

GLORIA MASSEY TORAN

Interview 187a

November 25, 2009, at The History Center, Diboll, Texas

Jonathan Gerland, Interviewer

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ABSTRACT: In this interview with Jonathan Gerland, Gloria Massey Toran, daughter of long-time Diboll educator Willie Massey, reminisces about her life and how race relations and education have changed since the 1930's. Mrs. Toran grew up in Groveton and Nigton, where she attended the segregated African American schools. She always focused on education, especially after moving in with her father, Willie Massey and her stepmother Louise Massey. She grew up insulated from many of the conflicts of the day and graduated from Prairie View A&M with a degree in education. Mrs. Toran taught for two years in Lufkin and then moved to Anahuac, where she married and had her first child while teaching music in the African American school. She moved back to Lufkin, where she taught at Garrett Elementary and Dunbar until forced integration in 1970. In 1971, Mrs. Toran became a counselor at Lufkin High School. She reminisces about her interactions with whites, her views on segregation and how they changed, and the issues that arose during integration of the schools.

Jonathan Gerland (hereafter JG): My name is Jonathan Gerland and I'm with Mrs. Gloria Toran and we are at the History Center today. Today's date is November 25, 2009 and we are going to do an oral history interview. Mrs. Toran I thought maybe we would begin by just asking you when and where you were born.

Gloria Toran (hereafter GT): I was born Jonathan in Trinity County, more specifically Groveton. I was born on February the 4th of 1935 and technically the site would have been four miles east of the township on 94. It wasn't in the city structure it was on the land area. You know they have a lot of lands, so we were four miles toward Lufkin, I guess that would be east.

JG: Who were your parents?

GT: Actually my dad and my natural mom, birth mom separated when I was like a baby. So, I actually grew up with a grandmother, my natural mom's mother until I was about eight years old and she passed away. So at that time I went to live with my father who had remarried.

JG: And his name was?

GT: My dad's name was Willie Massey and that is what he was called. It was really William H. Massey but he spoke of his name as the way people addressed it, Willie Massey. And, he had remarried so I knew my stepmother as my mother because I never lived with my birth mother.

JG: And your stepmother's name was Louise?

GT: The mother that I grew up with was Louise Massey.

JG: What was your grandmother's name who you lived with before?

GT: Her name was Callie, gosh it's been so long ago.

JG: Was that your father's mother?

GT: No, that was my birth mother's mother.

JG: Your birth mother's mother.

GT: Her name was Callie McCloud.

JG: So your birth mother was a McCloud?

GT: She was not a McCloud she was a Rhodes. My grandmother had separated from her husband with her first three children who were McClouds. My mother was the last child so her name was different from McCloud. Her name was Rhodes.

JG: Rhodes?

GT: R-h-o-d-e-s. There are a number of Rhodes in the Groveton area.

JG: Talk a little bit about your father. I went back and re-read his interview, he was interviewed in 1986 and I think he was born he said in 1911 in Nigton, is what he said. Talk to us about your father? What was he doing when you were a small girl about the time you were born?

GT: I knew my dad before I came to live with him, but when I came to live with him he was teaching at the time in Nigton.

JG: Okay.

GT: In fact basically he and my mom were the only teachers basically I had, both at home and in the school system. My dad was my principal. After I left Groveton of course, I think it was around the fourth grade and he was my principal throughout my school experience except the last year I went to Dunbar High School. He was assistant principal then but the principal was someone else at that school. I received most of my training from my parents, that is my stepmother and my dad, because both of them were teachers. So while I was in elementary school my mom was my teacher at school and at home. Then when I got into the middle school, what we call middle school now, my dad became my math teacher. There were a few other teachers that taught social studies and maybe some science. Being from a country school you were taught with several grades, you know. There weren't enough students to say you were just in the eighth grade. You

are in the grade with eight, nine, ten, eleven and twelve. So you were learning all up the ladder continuously. So that was my experience because Nigton had a very small school.

JG: I know this was a long time ago but I would like to clarify a few things in those earlier years and even try to get you to remember the community of Nigton even. Did you go to school before you began to live with your father and stepmother?

GT: Yes I did.

JG: Okay, what school did you go to?

GT: You know all I know was a school in Groveton.

JG: In Groveton.

GT: It was an all black school then.

JG: An all black school.

GT: I don't know the name of the school and I hate to say I don't, but...I think it doesn't exist any more so I have nothing to relate to to grab the name of it but I'm sure it had a name, but, I don't know. I started to school...actually I started before...there was a community called Lacy.

JG: I've seen it on the maps.

GT: It was just this side of Groveton.

JG: L-a-c-y.

GT: L-A-C-Y, it was named after a family. Some of my family reaches over there too. But, as best I can remember I guess I went there maybe the first grade or something. We actually could go to school before the first grade. Some how or another I ended up in school before I was six years old. I'm not sure if I was five or I was four or whatever. I'm not even sure how I got there, whether I rode a bus or whatever; this was just long ago. It was just a few children. I do remember the teacher's name, her name was Mrs. Livingston that I had. I remembered her name because I had the opportunity to see her at the Groveton School when they bused us. I know that was with a bus. We were bused from the Lacy school but we were almost half way to Groveton from Lacy. We had to come back the other way to go to Lacy. I guess somebody took us I know, but anyway, we caught the bus there on the highway, which was four miles away from Groveton and rode in. I think I may have been in the second or third something like that.

JG: Second or third grade?

GT: Yes, when I got to Groveton Elementary School.

JG: Do you remember anything about the size of the school student wise? Was there a lot of students?

GT: Well in Groveton there was certainly more than in Lacy but there wasn't that many because the campus wasn't that big. I do recall the community being so close to the campus because right in front of us, the school campus, was my grandmother's sisters, they were half sisters, but they lived right in front that you could walk across the street and be at their house. And on the same side of the school zone was a mortuary. We used to think that was a place you run from. You run in there and look at a body and take off running. It was a kid thing but it was right adjacent...

JG: Were there other children that lived with you and your grandmother during those years before you moved in with your father?

GT: There was. I had a cousin who was my mother's sister's son who was older than we were.

JG: Did he go to school as well?

GT: He did, I believe he did. I know he did but I don't think he finished because he had a lot of children. I know he married pretty early after my grandmother died because he wasn't a grown man when she died, but he was old enough to maintain. So I think he went to work early and come there to a family. He passed away maybe about two years ago. I kept up with him and so forth.

JG: Any specific memories about those early school years before you moved in with your father?

GT: I have one that I never forgot.

JG: Okay. (laughter)

GT: Is that, I see some of the grown ups now that was in that same little school, is that school was easy for me, for some reason it was just a natural thing. And so, I always understood what to do and I could do it. The kids picked up a nickname for me because they thought I was the strange one. They called me Morning Glory. Now, I don't know how they got it, it was because there was a plant named morning glory and my name was Gloria so they just had to have another name for me. So, I was Morning Glory. How they came up with that I don't know. But it was because "you were smart" is the way they deemed it. How they attached that to me, but they did. Every now and then I see one of the men that was in that class. He'll say, "Do you remember we used to call you morning glory?" And I say, "Yes I do." It didn't bother me, I just wondered why.

