could go just about past Hayti, past the little warehouse district in there, and pretty much after that, you know, there wasn't a lot. You had some housing and I think some sub developments were just getting off the ground. But in the early to mid 60s our world was within a few blocks. That was it. And yes, we used our resources and if you really had a boyfriend that was going to take you to the Green Candle for dinner.

GP: What was that?

GC: The Green Candle was in Hayti. It was in that whole Pettigrew Street.

GP: So it was in Hayti?

GC: Yes, it was a restaurant. It was not the dining hall. It was the Green Candle.

GP: Black-owned?

GC: Yes, black-owned, everything. Not only did everybody in your dorm know but everybody else. You know, he took her to the Green Candle. They must be really serious, honey. The Green Candle was big and yeah, there were shops in there with things and you had resources. But, you know, I bet if you went back and looked at the sanitation standards for the Green Candle of the time, they probably, you know what I mean. But it was the thought of owning something and the hope of making it better. So yes, there were barbershops and there was White Rock and there was St. Joseph's and people were dressed and they had cars and there was Lincoln Hospital, yes, yes, yes. If you look at did we have the basics, yeah. We had a lot more than some all white rural towns of comparable size had. Oh yeah, we had that, but compared to what the rest of Durham had, it was a different world.

GP: So tell me about the rest of Durham then and were you ever allowed to participate in the rest of Durham?

GC: No, we were not allowed to participate in the rest of Durham. Now in all fairness, students from Duke University did come over and march with us, some of them. But we knew they weren't from around here by and large. Well, true, I mean if you look at students at Duke now, who actually goes to Duke that's from North Carolina, you know. We wouldn't say the largest majority of their enrollment are North Carolina natives at all, you know. No, we had people from Duke who came from other places and we knew about things and there were people who worked in places. And we had North Carolina Mutual that was a beacon of entrepreneurial planning to take care of people's needs both in insurance and other ways too.

GP: Mutual was part of the Hayti?

GC: Yes, it was.

GP: So it was part of the fishbowl?

GC: Yeah, that's my point see.

GP: So then outside of the fishbowl?

GC: We didn't really have a lot.

GP: And you didn't get to go to those places?

GC: Go to what? You could go on the bus downtown to the Book Exchange at Five Points. And you could go shopping at Woolworth's and at Baldwin's in the old downtown area. But the school itself I think tried to protect us to make sure that we were on the campus by six o'clock if we were residing there. But no, we didn't have a lot of places to go. We had some little joints that you went to after hours, Club 55 that's now a Hispanic restaurant.

GP: La Tienda?

GC: Yes.

GP: Did you have a lot of interaction with whites?

GC: No, we didn't, only those who were working on our campus who were professors and some of them were kind of on a mission from God, you know. They thought it was the right thing to do. Some of them actually had husbands and wives that were employed at Chapel Hill or Duke or in the school system and it was a way for them to. But I never got the feeling that most of them were there because that was their first choice about where to be. It was convenience more than anything else. So no, we didn't have a lot of interaction with the larger Durham community and the larger Durham community felt like that was the way it needed to be.

For example, when we were all loaded up in the paddy wagon, I was one of the few that made the decision right before they got to my group not to fingerprint us. Because we were just all over the street in the sit-ins and after a point it was like just load them up and take them to jail. They weren't going through all that booking thing, you know. So I don't think I have fingerprints on file at Durham Police Department, although there was some of my classmates that did. Because the first few groups that went in I think they actually took them through booking. But, no, they were not sympathetic. They were very angry. We were told to march in pairs and for many of us who were from other places, no, we didn't have any notion about how to step with the larger Durham community because we didn't have that kind of contact.

GP: Was there any notion in terms of desegregation and in terms of what it was going to mean for the Durham community?

GC: Yes. All the white people on the sidelines thought it meant interracial dating. They were convinced and that's why they were so against it. It was going to mean going to school with you one day and the next day you'd be bringing somebody of a different color. Now ironically that is a part of what has happened but most of us absolutely had no interest in interracial dating. That was the height of that black pride. We were, you know, just moving to the point of black power and ( ) and afros. We were just beginning to go into that and the last thing in the world you're thinking about is dating some white dude. That wasn't it. That wasn't it. We found out later though many of the brothers did have another agenda but they were even very, shall we say, secretive about how that was handled, you know.

GP: Okay so school desegregation for whites in Durham, they were pretty much up in arms about integration?

