

## Loretta Young Jackson

Loretta holds many honors, but her greatest work lies in the discover and restoration of the Verden Separate School.

### Chapter 01 - 1:10

#### Introduction

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**Announcer:** Verden, Oklahoma, resident Allen Toles was an African American farmer who had become the owner of his land through the Homestead Act of 1862. He built Verden Separate School on his property in 1910, as a school for black children. When the school was consolidated with Lincoln Separate School in Chickasha, the building was used only as a workshop and storage building.

About ninety years later, the abandoned schoolhouse was found by Loretta Young Jackson, and under her guidance the school was moved to Chickasha, where it stands on Ada Sipuel Avenue. The school is visited by hundreds of students each year and serves as an education tool on race relations.

The school was restored and placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2005.

Loretta worked in the area of real estate and mortgage banking and became a leader on public issues in Chickasha and the state. Among her many accomplishments is the Foundation of the Loretta Jackson African American Historical Society.

Loretta holds many honors for all her accomplishments, but perhaps her greatest work lies in the discovery and restoration of that one-room separate school, which she talks about in her oral history, heard on Voices of Oklahoma...preserving Oklahoma's legacy... one voice at a time.

### Chapter: 02 - 10:33

#### The Youngest

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**John Erling:** My name is John Erling. Today's date is March 26, 2015. Loretta, would you state your full name, please?

**Loretta Jackson:** My name is Loretta Young Blunt Jackson.

**JE:** Young, where does Young come from?

**LJ:** I was a seventh child. My mother said that she ran out of names so her other children came home and on the tablets, like the Big Chief and those type, they had movie stars and they had everybody on there. But on one of the tablets they had Loretta Young. And she said, "That's her name. We're going to call her Loretta Young Blunt." And that's where the Young came from, off of a tablet from the movie star Loretta Young.

**JE:** Your date of birth?

**LJ:** February 6, 1935.

**JE:** And that makes you how old today?

**LJ:** Eighty years old. I didn't realize that until my son came in with a birthday card.

**JE:** Oh.

**LJ:** I never thought about age, I never thought about it. That comes from a long line of listening to my mother and my grandmother. My mother would remind my grandmother of how old she was. And she said, "You can catch up with me if you like." She was never going to get old.

**JE:** Yeah.

**LJ:** And so I never even thought about it.

**JE:** Because you've had your good health and you've been able to be very active?

**LJ:** I've been able to, yes.

**JE:** Where are we recording this interview?

**LJ:** You're recording this interview in my dining room at my home.

**JE:** Here in Chickasha. Your mother's name?

**LJ:** Lillie Bell Curry Blunt.

**JE:** Where does the Curry come from?

**LJ:** The Curry is from my grandfather. And my grandfather came from Texas, and his father came from overseas somewhere in Africa. And I'm doing that research now.

**JE:** Talk about your mother a little bit. Where did she come from?

**LJ:** She came from Waco, Texas. At probably two years old, they moved to Chickasha on 3rd Street. She grew up on 3rd Street here in Chickasha.

**JE:** What was she like? What was her personality like?

**LJ:** Mom was a very kind person in a sense, but very stern. Demanded respect. She said to me, "I killed 'I can't' so, therefore, you can." She would tell you what to do. She expected you to do that. She had certain expectations for all of the children individually. Not that one did everything or they all did the same thing, but whatever your ability was, that's what she expected of you. She said she knew what you could do and that's what she expected from you.

**JE:** So you said she killed "can't."

**LJ:** She said, "I killed 'I can't.'" You couldn't say, "I can't do this," or "I can't do that." She was church-going, she was mother of the church. We had to go to Sunday school. Back then we went to Sunday school, stayed for church, they had an eleven o'clock service, we stayed for that. If there was a two o'clock service, then you came home, had your dinner, went back to church at two o'clock. And they had Young People's Union, BYPU, and you stayed for that. Then we had night service and we had to stay for night service. So on Sunday, you had to stay dressed and intact. Sunday was a special day.

But Mama was very kind and immaculately clean. Everything had to be clean. She would come and inspect what you did, she didn't just say, "Do it," and walk away from it. If she said, "Wash up the dishes," each one of us had a day or a week to wash dishes. She would go then to the kitchen and see that the dishes is washed and dried and put up in the cabinet.

Then, if it was your time to rake the yard, or whatever chore, clean up, clean your room, she inspected that room. But then she was good to us.

