

Transcript of Interview with Gloria Register Jeter

12/23/2000

Interviewed by Bob Gilgor

Transcribed in June 2001 by Susan Pearson and Erika Simon

Tape 1 of 1 tape

[Begin Side A.]

BG: This is Bob Gilgor and I'm interviewing Gloria Register Jeter on the 23rd of December in the year 2000 at the Chapel Hill Public Library. Good Afternoon Gloria, nice to be with you. Most of these interviews I start with what it was like growing up, but you're here for a short visit at Christmastime, from Tallahassee, Florida, so I'm going to cut right to the chase and forgo some of the questions I would ordinarily ask and just ask what it was like as you left Northside elementary and went on in your schooling, and what some of the problems were that you saw as you went on, at the new Chapel Hill High School.

GRJ: I went 1-6 to Northside Elementary School. When I got ready to go to the 7th grade, ordinarily I would have gone I think to Lincoln for 7th grade through High School, however there was a school, Guy B. Phillips, which was 7th, 8th, and 9th, and my parents decided that I needed to go there. I went there.

BG: Can I ask you why they wanted you to go there.

GRJ: Well, it was a new school, and I think she thought it would be a better school and maybe she had the foresight to see that, well, integration was coming and we may as well be there and get our feet wet at the start. So we went. WE met at the corner of our street every morning, the three of us, I think the third may have been my sister Charlene, because she was going to Estes Hills Elementary. WE caught a cab and went to school.

BG: You caught a taxi?

GRJ: A taxi, my mother paid for a taxi every morning. It was me, Boyd Jackson, and Charlene. I think, I'm almost positive, that we were one of the first groups of black children to go to those schools.

BG: Do you remember the year?

GRJ: Well, I was 13 at the time, I was born in 52, so that would have been 1965.

BG: So that was right after the civil rights problems had just hit Chapel Hill.

GRJ: Yes.

BG: Did you have an orientation?

GRJ: Oh yes, I remember distinctly because I had to miss vacation with my Aunt and Uncle. We went down to the old Chapel Hill High School and met with a teacher, it may have been more than one, but we met with at least one adult who told us, wash your face before you come to school, brush your teeth. Now I'm 12 years old and I know how to wash my face and brush my teeth, how to use a knife and fork. It's not as though we were monkeys from the zoo, but that is how we were treated. And I was angry. That ticked me off, I mean because I had to miss my vacation for, and the unique thing was, there were no white students there, it was only the black students that were going to Guy B. Phillips that had to be there, and they were telling us as if we did not know to wash our face and comb our hair.

BG: So to your knowledge was there any orientation given to the white students at the school about how to deal with the integration process.

GRJ: No, not to my knowledge, I never remember anyone saying, Oh I had to go through that dumb orientation. We definitely did not go through it together.

BG: What were some of the other things that were discussed at orientation.

GRJ: I don't, I do remember those, I may have tuned out after that, but I really don't remember.

BG: Did they discuss integration?

GRJ: They didn't need to. They took these 3 or 4 black people, young people, and said "you are special, because you are going to integrate this school, and we know that you don't know anything about anything and so we're going to tell you to get up every morning and brush your teeth and comb your hair." I don't know what they were telling the white kids. But I thought that was terrible, I really thought that was terrible, because it showed no sensitivity to who you are. I mean, if you showed up and your face wasn't washed then, yes, okay, we need to tell this person to wash their face, but if you showed up neat and clean, they didn't need to tell, they didn't need to go there. So they made us feel unique even before we got to the school, I mean they didn't have to do that, you know if you're a black person and you walk into a room that you're going to stand out, they don't need to tell us that. It's almost as if they want to tell us you're not good enough, to make you feel bad before you even go into the situation.

BG: And were there just three of you there?

GRJ: There may have been five of us.

BG: What was it like being at Guy B. Phillips the first year of integration?

GRJ: If I remember correctly, I was not terribly intimidated, I didn't feel if put down is the right word, but I didn't feel like I had to put on my armor to go there everyday. I wanted to do well, but I was always very serious and studious, so I wanted to do well for myself, and I wanted to do well in light of the fact that when you get into a classroom with people that are white, and because they are white they know more than you do, it makes you feel like you have to work hard and be competitive. So I always felt like I had to work hard and study and be competitive. Frequently, I think, we take things personally that are not meant to be personal. I mean, there were people who were stand-offish, who would not sit next to you, who would sneer at you, but you could walk down the street and find that, especially in Chapel Hill. People would yell out the window, "hey nigger," so that was not particularly disheartening to me. We did have a lot of fights at Guy B. Phillips, but I was not fighting, and I did not feel compelled to fight, but a lot of the boys, I'm sure they were racially motivated fights. That was sort of their way of saying "I am as good as the next person, because if you do something to me then I will beat you up." But for a girl, they didn't expect us to fight, thank goodness.

BG: Was there any, in the hallways, any physical intimidation.

GRJ: No, I don't remember any.

BG: Verbal intimidation?

GRJ: No, not that I remember.

BG: How did you feel you were treated by the teachers?

GRJ: The teachers were actually very good. WE had an English teacher, Mr. Cooper, that made us read *Cyrano de Bergerac* in the 7th grade, and he was excellent, and I did not feel that he was racially motivated. Now we had a Home Ec teacher who was [laughs] who was bad. I mean, and I don't, we felt like she was prejudiced. I remember talking with other people in the class, and she was mean to the black students, and she was not that way to everyone. Now there are some people who are just mean to everyone, and that's fine. I remember at Chapel Hill High School, the librarian, what's her name, she was an old lady and she always wore her hair in a bun, she was mean to me but she was mean to everyone, which is fine, you know as long as it's even. Miss Lee, the Home Ec teacher, she was mean and she was mean in a racial way.

BG: Can you pinpoint anything, does anything come to mind about how she was?

GRJ: No, I can't remember anything specific, I do remember that we had to make aprons and muffins, but we all felt that she was racist.

BG: How do you compare the teachers and the teaching at Guy B. Phillips with the teachers and the teaching at Northside?