JG: Wondered why, right. Well let's talk a little bit more now about those years in Nigton and maybe tell us a little bit of what your memories of Nigton were. This would

be early forties I guess. What '43 or so when you started going to school there, if you were born in '35?

GT: Yes, six years later would have been '41.

JG: Six years, okay.

GT: Yes it would have been 'cause I said we are already in the forties. I got to thinking about some how or another I never thought about time in the forties. As I look back I thought about even President Roosevelt. I think he existed in the forties, and I said, "You know I was born then." When I relate back to that I say, "Gosh I was actually old enough to do things" you know, in the forties.

JG: It just helps us to place things in perspective a little bit.

GT: But there was the time period as it stood, it didn't have significance to me except now when I address back. "Oh I would have known." I just knew it but I didn't put it in a time period. There are a number of things that I can remember that actually was in the forties.

JG: Well what is your earliest memory of moving in with your father and your stepmother? Just what that was like and going to school there?

GT: Okay, when I came at first, my uncle from Groveton drove me to Nigton because my grandmother had passed and said "I'm going to take you to your dad." Because I had a brother there and he took him to the mother in Houston. He said, "I'll take you to your dad because my wife and I can't afford to take care of you." So when I get there I meet my mom and dad. I didn't know her but I knew him. So I meet them but then his mother lived right down the road from him and that was my first time seeing her. Of course she addressed me as "gosh that is certainly Willies daughter, look at those long arms dragging the ground." I thought oh there is something wrong with me. (laughter)

JG: That was your first meeting with her?

GT: With her, his mother.

JG: So you remember that, huh?

GT: I remember that because all of my life I did because I thought that meant something was wrong with you. My father was very tall. He was like six three or four, and there I was a little bitty something. There weren't many very tall black people around in the area where I was. You didn't see them. It was an unusual thing to be very tall, like that tall. And so I listened to that and growing up with my kind of diverse and all, it made me think about it. My grandmother was a person that I talked to all the time. I was a very inquisitive person. I wanted to know what is this about, why is this, you know all of that. She would sit in a chair and sit there a rocking with her eyes closed – it was my

grandmother. I always...she was kind of heavy set and had kind of flabby arms you know. I would just fan the arms because I thought that was something unusual to have the big arms up there. It didn't bother her; she was an easygoing person. I'd ask her, "What are you doing with your eyes closed?" And of course she says, "I'm praying." I said, "What are you doing?" you know. She said, "That means you're talking to God." "Where is He?" You know, I'd go through the whole, "What do you talk to him about?" She said, "Well what you talk to Him about is if it's something you want, you ask him for it." I said, "So I can ask him for what I want and I can get it." She said, "Yes." I never forgot that. Back to my long arms and dragging the ground when she said that I said, "Oh that is something I can ask God about (laughter) and tell him I don't want to be long and lanky like my dad." This is the kind of rational I had as a child.

JG: Right, right.

GT: I think it's real funny because I look back and I thought...

JG: You still remember it.

GT: How did I ...in all my life I've gone back and looked at things, how you rationalize what ever it is and I said, "Boy I did some funny things."

JG: What was her name?

GT: My grandmother? Callie McCloud.

JG: That is right, Callie McCloud.

GT: She had early...and I think that is where kids learn because they are so open-minded. There is nothing there except what you impress them with. And, that was me; I was so impressed very early in learning. I knew my father was a teacher so I was supposed to learn just because he was a teacher. And older people began to call me teacher so I just thought I'm supposed...that is what I'm called to do because that is what people said I was supposed to be.

JG: Describe the school there in Nigton, the schoolhouse.

GT: Now the school as I understand it by the time I got there it had lost some of what it had started to be. But I understood Nigton to be an incorporation of black people early. And, even they had lost that. In other words it had its own post office and all the technical things a corporation would need. I don't know how or know why but they've been asking me to do some history on it. That is one of the things I said, "Lord I got to be here for a while, I got a lot of things I got to do if I'm going to work with that." I've attended a few meetings and they said they have such a rich history. Now, back to the school, the school was a little higher-level campus than even Groveton. Even at that time because we had a school cafeteria, hot lunches, which some other country schools did not

have. Who was responsible I don't know. My dad was the principal when I got there but he had taught somewhere else and came there.

JG: I think he was in Panola County for a little while.

GT: Yes, exactly and so he had done that before he came to Nigton so, how much started after he got there, that I wouldn't know. There were just a few teachers there. I can remember some of them because I've seen pictures since then.

JG: Describe a typical school day.

GT: A school day. The highlight of any school day in the country was recess. And I don't know how long you played outside but you did a lot of interaction with other people. Now most of those guys out there were related, they was like family out there playing and you played softball, everybody did the same thing, the girls and the boys what ever you did.

JG: You played together.

GT: You played together, now basketball we did that, everybody played basketball, everybody played softball. I don't remember any other activities, oh marbles, we played marbles too. Now beyond that I don't remember any other outs but we stayed out a long time, maybe thirty minutes. We had a lunch hour I think that was a whole hour.

JG: Was recess in the morning or the afternoon?

GT: We had a recess in the morning also, then we had that whole, I believe, it was so long I believe it was about an hour for the lunchtime.

JG: What did the kids...you mentioned there were hot lunches there so there were lunches served by the school?

GT: Yes you would go to the cafeteria, which was all the way across the campus. It was a building there, now I understand it may have been an Ag building. They had taught night school. I understand and I don't know the real story but people from Lufkin came to that school at one time because the black school in Lufkin was not as strong as the one at Nigton. They had the stronger school.

JG: That was before you were there?

GT: Oh yes, before my time but the buildings were still there. I understand that is why they could have the large building down there because you walked all the way across campus to get to that building where they served the hot lunches.

JG: Did you eat your lunch there and the meals that were provided and did the kids bring their own lunches how did that...?

GT: All the kids ate when they had lunchtime. I don't know how they were paid for.

JG: Nobody went home and ate?

GT: No, no everybody ate.

JG: I thought with some people they would let out and some would go home and eat.

GT: No, everybody ate their hot lunch there on the campus and then everybody left the cafeteria and played until it was time for that period to be over. My dad actually owned the school bus in all of my time. He owned one from the time I started living in Nigton until even after I graduated from high school and went to college. I don't know when he stopped owning a school bus but he would lease it out to the school system because he became the transportation for the community, for groups.

JG: Not just school related but community.

GT: The community yes, because he always hauled all the scouts, even Lufkin and surrounding towns he did it. He would drive them across the states. I remember one time he took a trip to Canada with some scouts; he drove them.

JG: Wow!

GT: All the baseball teams because baseball was a prominent activity for the community, people even after they finished high school. So they would have these, kind of like tournaments, they played all the time. My dad was the main transportation to haul these people and then of course basketball playing with the schools, he did all the transportation for that.

JG: I want to come back more to your father and even maybe what you are talking about with the school buses but I would like to not get too far away from Nigton. Did your...I lost my train of thought, I'm sorry. Maybe just talk a little bit more about...okay I remember now. You were talking about baseball: was there organized sports there at Nigton? I know everybody played together during recess but was there an organized team?

GT: An organized team, yes.

JG: An organized baseball team and that kind of thing.

GT: Yes.

JG: Was it boys and girls then?