**JE:** Um-hmm (affirmative). Your father's name?

**LJ:** Clarence Blunt.

**JE:** Where did he grow up?

**LJ:** Daddy grew up in Earlsboro, was born in Earlsboro. His mother died at childbirth so he never knew his mother. He was raised by his grandmother. And I am working on that research also.

He had one brother. His father moved to Kansas City. He didn't grow up in a family setting. That impacted his life so that we could never have any verbal disagreement to the point that we would argue with one another. We could never show disrespect for one another. Daddy would stop us in just a few minutes if he heard a conversation. Just minutes in that conversation or seconds in it he would stop and say, "You kids don't know how blessed you are to have one another. And don't do that."

So we had to respect family. He was a very kind man. Daddy worked real hard, supported his family, so I grew up with a mother and father both surrounding me.

**JE:** And he was born here in Oklahoma, here in Earlsboro.

**LJ:** Yes. Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** That would be in Potawatomi County, I think.

**LJ:** Yes, in Potawatomi County.

**JE:** Right. So here you are, the youngest of seven children. How many boys and girls then in that?

**LJ:** Two boys. Then I had three other sisters.

**JE:** Being the youngest, were you, eh (hesitation sound), spoiled, then?

**LJ:** No, no, no I'm not spoiled, just the opposite, just the opposite. I was the designated person from my childhood that if you need something done, Loretta will do it. I wasn't spoiled, they

didn't clutter me like I hear a lot of talk about them being the baby and how they petted the baby. No, that was not my role. I was supposed to do the work. If they felt that they could put the rake in my hand, if Mama told them to rake it up, then, "Loretta, you rake it up."

And as I grew older, if you want something done or if Mama was reading and helping the older children with their reading and their arithmetic and that, and I was out in the yard, she would call me in and say, "Read this."

I would read it. She would then tell them, "Loretta can read this," and, "Loretta can do this." And when I'd finish she'd say, "Go back to the yard."

**JE:** Hmm (thoughtful sound).

**LJ:** She'd tell me to leave the house.

**JE:** Hmm, hmm (thoughtful sounds).

**LJ:** Go back to the yard. No I was not spoiled because I was the seventh child, baby, no, no, that was not my role.

**JE:** What did your father do for a living?

**LJ:** Daddy worked at the oil mill, he worked at the compress, and he worked hauling trash. We thought that that was the neatest thing. Daddy worked for the very rich of Chickasha. He went to 8th Street, 12th Street, 18th Street, and I think maybe 20th.

Sometimes during the spring they would clean closets out and they would give Daddy boxes of clothes and he hauled for the business sector of Chickasha, Crown Drugstore, all the businesses downtown. They would then clean the refrigerators out. There was a meat locker and if people didn't get the food out of the lockers when they were supposed to they would then let Dad have the choice.

So he cleaned up and hauled trash. He worked for himself, that was his. We had a truck.

**JE:** But I thought you said he worked for a company.

**LJ:** He worked for the oil mill. When I say oil mill, that was a grain type of company.

**JE:** Okay.

**LJ:** And then he worked for the compress. Part of it is still on Genevieve here and they called it the oil mill, but it was not related to—

**JE:** Oil mill?

**LJ:** Yeah. Oil mill.

**JE:** All right. So then did he have his own trash-hauling business?

**LJ:** Yes, yes.

**JE:** And that's what sustained beyond that?

**LJ:** Sustained us, yes.

**JE:** Okay.

**LJ:** But when the city took over hauling the trash and cleaning up blacks at that time, African Americans, could not work for the city because of segregation. So Daddy couldn't work for

the city. I heard the discussion and Mama telling him what he should or what he shouldn't do. But Daddy took the city foreman and showed them how he had been hauling the trash, taking it to the dump ground, dumping that trash.

I remember Mama saying, "You can't work for them, why do you want to tell them what to do? Let them find out how to do it."

Daddy said, "Because I think it's right and I'm thinking about the people that I worked for all the years and I want their trash hauled off right." So Daddy showed the city how he picked up the trash, how he cleaned up so that the alleys would look good.

After that then Daddy went into hay-hauling, cotton-hauling, and would then contract with different farmers in Verden, Minco, and Tuttle and Grady County. Daddy hauled cotton hands; they chopped the cotton and pulled cotton. He had a truck and he would then take it to Verden and take it to the nearest gin, wherever this farmer wanted him to take that cotton to.

So he found a way to make a living for us as long as he lived.