GRJ: Well, we know the teachers and Northside before we went there.

BG: How did you know them?

GRJ: Well, one lady lived across the street from us, so we know her. She was our neighbor. Another lady, Mrs. Hogan, lived near our church, so we knew her. So, and the community was rather small, so we knew lots of people in the community, so consequently we know lots of the teachers, and we know the janitor at Northside, and he subsequently was the janitor, either at Chapel Hill High School or at Guy B. Phillips. And he would sing as he worked, he sang in the choir at St. Josephs. I remember one day, specifically, it was very quiet because it was exam time, and we were in taking a test and he was sweeping the hall and singing a spiritual, and he had a beautiful voice, and so that was rather peaceful, I thought.

BG: did you feel that the teachers were your friends at Northside?

GRJ: Yeah. IF you came to school without lunch money, you could borrow money from the teacher at eat lunch. You could catch a ride home with a teacher. And believe you me, if you acted up, you knew the teachers were going to call your parents. Now at Guy B. Phillips, I didn't know any of the teachers until I got to the school, and when I left school, I did not see them outside of school.

BG: Were there any black teachers there?

GRJ: There was one black math teacher, a young man, I think my 9th grade year, but my first year there I don't think there were any black teachers, so there was nobody there, other than one another, to look out for your interests.

BG: How was your relationship with your white classmates, did you make friends with any of them?

GRJ: Let's see, I did not make friends, I had one friend, Charity Hardison, whose father was an English professor and I cannot remember if we were friends at guy B. Phillips or at High School. But she and I were good friends, I would spend the night at her house and she would come and stay at our house, and we would go shopping, you know, at the dime store. Oh, I know, my grandmother lived in Washington D.C. and one year Charity and I caught the bus together and went to Washington D.C. to visit my grandmother. And we went to the Smithsonian together, I must have been in High School, because I cannot imagine my parents letting me do that in Junior High. We went to the Smithsonian institute, we shopped around, and she was a good friend, she really was, and she was Catholic, which was sort of interesting to me, because I did not know many, she had 5 brothers and sisters, because I guess they don't believe in birth control, and her birthday was near Christmas so she always celebrated it in June so that she could get presents. Actually, she's in Italy now, she married a Greek man and she's in Italy.

BG: so you keep in contact with her?

GRJ: Not very good contact, but I do know that she in Italy.

BG: Did you feel the need to assimilate into the white culture that you were experiencing at school?

GRJ: No, because they did not allow us to. IF I remember correctly, we never stayed after school for anything. We did not join any clubs in junior high school, we just went to school and came home. And so there was no after school activity, or anything other than just going to class and coming home, that you could do.

BG: What about the way you dressed, the clothes you wore, the way you fixed your hair, did you make an attempt to change any of that?

GRJ: I did not, well, I should say as a young woman, probably in Junior High School, I decided that I needed to shave my legs, which is a really cultural thing, I have come to understand. Black women, when I was growing up, If you had hairy legs, the men thought that was really sexy so I, we didn't, nobody shaved their legs. But when I got to jr. high school, the white girls were shaving their legs so I decided that I should, but I quit, I decided this isn't going to make a big difference to me, and I still don't, even though my daughter does, that's surprising to me. It's a cultural thing.

BG: Did you go to any of the sporting events or any of the extracurricular things?

GRJ: The only thing I can remember at Guy B. Phillips is they had a 9th grade dance for those leaving and going on to the High School, and I went to that, and that is the only thing I can remember doing other than going to school. I never remember doing anything extra.

BG: Was there a reason for that?

GRJ: Well I think one of the reasons was, if were to stay, we all had to agree to because we were sharing a taxi back and forth and I could not afford to pay for a taxi myself, we were splitting the fare three ways. I couldn't just arbitrarily decide well I need to stay after school to do such and such. Plus they were not very encouraging, it seems to me, they didn't want you to feel part of the, that this was your school, it was their school and you were just going to class. Which brings me to Chapel Hill High School, because by the time I got to Chapel Hill High School, their theory was, their line was we are merging Chapel Hill High School and we are merging Lincoln High School.

BG: So when you went to Chapel Hill High it was a new Chapel Hill High School and it was the first year, what year was that?

GRJ: Well, I don't think we were the first year, let's see my sister, I would have been in 9th grade, no 10th grade, well it could have been the first year.

BG: So that would have been 67, 68?

GRJ: '68.

BG: So I interrupted you, go ahead.

GRJ: Their theory was, or the B.S. they fed us was that they were going to merge the two schools. Well in my mind, when you merge two things you bring something from both and put them together. Well they forgot to do that. They brought the mascot, the colors, everything from Chapel Hill High School, nothing from Lincoln.

BG: School song?

GRJ: I don't remember the School song, but

BG: Trophies?

GRJ: I don't remember, I know they didn't bring the trophies from Lincoln because I had been through Lincoln and the trophies were still there.

BG: So you didn't view it as a merger?

GRJ: It was not a merger. It was, I don't know, it was a mess.

BG: Please explain how it was mess.

GRJ: Well, they had, they did have a few black teachers. They had Miss Clemens, who was the typing teacher, they had Miss Edwards, I think, who was the counselor, I think she was Edwards, and Miss Marshall was the principal, she was white, and was probably the principal at Chapel Hill High School. But we had a bus, so we caught the bus, we no longer had to take the taxi, and the driver of our bus was one of us, a student, and a black student, which they no longer do, they hire someone to do it, but then they hired, it was a part time job for a student.

BG: Do you remember the bus driver's name?