GT: No it was the organized community related – was just young men.

JG: Okay it wasn't school?

GT: No it was not connected with the school. This was a community group.

JG: A community group, okay. So the school itself didn't have a baseball team.

GT: An organized baseball team, this was just school.

JG: Or a basketball team?

GT: Now basketball was girls, and basketball that played other teams in other communities.

JG: So Nigton School would play other schools.

GT: Communities, schools, other schools. Yes, that was the main...

JG: Did you play?

GT: Oh did I? (laughter) I wasn't big as a minute.

JG: Tell me about that.

GT: Wasn't big as a minute. They would say, "Look at that little ole cute girl out there." I was always so tiny, I was a petite person and I guess with arms hanging down as my grandmother had said. (laughter) But, we played Lufkin, Corrigan, Chester, every school that had a basketball team they played each other.

JG: Did you play Diboll?

GT: Oh yes, absolutely. Actually I was really very, very small, everybody was larger than I but I had learned to practice. I just felt like if somebody else could do it I felt like I could do it even though I was too small. And, at my house in Nigton the way I really learned to shoot, I became a pretty good shooter and that is how you win is making baskets. Everybody else then would protect me because I was so small. And I would practice, I didn't have a basketball goal at my house but we had lots of trees so I found a tree near the house and found me a spot on it and I practiced shooting that spot. So as a result I just learned to focus. Probably didn't have any particular form just learned to focus and shoot so, I became a pretty good shooter.

JG: Did your father help in that regard? I know he coached some.

GT: No, he was the basketball coach but he didn't do any training with me. That was left strictly up to me. That was his way of teaching. It's up to you, even in the classroom it was always up to me. His thinking was, once he taught you and gave you the pattern you were supposed to take it from there. So, when I went home, like they have parents to

help you when you get home, I didn't have any. It was then up to me because I had gotten the instructions was his concept of teaching me. I had gotten the instructions.

JG: Was your father and your stepmother the same way?

GT: Now my mom, elementary stuff was just too easy. All of what you did in elementary school they had done it so well you knew it anyway, from my standpoint. I never needed any help there. But, when I got in high school with math...

JG: And that was your father's specialty.

GT: And my dad, yes he was the math teacher.

JG: That was his specialty.

GT: Yes, he would say, "Well you got the instructions." I would get home and I would have forgotten some things.

JG: Well everybody needs some help with math every now and then. (laughter)

GT: I said, "Dad I forgot how to do it." He said, "Well if I do it for you, you will never have the experience so just read it 'til you understand it." He said, "It isn't about that problem it's about all problems. You must understand where the problem is. Then once you understand what the problem is you have what it takes to solve it." So that is how I had to approach all of my math. That I had been given what it takes to solve it. I didn't understand the problem, once I understood the problem, used the resources you know to solve it. That is the way I learned it.

JG: You talked about books, describe the books that you would have had at the Nigton School. Were they new books?

GT: Never! (laughter)

JG: I just wanted to give you an idea of what I was...I was kind of leading you on a little bit, (laughter) but talk about that.

GT: It was always an excellent book for you if it only had one name in it. (laughter) That was the new good book if it wasn't torn up or battered or nothing like that. So you strived just to get a book with one name maybe two that wasn't filled up with names and that was the good book. So, they were all out of adoption of course once we got them. As a student that isn't how you saw it because you didn't know about adoption. So to you it was a new good-looking book.

JG: Right yes, at the time that is all you knew I guess. One that is not torn up with pages missing.

GT: And you could still write your name in it. (laughter)

JG: There was a place to write your name.

GT: There was a place to still write your name in it. Then after I grew up, you know, and began to teach then I learned about schools being in the adoption and those books I was learning out of. But, they did the job because you learned to read and that is what is important. In math you learned the math even though the book was all battered and torn. So, I think the setting is what made the difference, the teachers knew you, you knew them. They knew your parents so they were at will to determined that you learned. They didn't have any limitations put on them that you can't scorn them; you can spank them if you need to. You could demand what ever you wanted from the student and from that perspective you knew you had to do what the teachers, and teachers stopped, you was suppose to learn. By the way as it relates to Nigton there was a lot of emphasis put on education and as a result they had lots of scholars to come out of Nigton to do scholarly things because there was so much emphasis put on – you had to learn it. You went to school to learn, you know, there was a lot of emphasis put on it. So, I grew up thinking that learning was something you had to do. It wasn't if you did it, you just do it.

JG: Talk about, I guess this is getting into race relations, but what are some of your earliest memories of interacting with the white race?

GT: You know I tell people all the time, both my mother and my dad, and when I speak of my mother that is the mother I knew. I don't know if it was both of their ways of thinking or one influenced the other, but it was never discussed in my house. So I never understood that as being a problem. I think, and see I was teaching myself when the school started integrating. I had already come out of the black school. Now my mom even when she was teaching during the summer she worked in the Caucasian homes. She would just go back with us. She grew up working, cleaning up and stuff like that in their homes and so she didn't see anything wrong with that. It was a way of earning extra money.

JG: Did you go with her sometimes when she did that?

GT: I never went because see I am teenager now. So, because when we lived in Nigton she would kind of go back to Tyler in the summer. Both my parents would go back, they both met at Texas College in Tyler. So my mom would go back to Texas College for school and a lot of times she would get a room and she would do that work up there. There was nobody to work for in Nigton. I would just kind of be at home and then I got big enough that I could go work in a café or something washing dishes. So I got a job. It was such a valuable experience to me. I didn't think there was anything wrong with it.

JG: Where would these jobs have been?

GT: In Tyler is where we would do that in the summer time. But back further than that, my grandmother just four miles out of Lufkin, I mean out of Groveton, had a white

friend. She just spoke of her as a friend, so at the time I don't know that I knew about the bad relationship. I just knew they lived in a different place or they may have been referred to as richer. I didn't know anything was wrong with the relationship let me say it that way. And I guess because I mainly grew up by myself and maybe that was something my parents didn't discuss any of that.

JG: When you would go to town so to speak to Lufkin or Groveton...

GT: Let me tell you my first experience of really seeing something was wrong. I was in college and it used to be Sadler's on the corner of Paul and Timberland.

JG: In Lufkin?

GT: In Lufkin, see because we live in Diboll now. After I finished college my dad and them moved to Diboll. Not college, high school.

JG: So this would be about '55 then?

GT: No '53 or 4 or 5, it was shortly after I finished high school in '52. He was at Dunbar maybe a couple of years, maybe somewhere in there. I'm finished from high school and college and I don't remember being around anybody in college, it was an all black college, discussing that. I just don't remember it as being a problem out there. I don't think you saw yourself as being among the group you already knew you felt a part of the group. As it relates to Hispanics you would go to Houston and you'd see a few of them and pass them on the street and they were speaking Spanish but it was an acceptable thing that they are a different people. And there was nothing wrong with being different, you know. But then when I went to college and came back you are young and you're trying to go out to places and be on your own. I came home and Sadler's was on the corner and they had the drive-ins then. I think those were kind of new about that time. I don't remember drive-ins before then. I was driving and I drove, from Timberland you had to go to a side window on Paul to get food. You couldn't go under the drive part that was covered with some kind of cover. So I drove through that, instead of coming off of Paul I came off of Timberland and drove through that. When I got around to that side window he told me, "Don't you do that no more."