GC: Oh, yeah, they were upset because they thought it meant that, you know, it was going to be interracial dating.

GP: Well, what else was the black community thinking because I'm thinking this is ten years, 1964?

GC: Man, we were thinking about we will finally have some up-to-date schoolbooks, textbooks.

GP: This is ten years after *Brown*, 1954.

GC: The first few years of *Brown* I think most of the South felt like, well, there are a lot of Supreme Court decisions. They don't bother us; we won't bother them. They don't try to intervene with us; we won't try to intervene with them.

And see a lot of things that white people don't understand today about the loyalty the black people have to the federal government grows out of the fact that it was the federal government that first tried to oversee after the Civil War that we didn't have to stay on the plantation, even though they didn't give us forty acres and a mule. But at least they did let us know you don't have to stay there anymore. It was the federal government that set up the Freedman's bureaus to try to make sure that some things were made. So, you know, when you look at the role of the federal government with black people it has almost always been to champion what we are doing.

The white people who are of, shall we say, the neighborhood have always been about trying to maintain the status quo. And the status quo has almost invariably been let's keep you in a subservient role. We won't tell you about how you need to register

to vote. We won't do this. We won't do that, until we get to the point that we need you. Now if a war comes by, we need you. If we've got a candidate out here who really wants to win, we'll tell you how to register to vote because we need you. And so the relationship has not been a fair one from the very beginning.

But that is why when people start talking state's rights you don't hear a lot of black people chiming in going yeah, that's right, because state's rights has been a cold term that meant let's keep the status quo, let's keep segregation, let's keep Jim Crow laws, let's keep black folks on the plantation. I mean it's always meant something different.

GP: Okay, so for blacks what I'm hearing you say among other things is that this umbrella deseg with education was really about access to more resources.

GC: Oh, yeah. It meant finally we might actually be able to go to UNC-Chapel Hill if we ( ).

GP: Was it about resources and integration?

GC: It was about resources and access. Now it became clear that they were not going to be able to fund two systems at the same level. That's almost the other alternative. And you may recall that some school systems still in North Carolina like up in Weldon, Roanoke Rapids and that area have tried to have separate school systems. Even in Lenoir County within the last ten years they merged. Well, even Durham County if you stop and think about it, you had Durham city and you had, and one was unofficially the black system. The other one was unofficially the white system, you know.

But after a point you don't have the revenue to be able to continue it and you don't want to set up a situation that calls attention to what the law says because you already know what the law says. So yeah, it was a matter of the resources, the access, the opportunity that we could finally do something more than teach and preach and a few social workers.

GP: So what did people think was a good education for blacks at the time? What was a good education?

GC: A good education for blacks at the time was A&T.

GP: And this is by black standards or white standards?

GC: This is by white standards.

GP: A&T was the—

GC: Oh yeah, because you're going to be a farmer or something. Liberal arts, what do black people need with a liberal arts education.

GP: So some kind of vocational ed to give them training?

GC: Yeah, that's what they're good at. It won't tax their brains too much.

GP: Is that what blacks thought?

GC: No.

GP: What did blacks think?

GC: No, we thought that we were just as capable. Even if you look back at W. E. B. Dubois, that even he, even though he talked about the talented tenth—

END OF TAPE 1, SIDE A

BEGINNING OF TAPE 1, SIDE B

GC: --of us who were intellectually endowed, shall we say, even gifted. I mean these experiments had been conducted at Harvard and other places where we just wanted to see if a black person could learn. I mean so you ended up with people who founded some institutions of higher education earlier and were able to come South during the Civil War because they were products of those experiments. We knew we could do. We knew we could do.

GP: So do you think, I mean you told me some things that you thought Jeanie Lucas, your supervising teacher over at Hillside, kind of made you feel like you had a special duty as a teacher, like dignity. Were there other things that you felt as a teacher or even a student that black kids needed to be educated about?

GC: Yeah and that is that you have the potential to be what you're willing to work to be. See people say this thing about you can be all you want to be. It's got to be more than that. There is this four-letter word, work, in between there. You have to be willing to work to be that.

GP: And so that's what you taught them then?

GC: That's what she taught me to teach them that, yeah, you can learn this language and you can learn it well but you will have to memorize the words and you will have to memorize some differences in things. It will be some work but you can do it. Now you know we talk a lot about students not having, particularly minority students, not having good self concept or self esteem. That's not the issue. It's that the school system fails to build confidence in them. It does not pick out experiences that will allow them to succeed and then build on the successes.