GRJ: I believe it was Jessie Chavis. So we now at least could catch the bus and go to school. I don't remember, I can't separate the years 10th, 11th, 12th, I remember distinctly some things from the 12th grade, but I do remember that when I got to the 11th grade, I remember this, I ran for a class office, I don't know if it was Secretary or what, and I don't remember if it was a school-wide office or just a classroom office, I can't make that distinction. Whatever it was, I won the election and the principal said to me, we're not going to make you the winner, we're going to make Seddle Wobbelds the winner. How she explained it to me, I do not remember, but I distinctly remember, whatever office it was, I didn't get it, I won it but I did not get it. Um, I also remember, this I think is humorous, I must have been in the 11th grade, there were no black cheerleaders, and we thought there were ought to be some black cheerleaders, there were lots of black guys out playing sports, so several of us decided to go out, to go

and try out for the job. Um, of course, I'm not very coordinated, I don't dance, well, I don't have much rhythm, I am black, but I thought "oh well, I'll go out and add to the number so they'll have to pick three of us." And they picked one girl who was an excellent cheerleader, very coordinated, but she didn't have good grades, so she couldn't be a cheerleader and they picked, for crazy some reason, they picked me to be a cheerleader. I must have been the worst cheerleader they ever had. But I didn't care [laughs] because my job was to be a black body out there, that's what I wanted to do. I think Paulette Minors was a cheerleader and Yolanda Hargroves was a cheerleader, so there was three of us probably on a squad of about 15. So at least we could do that, we could try to, I think we made a more concerted effort to be a part of the school, as opposed to Guy B. Phillips where we stayed separate. It may be that at Guy B. Phillips as a jr. high school you don't think much about it, you know, you're just going to school. But when you go to High School you've got these friends and peer groups and you really want to be a part, you know as a teenager you really want to be a part of the culture. That's why we strove to become a part of the school. And I remember the uprising, or the riot or whatever, I remember that we would meet occasionally as a group, I mean we, the black students, we socialized together, so if somebody had a party at their house we all went to the party at their house. WE were not, outside of school, very integrated yet. In 12th grade, we were much more integrated, if we had a party at the church downtown, the black people would go and there would be white people, so we were much more integrated then, but in the 11th grade we were not yet at that point. And we would get together and we would complain about the fact that the two schools, Lincoln and Chapel Hill High, had merged and there was nothing from Lincoln. So a group of us talked to the principal, it seems like to me we even talked to the school board people at one point, but anyway one morning we went to the principal as a group, probably 5 or 6 of us, to say "this is not right. You said you were going to merge the two schools and you did not. WE would like to see some changes." So we went in to talk to the principal Miss Marshall.

BG: Miss Marshbanks?

GRJ: Marshbanks, that was her name. Whatever she said really pissed us off. I remember palpable anger, you know you feel that this is you know people are pissed, they're not just this is not right and I'm going to say it's not right, they were angry and they were angry. And when we left the principal's office apparently a gathering, 5 or 6 of went into the principals office, and a group was waiting outside to hear the verdict, what she planned to do or whatever, and she didn't plan to do anything and we all got angry. And it was almost like a wildfire. There was a rush through the school of this group of angry young black people. And they turned over chairs, threw books around, I don't know if there any windows broken, but it was like, we were all so angry. I of course, I am not I have never been much of a violent person, and I hid in the bathroom, can you believe that, I think that's embarrassing. Now for all of my talk in the 60s, and I can talk a good game [laughs] I can talk a good game, but for all my radical talk, oh I think we should be black panthers and we should march with our guns and wear our leather jackets and stuff, when the shit hit the fan I was not into the violence I was in the bathroom hiding, afraid. And that's, I probably should hang my head in shame, but that's just the way I am.

[ES begins transcription here]

BG: So you were one of the people who went to the principal. Were you the leader of that group?

GRJ: I'm not sure that we had a specific - to my knowledge there was no designated leader. But I talk well. And I talked well even in high school. And I'm sure I spoke - I'm sure there were some other people who said some things as well, but I know I talked to her.

BG: Was this in your junior or your senior year?

GRJ: I think this must have been my junior year.

BG: So in '69.

GRJ: mmhmm.

BG: Do you remember specifically the things that you asked for, or was it just sort of general discussion?

GRJ: No, I think there were very specific things that we asked for. We asked for, like, maybe a change in the school color, a change in the mascot - there was, it was those kinds of things. We were very specific about the things that we wanted changed.

BG: What about academic changes?

GRJ: I don't remember asking for any academic changes other than maybe we did ask for some more black teachers, but I don't remember anything -

BG: Did you have any black culture or black history --

GRJ: Oh you know - no, we did not. And that was one of the things that we wanted. A black history class or some sort of black cultural class. But they didn't have any white cultural class either, not that they needed it because that was pervasive. And as a result of that I remember being suspended from school for two or three days. I remember the school closed for two or three days. I also remember - now here we are, this high school is way down, at that point it was way outside of the black community, it was pretty far from where most of the white people lived as

well, it was out in the country. But I remember after that incident, there were car loads of white people, white boys who had gone home and gotten their shotguns and had come back to the school and they were riding around in the parking lot with their shotguns. So we could have had, I mean, it could have potentially killed some people, but – it didn't – but that is, that, I distinctly remember that.

BG: So this was, it sounds like, almost a spontaneous event, the riot.

GRJ: It was. It wasn't anything – we didn't PLAN to riot. We planned to go and make certain demands on the principal, to say, "we want these things and we want you take our considerations for real." But we hadn't planned a riot.

BG: How long did the riot last?

GRJ: Probably 30 minutes.

BG: Did you have any of the black teachers who were there come talk to you?

GRJ: I don't remember anybody coming to talk to us.

BG: From the little bit I've gathered so far, apparently, some of the black students locked themselves in an area and then marched off campus. Do you remember any of that?

GRJ: I don't remember any of that.

BG: (laughs)

GRJ: (laughs)

BG: You were really a [beatnik?] weren't you. (laughs)

GRJ: (laughs)

BG: That was a good [tellsnicker?].

GRJ: Yeah, I'm afraid that's all I am. Even my husband says I talk a good game now and I'm not (laughs) I don't back it up always very well. I don't remember that.

BG: So you got suspended, yet you spent your time in the bathroom.

GRJ: Yeah, but I was in the principal's office a lot, that's why they suspended me.

BG: They suspended everyone who went to the principal's office asking for changes?

GRJ: Yeah. Now they didn't suspend ALL the black students, but I'm pretty sure those of us who were in the principal's office –

BG: So the assumption was that you initiated the riots.

GRJ: Right, right.

