

Joyce Henderson

As a child of the civil rights era, her mentor, Clara Luper, taught her to stand up for equality.

Chapter 01 - 1:13

Introduction

Announcer: Joyce Henderson was an Oklahoma City high school student in the mid-1960's.

She served as the song leader on Saturday mornings at Calvary Baptist Church when the city's civil rights giants gathered to plan marches and protests across Oklahoma City.

Henderson's early work with the NAACP was helped by her relationship with one of her high school teachers, Clara Luper. It was Clara Luper who led thirteen children into Katz Drug store in Oklahoma for the nation's first lunch counter sit-in demonstration. And Clara Luper chaperoned Joyce and a large group of black students who attended the 1963 March on Washington where they heard Martin Luther King deliver his "I Have a Dream Speech." Clara Luper became Joyce's teacher, mentor, and personal guidance counselor.

Of her thirty-seven years in education, Joyce spent twenty of those years as principal at five different area public high schools in Oklahoma City.

Her many honors include induction into the Oklahoma City Public Schools Foundation Wall of Fame.

She is featured in the Children of the Civil Rights Documentary Film along with others who participated in the Sit-In Movement in Oklahoma City.

And now you will hear Joyce Henderson tell her story which includes the sit-in demonstrations leading to the successful Civil Rights movement on VoicesofOklahoma.com.

Chapter 02 - 7:42

Joyce and Music

John Erling: Today's date is March 1, 2016. Would you state your full name, please?

Joyce Henderson: Joyce Ann Henderson.

- JE:** Your date of birth and your present age?
- JH:** January 12, 1947, I am sixty-nine years old.
- JE:** Tell us where we're recording this interview.
- JH:** We are recording this interview in a replica living room of Clara Shepherd Luper at the Oklahoma History Center.
- JE:** And we could point out that right next door...
- JH:** Next door is a replica of Katz Drugstore, the first sit-in took place at that drugstore August 19, 1958.
- JE:** There are about six stools there up to that lunch counter, so people can get a feel of what it looked like. But not a feel of what it felt like.
- JH:** That is correct.
- JE:** Joyce, where were you born?
- JH:** I was born in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, but I was raised in Spencer, Oklahoma. Spencer and Oklahoma City connect, in fact, we say Spencer is the suburb of Oklahoma City.
- JE:** Your mother's name?
- JH:** My mother's name is Fanny May Johnson, she was a Johnson and married a Johnson.
- JE:** Tell us about your mother.
- JH:** My mother was a hard worker. She was the mother of four girls. I'm the oldest of four girls. We're about six years apart from the youngest to the oldest, so at one time, my mother had four babies that she was taking care of while my daddy was working.
- For a long time, Mother was a stay-at-home mom. Later on, she started working at what was called Oklahoma Waste Material Company. After that, she went back to a vocational school and became one of the taxpayer assistants for the Oklahoma Tax Commission. That's where she retired from after thirty years of work.
- My dad—
- JE:** His name?
- JH:** Eddie Lee Johnson, retired from Tinker Air Force Base. He was a civilian worker and he was a hard worker. He went to a vocational school to become a draftsman. So both of my parents were hard-working parents and provided the best education for us by allowing us to go to college.
- JE:** They didn't go to college but they thought it was important that they go to some school to better themselves.
- JH:** That is correct. And they stressed education in our household. We graduated from Dunjee High School, the same school my dad graduated from and my mother graduated, both from Dunjee High School. We lived in the community, went to school in the community, went to church in the community. The neighborhood itself was called "Green Pastures." And Green Pastures was the community in Spencer where we grew up.

JE: Elementary school was?

JH: Dunjee School, consisted of elementary, junior high, and senior high school, and all located on the same campus.

JE: And then you were on to college.

JH: Went on to Langston University in 1964. I graduated from Dunjee in May 1964, and was able to go to Langston on a band scholarship, at least that's how I started out. But being in the band was so demanding, after the first year I went on a work study program. And that's how I paid for my college education.

JE: You were a vocalist too, we know you as that.

JH: Well, I don't think they wanted me to sing, but, yes, I played the clarinet at Dunjee. Really I as a majorette and became the majorette leader under the direction of Donald Edwards. He had a requirement that if you were a majorette, you also had to play an instrument. Because when we were not performing during the football season, we were performing with the orchestra or the band during concert band season. So I chose to play the clarinet. Wasn't the best at it but I did it.

I also played for the jazz band because I was pianist of my church. Not that I could play the best jazz, but I could read music well enough for the teacher to have me to play for the jazz band. So I played for the jazz band and I played the clarinet.

JE: What church did you attend?

JH: I grew up in really two churches—let me explain that. My church was First Baptist in Green Pastures, however, at twelve years old I started playing for Methodist church, St. John Christian Methodist Episcopal Church. At that time it was called St. John Colored Methodist Episcopal Church. The name changed from Colored to Christian 1954.

So at any rate, the preacher was assigned to reopen the church. He went to my music teacher so she could recommend some of her students that could play hymns at that time. I was one of the ones she recommended. He talked to my father to see if I could take on that responsibility. And my dad gave him permission to ask me if I wanted to take on the responsibility.

So I started playing for St. John CME Church, located a block from my regular church. I got my start playing for the choir, played for St. John CME Church for thirty years. I retired in 1989, as the Minister of Music Emeritus. We have some young people in our church who can take us to the next level when it came to singing in the choir and playing for the choir.

So from then on I started playing for the church's missionary choir, and I continue now playing for the missionary choir. I still sing in the choir, I still have a lot of energy, I guess, so I devote my time in church to that.

So really, I grew up in the Baptist church and I grew up in the Methodist church. I could still participate in all of my activities in the Baptist church and continue my

responsibilities that I had in the Methodist church. My husband and I joined the Methodist church when we married in 1967.

JE: And your husband's name?

JH: My husband's name is William Gerald Henderson, and he's a native of Lawton, Oklahoma. He's also a graduate of Langston University.

We decided if I'm going to continue to play, we needed to go ahead on and join to be of one denomination, and that's what we did. So I've been a member there ever since 1967.

JE: Are you the only one in the family, your family, that was musical?

JH: No, in fact, each one of us played some kind of music. And part of that is because my dad sang in a quartet many, many years before the group dissolved. So we were around music in his family, from both sides of the family.

My sister Edda, next to me, she played the piano. My sister Barbara played the alto saxophone and regular saxophone in the band. And my younger sister Laverne, took piano lessons as well as she played in the band. So we all had some music in our growing up days.

Chapter 03 - 9:30

Clara Luper

John Erling: Let's talk about the lunch counter sit-in demonstration story.

Joyce Henderson: Sure.