GP: Talking about schools now?

GC: Now, right.

GP: Say that to me again.

GC: It does not pick out experiences that will allow them to succeed and then build on those successes.

GP: And you think Hillside did a good job of that?

GC: Oh yeah, yeah, because see we didn't accept those I'm never going to France, I'm never going to Spain statements. We talked about a bigger world where in many African countries French is one of the official languages. Yes, you have your travel language and this, that, and the other. We talked about the Moors in Spain for seven hundred years and where did the Moors come from: Africa, okay? So we talked about a bigger world. Now let's talk about reclaiming some of the many pieces that you are and that you have been in your world. And in so doing we began to talk about people reaching to be something based on what their ancestors have already been. Do you see what I'm saying? I mean it's just a mindset.

But if you have students and they come into your class and you say well, what my advisor at Chapel Hill said to me, most black people can't speak English, I doubt you're going to be able to learn another language. Well, that doesn't make any sense but if it's that premise and you put that forward to the student, what is the student supposed to say? Is a student supposed to say I beg to differ with you? That kind of system of education would suggest I already know something about who I am. But if I'm already feeling sort of predisposed to do this in the first place, hesitate, guarded feeling stupid about making sounds I don't usually make and learning things I don't usually learn and then you tell me that I can't learn it, then what am I supposed to do.

So that's what I mean when I say the perspective is different and it's one of what we see most in the job market. I want somebody who's already done the job to take the job. Not recognizing that sometimes when you take a person who's never done the job but has related experiences, perhaps you can get it done a new and better way, because the person is not encumbered with past experience. Well, I'm sorry, when we were at GlaxoSmithKline we always did it this way. Well, you're at Nortel now, you know. Want to see it different, you know. So that's kind of what was unique about it that there was this notion that yes you can and building your confidence. I don't know that we did a lot with self esteem, as a matter of fact. I don't think that we even paid much attention to that. But we did pay a lot of attention to convincing people of what they could do and then giving them some achievable things that allowed them to reinforce that notion.

GP: And so those are some of the things you kind of honed in on as a teacher and you talked some about some of the things that you kind of thought was lost, this whole perspective of becoming who your ancestors are, kind of reclaiming who you are as a people, meaning black people. Do you think that there's more that was lost that black schools offered once the schools integrated?

GC: Oh, absolutely. First of all, the teachers were put on the defensive. The black teachers were put on the defensive.

GP: What do you mean by that?

GC: Because they hadn't had the resources. They hadn't had many of the opportunities for preparation. They were automatically deemed at least marginal, if not inferior, definitely marginal. You had white parents who demanded that their

students be taken out of classes where there were black teachers. You had the community demanding that principals often were not, shall we say, the right kind of leadership for the institution. And so there's this constant barrage of telling you that you're not good enough, that you are inferior, that it's not right.

And so, you know, when you look at what was going on with the teachers and then you look at what was going on in the larger communities, what was going on with the principals, you can understand how that got acted out among the students. The students have been ill prepared to understand why we want to integrate and so what they do is resegregate even today.

In the dining hall all black kids sit together, white kids sitting over here. And then now the black kids act like the white kids who sit with the white kids and everybody knows yeah, they're black on the outside but they're really white. And the ones who are really white on the outside but they are much more comfortable with the culture of black kids and so they're really black. And so you can't always look at the skin color and be certain that what you're looking at is what really is.

But no preparation for--I call that why we're doing this, why this is important, what the history was before, why we would want to make this effort to do it. And so you get a bunch of people thrown in together who basically don't think they belong together and that makes it more and more complicated each time. Because the other part of that is nobody wants to talk about it. If we just don't talk about it and just get up and do it everyday, soon it will go away. No, soon it will go underground is where it will go and it will fester.

GP: And so what I'm hearing you say is some additional things that you think were lost in this whole dynamic of black teachers and black administrators and the role and the lessons that they brought with them have kind of diminished or obliterated, pushed aside, in addition to kind of the history of the importance of integration and why we need to come together and work together and those kinds of things.

GC: Right.

GP: So those are the lessons that you think were lost?