BG: Was there any proof that you had?

GRJ: No. And the people who initiated the riot was Marshbanks. Because here you have a group of angry young people, asking for something rather reasonable, and it wasn't like we had not requested some of these things before. And instead of her responding positively, she just, I don't know – I can't remember what she said, but it was in effect, "get out." I'm sure that's – at least, that's the feeling that we got. It was like, "we don't care what you want, just get out."

BG: So you left her office and the word spread. Did the group who went to see her come and and say, "We've got to do something about this," or was it sort of a mass reaction to –

GRJ: I think it was just a – reaction. Just, WOOSH. And everybody just went running.

BG: Can you remember any more about it?

GRJ: I remember going home and my father being very upset saying that I was going to be arrested and put in jail, and I remember the state police driving up and down our street.

BG: Were there police at the school at the time? State troupers, any –

GRJ: There were some after the fact. But this was nothing planned, so they didn't have any foreknowledge so they weren't there on the spot. But they were there after the fact.

BG: Was this reported in the newspapers?

GRJ: I'm sure it was.

BG: You don't recall specifically whether it got big press –

GRJ: hmm-mm

BG: – or if people came to interview you for the paper

GRJ: nah, nobody interviewed me from the newspaper.

BG: Did any of the black students get interviewed from the newspaper that you know of?

GRJ: Not that I know of. This – we went – there was some sort of, TV show, afterwards. Because I remember watching myself on TV. But, I can't remember. I can't remember. I don't know what that was about. And I think – you know, in a lot of ways it's bad to get old? Because you – cut through so much of the bullshit so much quicker. And as a young person I felt like I could make a difference, I can make people understand that racism is a terrible thing. So it's, it's, I should go out and when people ask me to express myself, I should say, these things, but when you get to be, older, you realize that you're not gonna make anybody change and it doesn't matter what you say, and so you just don't worry about it anymore (laughs).

BG: Um, that's a really interesting comment, about, racism is a terrible thing. And, certainly if you're in the minority it's a terrible thing.

GRJ: Oh no.

BG: But let me turn the table a little bit and ask you, what you were taught in your family and when you were going to Northside Elementary. Were you taught, or was it implicit in any way to have disliked the white community?

GRJ: No. We weren't – specifically, taught to, dislike, anybody. As little children, the lady that lived next door to us worked for a white family with children, and she would bring those white children home occasionally and they would come out in the yard and we would all play together so we weren't taught, you should, be, standoffish and you should not like white people. My parents taught us that we should like ourselves. That was one thing that they strongly taught us, that we are – that we should love ourselves, and that, and it's not like they said it out loud. And they never said out loud, "we should love being black." They never said that out loud that I can remember. But my father – always told us, now one of the things he told us, he told us that we should never be followers. "If you can't run it, get out." He told us that from day one. If you cannot run this show, get out. And he'll tell you that himself. That he preached. But, he – we were also, I mean, and he was very active in the demonstrations. Every Sunday, he would go downtown and demonstrate. And we would often ask, requested, "Daddy let us go with you," "no, no. It could be bad, it could be violent, you cannot go, you have to stay at home." But he went religiously every Sunday. And then when they integrated the theater, you know in Chapel Hill, when I was a little girl we had to go to Durham to the theater because they had a balcony. Chapel Hill theaters didn't have a balcony so we couldn't go there. In fact my neighbor when I was 13 took us to Durham on Christmas Eve to see the Sound of Music. But. But after they integrated the movies, that my father had marched and marched and marched to get integrated, we didn't have enough money to go to the doggone movies. (laughs)

BG: So that taxi cab ride that --

GRJ: -- well [they took it?]

BG: -- every day was a real hardship --

GRJ: -- yeah

BG: -- but your parents felt strongly enough that you were gonna be -- integrating --

GRJ: -- mmhmm, yeah --

BG: -- that they wanted that.

GRJ: Yeah.

BG: What did your mom and dad do?

GRJ: My mother was a maid, and she worked – which is typical of black people in Chapel Hill at that time. You either worked for the University, or you worked for the white people that worked for the University. She worked for a doctor – well, maybe he was a Ph.D. doctor. Mr. [Spearna?]. For years when I was a child. And then she worked for a law professor for a while, for a long time. So she worked FOR white people. Frequently, I remember this, she gave her clothes. The clothes that they had outgrown or didn't want anymore, and we wore those clothes to school. If you look in the yearbook, one year I took a picture in, no, one year my sister took a picture in a blue and – no, red and blue jumper that the white people had given us. The next year, I took my picture in the same jumper. So we – and my father was a plasterer. He worked frequently out of town, because there wasn't a whole lot of construction work always here in town. He worked in Durham a lot, he worked in Washington for many years and he'd come home on the weekends.

BG: Washington D.C. or --

GRJ: Uh huh, Washington D.C. – I remember, you know, there were a couple of things that I remember that came out, came about as a result of the riot. They did change the school colors, because if I remember correctly the school colors at Lincoln were gold and black. The school colors at Chapel Hill, at the old Chapel Hill high school were orange and black, so they did make them gold and black. They may even have changed the, no, they didn't change the mascot. Cause I think Lincoln's mascot was the tiger. But at least that one thing changed, the other thing that changed is that we had what we called in high school, "the late bus," so that if you had something to do after school, you could catch the late bus and get home. So the late bus actually brought you to your door as opposed to bringing you to the bus stop. And there weren't a whole lot of people who – everybody could catch the late bus, but everybody didn't stay after school for stuff. The other thing, we had a week of cultural activities. And I'm trying to think what they called it. But it was like a week where, it was almost the students who did the organization. We would have different classes of cultural things. We had – some university students who were members of some sort of black organization come and talk – and you could plan your schedule, they'd print up the little bulletin and you could pick out the different cultural things that you wanted to do. And I thought that was just great, because you got exposed to – lots of things that were just of interest, not necessarily, I mean it may not have been terribly educational, it wasn't science and math, but, if you wanted to find out about a different religion, those religions, you could say, "well I want to find out about, the Hari Krishnas. They would have them come and give a little talk, and you know they talked like maybe Monday, Wednesday, and Friday at ten o'clock or two o'clock or something like

that. So you could pick out the different things that you wanted to do. And I thought that was great. I don't know if they still do that, but that was the one thing, that I thought benefited everybody. I think the riot probably benefited everybody too.