JE: In August of 1958 how old were you?

JH: I was not in the first sit-in at Katz. If you think about it, in '58, I was eleven years old, because I was born in 1947, and I became active when I started taking history under Clara Luper. She was my history teacher at Dunjee High School. She spoke all the time about being involved, and she was the kind of teacher who would bring history to life in her classroom.

When I took Oklahoma history, we did the land run, and we didn't just talk about the land run, she'd take us out on the football field and we had to dress the part. We had to claim our property. So she would bring history to life. She wrote a play called *Harriet Tubman*. I was fortunate to be her lead person, meaning I was Harriet Tubman in the play she wrote. And we took that play on the road, that's when I thought, "Maybe I can be a movie star," but it didn't go any farther than that.

JE: So she taught in Dunjee High School?

JH: Yes she did. And I'm thankful every day that she was part of my life. If anybody took her class, you left not the same way you went in there.

JE: Hmm (thoughtful sound).

JH: I can assure you. At that time, we didn't know the word was interdisciplinary teacher, she was that type of a teacher. She not only taught history in that class, she taught me a little algebra. She taught me my home row keys for typing. She taught us drama in the class. She taught us how to debate in her class. So in her class we learned everything.

I'll give you an example. Let's go to algebra. She taught us, "Okay, know the rules of algebra. If the signs are alike you add, if they're not alike you subtract." Then she said, "If you are to subtract, change the sign of the scepter hand [time 2:10] and do what you did in addition. If the signs are alike, you add, if they're not alike, you subtract." And it sticks with me today just like last year.

So, yes, we learned a little algebra. So when we got in our algebra classes we did not go in there not knowing what to expect in an algebra class. And when I talk about how we had to articulate in her class, you could not talk saying, uh, uh, if she asked you a question, you were expected to answer without the "Ah," or "You know." Those little bridges were no-nos. And we mastered that. I say we mastered that because at the end of the class period she will have a total of how many "ahs" you said. And we got that many swats.

So today, I'm very much aware of when I'm talking in public not to say, "ah." In fact, when I listen to athletes, especially, when they're interviewed and you hear them say, "Uh, uh," or "you know, uh, you know," and I'm like, "Oh, you wouldn't talk like that if you had Clara Luper as your teacher."

JE: Yeah. She was a civic leader, she was a teacher, she was an activist, and she was a pioneer. Would you agree to all that?

JH: To all of that and more.

JE: Yeah.

JH: She became a mother to those who didn't have a mother, and she became an extended family member if you had a mother or father. She became a counselor to you, whatever you needed Clara Luper to be, that's what she was to you. The thing about the role she played in all of our lives, we didn't know how valuable she was until we became adults.

Fifty-plus years later, I still hear Clara Luper talking to me. In fact, I tell people, "She was so much a part of me I went to Langston. I didn't know what I wanted to major in but I thought about Miss Luper, so I majored in history." When I became a classroom teacher at Dunjee, where she was a teacher at Dunjee, I found myself doing some of those same things she did to get us involved in her class. I did it with my students when I became a teacher. She was my cheerleader sponsor; while I was a teacher at Dunjee, I became a cheerleader sponsor at Dunjee. I look back, she had us talking, walking with your head up, talk like you know what you're talking about. I was preaching those same words to my students, "Walk like you know where you're going. Talk like you know what you're talking about."

And when I became an administrator, I was so afraid when she brought her daughter, Chelle Luper, to my school, where I was the principal. And I'm thinking, "Oh no, I'm going to be graded on how well I am as a principal because I have her daughter now." But honestly, that was a priceless moment—for her to have been my teacher, and for me to be the principal of her youngest daughter, I cannot explain the joy. And she put her there because she knew she was in good hands.

I thought I was going to have Miss Luper as one of those parents that you would see every day or you were having to address some concern she had—she was not that type of a person. She gave me all of the support I needed, if I needed it, and her daughter was a jewel at Northeast High School. And today, I'm proud to say that she is a leader living in Benton, Texas. She is now one of the regional directors of my sorority.

And I really thought I was going to get in trouble when Chelle became a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority. And Miss Luper was a member of Zeta Phi Beta sorority. I thought, "Oh my gosh, she will be mad at me."

She said that if that's what her daughter wanted to do, she accepted that. So I didn't get in trouble like I thought I would.

JE: It sounds like Clara Luper, obviously, would have been a great person, even if we didn't have the lunch counter sit-in demonstration.

JH: She was the kind of person where her leadership was exposed with the sit-in movement. She was always preaching and teaching—I don't care what the subject was—she was preaching and teaching. I just think she was anointed to be the type person to lead a group of young people, and to lead adults at the time that she did. Timing is everything.

She grew up in Hoffman, Oklahoma. She was born around Grayson or Hoffman. She would tell us all the time, "I was in the top five of my class," and then she'd say, "There were only five of us."

And we'd laugh because we thought, "Well, that's a good way to look at it. She was always in the top five of her class because there were only five students in the class."

But she would give you something to think about. She never allowed you to think you could not do anything but your best. If she could talk to you today she'd say, "Joyce stuttered when I had her." Now I don't remember being a stutterer but she said I did. And that was one of the main reasons she made me Harriet Tubman in that play. It was to get the confidence in me and to give me experience of talking in public. If that hadn't of been her goal I don't know if I would have had that role. But because I was Harriet Tubman, I find myself thinking about all of the traits Harriet Tubman had leading the slaves to freedom.

I had a husband in the play, his name was John. Every time she took a group of slaves to freedom, somebody wanted to turn back. And if they wanted to turn back, saying, "Oh I'm tired, I don't want to go," because it was rough, it wasn't an easy thing to do.

Harriet Tubman would say, "Turn around and keep a'walkin'. Turn around and keep a'walkin'. Keep going, keep going."

So really, to me, the seed was planted in me as a child because anytime I had the thought, "I can't do this," I had Clara Luper and Harriet Tubman saying, "You can do this, keep going, keep going." And it became part of my character.

Today, I have those who say, "Joyce, you walk like Clara Luper, you talk like Clara Luper, they should have named you Claretta."

Chapter 04 - 7:52

Jim Crow Laws

John Erling: Give us some background how blacks were treated, before we move in to the sit-in story. Restaurants, water coolers, bathrooms in '58.

Joyce Henderson: Well, we had Jim Crow laws. We had laws that segregated us here. Many of us know our history, to the point that in the South you were not expected to cross over those lines. Something is wrong with that picture. Anytime you look up and you're separated because of the color of your skin, it didn't take a rocket scientist for you to know something is wrong and we need to change that.