GC: Yeah, absolutely. I mean we come out of a culture of African American people come out of a culture of feeling. Anglo-Saxon culture appears to be much less of that, much more emphasis on the cognitive, what you know. How I feel about you is not nearly as important. It's almost the flip with African Americans. I'm not listening to anything you say if I don't feel good about you as a person.

And that's what I really appreciate about Senator Lucas' instruction to me about maintaining some sense of dignity. Now, human relations training now teaches that to everybody. I mean if you don't maintain people's dignity you've got a problem. But she saw it even then and said you can't get anywhere trying to teach this if you're constantly belittling people. Now, belittling people isn't always words. It's very often actions.

And I say that when you discriminate against me as an African American it's rarely what you say to me. It's how you treat me. When you come and we don't have many seats and there's one seat beside of me and you're dressed for success and I'm in a pair of sweats and I don't look like I'm clean enough or that I smell right, you're

not going to say that to me. You're going to look around, is there any chair, and people are going there's one right there, and you're going oh, yes, and then you sit down and you sort of shrivel up, pull yourself almost in the fetal position. Let people know I don't want to touch you. I don't want you to touch me. I get that constantly even now professionally. People are not expecting me to be who I am, with a last name of Chunn, no, no, no, not you. And so you get to places and people are looking for you and you're trying to tell them that you are who you are and they're sort of dismissing you like no, no, we're looking for Mrs. Chunn. That's who we're looking for. So a person told me, she's going to be this little Asian lady probably. Well, no she's not, you know.

So you know, it's all of the nonverbal cues that teachers often send students that suggest you're not good enough, you're not clean enough, you're not smart enough, you're not fast enough. You're not enough. You're not enough. You shouldn't be here. You don't belong here.

GP: Okay, so those are some of the things you think we lost?

GC: Yeah because see, black teachers gave you that?

GP: What do you think we gained?

GC: Oh, man, we gained books and videos, media stuff we'd never even seen before. We had ditto machines with that purple thing on a round drum and you cranked them out. I mean that was it, man. That's what we had.

GP: Resources?

GC: Oh, man, we gained things we'd never seen before. We gained stuff. We'd got to make field trips and go places, you know. We got to go to the

planetarium, you know. We got places to go and it was wonderful. It opened up a brand new world, you know.

GP: What do you think for people like me who didn't really grow up under the umbrella of desegregation, although some would argue about that, but what do you think it's important for others to know about the struggle to desegregate schools?

GC: Let me answer that by first saying I think we did you all a tremendous injustice.

GP: Why so?

GC: Because we were educated enough to tell the truth about the story. And we failed to tell it often. And because we have failed to tell it, its gotten distorted. People remember the pieces that they want to remember and deal with the pieces that they want to deal with. That gives you an inaccurate picture really of what we did, why we did what we did, all of that. In defense of us, we were trying to prove to the world that we could be as good as. Now many of my peers would say, oh no, that's never true. Well, yeah it is you see because if you own a home in North Raleigh or in whatever the most fashionable neighborhood of Durham is or Chapel Hill, don't give me that. Yes, you were, you know. If you joined all the right clubs and the this and the that and the Capital Club and the so and so club and the golf course, you know, oh no, don't give me that. Yes, you were. You were trying to do some of that too because you didn't grow up in that. You see what I'm saying?

GP: Most blacks didn't.

GC: Yeah. So then you are doing some of that to show people that this is my reality now. But when you do that you also have a responsibility of describing

how it has come to be that. And that's the piece I think that we have not done well at all. That means then that our young people who are coming through the system now do not have good roots in terms of who they are. They take lots of things for granted. When young people say you used to not be able to go into the front door of a restaurant that was outside of the black community, not understanding that we just didn't have an affection for back doors. That when I bought my ticket to Mexico City in 1962 from the back window of the Trailways Bus Company in Salisbury it was the first ticket they had ever done to Mexico City. But the signs were still up, colored and white and I was not allowed to go in there. So after making sure that I understood that I was going out of the country to Mexico, that I was not in fact looking for Mexico community in South Carolina or Georgia or Alabama but that yes, in fact, I was going to Mexico City, I knew where I was going, then you know there was whites, this was the high point of my working here. I'd never routed a ticket to Mexico City and back.

GP: So what you want people to know about the trouble to desegregate schools is to not take the struggle for granted?

GC: Don't take it for granted.

GP: And they need to know the roots of the struggle?

GC: Need to know the roots and need to tell the truth about the thing.

GP: Okay, so what is the one truth you would want me to know about the struggle to desegregate?