BG: How did they, uh, make these changes. What, uh, did they summarily say, "okay, we're gonna make these changes," or did they have a committee set up or did they have a black representation --

GRJ: I don't remember what they did or how they did it. And I think it came through the school board as opposed to the principal.

BG: Did you meet with the School Board?

GRJ: I think we did meet with the school board? I think we did talk to the people at the school board.

BG: Was that before or after the riot.

GRJ: I don't know that.

BG: I assume that you weren't there for the few days after the riot --

GRJ: No--

BG: -- because you were suspended.

GRJ: -- yeah.

BG: For what, 3 days, did you say?

GRJ: Yeah, I think that's right.

[End side A. Side B begins.]

GRJ: I was just remembering, when I graduated from high school, I was so angry and so disgusted that I told my mother, if she wanted that diploma, she would have to go get it. I refused to march. It was just -- I was through with them. And I promised myself that I would never go back to that school. And I have gone back, once. I went with my father to pick up my niece. And that's it. I did go back to the 25th class reunion ONLY because Charity Harteson was going to be there and I wanted to see her. That's the ONLY reason I went.

BG: Is this something that's common in the African-American community, is it, they, they were not going up to pick up their diploma --

GRJ: I think so.

BG: -- and they don't go back to the reunions --

GRJ: I think so. And I don't think, I'll bet money: If you talk with the people who graduated even from the college level, from white universities, they do not feel a part of the schools. I graduated from Florida State, and, I did not march, I was, I graduated in nursing school, I did go through the pinning ceremony, only because my parents came from North Carolina to Tallahassee to see me get pinned as a nurse. So I did do that. I never give any money to the school. In fact, my husband went to Johnson C. Smith University as well as Fran, my sister. We sit down at the end of the year and we send money to Johnson C. Smith and I send, when he says, "I'm gonna send money to my school," I send my money to Smith. Because I don't feel, I just -- you go and you get what you can get from them, and you leave them because they don't want you there anyway. And I think that's what the people at Chapel Hill High School felt. They didn't want us as black students there. And they let you know. They may not say -- they may not walk up to you and say to your face, "we don't want you here," but their attitude is, we don't want you here.

BG: How, how did you, um, come up with that feeling. Was that from students? Or from teachers? Or both?

GRJ: I think it's from both. There are, there were some, um, students, who were very nice. And who liked, me as an individual. And you know, you might want to ask, Carl [Ketchuga?]. And I'm sure he's still around here.

BG: [indistinguishable]

GRJ: Maybe. Uh huh. He was in my English class. K-A-R-G-E-R-I-S. And he and I were good friends.

BG: Is he white or black?

GRJ: He's white. And he's, he's a [indistinguishable] white. Oh yeah, that might be an interesting perspective.

BG: Oh I think it's necessary.

GRJ: He used to (laughs), I used to have this car, he lives in Pittsboro, he's in construction business or was, the last time I talked with him. He's another person that sort of keeps up with -- I haven't talked with him in a while. But he -- he and I got along as individuals, as friends. But the administration? Did not -- I don't want to say -- it was more than just ignoring you. You could survive if somebody ignores you. But they tried to make it difficult for you. They did not meet out equal punishment. When two students were doing the same thing, if you were white, your punishment was a lot less than if you were black? So it was that kind of, they discouraged people from -- going to college, they discouraged the black students from going to college. Because they encouraged you as a black student to do work study. Work study trains you to graduate from high school and get a job. It doesn't train you to graduate from high school and go to college. So they discouraged the black students from going to college, from pursuing

academics, and it didn't really matter if you were smart or not, that was irrelevant. They didn't want you to – here we go, I didn't even spell his name right.

BG: What were your grades like?

GRJ: I got pretty good grades. I was a good student. I failed French in Jr. High school, but um, I was a pretty good student. My sister was not a good student, which I find, interesting. Fran was a terrible student in high school, went to college and made the dean's list. Now how do you account for that. She was discouraged, that's how. She was – now that's interesting. She was discouraged. As a student. She was not encouraged to be, academic. And I remember, the counselor told Fran, now this was a black woman, the counselor, told Fran that she shouldn't go to college.

BG: She's got a Ph.D. now?

GRJ: She sure does, as does my younger sister. I'm the only dummy in the family. I only have a BS degree.

BG: Did you start at Florida State, or did you go somewhere else first?

GRJ: I started at Carolina. I spent a year at the University of North Carolina.

BG: You got accepted there.

GRJ: Yeah.

BG: So your grades must have been good enough.

GRJ: Uh huh. My grades were good, I was a smart girl. You know what I did one summer? (laughs) I went to – I applied – well you know we went to Upward Bound, um, because we were poor enough to go, and, you, got a little stipend and you stayed on the campus and you took college classes, so they were preparing you to go to college. So we went to Upward Bound. One summer, somebody told me to apply to something called a [Telluride?]. And I went to Ithaca for the summer as a Telluride Student. Which was fun, and I got accepted to Ithaca. But --

BG: Ithaca College?

GRJ: No. No, what is that, what else is in Ithaca?

BG: Cornell.

GRJ: Yeah, I got accepted at Cornell, but I didn't have enough money to go, I sure did. Because of the Telluride. We were at the, it was held on the campus at Cornell. And they had a Telluride House. And so there was three, three young black girls.

BG: So you spent your first year at Carolina and then transferred.

GRJ: Mmmhmm.

BG: Why did you transfer?

GRJ: I got married. I married a man who was, I was a, stupid – not stupid, young. I was a young freshman. And I met this man who was a senior at that time, he was a senior at Carolina. And he wanted to go to law school. And we got married my freshman year. And he transferred to Florida State University Law School. And if I'm not mistaken, can you see how these things keep repeating themselves. Florida A&M and Florida State are both in Tallahassee. Florida A&M had a law school. They took the law school from Florida A&M and moved it to Florida State, to the white school. And that was the first year they had moved it to the white school. And they had to have some black representation. So they (big laugh) – you see how these things keep repeating themselves? It's almost like Chapel Hill High School and Lincoln! All over again!