And I like to use the First Amendment of the Constitution that allows you to assemble and to petition. Those were rights we had, to change those laws we thought were not equality laws. You couldn't live here, because of your color. You couldn't go to this school, because of your color. You couldn't eat here, because of your color. You couldn't go to the recreational park, because of your color. You couldn't go to this bathroom, because of your color. You couldn't drink out of this water fountain, because of your color. The list goes on and on. And when you look at, your inner self said, "Something is wrong with picture."

And when Clara Luper would talk to us in class and invite us to be a part of the city, and because on Saturdays we were making a change, we were ready to go.

JE: She was on the Oklahoma City NAACP Youth Council.

JH: Yes she was. She was a member of the Adult Council and she became the NAACP Youth Advisor.

She did another play, I didn't mention the play that came into the picture with the sit-in. *Brother President*, she wrote that play. She took a group, I didn't go, but it was in, I believe, 1957. They went to New York City to perform that play, *Brother President*. *Brother President* was about Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. And on their way, and they'll tell you, and

she will also tell you, they took the northern route to New York City. And they got to see what it was like not to have those signs to separate you.

And on the way back, they took the southern route, and they could see the difference. So when they got back here, they had been trying to change the laws anyway, and especially where you were eating in separate facilities, but they couldn't get them changed. And thirteen young people, including her son and daughter, Calvin Luper, Marilyn Luper, met and they decided, "Let's just go down there."

And that's how it got started.

JE: A cute story here.

JH: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: On their way home from New York, they stopped in Washington, DC—

JH: Yes.

JE: ...to visit Arlington Cemetery.

JH: Yes. And they got to see all of the headstones of those who had died for freedom. When you look at that picture, because I've been there, that's an experience that gives you chills, to say, "They've given their lives, we may have to give our life." And that's why it was not hard to be a part of.

JE: They stood at the tomb of the Unknown—

JH: At the Unknown Soldier.

JE: When the child asked, "What would happen if the unknown soldier's casket was opened and they would find out he was black?"

JH: That's a good question.

JE: Yeah. Yeah.

JH: And to be truthful, that's the message that we are preaching today with our young people. And to all people. If you look at the history, look at the contributions of African-Americans in this United States. And when you look at the contributions we have made, how dare you deny me the opportunity to have the same opportunities you have?

JE: There was a saying, "The Sooner state, the sooner we get rid of desegregation, the better of we'll be."

JH: Well, that's a good saying, it's a good quotation. We needed to get rid of it before they put them on the books. But because they had them on the books, we were going to take them off the books.

JE: The sit-in became a project of the Youth Council to eliminate segregation in public accommodations.

JH: That's right, in fact, when Katz opened their doors, there were other restaurants that were segregated. We left them and went to others at a mall. There were just many restaurants that did not allow you to eat there.

JE: But even before she went to Katz, she made an appeal to the city manager, to the city council, to the white churches—

JH: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: ...and they all turned a deaf ear.

JH: And they all said that they had a right to not serve you, basically, is what she got as a response. That people could choose not to serve you, if that's what they wanted to do in their businesses. The City Council, they all didn't want to get involved, churches didn't want to get involved.

JE: I think even some black churches did not support it.

JH: Yes, in the black community, they were afraid. They knew this was, I would say, an issue that couldn't be won—that's what they thought. If it hadn't been for Clara Luper saying, "We can," we probably would still be segregated.

That's why, even when she was our teacher, we didn't think of her as a hero, she was just our teacher. And she emphasized some things in her classroom. She wasn't trying to make us the kind of students to go against the laws that we had, because she taught us to do it in a peaceful way when you had any objection to anything that you did not agree with. But she did make it real to us that we are citizens of the United States of America. And because we're citizens, we should have the same right as any other citizen, not only here in the state of Oklahoma, but in the United States.

JE: And then the motion was made to the council, "I move we go down to Katz and order a Coke."

JH: That's what happened. And I believe if they had served them they probably didn't have the money to pay for it. But at any rate, that was the goal, to go and integrate Katz, that was the first one. And—

JE: You said you were eleven. You knew this was going to happen?

JH: Well, not at eleven. You know we didn't have social media back then. We didn't have televisions, many of us, in our homes back then. So the information I got primarily came when I became a student of Clara Luper.

JE: Okay, so your lives—

JH: At Dunjee.

JE: ...your lives hadn't connected yet. Your family.

JH: Well, she was at the school.

JE: Yeah.

JH: And I was at the school, and everybody knew of a Clara Luper. And to be truthful, if I had a choice, I probably would have taken another teacher because Clara Luper was tough. And the word was she was hard. No one wanted to go to a teacher like that. Especially at that young age. But we had no choice.

And that's why I'm thankful today that we didn't have a choice. She was our teacher and she was *the* history teacher at that time. That's grades nine through twelve, in fact, probably junior high, we didn't call them middle schools at that time. She taught junior high as well.

But I got involved more with the sit-in movement when I was in high school, ninth grade.

Chapter 05 - 10:00

August 19, 1958

John Erling: So it was late in the afternoon August 19, 1958, when these thirteen youngsters, with Clara, went to Katz Drugstore.

Joyce Henderson: That's correct.

JE: At that time, I understand, blacks could order food to go—

JH: True.

JE: ...but could not sit down.

JH: Could not sit down, or you could go in many restaurants, get your food and eat in the back. And when I say the back, I mean, outdoors, you could not eat in the facility. And that's the sad part. You could buy anything you needed in their store, but when it came time to eat, you could not eat in the store. Not only that, you couldn't go to the bathroom unless you were going to a separate bathroom.

You think back and say, "How much money did you spend to keep us separated? Not only did you have restrooms for blacks, you had to divide those restrooms, male, female, so you just went through a lot of trouble to separate us."

JE: Can you comment on these thirteen youngsters?

JH: Many of them lived right here in Oklahoma City. I know all of them. Some of them live now in other states. Barbara Posey became the president of the NAACP Youth Council, and she is a professor at the university—I can't recall the name at this time, but you had Richard Brown, who was a nephew of Clara Luper. Of course, you had Marilyn Luper, her daughter. You had Calvin Luper, her son. Chelle Luper was not on the scene at that time, her youngest daughter. You also had a lady by the name of Lynsetta Jones, she's now Lynsetta Quarter. You had Gwendolyn Fuller Mukes, Betty Germany, that was Mrs. Luper's cousin. You had the uncle to Kanye West, Portwood Williams Jr., it was his father, Portwood Williams Sr., who provided one of the vehicles to transport the youth downtown. These are persons that are still living here in Oklahoma City area.

That's my memory right now, but for the most part, everybody's still here in the Oklahoma City area, a few outside of the city in their walk of life. But growing up, becoming productive citizens took place with all of us who participated.

JE: So on that day they sat up to the counter and the waitress says?