JG: Who told you that?

GT: Whoever waited on me said, "Don't you do that no more, you don't supposed to drive through there."

JG: White person or black person?

GT: White, it wasn't no black people in there.

JG: Okay.

GT: So, she just went, I don't know if they were working in there they were totally out of sight. So I don't know if there were any back people even working in the food part in the back because I only saw in that window. I believe that was my first experience. Now, how that became profound to me there was a young lady that lived in Diboll next door and she was also in college with me. And, she was forever addressing it as a big problem. "I can't stand white people" the way she said it. I didn't understand it. And then she would just if they said something, "You didn't speak to me." She would always address it and I thought something was wrong with her. You know, why you doing that. I guess I was kind of naïve, I guess is what you say. I wasn't conscious. My conscious was not that it was something wrong with us being apart from or different from because it was not discussed so, I didn't have a background for it. I later learned when the integration started, I was at a beauty shop and a lady was telling me how she had worked as they called it "for white people" and she began to talk about things that had happened to her as a result of working. See I grew up protected as one child and both my parents taught so I never...I only worked at that café in the summer and I couldn't do anything in there but wash the dishes anyway.

JG: And that was a café for a white establishment?

GT: In Tyler, yes it was a white establishment. And I was understood that was what I was supposed to do so I just did that. I had no other expectations so I don't know that I experienced anything. I couldn't be conscious of it because I had not been made aware that there was something wrong with anything. And so I had become almost...I was in my twenties before I really knew that there was a problem with being separate. You know, I lived in a different community because in the black community there was also separations based on hierarchies of learning and accomplishments. There was always mister somebody or doctor somebody that was a doctor and you didn't see yourself in their world either because you hadn't grown up to that or didn't have the training for that.

JG: Where might you have been, you and your family maybe, since your mother and father were both educators and your father was principal of the school? Where would that have been in the hierarchy within the black community as you are talking about?

GT: The school was the hierarchy; everybody looked up to the teachers because they made the community. There were few black doctors, certainly there wasn't one. There had been doctors come out of Nigton, you know, who had grown up and went to school and were doctors but they were not back in Nigton. So the highest level of education and making whatever happen in the community was through the schools. So they were the hierarchy you see. So, when you went to Lufkin they had a black doctor and some people who were more and so we were in that hierarchy. I'd say that so far as because you made the community. In fact when I first started teaching I was told that you must contribute to the community. You were expected to do that. I was a Girl Scout leader, I didn't want to be that but I was expected. You didn't get paid, that was expected of you.

JG: Of someone who has spent your whole career in education and also the time period in which you lived before, during and after integration, how would you place that

relationship maybe instilled I'm assuming by your mother and father, to others, would that be a typical perspective?

GT: Of others?

JG: I'm getting the sense and I'm sorry I'm not expressing it very well, that all these things were happening around you. You were maybe, as you say a higher hierarchy in the black community, you know, you said your father was pretty much and I know your father interacted a good bit with the white community but left a lot of that educational process to you yourself to your own experiences. So all these changes were happening for instance like, again here we go with dates, but 1954 was the Supreme Court Brown vs. Board of Education, I'm assuming that would be when you were at Texas College.

GT: No I never went to Texas College, my parents went there. I went to Prairie View.

JG: Your parents went there; you went to Prairie View okay. But, anyway you were getting close if you weren't already there to your college years and those things didn't seem to come to your consciousness as you've said until much later. Is your experience would you say typical or average?

GT: No!

JG: Okay.

GT: I say that because of listen, remember I told you about the beauty shop and this lady began to say her experiences working and she did not like the other race of people because of her experience of growing up and having to work there. Now, things began to be pointed out to me that black people, which I was a part of, thought was real unacceptable as relationships between the races. I began to look at them then and I could see them then.

JG: This is after you left home more or less?

GT: Absolutely. I had finished college, you know, is when I really began to learn...

JG: So Prairie View didn't address maybe in classes or anything, didn't address some of those issues or didn't come up on campus life even?

GT: No because you are interacting with other students and your thing was "get your education."

JG: Just finish, just get your grades and get out. (laughter)

GT: Just get your education. You got to be prepared. They taught even in colleges then, preparation is the key thing. They knew you were going to another black school. The only thing I remember you must be so educated that you must compete in the big world

and you got to be better than other races. If you don't you won't be accepted. Now that was basically what was said. To me they would say things like, "if you are going to be teacher you got to be...if you going to ever get past where you are" they would say like, "How do you get better in the world?" It was like training to get in the bigger world. Says, "How you going to do that? You must be greater than those you compete with." And so that was always said. And even, you remember I'm saying that is different even in the communities you go to. The teachers, if you are going to be going for a job that another teacher is going for you must be greater than that. So your job is to be as excellent as you can be. That was the teaching. Even when you go to schools, your schools may not be able to furnish the materials you need, you must not let that cause you not to be a good teacher. You are being paid money, take your money and buy what you need. Your job is to be good at what you do. Take your money and buy what you need. But then if it's not consumable you put your name on everything you got so if you have to leave you take it with you. That was taught in teacher education. In music all of your teaching was about just being greater, you know, being able to do well, which I just don't remember this thing. It wasn't talked about...about you weren't trained to compete in a white world. That wasn't part of the training. It wasn't nothing about another race it was in your own world.

JG: Your own world.

GT: Yes, all of my experiences basically when I was grown...

JG: So Prairie View, you would say that Prairie View, and what years did you attend Prairie View?

GT: In '52 through '56 as an honor graduate.

JG: '52 through '56, okay.

GT: And see it was totally no integration during that period.

JG: Right, okay.

GT: My own exposure to the other race was if I went to Houston, you know, to town. It was a totally black school. And it wasn't like, you know, there is another group of people out there don't like you or whatever because you weren't old enough to compete in that larger world. You didn't have anything to offer the bigger world. I said I was already teaching and making money I began to realize like I drove through that Slaughters [Sadlers], that food place, and I wasn't supposed to do that. I mentioned it to my father and he said, "Well just don't do it." He wasn't going to comment beyond that. And then I began to realize that other people were more daring than me. They would do it just to create a scene. They would say, "Well you can't go to so and so." You got your messages from the people you associated with that you were going to be not accepted. There were unacceptable things that you could do and not do. Remember I had this young lady lived next door to me she would say, "You don't know how to speak." Well, nobody had

spoken to me, I never thought of it that way. But, because of their past experiences or their parents past experiences they brought it forth.

JG: What is your earliest memory of the civil rights movement? Specifically the thing as we've been looking at school integration here, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 which was basically the enforcement of *Brown vs. Board*, well as it applied to schools anyway specifically. But, then you know *Diboll* started Freedom of choice in '65 etcetera. Where were you and how did that play out as you remember it? Maybe, like I said backing up before '64, you graduated from *Prairie View* in '56, so a little bit of chronological history there too, but specifically what changed your mind? You've already established that it was just something on the periphery there and you weren't really aware of the issues.

GT: The real problems out there, yea.

JG: So what was the change for you?