**JE:** Hmm (thoughtful sound). Did you grow up in a house? Must have been right around in here?

**LJ:** I grew up right next door.

**JE:** To where we're sitting now?

**LJ:** Where we're sitting right now. That's where I grew up.

**JE:** Yeah.

**LJ:** I was born on Shephard Street. And Mama said that Mr. Mathis, the man that they rented from, said that he had a house that some people was moving out of. And he wanted to sell that house. And he said, "If you all will move in here today I'll let you all have it, you can buy it."

Mama said that they got everything ready and they moved right there.

## **Chapter: 03 - 4:45**

### **Education**

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**John Erling:** So then you went to elementary school here in Chickasha.

**Loretta Jackson:** I walked right across from here to Lincoln School.

**JE:** And—

**LJ:** Elementary and high school.

**JE:** Were you particularly strong in any area?

**LJ:** Yes I was strong in most of what I did at school, from grade school to high school. I remember when I was in the fourth, fifth, sixth grade I was good at speaking, learning, retaining. We had what they called chapel, and then they called it the assembly, at school.

The grade school would be on Tuesday and then high school on Thursday. Sometimes on Thursday they would invite grade school. So this particular day the grade school was invited. And Mr. Parish said that he had, "Listened in on the grade school. And there was a student that said a poem that I want you all to hear." And he just called me out and asked me to come on stage and say that before the whole school. It was a poem called "Others."

Then he asked me about another one, "Opportunity." So when the school had a program I then was that person to announce what the school was going to perform and how they would perform. That's my skit there.

**JE:** How old were you when you did this?

**LJ:** It was in 1951.

**JE:** Fifteen years old.

**LJ:** So I must have been in about the ninth grade.

**JE:** Why don't you just read the first paragraph of that.

**LJ:** Okay. This is a radio skit: Ladies and gentlemen of the radio audience, this is Lincoln School. Lincoln School was founded and set in motion by the late Jay Oscar Spenser in September 1900, in a little Baptist church on the southwest corner of 1st Street and Dakota Avenue. Of the small number of pupils present on that occasion there are but a few living here in Chickasha today. Among those are Miss Ethel Smith, who for many years served W. H. Gilleys, Miss Edna Pearl, and Miss Addie Brown.

That was my strong point, reading, retaining. In high school I have other certificates. This is one that I have received, it must have been in the sixth grade. It was in spelling for the year. This is one that I received in reading when I was in grade school. This is what I received in 1952, I must have been in the eleventh grade, and that was in typing. This is in grade six, penmanship. And this is a perfect attendance slip that I received in 1947. And I want you to notice on there that I do have my report card at the bottom there.

**JE:** I can tell you that she was almost straight A: English - A, Music Appreciation - B+, Typing - A-, American History - A, and French - B. So Mother must have been proud of you on that.

**LJ:** Yes. This is General Science I received, and this is another one in Reading. So I did all of those things. I was in the Band, I sang. I was drum majorette in the Band.

**JE:** Did your mother talk a lot about the importance of education?

**LJ:** She drilled that in us from home first, that you must get an education. Then at church they told us that you must have an education. That was reinforced from home, church, and then school, so you were taught that you must do that.

This is the senior chorus at the school and I sang in that choir.

**JE:** Huh (surprised sound).

**LJ:** But all of that, my being involved in school, was reinforced from home. My daddy always stated to us, "Remember who you are." And there was no disgrace, nothing that you did

when you left home was supposed to impact or reflect your mother and father and who you are. You belong to somebody, and Daddy said, "You got to respect that."

**JE:** What year did you graduate from Lincoln High School?

**LJ:** Nineteen fifty-four.

## **Chapter: 04 - 5:45**

### **Ada Lois Sipuel Fisher**

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**John Erling:** There is somebody else in this community and there's a street sign out here for Ada Lois Sipuel Fisher.

**Loretta Jackson:** Yes.

**JE:** She was older than you, I think by about ten years or so.

**LJ:** Ada Lois grew up across the street, angled from where I was raised.

**JE:** Oh, wh—

**LJ:** So we were both raised on Dakota. She was a high school student and I was grade school. But in the summertime or spring, they would play ball in the street. And if the ball went in somebody's yard, it was Loretta that Ada Lois would say, "Go get the ball. If you want to play with us," you know, young children at that time, little kids, is what they called it. They wanted to play with the big kids, they wanted to play ball. But you couldn't play directly, you had to do those chores.

But Ada Lois was a good friend of mine. She was always nice. When she grew up, the father moved the house, because he was a minister he moved the house on 1st Street right next to the church that he pastored. So that took her out of this community.