JH: "We cannot serve you."

JE: And Clara says, "We'd like thirteen Cokes, please."

JH: "We want thirteen Cokes." They refused. In fact, I would imagine they got so nervous they didn't know what to do, because it hadn't happened where you just wouldn't get up after being asked to leave because we're not going to serve you. I'm sure everybody panicked. And again, we didn't have social media so that we could share what was going on at that time. But the word got out and that was the beginning.

JE: But it was Clara who had to stand firm, "Thirteen Cokes, please," and probably asked several times, "We want thirteen Cokes, please." It was her strength—

JH: That's right.

JE: ...that was displayed to these thirteen that we are going to stay here.

JH: That's right, and let me also say, Clara Luper was the type person, we had rules and regulations when we participated in the sit-in movement. Let's say you said, "Well, we're not serving you."

Well, I couldn't say, "I'm going to curse you out because of that." We had strict rules and regulations on how to behave, how to conduct ourselves under these circumstances. Because of that, we never had the kind of violence like you had in some of the other states when they were trying to integrate facilities. We didn't have dogs sicced on us. We didn't have water hose on us. We did have those who decided, "Well, we'll just spit on you." They didn't do it to me.

You did have those who decided, "Well, I'm going to pour water on you." We did have those who would call you bad names. But we had been instructed how to react and we were not to be violent.

JE: The police were obviously called to this original sit-in and they were there just to?

JH: Well, they were there to make sure we didn't cross the line. The one thing that we learned later, Miss Luper had a relationship with the Oklahoma City Police and with the police chief. And they would know what we were going to do. And because of the relationship, he would instruct his policemen on how we were to be treated. Because of that relationship, nothing got out of hand. And I believe that was the key to our nonviolent sit-in movement here in Oklahoma City.

Now, when you think about the thirteen, when you are a child you are an obedient child. Because if Clara Luper told you to do something, you were to obey that. And I tell people today, "I was more afraid of Clara Luper than I was the sit-in movement." She was a strict disciplinarian person.

- JE:** The ages ranged, of those thirteen, from?
- JH:** From seven because I know one of the ladies, and she has been with us in this Children of the Civil Rights documentary film, Ayana Neyuma. She was seven at the time and she participated. Her mother and Clara Luper were best of friends, so she was one of the original ones, as well as she had a sister by the name of Linda Polk, I believe that's her name. So I would say probably from five till fifteen, sixteen years old.
- JE:** That day then, that evening actually, the thirteen just sat there.
- JH:** Right.
- JE:** And none of these children would dare get up and leave because Clara was standing there.
- JH:** That's right.
- JE:** And that's what kept them there.
- JH:** That's right. Um-hmm (affirmative).
- JE:** So then, they did that, I guess, until closing time.
- JH:** Until closing time. And if my history is correct, they opened their doors to blacks in three days.
- JE:** They did relent, yes. As a matter of fact, they had thirty-eight outlets in Missouri, Kansas, and Iowa.
- JH:** That is correct.
- JE:** So they relented in all of those stores.
- JH:** That's right. And I tell people today, "You don't have Katz Drugstore, in fact, now, you don't have any stores called "drugstores," they're all called "pharmacies." And so, we have the CVS, the Walgreens, et cetera, et cetera. But do you wonder today if any of the family members of Katz, if they're still around? So that you can get a sense from them what role they played in opening the doors to eating establishments here in Oklahoma City, and in other parts of the United States. Because someone made the decision with Katz Drugstore, "The right thing to do is to integrate our restaurants." And they did that, which opened the doors for some others, but many others became pretty stubborn too.
- JE:** Right, they relented earlier than some of the others did.
- JH:** Um-hmm (affirmative). They did, correct.
- JE:** Were there any black police officers?
- JH:** At that time, I would imagine we didn't have any, but I can't recall the date that Oklahoma City Police hired their first black officer.
- JE:** I can only imagine that day when the thirteen sat down, what whites said to these kids.
- JH:** Right.
- JE:** Spit.
- JH:** Um-hmm (affirmative).
- JE:** Coughed in their face.

- JH:** Um-hmm (affirmative).
- JE:** And they just sat there.
- JH:** Um-hmm (affirmative). Those were our instructions. Do not retaliate.
- JE:** That shows again how strong a leader Clara was.
- JH:** That's right.
- JE:** Because some child could have started crying and just run out of there. And it would have been understandable. The seven-year-old could have just run.
- JH:** That's true, but there's strength in numbers. If only one, that could have happened, but you had thirteen children together. To me, that was unity. Miss Luper had some other adults with her, like I said, Portwood Williams Sr., Ayana's mother were with the children, they were not there unsupervised. When we participated in other years, we had adults who participated alongside of us. What was unique about the sit-in, they preferred to use children instead of adults. Because if it happened to adults, they probably wouldn't just say, "Oh I'm going to take this." They would probably be ready to retaliate quickly. So using young people worked out to the advantage of the sit-in movement time.
- JE:** We must also remember the idea came from children.
- JH:** That's correct.
- JE:** And it came from a Youth Council, so it grew out of that.
- JH:** That's right.
- JE:** Which kind of made sense then to also use children.
- JH:** Use children. The seed was planted because of children saying, "Let's do this." We found out that we were the first nonviolent on the books in the United States. And they have that now as a record, because at first we thought it was Greenboro's, North Carolina. And history showed that it started in Oklahoma City.

Chapter 06 - 2:40

In the Dark

- John Erling:** I understand the white churches, seventeen, welcomed this demonstration, two segregated, one turned away people. The seventeen that welcomed them, you kind of wonder if the white church-goers left the church because of it.
- Joyce Henderson:** If your heart, I mean, if your heart is that you don't like me because of the color of my skin, it didn't matter whether I was in a church or wherever I was, you were not going to like me. If you were to choose not to worship because I'm in there, I think you need to re-look at your heart.

JE: Right. Yeah. Okay, Katz opens their door, but there was a list. V.C.'s Drugstore, was that next?

JH: Yes. I can't tell what order they were in.

JE: Okay.

JH: Because it was not like you went to one and you stayed. You might have gone to V.C.'s one day, you might have gone to Anamald on another day. So I don't have the schedule that we used. When we met on Saturdays at Calvary Baptist Church, that's when we found out what we were going to do that day.

JE: Kress was definitely on the list.

JH: It was on the list, another store where they had a fountain in there.

JE: S., S. H. Kress, in there all the chairs and tables were removed.

JH: Probably.

JE: So you couldn't—

JH: To make sure we—

JE: ...you couldn't sit down.