GT: I think because of my earlier orientation of just you are responsible to present yourself to somebody, so get yourself ready for that. So, every opportunity that I had to interact and get training I would do that. And so, I would write for grants. I wasn't married so I became a professional school person.

JG: Did your father encourage you?

GT: No, he didn't. Remember my dad didn't talk.

JG: Okay.

GT: If you brought a problem to him then he would address it.

JG: Okay, okay.

GT: Other than that, there was no conversation. He always had too much to do. I used to have to make appointments to see my dad...

JG: Oh wow!

GT: ...because he was always on the road. Remember he had this bus so he hauled everybody everywhere. So, I hardly ever saw my dad except, you know, on special occasions and then I tried to get it all in. But, that was not a discussion ever at our house and I understood getting this orientation from my peers saying is something wrong, you are not going to be treated right and I had that one experience, you know. So, I thought well how do I overcome that. Remember my training about math if a problem exist you take the resources you have and try to solve them. So, that never left me. So, when I realized that there were problems to be addressed I thought you must have all the training you need to do that. So I started writing for grants and one grant took me to the University of Texas. In fact it was the same year. I believe it was in '65 or '68 somewhere along there and I went to UT on a grant and I applied for it and I got it. They were trying

to get ready for integration at the time. So, you were in the classroom there, you were taught at UT campus but then you had hands on experience at an elementary school called Cacis. I believe that was the name of that school. I don't know why it came to my mind. I believe the name of that elementary school was Cacis or something like that.

JG: How would you spell that?

GT: I don't know. It just popped in my mind just right then. I remember going up in the hills to an all white school.

JG: There in Austin?

GT: In Austin. Actually it was during the summer time so it had to be a special kind of something. Now this was in '65 and this is 2009. I took that training and my sister in law went with me also, that taught in Jasper.

JG: So you were a student at UT?

GT: In the summer, a special program. I was teaching at the time.

JG: Where were you teaching?

GT: I had moved to Anahuac. I had gotten married and all that kind of stuff by then I believe.

JG: So, you are about 30 years old?

GT: Yes.

JG: Still teaching at a segregated school?

GT: Absolutely! I thought this was an opportunity to learn. I don't remember particularly what the basis of the... but whatever that grant was for I thought it fit the situation. I took it and it really did. The goal of that was to inter-relate black teachers with white students I think. Some of that was in there. So, I took that course and I did well with it. You see I think when people have a problem mixing with other people it begins through training and understanding. What is your interpretation of other people? I didn't know there was something wrong with interacting with other people. And I still don't. If I see a foreigner I think and see every person as a person. It's just a person with a different color skin and background and all that. So, I didn't go there with things on my shoulders or problems. I went to, people said there was going to be problems that we were going to have to integrate the schools. They were talking about it. It was in the early stages so I thought let me go off and take something and see if I can't be trained and learn what is going on. So I did and every kind of workshop or anything that was related to that, if it was available to me I took it.

JG: But you wrote your own grant applications yourself?

GT: Yes.

JG: The school, Anahuac school didn't necessarily encourage you to?

GT: Absolutely not.

JG: It was all you.

GT: Me looking for something that was going to help me learn. I loved learning and I still do. I think if it's out there and it affects you – learn it, at least know about it. If you can learn it, then learn it. So, that has kind of been my experience with the integration so I then decided, I had made some changes in my assignments in the school. I went from elementary to high school where I always felt I was more comfortable. I went from elementary school in Lufkin; I'm back in Lufkin by the way. I only lived in Anahuac a short period of time. I was assigned to Dunbar math and that is where I really felt comfortable teaching.

JG: If you don't remember the exact date that is okay but do you remember about the approximate date you went to Dunbar?

GT: I'm going to say '68.

JG: '68 okay.

GT: Because if it was after I had gotten a grant from Prairie View. I always enjoyed math training because my daddy always put so much emphasis on it. So I had done some grants for summer school in math.

JG: So you are at Dunbar in '68 and Lufkin is still segregated.

GT: Yes, but they were beginning to...I think by that time they had taken some of the teachers over to the white schools but not the students.

JG: Were there white teachers at Dunbar in '68?

GT: I don't think so. If I was there I don't remember any being there no. But some of the black teachers had gone over to the white schools. Now when the students started perhaps by then some of the students had gone over.

JG: Some of the black students?

GT: Some of the black students. It was like they could choose to go over there. But, only a few students had done that I believe. That wasn't my role at that time to be involved in that process. I was just a classroom teacher.

JG: And what were you teaching?

GT: I was teaching elementary, the fifth grade when I moved over to the Jr. High math.

JG: Jr. High math, okay.

GT: In fact I was fishing one day and the principal at Dunbar was out there and we just happened to be at the same place. I think we were talking about my experiences being just coming out of some math training at Texas Southern I believe, and he said “I need a math teacher can you qualify for it?” And I said “yes.”

JG: Where were you fishing?

GT: Somewhere on Lake Rayburn.

JG: Okay.

GT: I don't know which one of them, but my husband and I used to do a lot of fishing.

JG: I guess Rayburn was brand new in '65.

GT: It was relatively, it was the place to go and be out and lots of fun, you know. We were out on Lake Rayburn and this principal happened to be out there too and we just began to talk. That was in the summer and I went out there in the fall.

JG: I don't want to totally get away from where we are right now, but just to back up; you mentioned earlier that you had already gotten married. Talk a little bit about that. When did you get married and who did you marry?

GT: I went to Anahuac, actually I taught two years in Lufkin after I finished college. It was kind of hard for me to settle down to teaching because it was so simple. There was no challenge in it to me. Most of the challenge was inter-relation with people. That was my biggest challenge. How do you relate to these other teachers and how they relate to each other and relating to principals? See that was another governing situation that I had never dealt with. I love the kids and the teaching part but I thought I like learning more than teaching. So I said “I'm just going to go back to school.” But my dad had put another challenge on me. He said, “Somebody has got to pay for that. Who is going to pay for that?” I said, “I'm not sure but I don't think I want to teach no more. I just want to go back to school.” And, because both of my first years were back where I had finished school, Daddy and my mom was in Diboll so my environment was still under them. It was like I had no name. I was Willie Massey's daughter and it was like I had no identity because that is all I had ever been was Willie Massey's daughter. I thought I needed to establish my own identity, that is kind of where I was I think. The next thing I knew they needed a music teacher in Anahuac and they were calling me. I think my dad may have had something to do with that. (laughter) I'm not sure. He always solved his

problems his own way. They called me and said they needed a music teacher and if I would be interested in the job. The main thing that meant I wouldn't be in Lufkin again in the same environment. And so I took the job down there and being in Anahuac in such a little town but all within the big city. It's just 45 minutes from Beaumont, 45 minutes from Houston about an hour from Galveston so you had all those big cities and lots of fun things to do. My husband was in the military at the time but the next year when I was there he came home and we met. His sister, who was teaching also, and his family encouraged him highly that I was the person that he should be interested in. So, that pursued until we decided it was time to be married.

JG: And what was his name?

GT: James Toran. So we went ahead and we were married within a year after I was there and then the baby came the next year. In Anahuac they had a rule that you could not...my baby was born in April, that you had to be out a year before you could go back to teaching. They let me teach while I was pregnant, so I could get that year but I couldn't start the next one. So, that is how I ended up back in Lufkin.