Then I lost track. Then I heard about her at the University of Oklahoma. In later years, she would come back to Chickasha and would talk to my mother and my father and my brothers. And when I was given an honor they called it "Loretta Day." And I'll tell you about that.

Ada Lois came back and was one of the keynote speakers. She was one of the persons to come and say how she knew me and so on. But she was a good friend of mine.

**JE:** While we're talking about her let's tell her story just a little bit. She, of course, was the first black to graduate from the University of Oklahoma Law School. But she actually graduated from Lincoln High School.

**LJ:** Yes.

**JE:** Right here.

**LJ:** Yes.

**JE:** In Chickasha.

**LJ:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** She enrolled in the Arkansas Agricultural, Mechanical, and Normal College, now University of Arkansas, Pine Bluff. Transferred to Langston University in '42, and was graduated with honors in 1945. So then this kind of brings her to that point where she delayed her legal career in order to challenge segregation. And then it was in 1946, that she applied at the University of Oklahoma and was denied because of race.

You did a documentary on her.

**LJ:** I did a documentary on Ada Lois because I wanted her story. I did four documentaries and hers was one of those.

**JE:** Even though she was finally admitted to the law school she had to dine in a separate, chained-off, guarded area of the law school cafeteria.

**LJ:** Yes.

**JE:** She recalled years later that some white students would crawl under the chain and eat with her when the guards were not around.

**LJ:** The students accepted her. It was the law of the university, it was the law of segregation. But the students, they took the chains down and accepted her and would not allow her to sit in a separate place to eat or to be in class.

**JE:** As I said, in '46, she applied at the University of Oklahoma and was denied because of her race. And then two years later, in 1948, the US Supreme Court ruled in Sipuel versus Board of Regents, University of Oklahoma, that the state of Oklahoma must provide instruction for blacks equal to that of whites.

Thurgood Marshall acted as the head NAACP lawyer for this case and the justices rules unanimously. The case was also a precursor for Brown versus Board of Education.

So she was admitted, but even so, was treated differently.

**LJ:** Yes.

**JE:** But then graduated in '51, with a master of law degree, began practicing law right here in Chickasha in 1952.

**LJ:** She practiced law here in Chickasha with a friend of hers and a neighbor, T. J. McElthene. She worked with him here in Chickasha.

**JE:** Then it's interesting to point out, Governor David Walters appointed her to the Board of Regents.

**LJ:** Yes.

**JE:** At the University of Oklahoma.

**LJ:** That's right.

**JE:** What a great story that was as she's noted and completed a forty-five-year cycle for her to for her to be named a member of the Board of Regents. You had to be terribly proud of her, that you knew her playing ball.

**LJ:** Yes.

**JE:** And then when you saw what she did, I mean, she, of some sort, was a role model for you probably.

**LJ:** It was a role model for us. But then when you met Ada Lois that was not the topic of discussion. She was just Ada Lois, she was being herself, it wasn't something that she would dwell on. It was all about learning, it was all about being fair, it was all about being somebody. And that's what the teachers would say and the older kids would tell you, "Be somebody."

So when we would visit, she just might say, "What are you doing? And how are you?"

**JE:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**LJ:** "Can I help you with whatever you're doing?"

So when she said that I told her about the projects and my being on the banking board.

**JE:** And even though, as I pointed out, she had to eat in a chained-off section, she was given a chair and it was labeled "Colored," in a roped-off area of the classroom.

**LJ:** Yes. At that point in history, on all of the water fountains, all of the bathrooms, they would have "Colored" and "White."

**JE:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**LJ:** And you knew exactly which fountain that you should drink from, or which bathroom you should use, if there was one for you.

## **Chapter: 05 - 4:45**

### **Living Segregated**

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**John Erling:** So as a child, and you got into the community and you saw these things, weren't you asking questions?

**Loretta Jackson:** We were told that before we left home.

**JE:** That you'd encounter this kind of scene?

**LJ:** That's right. You knew exactly what the situation was. And I've been asked this question, "How did I feel going to Lincoln School when there was a Chickasha High School?"

**JE:** So Lincoln High School was a separate school for blacks?

**LJ:** For blacks.

**JE:** And there was a regular Chickasha High School for whites.

**LJ:** For whites.

**JE:** Okay, then how did you feel about going to Lincoln?

**LJ:** We went to Lincoln School feeling very proud of Lincoln. We were very proud students. Twice a year, we would visit Chickasha High School, and Chickasha High School would send students to Lincoln School. It was during Brotherhood Week, and maybe sometimes during the spring. But there was never the feeling that they had more than we had. That feeling was never there.