JH: That's true, that is true. I recall, we went to a big facility. It was on Eastern, here in Oklahoma City. Someone in our organization made a reservation for a banquet. This particular place did not serve blacks but it was too late, we had gotten in. And I recall they had it decorated so pretty. They had candlelights because it was like a banquet.

When we got in and they saw we were black it was too late. They locked us in there. So they cut the lights out. We had the little tea candles, and that was our light. They also had crackers on the table because we were going to have salad. And I recall we made a meal out of butter and the crackers, already placed on the table. And we stayed in that dark facility until the adults were able to get us out. We were not afraid because it was not like it was one, there were many of us. But that was an experience. I recall them locking us in this banquet room because they didn't know we were black.

Chapter 07 - 9:00

John A. Brown

John Erling: Well, John A. Brown Department Store became the most resisting store of all, I believe.

Joyce Henderson: John A. Brown's was like a Macy's, it was one of your expensive stores in Oklahoma City for shopping, especially women. They had the nicer clothes, the nicer hats, et cetera, et cetera, but they also had an eating facility in their department store. Now, it's not like you can go in there to purchase clothes or you could buy anything in there, you

could go and spend all the money you wanted to at John A. Brown's, but when it came to eating, you could not eat in there. So sad.

JE: Sorry.

JH: That's okay.

JE: You just end up laughing at the bizarreness of it all. So then, by that time, I believe, there were thirty-five students that took part.

JH: I don't know exactly the numbers but I can tell you the numbers grew each time.

JE: I guess they sat there for six hours. I suppose they would come and go during that period of time?

JH: No, when we left Calvary Baptist Church you went as a group, you left as a group. So once you got there it wasn't like we were in and out, we stayed there together until the day was ended for us.

JE: Okay, then what about restroom facilities?

JH: We would go wherever we could. Now I tell people, "That's why I didn't get arrested one time." I wanted to get arrested and couldn't because I had to go to another facility to use the restroom. When I got back, the paddy wagon had taken all of those, at that time, to the Oklahoma City jail house. And I'm like, "Oh my gosh, where are they?"

Well, somebody told me the police took them to jail. And I said, "Well, where is jail?" It was downtown and they told me how to get there. And we walked to jail. And when we got there I said to the policemen, "We were with them, we were with them."

And the policeman said, "But we can't arrest you."

And I said, "Why? We were with them."

He said, "Because we didn't see you."

And I'm like, "I can't get arrested because you didn't see me." I was so disappointed. But yes, they did arrest us. I can't recall what would allow them to arrest you on one occasion and not on another occasion. I'm not clear in my head about that. And understand, as children, we didn't know all the strategy used, we just followed instruction. But I do know Clara Luper was arrested twenty-six times.

Now when I say they were arrested, I don't recall ever being in jail overnight. I believe primarily, from my point of view, was to make a statement, "We don't want you down here with this sit-in movement." If they could intimidate you by arresting you, they did. But it didn't stop us.

JE: So you were arrested?

JH: I was not, I never got arrested.

JE: And you wanted to be.

JH: And I wanted to be arrested.

- JE:** Continuing on the John A. Brown story, one white woman ignored Sally Harris, who was seven, and she just simply sat on her. Police removed a white woman, Sally was later knocked down by a white man at another protest at Brown's. I bring that up to show how ugly this thing was becoming.
- JH:** Yes, and it was ugly, but I can assure you, as I listen to those accounts, it didn't deter us from participating and continuing. In fact, when you see things like that, I believe in today's society, you would probably have all of those students jumping on that lady. But back then, we were too well disciplined to retaliate.
- JE:** Yeah, even black members of the Brown's staff offered support. White members of the staff eventually began offering secret support.
- JH:** Um-hmm (affirmative). Meaning that you had those who gave you encouragement, even if you got a smile or a thumb up. One thing I like to emphasize when I talk, you had blacks and whites together participating in this city. Not all whites believed we were to be separated. And because they joined in the movement, the movement included not one race of people, but any race that felt like inequality had taken place.
- JE:** Um-hmm (affirmative). The first black student at OSU was Nancy Davis.
- JH:** Yes, I was with the family last week. They had a Nancy Davis Day, and they continued to have her day in February at Oklahoma State University, Oklahoma City campus. She was my play mother. She was also a teacher at Dunjee School. She was also a youth advisor of the NAACP. She worked with Clara Luper closely. She was my economics teacher. We didn't know all of this at the time we were students in the class because, again, they were just our teachers. But Nancy Davis was the first African-American to enroll in graduate school at Oklahoma State University.
- JE:** At Brown's, she came by one day and tried to get Clara Luper to quit, saying, "It is doing no good." Clara made her leave, knowing she was too violent and temperamental for the peaceful protest.
- JH:** Mrs. Davis had a temper. Mrs. Luper is the first one to tell you, "If you're not going to be nonviolent, we do not have a place for you here. But we have a place for you." Meaning, they could help with telephone calls. They could help with making any kind of food for us because we couldn't eat in the cafeterias, so we had to eat something during the day. She had a role for anybody who wanted to be a part of the movement, but because of their temperament, could not participate in the sit-in part.
- JE:** I should part out here that Clara Luper wrote the book, *Behold the Walls*.
- JH:** Yes, I have a copy of that book.
- JE:** The walls of separation between black and white. And it's nice that you have a copy of it, because I'm telling you, they're difficult to find, they're not in print.
- JH:** They're not.

- JE:** And I actually gained access to it in research at McFarlin Library at the University of Tulsa. It's the only place I could find it.
- JH:** And I have a friend, she went on eBay, that's where she got her copy.
- JE:** Oh, well, I went on Amazon and I couldn't find it. But anyway, I was glad for the library.
- JH:** Yes. Well, my book is so old I hold it together with a rubber band because the glue started coming apart.
- JE:** Um-hmm (affirmative).
- JH:** Separating the back from the pages. My picture's in the book. I do know at one time before her death, they were trying to get her book reprinted. And, of course, things stopped when she became ill. But the book needs to be reprinted, it's a historical book.
- JE:** Right.
- JH:** Um-hmm (affirmative).
- JE:** I should point out, the copy at McFarlin Library is in pristine condition.
- JH:** Oh?
- JE:** And it's very, very nice. But that should be a project for somebody—
- JH:** Yes.
- JE:** ...to raise enough money to make that happen.
- JH:** That book, and there's another book that I'm part of the teacher's guide, it's called, *Black History in Oklahoma*. That's a book that the Oklahoma City public schools put out with some federal funds. Today you cannot find that book.
- JE:** Um-hmm (affirmative).
- JH:** And again, I hold onto that book with a rubber band.
- JE:** So then, at John A. Brown, 1958, we're going '59, '60, that's two, three, four years. Finally in 1961, Mrs. John A. Brown asked to meet with Clara.
- JH:** That's my understanding. And Miss Luper has told me the story. They became best friends after she met her, because I believe, that Mrs. Brown had a heart. Mr. Brown did not want to integrate, and, of course, he passed away. But Clara Luper would tell you about their relationship becoming best friends.
- JE:** But at first, Clara refused to meet with Mrs. Brown, claiming she was too busy, just as had been done to her for many years.
- JH:** I don't know who decided when and how, timing is everything. When they met, the friendship began.
- JE:** Let me point out, because it does come from her book, all the protestors and everyone Clara mentions this to are stunned. They told her she's making a mistake. And here it shows you how big Clara was, she realized that she was letting her anger get the better of her and accepted the invitation.
- JH:** Yes she did. She did, and I think we are better because of it.