BG: So again it was a combination, it was a merger, but the merger was mostly white.

GRJ: Mmmhmm. Actually it was just a taking. It wasn't a merger. Just like, this situation wasn't a merger, it was just a taking.

BG: So then you started school at Florida State?

GRJ: Right. I started school, after I had been there for a year. Because I had a baby, I was nineteen when my child was born. I had a baby, and I was out of school for about a year, and then I went back to school.

BG: Well I want to go back to something you said about the teachers at Chapel Hill High School. And that is, that it was not just that you were ignored, and implicit in that is that you WERE ignored.

GRJ: Yes. We were ignored. But, worse than being ignored is the attitude that you are stupid and you don't deserve my input. You don't deserve my energy or my time. And even though, on the one hand, you might have a black student here who is studying and trying to learn, and you have some white students over here who are just playing around and don't care about learning, my emphasis must be on these white students. I think part of the problem, too, with Chapel Hill is economic. There is a huge disparity between the amount of money that these students in this classroom have, when I was in school, I was in school with Ruth Julian and Hugh Taylor, whose father was the dean of the Med School – these people had money I'll never have in this lifetime. They had – so – they had experiences that I would never even think about. I remember Hugh Taylor was supposed to go to French, down to French teacher. He went to France every summer! So when we'd go to class to learn to speak French, he's telling, he's teaching her! And those of us who can, who don't speak English, the way white people spoke English, well you KNOW you don't expect black people to speak FRENCH. You're just in here wasting my time. So they – just – they tried to prove to YOU that you were, dumb, and you were, not good, enough. And I think that sparked a

lot of anger with us. Because some of us, I mean I wasn't all that smart, but I did work hard and I enjoyed studying. But some people in the class were quite smart. But --

BG: Some blacks?

GRJ: Mmmhmm. But it's like they tell you, oh you can't, you know, you can't do this, because you're black. And I think that's what sort of ticks me off.

BG: Did they make eye contact with you? The teachers? The other students?

GRJ: Some of them. There were some students who, would make eye contact and were across the hall, there were some students who were, just OVERTLY racist. You know.

BG: All three years that you were there.

GRJ: Yeah.

BG: And, the teachers, um, did the teachers help you to get into UNC? Who, who was the one who helped you get into UNC?

GRJ: It was more through Upward Bound. It was more through the Upper Bound program saying to me, well, you took these classes at Carolina, just, apply and go. They'll give you scholarship money, we know they've got money, so you can just apply to college. And they, and they said, you should not apply to just one school, apply to several schools.

BG: Who was "they" that were saying this. Upward Bound?

GRJ: Mmmhmm.

BG: So, did you get ANY help from counselors or --

GRJ: NO.

BG: -- or teachers at Chapel Hill High?

GRJ: No, no. huh uh.

BG: Did ANY of the black students get help?

GRJ: Not to MY knowledge, and if you were,

BG: Did the WHITE students get -- excuse me, did the WHITE students get help?

GRJ: I don't know. But I know as a student, as a young person, my parents always said, "You are going to college." It's not like, "you have a choice, if you want to go, you can go to coll--," no. "You are leaving here and you going to somebody's school. So we didn't have any choice about NOT going to college, that was the law. You were going to school, there were certain things that we, had to do. That was one of them. So, what I did, when I got to high school, I looked around in the class and I said, well, this person looks kind of smart, and that person seems to be kind of smart, whatever they take I'm gonna take. So that, because I know they think they're going to college, I know I GOT to go, or I got to fight my parents, so, that's how I decided to plan my schedule. To pick out the classes that I wanted to take. I just said well, some of these white people in here are smart and they, they taking this kind of English and that kind of math and this kind of History, so I'm gonna take that too, because I know that that way, when I get ready to go I will be academically ready, for all sorts of credits that I need. But I think Upward Bound was probably the major influence on how, the actual mechanics of applying, getting an application, taking the SAT, and getting to the point of going to school.

BG: Who started Upward Bound?

GRJ: It was a federal program. Federal government program.

BG: Did they come into the schools? Advertise?

GRJ: (pause) I think so. I don't know. I can't remember how I found out. I know my sister went to Upward Bound. Fran did. Subsequently I did. But I don't know how or why or who said, "go to Upward Bound." But they took a lot of students. And we were all poor. And see that's one of the things that also, united us as black students. We were all poor. I mean, today, you have black people, black high school students who have as much money as white high school students. Because their parents are University professors. When I was growing up, there was no such thing. Chapel Hill NEVER had a middle class of black people. Now Durham, interestingly, had a black middle class. They had black doctors, they had black dentists, they had black university professors, so they had a black middle class, they had the insurance company, they had a bank. But Chapel Hill, you were poor. If you were black in this town, you were guaranteed to be poor. So there was no, there was no black middle class. So all the black students were poor. But we, a bunch of us went to Upward Bound.

BG: How long did Upward Bound last?

GRJ: It was summer.

BG: The whole summer? Eight weeks.

GRJ: Yeah. About eight weeks. Mmmhmm.

BG: And where were the places you went?

GRJ: We went, well, we stayed on the campus. We stayed in a dorm. So it was like, as if you were in college. We took college classes, we got college credit for those classes, and, we went, I mean, they would have cultural things.

You could go to a play, they would load you up in a bus and take you to a play. And they'd make you, in addition to the college classes, they'd have you read certain things and meet in a group, that sort of thing. We had parties.

BG: And how many students from Chapel Hill were there?

GRJ: Well I'd say probably 30, 40.

BG: Out of a class of . . .

GRJ: Oh, gosh, I don't remember. I'm not good with numbers. Bunch of people from Hillsboro went. Bunch of people from Pittsboro went. My cousin was in Pittsboro, she went.

BG: And did that start after your uh, tenth grade or eleventh grade, or both?