GC: That there were lots of talented people who were displaced, based on changed criteria. That there were other people who were retained who were not necessarily better equipped to handle the charge of educating a mixed group of

youngsters, rather they were from the right power structure. And were not only ill-equipped but very convinced that these students lacked the potential to ever succeed. Now that's a lot of what you get in the teachers lounges today. Oh, you just wouldn't believe what Raheem said to me and what he did. Well, you know, when you're teaching any group of people there are always going to be incidents where you just wouldn't believe that somebody did something or other. But when it begins to color your reality as the norm rather than the exception then we got a problem.

And see now the notion is certain schools are inherently weak because, well, these students just don't come out of the right background with the right preparation with the right this and the right that and the right this. And the problem is that the way you engage them cannot predict success. You cannot engage them like white middle class kids. They don't come out of that. And if you don't engage them from where they are rather than where you think they ought to be, and guess what, I'm teaching starting on page thirty-four and those of you who haven't gotten to thirty-four, too bad.

GP: So I'm hearing some things that you think that schools can do now to better educate black students.

GC: Oh yeah, that don't necessarily cost money. It's not really about money.

GP: So I heard see incidents as the exceptions that they are rather than assuming that they're norm, classifying them as norms.

GC: Exactly.

GP: And teachers need to engage black students differently, meet them where they are rather than where you wish they were.

GC: Right, exactly.

GP: Are there other?

GC: Be encouraging. Give them opportunities for success rather than picking out situations that predict failure and then you confirm your diagnosis. Of course, what did you expect, right. Well, what did you expect if you were looking at the whole student's needs, you know. Now some people will say to me that's being idealistic. No, it isn't. No, it isn't, because if you are looking at the needs of the students as being paramount you then as the teacher the instructional resource should have the where with all to adapt your materials to gain the progress toward achieving your objectives.

If you only know one way to teach things that's the only way you can teach it, just one way. As a competent, capable teacher you should have five or six different ways you can teach the same thing. And if you don't have that then I submit you're lacking. And see that's the problem. We want to be, well, I always present. Well, you can't do that with this group, you know, just like making the same speech to people. Tell you what, Julian Bond was an excellent speaker in his day. He really was. I used to just love to hear Julian Bond. He was going to say wonderful things. Well credentialed, well trained, easy on the eyes, I mean Julian Bond.

GP: Easy on the eyes?

GC: Julian Bond, you see him now but in his day, oh.

GP: Really easy I bet.

GC: Very easy on the eyes, articulate, self possessed, the whole thing, and so you're thinking ooh, and the first time he makes a speech, whoa. Can we just have a session and just dissect that? Problem is, after a point it was the same speech and you're going I heard that in Atlanta. He made the same speech and after a point it's the same speech. And you want to say okay, sweetie, set down and write a new speech for us. If you're going to be really attentive to people's needs you can't give the same speech over and over again.

GP: So same thing with black students, differentiate?

GC: Exactly right. Different culture here, friends, you cannot approach them the same way. But they can be approached and they can make the same amount of phenomenal progress. They can do it.

GP: Well, I only have one more question.

GC: Okay, I know you're glad.

GP: I know we're running out of time. Do you have any thoughts or suggestions on how you think school integration could have been done better?

GC: Actually, I'm not sure. The only way I can answer that is this. The emotional fallout of the time was like the cloud of a detonated atom bomb. We couldn't see anything but the emotion. I'm not sure if anybody had had the reason to present at the time that we could have accepted it because the feelings that were manifested represented centuries of stereotypes, of slights. And I'm now talking white, black, you know. Mindsets of limited, you know, that we had limited ability, of our feeling locked out and frustrated and angry and it was just so much emotion. It's like trying to have a conversation with somebody when you're just furious with them.

I think it had gone for so long and then after the decision was made, and I have had the good fortune of being close enough to a white friend who was my age and is from rural North Carolina who said to me do you remember *Brown vs. Board of Education*. I said yes. Tell me what happened in your school when it happened and I'll tell you what happened in my school. I said in our school the principal came in and said something like, oh happy day, we're going to have books. There'll be new books and we're going to do this and we're going to have that and it's going to be wonderful and people are going to be sitting together and learning together. And he said the principal came into our room and said this is a terrible day for this country. It's just everything that we've worked so hard for now is just lost to us. It was like a day of grieving for them, you know.