Chapter 08 - 5:00**Threats**

John Erling: We haven't talked about this, Clara Luper received hate mail, bombs threats.

Joyce Henderson: Correct.

JE: Shotgun shells.

JH: Yes.

JE: A note from the KKK.

JH: Yes.

JE: They broke in to her house. Someone burned some furniture?

JH: That is my understanding. She went through a lot. I recall her daughter Marilyn, at this time, was at Douglas High School, and they had to take her out of school because of the threats. You can imagine being young, how fearful that could make anybody. When you are getting the threat, that's one thing. But when you're threatening my children, that's another thing.

JE: Yeah. At what age then, and what year did you get involved with these demonstrations?

JH: Probably in '60, '61. I graduated from high school in '64. I went on to Langston University. But she kept me involved. We attended national NAACP conventions as part of the organization. And, after I got married, you could believe every, every year, she said, "Okay, Joyce, we need a donation from you. We've got to take these young kids like we did you."

And I would give her a donation every year. Because although the Civil Rights Act was signed in 1964, the convention today continues. And being exposed to other people from all over the United States at the NAACP National Convention, that was an experience itself, to know that we all had the same agenda, and that was equality for all. The convention was not attended by only African-Americans, you had other races participating in the convention itself. So Miss Luper kept me connected, and I was glad to give—it wasn't a big donation, but others donated so I could be a part of. I didn't have money to go to Washington, DC, when we heard Dr. Martin Luther King deliver the "I have a dream" speech. But because she would pick up donations out of the community, from the churches and all, we were able to go.

Every time I'd ask Mother, "Could I go to a National Convention?" she said, "You know we don't have money."

"But Miss Luper said if you say I can go, she'd make sure our fares would be taken care of." And we went on a bus.

JE: And I want to get to that. What was your first sit-in demonstration?

JH: I can't tell you the first except I'm thinking it was Anamald.

JE: Anamald?

JH: Uh-huh (affirmative), Anamald was one. Kress, I remember being a part of all of those.

JE: Okay.

JH: But which one was first? You ask me to go sixty years back and it's hard for me to determine which one was first.

JE: Right. And then you were how old again? The first—

JH: The first one I was eleven years old.

JE: But your first actual participation?

JH: That I recall was when I was in the ninth grade.

JE: Ninth grade.

JH: So I would have been about thirteen.

JE: Thirteen years old, there you are sitting in one of these drugstores.

JH: That's right. We were mainly on the sidewalk. You couldn't get all of us in a restaurant.

JE: Because by that time it had grown to a huge number.

JH: Oh yes, yes, so we were standing outside blocking the sidewalks, or we were sitting on the sidewalks. That's one reason we got kicked; people trying to get in, we were blocking doors, et cetera.

JE: I heard they would step on your hands.

JH: Yes, um-hmm (affirmative). When the movement increased to those large numbers, you were not in the facility itself on many occasions. You were outside at that time.

JE: Yeah. I got to bring this up—

JH: Sure.

JE: ...because in John A. Brown, the first black in the cafeteria was a seven-month-old baby that was snuck in by a white protestor, an activist, Caroline Nixon, alongside her own four-year-old daughter. And so, they came in and then they served them, but here was a seven-month-old black baby, that just threw them off. "How can we be serving you when you have this black child?"

JH: Black child.

JE: Isn't that amazing?

JH: It's amazing. And yet, did they want to serve her? No, because she had the black child.

JE: Well, after they found out she had a black child then they wished they hadn't served her.

JH: I know, that's what I was getting ready to say.

JE: Right, right.

JH: For many, you could be black and look white, if you were biracial. And that's why I say many times it was primarily because of the color of your skin. Once they found out you were part of the Negro race that just put up a wall for many people that something was wrong with you. And we're not supposed to treat you like you are a human being, so to speak.

Chapter 09 - 3:25**Demonstration Songs**

John Erling: So then on Saturdays you would meet in the church?

Joyce Henderson: Calvary Baptist Church.

JE: You kind of get your marching orders for that day, is that true?

JH: That's right.

JE: And you were there, you were a song leader in all that.

JH: I was song leader at one time, and, of course, Clara Luper had me to get us pepped up for the day. And that was to give us some energy, really, because we walked, we didn't drive or ride from point A to point B. We would walk coming through Dew Street, walking down to Main Street, primarily where those restaurants were located at the time. Even at one time, not only restaurants, we couldn't go to Wedgewood Park, we couldn't go to Springlake Park. They no longer exist but those were recreational facilities that were segregated. And, of course, we ended up picketing there. But, the songs we did—

JE: A little bit of one of the songs you may have done.

JH: Do you want—which one? Let's say, well, one, "I ain't goin' to let nobody turn you around, turn me around, turn me around. Ain't goin' to let nobody turn me around, I'm going to keep on a'walkin', keep on a'talkin', walkin' to the Promised Land." That's one. And then another one is "We Shall Overcome." That became the theme for all of our sit-in getting ready, because if you would hold hands with the person next to you it was like the spirit of the day to go and do good. And a good feeling because you were working to overcome the prejudices that existed.

So, as I sang, and I don't have that voice anymore, but, "We shall overcome. We shall overcome. We shall overcome some day-ay-ay-ay. Oh deep in my heart I do believe we shall overcome some day."

JE: You still have the voice.

JH: Thank you.

JE: That was good.

JH: Thank you. And then the one that we would really include Clara Luper, "Give me that old freedom spirit, give me that old freedom spirit, give me that old freedom spirit, it's good enough for me. It was good for Clara Luper, it was good for Clara Luper, it was good for Clara Luper, it's good enough for me."

JE: That's great.

JH: Thanks.

JE: So that was a spin-off of "Give Me that Old Time Religion."

JH: Yes, that's right, exactly. We would use different ones in the room—

JE: Pumped up for.

JH: And we'd get pumped up for that and we were ready to go.