JG: And what was your baby's name?

GT: Robbie Toran.

JG: And what year was she born?

GT: '61, is that right? '61 yes. I get it confused with when she got married; she was married in '90. It's always zeros and ones and I have to put them in...because her baby was born in '61. Is that right? No, she was born in '61 the baby was born in '91. She was born in '61, the baby was born in '91. My dad passed away in '91.

JG: That is the digital age ones and zero's.

GT: Zeros, that is right. She was born in '61. I got married in '60; she was born in '61. And then that same...she was born in April and I came back to Lufkin that fall when that was the biggest storm, Carlos [Carla] I believe, was the storm. I blew in right with the storm, back this away.

JG: Well I forgot where we were before I cut you off.

GT: Let me share this with you on race relations. When I was in Anahuac that was another thing, the community there was so small. The interaction between the white race and the blacks, the school was separate, they had a lot of French people, they called them Cajun in the area and there were whites and blacks. The only thing that separated the blacks from the whites in Anahuac was the canal. Once you drove over it then you had the township and the white race lived there and their white school and the black school was this side of the canal. It was just a real small community but the relationship was everybody knew each other. I thought that was strange because that was not so in the other communities where I lived.

JG: You said everyone knew each other you mean the whites and blacks?

GT: The whites knew the blacks. I could meet the superintendent on the street and we would be talking about what I'm doing, you know.

JG: And the superintendent was white?

GT: Yes, all of the structure was still the way it was anywhere else but I think it had to do with the relationships.

JG: What of the children, white and black, or what you knew of the white children, what did their parents do, what was the employment? Was it oil fields?

GT: You talking about in Anahuac?

JG: In Anahuac yes.

GT: Basically they were farmers and ranchers.

JG: Farmers and ranchers. Was Interstate 10 built then?

GT: They were building it.

JG: They were building it.

GT: I actually came into...I would come up way of Houston and come in on 73. 73 still exist but it's an old highway but 10 they were working on Interstate 10 and it was just part of it developed. You'd have to pick it up from...what was the name of that place, oh I'm going to loose that, but it was near Baytown but it wasn't...Interstate 10 didn't even come that far. So I grew with Interstate 10, very familiar with the growth of it.

But, so far as the relationships between white and black and my thinking and how I thought it worked, I think the smallness of the group builds relationships. And I think during my grandparents' time it was something they knew existed but somehow another small groups of them formed relationships. I don't think the movement toward education and things would have existed had there not been relationships. Somebody had to relate to somebody for things to move forward. It would have been in small groups but they did move forward. In the larger masses it was not an acceptable thing. But, somehow relationships overcome those things, you know, just building relationships.

JG: I'm jumping ahead again back to Dunbar I guess in the late sixties. Just talk us through a little bit, anything you care to share about integration in Lufkin and what was going on.

GT: When I realized it was a dramatic experience, you know, I was at Dunbar. I was not one of the teachers that went over. I went over with the forced integration. When they say forced that means you don't have another year to do it.

JG: And what year was that?

GT: It was 1970 and that one is ear marked. You don't ever forget that date.

JG: 1970, okay, that is one you do remember.

GT: Yes I went over when it was a hard thing. It was not hard for me because of my orientation. I didn't know it was something wrong with it. It came on as a result of it coming toward me. And, there was some training even then to try to get the teachers level of thinking. They brought in all kind of resourceful teachers and stuff like that. In fact I always didn't like history but they brought a black guy in that was so strong and I had a chance to hear him one other time, but he was so strong on his knowledge of how the races evolved. I never had that; I learned to love history then. That is how I'm interested in all this stuff you are doing. I had focused on it during the integration process that this thing needs to be more important than it is in the schools. How important is history and how did you get to where you are now, how did you evolve and so forth. But, the training that the school system brought in, I suppose it was developed from the state level, I think really helped because it had to deal with teachers understanding and where they were in the process. Because if the teacher's not ready for it no way in the world the students are going to be ready for it because it's going to come off of their thinking. And of course all of them were not, from both sides the blacks weren't ready for it, some of them and the whites either. Now, I always thought I could teach anybody. I didn't see nothing wrong with it, I did not. One thing I had experienced the thing in Austin. Like everybody else needed to learn and you treat them the same way, so forth and so on. I think, you know, its people's orientation. Well that is what it is, integrating people who come from all kinds of thinking and backgrounds, even what they think about them selves. You know, how are you going to accept me. If you don't like me, we got a problem. And that is kind of where life is. If I've got to interact with you and I think you don't like me, you may like me, but if I think it then it makes a problem for me because everything I say, everything I do I'm conscious if it's being acceptable. So, I think that orientation created some problems for them that you are not acceptable. We must judge ourselves against each other, but that happens within the races anyway. It happened and now it's just a larger group trying to do it. Even when you are in a black setting, there was always that pit against you, you're blacker than another person, or you are lighter. It was like lighter skin versus darker skin. So, you had gone through it in the smaller setting and now it's in the big world of setting light skins, dark skins and varying skin and so when they got ready to integrate I thought it was so funny because the black community was saying, "They won't accept you over there being black, you got to be, look more white than..."

JG: Now who said that?

GT: The community, just in interaction.

JG: So this would be adults?

GT: Yes.

JG: Parents of the children?

GT: Yes, and teachers.

JG: And teachers.

GT: Just talking about the situation. So, when they began to integrate sure enough most of the teachers were not the darker ones. I think Mrs. Burley was one of them, so that was one of the people that defied that situation because she was darker. But, it was her excellence.

JG: So lighter skinned black teachers integrated before...

GT: For the most part, uh-huh. Now, in particularly...

JG: Now this was an observation you had even at the time?

GT: I didn't it was given to me...yes, because I said "Oh" you know, because I had not thought of that. (laughter) They don't want the children to experience getting a dark teacher, the white kids first. It would be too dramatic I guess a change for them. Because you looking too different from the world they are used to. I guess that was something to think about. But anyway, you'd be surprised the hang-ups that people have about difference in any world you are in. Even if an Asian person comes in, you see, he is all dressed different. If you are young how are you going to relate to that, it is too different? I guess that was the understanding but people consider it a big problem. I think it's the way people generally look at the world. It's too big a problem; you are too different. I can't adjust to that and it is not acceptable. Well even, let's go back to the black world. There are people who live in a whole different ballgame. They live so different than another group of people that live a different way. Well that person feels like they don't measure up. He is the same color as you and everything but I don't measure up so I can't relate to you. It ain't the skin color at that point. But, then when I get over to the skin color now I don't relate to you, you're too different. I think it's a training.

JG: What did you do in 1970?

GT: 1970 I went to Jr. High West as a teacher. I was teaching at Dunbar the second...I had been there about two years and then integration came.

JG: So you went to Jr. High West, which would have been...

GT: I was already in counselor training.

JG: ...which would have been the old white high school.

GT: That is true. But it had been a Jr. High for some time.

JG: Oh it had been!

GT: Yes, because at the time I finished high school the school that is now the middle school was their new high school.

JG: Yes, and I'm getting into something now, I apologize, I haven't done my homework on the Lufkin end of it. I think I told you earlier I went to Jr. High East, which is now the high school.