So when you look at it I don't think any of us saw the mechanism that was going to be used. But the only mechanism that could have been used was the courts because of the emotional issues. I mean you think about it, it ain't over yet and it's been what, forty years? So you can see from that the fallout from it still lingers.

GP: Fifty years.

GC: Yeah, fifty years, yeah, right. The fallout still lingers, you know, and so I'm not sure. What I do think though that we didn't do was after we began to get past that we should have sat down together to reason about differences, about how to adjust to those things. Now there would be some people who would say we did that and some people did in isolated districts. But it never caught on as a statewide phenomenon. When everybody else was setting up requirements about how to get through things, our response was let's go out and do some human relations training.

That was a nice strategy but it shouldn't have been the only one. There should have been many other things.

GP: Or combined strategies?

GC: Yes. There should have been things like we know that the kids coming into primary school who come from this neighborhood will generally speaking be lacking A, B, C, and D. Let's talk about then how we change the curriculum, adjust it, add to it, in order to meet those competencies or build those competencies so that we can predict that kids will not feel disaffected and want to drop out by the time they're in the third grade, you know. So we didn't capitalize on what we knew.

Now it may be the phenomenon the South is going to lick the North in six months and everybody will be home for dinner. Set a place for the colonel because he'll be here. It's been six months, you see. And I don't know if people saw it like prohibition. Maybe the court will see the error of its ways and repeal this and it will be Jim Crow again and we'll all be happy. Right now there are people who will talk about separatist kinds of things. Maybe we'd all be happy if we went back to being separate, you know.

That'll never happen again. Time marches forward. We got to go with it and I think when the census reported that they have twenty now designations of what you can be in this country, you know, that tells you it is never going to happen that way again. We might as well, this is the time to say it, get over it and let's get on with it, you know.

So yeah, I think we could have done a better job after the first initial emotional fallout instead of trying to get around things with freedom of choice and having two

student government presidents instead of one, if we had just tried to do that and made sure that we welcomed everybody, that we took the attitude that the Ivy League schools took in the '60s about their minority students.

GP: Which was?

GC: We have chosen you from thousands of candidates. You have a profile that suggests you have been successful here, here, here, and here. This education costs a lot of money. We know we are not wrong. You are not succeeding so why don't we talk about what is the problem. Is it a girlfriend, you homesick, or what. Because they felt like the investment was too great to just let you walk away and say, oh well, we tried it. But you see, in the South particularly many of the large white higher ed institutions took almost a perverse pride in saying, well, we had twelve, you know, African American students and we have two now. I guess they just can't cut it. You hadn't really looked at why did they walk away. It wasn't always that they couldn't cut it academically. It was the constant, like I said, the Catherine Carmichaels telling you no, you can't live on campus because we wouldn't ask any white student to share a room with you. So it's those kinds of things that really lead students to believe that it's not worth the effort.

GP: Is there anything else I need to know about Hillside and Durham and your experiences of deseg that will help me tell my story better?

GC: Well, let's see, Hillside is part of a very vocal black community, a black community that is not afraid to flex its political muscles when it needs to do so. It's not afraid of being in the paper. It's not afraid of being outspoken.

GP: Why do you think that is? That seems so different from other black communities in North Carolina.

GC: I don't know if it was the unique mixture of having people who were prepared academically as well as having some access to corporate jobs, large corporate jobs in the tobacco industry and other places that made for a mixture of, I call that, I do see that we can do some things, that we are not unwilling to step out. Because you look at Raleigh right away that has Shaw and St. Aug but you don't have that same kind of vocal political community.

Somehow or another Durham is not afraid to show its force, to go to the war. And I think for whatever reason that same kind of spirit didn't take hold in other places. It may have been that because of, like I said, that whole diversity, the notion of Pettigrew Street, of Hayti, you know. But if you look at Raleigh they had also had Hargett Street and that kind of thing. They just never had that same desire I think to want to wrestle with things the same way. Now there are probably unseen forces too. Raleigh is also the state capital. You don't know how many people may have been told by the governor's folks, just hush and we'll give you what you want, you know. You don't know what happens behind the scenes. But the point was, I think that Durham didn't seem to be bought easily by anybody. And in that they should take great pride, great pride.

GP: Well, I think that's a great place to stop. Thank you very much.

GC: You're quite welcome.

END OF TAPE 1, SIDE B
END OF INTERVIEW

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