Chapter 10 - 4:05

Senator Robert Kerr

John Erling: So, we had Adair's Cafeteria, we had the Pink Kitchen, it's not just the most famous ones that we've been talking about.

Joyce Henderson: That's right.

JE: Forum Cafeteria, Civic Center Grill, YMCA lay-ins July 1961. All of these were leading up to 1964.

JH: Right, that's true.

JE: In the Civil Rights.

JH: And that takes you back to when I said Clara Luper took two buses to Washington, DC, for the march on Washington.

JE: Let me just ask you here, I understand there was a meeting with Senator Robert Kerr and Mike Monroney to discuss the Civil Rights bill after hearing Martin Luther King speak in Washington. Senator Kerr refused to vote for it, claiming that he was opposed to the government interfering in private business affairs. From Clara Luper's book, I asked him about the black votes that he always received, and the number of black votes that he consistently got. Even when he was governor.

And he said, "The blacks that worked for me were paid off. They worked for me, I paid them off, and I owe them nothing. I looked at Helen Johnson, Lillian Oliver, A. Willie James and we were all shocked."

JH: I'm shocked to hear it even now.

JE: Yeah.

JH: Even if I thought it I wouldn't have said it, but he said it. He said it but that was probably the spirit of so many like him. And when you hear that it really reconfirmed that they did not consider us as equals.

JE: Yeah. The famous actor, Charlton Heston, came to Oklahoma City to lead a march in support of Civil Rights.

JH: That's right. And that's why it's good to record; the older you get you start forgetting things. And I had forgotten until that came back up in the film that he was a part of our movement back then.

- JE:** Here's something ugly, in Bishop's Restaurant, a white man throws a pet chimpanzee at Clara and tries to get it to attack her.
- JH:** Yeah. You called it that, I called it was just a monkey. I was not there at that day, I probably would have, I don't know, let me not second-guess, but it did happen.
- JE:** And a man goes into Bishop's and the monkey is served while several angry protestors attempt to get inside. The staff holds the door shut. Clara and others calm the situation down, and the man with the monkey leaves under police escort.
- JH:** Um-hmm, um-hmm (affirmatives).
- JE:** I just wanted people to know how ugly this thing is.
- JH:** I was getting ready to say another ugly scene, we didn't have the dogs, we didn't have the water hose, but we had so many other tactics that were used. As a kid, how devastating those tactics were. I look back over the sit-in movement, and in spite of all of that, I'm so thankful that we had someone to lead us, so that those experiences were worth it, to see where we are today.
- JE:** Then Clara led a group to Tulsa, it wasn't just Oklahoma City. They had a parade, a rally in Boulder Park, and Borden's Cafeteria was targeted.
- JH:** Umm (thoughtful sound).
- JE:** In Tulsa. The front door was locked, so they went in the back door. Police equipped with tear gas, Clara was arrested, and the police chief was Jack Purdie. She liked him, she spent an hour in jail, actually liked the jail, released to the custody of Ed Goodwin, who was the publisher of the *Oklahoma Eagle*.
- JH:** Right, right.
- JE:** And black leaders denounced the demonstrations.
- JH:** Um-hmm (affirmative).
- JE:** So it was in Tulsa as well in the Skirvin Hotel too, it was a big one.
- JH:** And she also went to Doe Doe Park in Lawton, Oklahoma. There were other hotspots in the state of Oklahoma, she didn't drag us over the state. Every spot had their own participants. It wasn't like we had to go and do it for them. I think everybody felt the same way, we wanted quality here too.

Chapter 11 - 6:15

The March on Washington

John Erling: The march on Washington, you were in high school.

Joyce Henderson: I was in high school, I was sixteen years old. I was going into my senior year—remember this is in August. Back in those days school started the day after Labor Day.

So August 28, 1963, she took two buses. I recall going, thinking, “Yes, we’re going to the march,” but I had no idea what magnitude, the thousands of people there. And as I look at pictures today, I can point out about where I stood. But at that time, I, as an individual, had ever seen that many people gathered anywhere. And according to history, they said 250 thousand people gathered for that march on Washington.

I was fascinated with a lady by the name of Mahalia Jackson, and that’s because she was one of my favorite singers. I was very much excited that I got to hear Mahalia Jackson and see her. You could hear everything just like it was next door to you.

So at any rate, I heard Dr. King deliver that speech. At that time, it wasn’t called the “I have a dream,” speech, he was the keynote speaker. Like a Baptist minister, he got us all roused up. And I can recall clapping and we were cheering at different parts of his speech. I also tell people, “I heard the speech but I did not understand the speech until after his assassination.” When he talked about being judged by your character, not by the color of your skin, things started making more sense later on in life for me. And I was an adult then.

But in 1963, I was glad to see not one race of people, but all races of people, come together for that march. I had the opportunity to lead out in songs. As we would walk and I’d lead a song, everybody would join in as you were walking toward the mall. That to me was special for me. It didn’t matter, people just felt like we knew each other, and we just felt good about that moment.

JE: The march was really known as “the march on Washington for jobs and freedom.”

JH: Right. We had job issues, transportation issues, public education issues, public accommodation issues, housing issues. There were a lot of issues addressed. So when you think about what the agenda for that march, eating was just part of it. It was just one item on the agenda. There were so many issues, we wanted equality for all people. And again, at that time, the Civil Rights Act wasn’t signed—it was signed in ’64, under President Lyndon B. Johnson.

JE: But the march is credited with helping to pass the Civil Rights Act.

JH: If you were a part of the march, you could not help but be touched. If you saw the march on television, you couldn’t help but be touched. So the influence, the impact of that because it hadn’t happened any other time, that many people assembling on these issues. And that was a way to express your voice. And the voice and voices were heard at that march.

JE: That march also preceded the Selma voting rights movement, which led to the passage of the Voting Rights Act. So that’s how important—

JH: That march was.

JE: ...that event was, and you were a part of it.

JH: I was a part of it. Again, Miss Luper always taught, “Be a part of history.” Now, fifty years later, 2013, I decided, “I’ve got to go back for the celebration of the fiftieth year.” Now, as

a kid, when you're participating in it you're not thinking, "Oh, fifty years later I'm coming back." But when they announced it was fifty years I hadn't thought of it like that. I told my husband, "I want to go back for the fiftieth anniversary."

He couldn't, he said, "Buy yourself a ticket so you can go and be there." He bought my ticket, I took a flight and went by myself. Tried to stand about where I thought I stood fifty years ago. The feeling was chilling, just because you had people saying, "You were there? I was there." "You were there? I was there." And how many had? I just couldn't afford to take my grandchildren, but so many brought their kids, grandkids. To be truthful, I felt more like a celebrity then because somebody would say, "This lady was there back in 1963," and the little eyes were like, "You were?"