GT: When did you finish high school? Tell me again.

JG: 1985, I graduated in '85. And where I graduated high school and where you were the counselor is where my sixth grade son now goes to middle school.

GT: I grant you for a long time I drove right up to that middle school going to the high school you know, after it changed, when I'm no longer in the school system because I'm still seeing that as the high school.

JG: So in 1970 you went to Jr. High?

GT: To Jr. High West, that was the only Jr. High.

JG: And it was integrated?

GT: Integrated setting.

JG: Okay and you went because you were told to go.

GT: Absolutely, that was where, there was no other place for me to go to teach based on what I taught.

JG: Was that your first experience to teach white children?

GT: No, because I had done this summer thing in Austin.

JG: The summer thing in Austin, that is right.

GT: With the elementary students, so it was not my first experience.

JG: But your first experience at that...

GT: In a massive school of white administration and teachers, that was my first experience. But since I never saw people as just people I never saw that as a problem because a person looked different than the people I was used to being with. That was never a problem for me. I guess because I had no bitter or bad experiences. I thought when the man told me “don’t come through there” you know at the Slaughters [Sadler’s] that was my only memorable and first experience of him saying, you different so you not suppose to drive through here. I just saw something wrong with him. What was wrong with that? From my standpoint he’s thinking wrong, he’s thinking off beat so that is how I addressed that. Actually, I was in counseling and what drove me to counseling, or made me decide to do that, I’m all about learning. When I took the math teacher job at Dunbar, I had been teaching, the principal at Garrett had said “you pick up students in the fourth grade and you take them all the way through the sixth.”

JG: Now Garrett was an all black...

GT: All black elementary school, right there on Kurth Drive, it still exists.

JG: My son went to first...

GT: I think it’s a primary school now maybe.

JG: No, he didn’t my sister taught there for a little while, I’m sorry.

GT: That is okay. But, this principal that was there and oh he was so condemned. Teachers hated him and thought all of his concepts were wrong and all that. But, he was a very strong principal and kids really did learn. But if you started with the first you took them through the third. You started with the fourth you took them through the sixth. If your kids could grow then you kept them but if they didn’t grow he moved you. So, I was at Garrett teaching fourth, you know I had moved through the fifth, I was probably at the fifth and I was going to be going to the sixth level then I went to Dunbar. So when I left Dunbar that was the only place I could go was to West. When I get there, a big mixture, mostly whites because the black students are the minority, you know, and I thought just some children, liked them all. They related to me for some reason. I don’t know I didn’t have any problem with anything. If they thought anything they never said it. The response was just very good. The problem seemed to come after they left the classroom with the black and white thing. The same as if it were if it were not all...when it was all black. Your problems come mostly not in the classroom; you get a few in the classroom but most of them come when they are trying to relate with each other.

JG: Did you have lunch in the cafeteria with the students?

GT: Yes, and see that was...

JG: How did that go?

GT: It was different. Because...now when you think of how groups of people relate to each other as opposed to how this group relate to each other, that can be different. And, black kids had never had a food fight. That was not heard of in a black school. In white school they had done that. That was part of what they could do and get punished for. But this was something unheard of. So when I got there, these food fights I thought how do they let them do that, you know. I didn't know I was not an administrator. But it was something to contend with. That was different. Black kids somehow another had learned to fight each other a lot. I didn't know about whether the white kids did or not. It wasn't anything I had experienced that part. And I noticed that I was having to interact with fights, which I never had done because Dunbar campus was small enough that if there were fights you called the principal. They would interact. But, I was back down in this corner and these kids would be just fighting.

JG: And who was fighting?

GT: The kids, this is black and white.

JG: Black against white?

GT: Yes, it might be...most of the time it was that because kids were having a few problems with that, coming from different homes and stuff. The general thing it was all on the news that it was not right.

JG: So it's white and blacks fighting?

GT: Yes, well you would have some of the others too, but most of the ones I'm talking...

JG: Would there be many white against white fights, or black and whites?

GT: The ones I remember most were the blacks. Those were the ones that I would remember you see 'cause I'm sure it was all of that if you were in administration. But this was down this little corner where it was hard for somebody to get down there. I would go out there to stop it and I noticed the white kids were so light, you know, they weren't strong like the black kid. I was thinking I had to pull with force I'd nearly fall over myself. I didn't realize it was a difference in strength when the black kids go into something. I guess he was used to fighting. I don't know why that was different to me. I thought, "Oh that was unusual." And as it related to teachers so far as competition all of that existed in a non-segregated school, integrated school I'm sorry.

JG: Did the teachers try to make an effort to integrate, like say even in the cafeteria if there were black and white teachers did y'all sort of segregate yourselves or did y'all inter mix at the lunch table?

GT: I tell you this about me Jonathan, you know they probably did, I didn't because anytime I don't care what world I'm in, I'm going to talk to whoever is in it, you know. I

just find people such a pleasure to have. I think God created something special when he created people and particularly to interact and so, if I see a person I think God created him for me to talk to or to interact with in some way. Many times I think I just didn't notice and I'm one of these people who just don't see the problem first. Other people point them out and then I see it because those things were not important to me. And so, when I was there...I'm trying to remember, I was only at Jr. High West one year. I would hear about all these fights over at high school. I was coming through the counseling program. I get back to the counseling program, what drove me there I was teaching at the elementary school and I got away from that. I get to high school; I kept these kids fourth through sixth and now I got some of these same students in my math. They are behaving so different! The kids who were performing well and all that and their whole mindset is different. I said, "What's wrong? I better go back to school; there is something missing or something." So that is why I went to SFA to learn how I can pull this thing together. I'm facing something I don't understand what is going on. I got into child development and all that kind of stuff and it just lead into counseling. So, understanding people and why they behave and all of that. So, I guess that also helped to stamp in the mindset that I already had. So, when I got my counseling certificate I went straight to high school

JG: When was that when you got your counseling certificate?

GT: 1971, the next year.

JG: Oh, the next year, okay.

GT: I was certified the next year after the first year and I went straight to Lufkin High School. They needed somebody there.

JG: So integration influenced all that, that decision. Am I hearing correctly?

GT: It really didn't. Remember my orientation for counselor training was coming out of elementary school to Dunbar and looking at the same kids I taught in elementary for three years and now I get them at Dunbar in the ninth grade and their mind set is all different.

JG: So the racial aspect was just supplementary to this other interest?

GT: The training that I had actually prepared me for it is what it was because now I'm seeing people generally global you are not talking about a race. That is a relationship problem, that race thing in the background training that you have as it relates to people. You know and some people just have an in ground training that there is something so different about certain people that you shouldn't be with them. Your only action is to speak and let it stop right there, you see. And, from my perspective people have such valuable things to offer you if you take time to learn it or listen. It's all about learning. So, my orientation is so different from a lot of people. I never had that experience of working in somebody's house that told me to do something I didn't want to do or sit me in the back seat of the car or none of that. I never did any of that. I have talked to people who did and so from that perspective their experience with the other race was just bad.

So, naturally they don't like integration 'cause I don't like the people that I am integrating with. But I can see that within the races actually and so that is a long story. I think that is a longer story than we could ever get through.