GRJ: Tenth and eleventh grade. No – eleventh grade I think is when I went to the Telluride thing in Ithaca. And, the summer of my twelfth grade year, I may have went to Upward Bound, yeah. I did go to Upward Bound.

BG: So you went two years, tenth grade and twelfth grade.

GRJ: Mmmhmm.

BG: And how many classes would you take there?

GRJ: We took two, two a summer. Uh-huh.

BG: For the whole summer, the whole eight weeks.

GRJ: Uh-huh. Two college classes. Cause I had some credits when I went to college. That was nice.

BG: I bet it was (laughs).

BG: What about Telluride, what was, can you, go back over Telluride?

GRJ: Telluride, apparently, was some sort of privately funded group, and I think it's a nationwide group because they have the Telluride in Colorado, and, I don't know what their purpose is, but I know that they paid for me to travel to Ithaca, and I stayed that summer in a Telluride House. We didn't stay in a dorm. And there were three black girls, including myself, and there were, the rest, everybody else was white, and they were, men and women. Girls and boys, we were girls and boys.

BG: What about Upward Bound, was Upward Bound um, mixed black and white or was it all black?

GRJ: Mhm, it was all black. And I don't know why that was. But maybe – I don't know. Back in the '60's they didn't mind things not being integrated. Now it's, you know, if things are all black it's bad, you know they don't – the government no longer allows, no longer wants to fund black things, they want, you know, they want to integrate it, and they want it mixed sexually, too. They don't want to fund something for boys and not fund it for girls.

BJ: Do you think without Upward Bound you'd have still gone to college?

GRJ: Oh yeah. I may not have gone to Carolina, but I was going to college. My mother, you, you were going to college. She – that was not an option, not to go. That was not an option.

BG: What about the, um, the other students that went to Upward Bound. Do you think that most of them went on to college?

GRJ: Mmmhmm, many of them went on to college. There's a guy at Central who's an historian, because I'm reading this book by John Hope Franklin called *Runaway Slave*, and he contributed to the book. He was in Upward Bound. And don't ask me his name because I don't remember. Freddy – Freddy was his first name. If you ask Fran, she'll know his last – or ask Charlene, she'll know his last name. But he, he contributed to that book, so, and he went to Upward Bound. Yeah, many of those students went on to college. But I guess Upward Bound's purpose was to show you what life was like on a college campus, and to show you that you could compete in the classroom. Because you took these classes and if you needed help they had college students they had hired who could help you with your homework, or that kind of stuff. So they wanted you to go to college.

BG: Did you see a difference in the professors who were, teaching the classes at Upward Bound versus the teachers who were at Chapel Hill High School --

GRJ: Well --

BG: -- how they responded to you?

GRJ: The teachers at Carolina at the college level who -- taught a class of 25 or something, they were distant from everybody. It seemed like to me that they were separate sort of standoffish to everybody from the class. And they didn't care if you were green or blue, they didn't appear to be very warm and friendly. The colored, the Upward Bound people knew you and they said to you, you have the potential to do this work and we expect you to do this work.

BG: So they really encouraged you,

GRJ: Oh yeah. And, and -- they didn't say you can't do it or you, don't know how to do it, they said you can do it and, this is how to do it. I remember I took a speed-reading class when I was at Upward Bound, which taught you to read faster and comprehend better. Because they said, oh that will help you with your SAT scores. So. They said to you, you can do this. And you must do this.

BG: And did you get any of that from the Chapel Hill High School teachers?

GRJ: No. Even the teachers that weren't overtly racist did not say to you, you must live up to your potential. They said, here is the material. You can get it, you can take it and learn it, or you don't have to take it and learn it, but, it

doesn't, it's like they didn't really care. And I don't know if the white students had that feeling, but I certainly had that feeling. We had a lady at Chapel Hill High School who was a history teacher and I always liked history. And I didn't think she was, she was not overtly racist. She was a hard taskmaster, but it was like, "here it is, you can have access to this information. But I don't particularly care if you, if you have, if you want it it's there, if you don't want it, I don't care."

BG: What about the black teachers at the high school.

GRJ: Well the only black teachers that I remember specifically, I remember I took typing from Miss Clemmons, she was a black lady. And they didn't, um, computers were, becoming important, so we did some sort of computer something. But, she expected you to get your work, and she, you know racism is a funny thing. It affects the minority directly, but, even those of us who are black, we think white people are better than we are. So when the white people do something, she didn't, come down on them, like she would come down on us. So we are, affected as badly on one end, and white people benefit from racism, they all, I mean not just, the obvious things, but--

BG: So black teachers, in a way --

GRJ: Yeah --

BG: -- were --

GRJ: -- feeding into the racist attitude.

BG: mmmhmm

GRJ: And they were reflecting those attitudes back to us.

BG: Were there any teachers who said to you, "Gloria, you can do it. Let me help you."

GRJ: (pause) No. There was a teacher, when I went to nursing school there was a lady, a white woman, who said to me, "You can do it, I will help you, and not only you can do it, you must do it." And it's not like, she, it wasn't from a racial point of view, you must do it to prove the, accelerate the race or whatever, you must do it because you have the ability to do it and you cannot shortchange yourself. That was her attitude. I was inducted into the honors society in nursing school and I went to her and I said, "Look. I don't want to get involved in this bullshit, I don't need this," and she said to me, "this is not something that you can turn down. This is something that will go on your resume and will be with you for the rest of your life. Now you get your butt in there, and do whatever you have to do to get inducted into the honors society." And so I did, but I mean, she was the kind of person that said, to me as an individual. But, I didn't have that sort of --

BG: -- not as an African American.

GRJ: No. Just as a person. But I didn't have that sort of, I didn't have that kind of relationship with ANYbody in high school. Not a teacher, not anybody. (pause) Hmmm-mm. And I was, I don't know if, I mean, I remember in high school being so angry ALL the time. That was the most angry I think I have ever been in my life, I mean, you know sometimes you get angry, really angry, but it passes quickly. Where you get in a, traffic jam or something, and somebody toots their horn and you're ANGRY. But in two minutes you've forgotten about it. But I was angry the entire time I was in high school. I was angry with the system because, the system allowed these people to treat us poorly. My momma and daddy paid as much tax money from their salary as everybody else did. And their children should have been treated, as good as everybody else's children. I was angry about that. I was angry at the individual people. I was angry at the black students. I was so mad with them I didn't know what to do.