Well, you know, you think about it, young people today read about this history, but when you can touch somebody who was part of history, it's priceless.

JE: Yeah, let me just restage here, you may be hearing voices off in the distance. I just want to remind you again, we are in the Oklahoma History Center. We're in a replica living room of Clara Luper and we're right next door to a replica of the lunch counter in Katz Drugstore, so these are young children coming through and learning about history, that's what you're hearing on the side.

JH: That's correct.

JE: So there is no way you could have known that day how important that was. Most couldn't. There had to be somebody said, "Well, this was a great speech," immediately. But as you listen more and more to it sometimes when a man like Martin Luther King is so fiery—

JH: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: ...the words come so fast—

JH: Yes.

JE: ...it's hard to process that.

JH: Yes. And think about it too, he was alive. We were listening to one of our heroes.

Chapter 12 - 3:20

MLK Assassinated

Joyce Henderson: Five years later, he's assassinated.

John Erling: Sixty-eight.

JH: So from '63 to '68, about five years later, it was in April, it was just not on my radar to imagine what happened to him would happen. So I value the moment even more so because that was the last time I saw him in person in 1963, on that stage.

So a few years ago, I wanted to go and visit where the assassination took place, to Lorraine Hotel. It is now the Civil Rights Museum in Memphis, Tennessee.

JE: Museum.

JH: We had a national church convention there about 2006, and I made it a priority to go and visit the museum, and had some of our young people attend at that convention. And we took three of them, the pastor's wife and myself, because we wanted them to be a part of history. They still have the car and they still have everything pretty much just like it was when it happened. Another chilling effect.

So as I look back over my life and I look back over my relationship with Clara Luper, she made me appreciate everything about history. She made me appreciate getting involved in history. She made me appreciate because she would say in her class, "One day we'll have a black president." Appreciate it to the point where I've got to go to the inauguration.

So I drove to the inauguration, thinking, "This won't happen again." So when it happened again, I hear Clara Luper saying, "You need to go." And again, I drove to the second inauguration of President Barak Obama.

So I look back over my life and think about how rich it has been, how much it has contributed to who I am as a person. And as I see young people who don't have a clue what's going on it hurts my heart, because they don't realize these opportunities have not always been here.

So a part of me is still being Clara Luper, and that is, to tell the story. And I will continue to tell the story. Being a part of the children of the Civil Rights documentary film, I don't think happened by accident. I think it was in the plan for me to be a part of it. And as Julia Clifford, the director, would say when she contacted me so that we could contact others, I knew then the importance of telling the story. I didn't know how it was going to come out, but I look back over that experience seven or eight years ago as a blessing for me. And again, that's the connection of what Clara Luper has done in my life.

JE: And the name of that documentary?

JH: The name of that documentary is, *Children of the Civil Rights*.

Chapter 13 -6:17

In Reflection

John Erling: How would you like those sit-in demonstrations to be remembered by today's young African-Americans?

Joyce Henderson: I would like for them to know that there were those of us who had the courage to make a change. And because of what we did, and because of the

opportunities they now have, don't take it lightly. Take advantage of it. Don't say, "I don't want an education." Don't say, "I don't want to be a productive citizen." Don't say, "Oh I don't care about what the issues are." Don't say, "I don't care to vote because it's not going to make a difference."

When I hear those comments, I'm thinking, "I need to take you back to Clara Luper days, because you need to understand the opportunities that you have. Because many of us made sacrifices so that you could have opportunity today.

JE: Just the other day I actually took a picture of a newspaper headline involving the Klu Klux Klan in California.

JH: Umm (thoughtful sound).

JE: And here we are in 2016.

JH: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: So my question to you then is, "Where does racism stand today compared to the '50s and '60s?"

JH: Back in the '50s and '60s, we had laws that segregated us. Now we have laws that integrate us, but yet we still have some segregation in us. So when you look at articles like that it tells us that racism still exists in our United States of America. When you look at what's going on in America today you may not have the laws but you have the behavior. And when you have the behavior it's hard to put your finger on it unless you make it obvious that you still have racism in your heart. So we have progressed. But everyday I see signs that we still have a long way to go.

So we continue to try to change hearts, and as stated in the film, if you don't know your history, you will repeat it. Clara Luper is one who would say, "Know your history! Know your history! Know your history so you can appreciate where you are now. But in order to continue to progress in the future you've got to come on board and still be engaged. And don't take for granted that these opportunities that you have will continue to be there. Because if you don't watch it, we're going to go back. And I don't want us to.

JE: My father would say about church politics—

JH: Yes?

JE: He's say, "It was so fine."

JH: Yes. I agree.

JE: And you probably would say that now about racism.

JH: Yes.

JE: It's not black and white—

JH: That's right.

JE: ...and signs.

JH: Yeah.

JE: But it is so fine.

JH: Yes it is.

JE: You, yourself, you're a very nice looking woman.

JH: Thank you.

JE: Beautiful black-graying hair, and of course, you love to purple.

JH: Thank you.

JE: Do you sense any prejudice shown to you, even in this day?

JH: People have a way of treating you a certain way if you have a certain position. So I'm treated a certain way because of my position and who I am.

JE: Standing in the community.

JH: Yes. But I don't take for granted that you're treating everybody like that. But I wouldn't know that. I do try to watch your interaction with others, not just me, to see if the behavior is genuine or not. If I pick up that you are genuine, it doesn't matter what the race is. I feel as though you're going to treat that person as a human being and with the same respect that you would me.

I do recall before I became known, there were subtle kind of behavior toward me in certain environmental things or programs or conventions, depending on what the situation was. But once they got to know me, behavior changed. And that's why it's important that we expose everybody and interact with people. If we're separated, you don't get to know me. But because they've gotten to know me in this setting or that setting they have an image of, "We like her, not because of the color of her skin, but because of who she is and what she has to offer."

JE: Right, great. Well, I've sure enjoyed this and I thank you for taking the time—

JH: Thank you.

JE: ...and particularly here in the Oklahoma History Center in Oklahoma City, sitting in some artifacts that belonged in Clara Luper's home. You probably recognize some of them because you—

JH: I recognize all of them.

JE: ...as you look around.

JH: Yes.

JE: So can we kind of conclude here with you doing one of your songs?

JH: Let's see. "Black and white together. Black and white together. Black and white together today-ay-ay. Oh-oh deep in my heart I do believe black and white together today."

JE: And if we were in church we'd say, "Everybody say, 'Amen.'"

JH: Amen.

JE: Thank you, Joyce.

JH: You're welcome.

JE: That was fun.

JH: Thank you.

Chapter 14 - 0:33

Conclusion

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