JG: Right, well I sure appreciate your time. I see we are about an hour and twenty two minutes.

GT: Really, you see!

JG: We generally try to keep the interviews to about that time period.

GT: Well we just have been running all over the place.

JG: We just kind of got started. I just want to give you the opportunity if there is anything that we've discussed already...go ahead and take a sip of water, if there was anything that we've talked about that you wanted to add to or maybe add some closing thoughts or something like that. At some point if we wanted to we could even come back and do a second interview. We covered most everything that I wanted to talk about. I wanted to talk about the Nigton community and your early years of school and a little bit about your father and that kind of thing. As you've had a little bit of time to think I've been rambling on. If there is anything you would like to say.

GT: I can say on closing really as it relates to integrating and growing up in all my knowledge of relationships with people there has always been conflict among people that are different. What ever that difference is there is always been conflict. [they must be real expensive to be doing that].

JG: She is referring to her earring, it fell off. (laughing)

GT: I forgot that was on. (laughing)

JG: Yes, just so we...

GT: I think it always has been, I don't think we are in any different world than people before us have experienced. I think we are better off because we have learned so much from each other. I know I am. I think learning, and I think as long as you treasure learning, if you don't know anything about it you can't appreciate it. About cultures there is so much treasure in it. I've learned so much; even integration as far as I'm concerned is a thing of the past so far as between blacks, whites, Hispanics. There is always going to be problems there. They are going to minimize themselves based on relationships. But, I believe that if we can ever teach our kids in school the value of learning, it isn't about your grades, it's about learning and if you can ever get them to do that I think race relations is going to be such a little thing. You can learn so much from another person. I've learned to eat foods I never dreamed I would eat, you know, just because I've learned from other people. And there is so much more to learn. You haven't learned enough. If you get up everyday and learn something you've had a good day. So if you haven't learned anything you haven't had a very good day because you got to learn to

live well. We have had some awesome experiences but I hope, I know that I've gone through every experience that I've had it's taught me something. I have experienced some things that I thought were kind of tough. At first I thought it was not good that I did not know my natural mom, didn't grow up with her. Where I thought it was a problem was whenever I had to fill out a paper it asked the name of your mother. I didn't know which name I was supposed to put down. That was always a concern to me, which name do I put down.

JG: And that was something you never were really able feeling comfortable talking to your dad about? You never talked to your dad about?

GT: No, because I was supposed to solve that myself and I did. (laughter) He gave problems back to you to solve them. He says, "If you have the resources to do it, then you can do it."

JG: I know I'm jumping back, I'm going all the way back to the beginning again, but I just can't help but think...

GT: Where does the dad fit in?

JG: Well just a little bit more about your father. You know your father said he was born in 1911 in Nigton. Nigton we know was a community of former slaves founded right after the civil war. I was just wondering, but you may have already answered it, since your dad didn't talk about it much. But, I just can't help but ask, at least the opportunity. Here's a learning opportunity for me and others.

GT: I think he was a very optimistic person.

JG: Well I was going to ask you about your father's, about his background. Were his ancestors tied to the very early days of Nigton? I guess is what I'm getting at.

GT: I really don't know. I have a cousin who was closer to my dad's age because she was born of his sister that was older. My daddy was the youngest of the family.

JG: I think he said he had four or five brothers and sisters each, he was one of nine or ten. Nine I guess.

GT: Yes and he was the youngest.

JG: The youngest, yes. He didn't talk much about his family in his interview but I just can't help but wonder just more about that heritage.

GT: And more of that like I said, you didn't just...it was like...

JG: He didn't talk about his family even?

GT: No, because everybody was to grow and learn not with each other but as a person. I think that was the orientation because my dad does not talk about people. He didn't discuss people at all. I would ask them when I come home, my mother and my daddy. Other kids would say, "You know so and so died or so and so did this or got married." I say, "How come y'all didn't tell me." "Oh we didn't think about it." We were talking about what was going on with the community. What is going to change with this? We would talk about other things but it was never about the people. So far as you are going to be working at so and so or we are going to be moving over here or we are planning to do this. It's more or less about what we were going to be doing.

JG: Not the past.

GT: Not the past and not the people. I would have loved...the only reason I knew about...we never talked...well see my dad was never there. Now, my mom would mention, talk about her family, their interaction. But so far as my dad's family he was never there to talk about it really. I have a cousin I talk to now more than anybody. I've learned and I told her I've got to interview her before she dies. She is 88 years old. I said "Girl I've got to put you on tape" because her mind is still sound and she knows a lot.

JG: I encourage you to do that.

GT: I told her I got to...she lives over in the apartments, Lewis Toran apartments. I was over seeing my husband's nephew who is mentally challenged and he lived next door to her. So for a while we were really seeing her very often. I have got to do that. She has more of the history of the family than anybody else. One other cousin in San Antonio who is a first cousin, she is the child of the oldest, yet she is the youngest of all the next generation. He had her very late and I believe he is the oldest child, if not he is the oldest boy, oldest man-child. And she loves that so she has done a lot of the research. We keep saying but we are working on land now; they left quite a bit of land. They had a lot of land out there at Nigton. We didn't talk about that too much. My dad, that was near and dear to him, his family's homes where his dad lived. I had said to Dad, I said, "Y'all are not getting together on it. Where is your part? It's just me and it won't be nobody to discuss it with, if it's left with everybody's got all." It was finally left, it started off about 400 acres but it was down to about 200 of those that still exist. That had not been sold or whatever. My dad, I didn't realize he had done as much work on it as he had. I asked him, I said, "Dad it's going to be hard if you don't do it." Well, before he passed he handed me a little brief case. I just said oh it's about this. I don't know why I didn't address it but I didn't. The relatives always pass it to me. I don't know why, well for one thing I was the one child and my dad had bought a lot of their properties so I was going to have the most. So you need to go and get that land separated. So I go to a lawyer and asked them what to do. They told me an affidavit of heirship could suffice for whatever we needed. I go spend the money for the affidavit of heirship. Well when we really got to the nitty-gritty it was really down past that part. All of that had been taken care of so I spent money needlessly. When I figured, get into this briefcase, I said, "That is right, Daddy left me a brief case with some stuff in it." Well he has got the deeds and stuff in

there for the land he had bought. But the point is we still haven't gotten it together and Dad has been dead since '91. That is fifteen years ago, no longer than that.

JG: It's been eighteen.

GT: Yes, it's been a long time and we are still working on that. But, we are down to where we can almost do it. And to me that is my goal because I know that meant so much to him is to get that land and have it under my name. Now, what I'll do with it I don't know because my daughter is not the kind to do anything with it. But at least I'll get that done.

JG: Okay. Well again Mrs. Toran I appreciate it very much. Thank you for your time and I know you've got other appointments this afternoon.

GT: I sure do, Jonathan.

JG: We'll conclude right now then.

GT: Well thank you. I don't know what you can do with it but thank you. I appreciate the opportunity. I really did. I just think what you are doing, I don't know all that you do but remember I was going to get you to do a presentation to the Lions Club. What you think some people ought to know of what you do.

JG: Okay, all right. Let me stop this and we can go ahead and talk about that.

GT: All right.

END OF INTERVIEW