BG: Why were you angry at the black students?

GRJ: The boys, would, they always wanted to date the white girls. The black girls, they wanted to have sex with. So they treated you a different way than they would treat a white girl. And I was mad, oh gosh, I was mad about that. I mean I was just, angry at the whole thing. Now see, that's, that's not, I don't know, I don't know, I guess because it was newly integrated and, as black people we hadn't socialized very much with white people, but [indistinguishable]. I think, in this society, when black people marry whites, they think they're marrying up. And it doesn't matter, who the white person is, so long as it's a white person. Because if you think about OJ, he married that white woman who was just trashy. Now here he is, a man who had at least gone to college, I don't know if he graduated, a professional athlete making, good money, traveled extensively, lots of experiences, and he picks up somebody who's, ah, kind of walking the streets, and marries her and, puts her up on a pedestal like he's done something good and wonderful, when he's brought himself down. But that's, I think that's the way a lot of people view it.

BG: Do you think that the, white, female was, the, role model of what beauty was?

GRJ: Yes. Very definitely. I mean, when I went to high school, we ALL had long straight hair. We would, black women went to great pains, to straighten that hair. (laughs) I was looking in the scrapbook at home today, and I had long, straight hair, and I went to the beauty parlor and had my hair straightened, and I went to great lengths to keep it, straight. Because that was the, that was thing. When I was in high school, I got *Seventeen* magazine, and Twiggy, was the model of the (laughs) --

BG: And those were all white magazines.

GRJ: Mmmhmm.

BG: How about now? Are there black magazines for, beauty?

GRJ: Oh yeah, yeah. We got *Essence*. Well *Ebony* was there, but *Ebony* is not, strictly a beauty magazine. But *Essence* is like, the black beauty magazine. And that's one of the things that I like about living now. When you walk into the, airport, you see black people with all kinds of hair. Some of them have hair like mine, some of them have straight hair, some of them have those dread locks, some of them got it planted, weaved, ALL kinds of hair, and I just think that's, wonderful, that you can express yourself, in the way that YOU feel most comfortable, and not have it be a statement of, your politics. See the afro was a political statement. It did not say, "I'm wearing my hair in an afro because I think it's beautiful," no, it was a statement, "I'm wearing my hair in an afro because I'm black and I'm proud." It was a political statement, not just, what, the best look on you, cause everybody doesn't look good in an afro. But I guess we, drifted from the subject (laughs).

BG: This is all very interesting, but, ah. I wanted to ask you about the anger, whether the anger was a common emotion among the African American students in Chapel Hill High School.

GRJ: I think, I would have to say yes. I think people were angry, about the situation. And I think, I mean, it seems like I must be blocking and not remembering, things, because there must have been something rather specific that they did, to, to make us all so angry, but yes. We were very angry. And I think maybe the one thing that, that, caused the anger to start and to sort of seethe, was the fact that the school system said, "we are merging these two schools," when in fact they, shut down Lincoln and sent the Lincoln students to Chapel Hill high school. They built that, they built that school for white students. And they closed Lincoln. And they just sent the black students to Chapel Hill high school, now they, and then they, what they should have done, they should have done that and not said anything. You know where you stand. But to say to me, "we are merging these two organizations," why is, it's a lie, they just told us a lie, and I think that's, that, made us angry, and then, as you go to the school every day, and you see that lie perpetrated, then you've become a little more angry, and a little more angry, and then you begin to talk about it, and then it becomes like a fireball. (pause)

BG: Is there, is there anything else you can think of that, you want to share, any questions I haven't asked you that you have the desire to express yourself about?

GRJ: Hmm. (pause) I don't, I would like to (pause). One thing. My niece went to, Chapel Hill High School, and she graduated from there and she was as unhappy about going to school at Chapel Hill High School seemingly as I was. And that's 30 years later. She's, this is her second year at [indistinguishable].

BG: So she graduated two years ago.

GRJ: Mmmhmm.

BG: So what, are you saying to me, I don't have the words for --

GRJ: -- that nothing has changed.

BG: It hasn't changed.

GRJ: I don't think so. (pause) And that, is, that is tragic. That is, that is tragic that nothing has changed. (pause) Because we ought to be able to change. This is a wonderful country. We ought to be able to get over this -- (pause) I mean, we just ought to be able to get PAST racism, we ought to be able to get past this color. We ought to be able to say, that we embrace everybody. And we do so, I mean I know you can't, I know we won't every be able to say we do it equally, because I don't think, I don't necessarily think everybody is the same, cause you can't treat everybody the same. I think there are individual differences, but we ought to be able to say, we no longer base it on race. We base it on merit. Or, hell, base it on looks if you want to, but just don't base it, solely on, the color of somebody's skin. And the thing that, that, is really sad, and I think it's the thing that, everybody in this country, black people and white people, need to realize, by continuing racism, we deny ourselves, as a group, as a country, opportunities to get ahead. We hold back the ENTIRE nation when we perpetrate this racism. Because there are a lot of very talented, smart, brilliant, engineers, scientists, people that can do wonderful things that would help the entire country, that would help EVERYbody. But we, hold back and we refuse to allow these people to, be the best that they could be, because of the color of their skin. It's, it's, now that's, that I think it just, horrible. And it's something that we, this is, this is 2000. We ought to be able to get PAST some of this. I don't know how. I, I mean, when I was sixteen I knew everything. I could have told you how. But hell, I'm 48 today and I don't know how (laughs).

BG: Well I'm a little older, and I don't know how either (laughs), though I wish I did.

GRJ: But I think that is, I think that is the real tragedy of America. And I think it has been for, however long, 200 years, however long. Mmmhmm.

BG: Shall we end it here?

[End of tape]