**JE:** Did you feel racism amongst people of your age then as you were in high school? Was there tension or were you mixing with them?

**LJ:** We didn't mix with them. I could go all day and never leave the community. We had grocery stores, we went to church in the community, we had recreation in the community. We played ball, there was a ball field. We had everything. We went to school, we had basketball games. Black schools around the state would come to Lincoln School, so we had that activity. We had the choir.

Lincoln would have a festival and we would go to some other place to sing with other black schools. So we had activities within the black race. We didn't need that outside. The only thing with our band uniforms and with the band instruments Lincoln colors were black and gold, we had to wait to get uniforms. In the Home Economics department they made the majorette uniforms, but the instruments, we had to wait until Chickasha High had an access. They would pass their instruments down to Lincoln.

**JE:** Hmm (thoughtful sound).

**LJ:** We didn't get new. The only individual, there was a family that came from Mississippi, with a white family, the parent worked for these white people that bought these children their instruments. And, of course, at that time, a standout because these children had new instruments. We thought the parents were buying them.

Later, in my interviews about Chickasha and Grady County, I interviewed the mother and she told me that the people that she worked for had supported her children. I didn't know that. And possibly most of the individuals that went to school with this family, today, does not realize that these kids was being supported by this white family.

**JE:** I guess you just accepted, the whites go there, the blacks go here, and when you're young you don't try to—

**LJ:** But see, when you grow up with it, and you grow up going to school, and you grow up not seeing these people, you don't see these people. You didn't see them at home, you didn't see them at church, you didn't see those people at school. You could go to the grocery store, you could go to the doctor, Dr. Bullock was right there. We had a dentist, we had all of that in the black community.

**JE:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**LJ:** So you didn't have that desire. There was no television to bring in—

**JE:** Yeah.

**LJ:** ...that.

**JE:** Whites didn't come in here to try to create—

**LJ:** No.

**JE:** ...problems at all?

**LJ:** No they didn't come in. No.

**JE:** So it was a peaceful community then?

**LJ:** Yes, that's right.

**JE:** I think you were instrumental in getting streets named out here Ada, Lois, Sipuel?

**LJ:** Yes.

**JE:** I saw those signs. And, you know, while she was doing that a very similar situation was going on at the University of Tulsa, happening at the same time. And it was Anita Alexander Hairston. She was the first black student to graduate a year later in 1952.

**LJ:** Oh.

**JE:** At Tulsa University. She sat in a legally segregated location, was not allowed to use the library or other buildings. They did have an evening Sociology class that admitted black students when white students agreed then not to contest the integration.

So a year after Ada Lois it was the same situation going on in Tulsa.

## **Chapter: 06 - 1:10**

### **Blacks to Oklahoma**

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**John Erling:** At the time in Oklahoma, there really was in the '30s and '40s, open, blatant segregation. You'd have to say because you experienced that right here.

**Loretta Jackson:** Oh yes.

**JE:** As we even go back further, when the five civilized tribes were forced to come to Oklahoma, they brought with them black slaves. So that's really how blacks came to Oklahoma Territory. The slaves did the clearing of the land for the Indians and managing livestock.

And you have produced these three documentaries, *Courage: The Ada Lois Sipuel Story*; *The Color of Hope*; and *A City Within a City*.

**LJ:** Yes. And see, that's what I was trying to explain when I did *Hold to the Past*; *A City within a City*. The black community was actually a city within the city of Chickasha. That's what I was trying to bring to recognition that the black community served this community. Except for a representative in city government you didn't have to leave this community at all. No, you didn't have to do that.

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**Chapter: 07 - 9:00**  
**Industrious Loretta**

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**John Erling:** After graduation from Lincoln High School, then what do you do?

**Loretta Jackson:** I married Limon Brown and that didn't work. We were young and we had to different visions for life. I still wanted to go to school, that was sort of a conflict in there and that didn't last.

I then started to work because Daddy knew all of the rich people. So coming up in high school we worked at Thanksgiving, Christmas for the rich. Washed their dishes, cleaned up after dinner. There was several blacks in the home. There was a cook and there was a person that served the meal. We washed the dishes after they prepared the meal and served the meal. Then we cleaned up after that.

So that's what I did, I worked for these people for Daddy. Daddy would get us a job working for this person, doing domestic work or working in homes.

After that, Daddy came and said he wanted me to work for a man that had a motel where you could make the beds. So we did that for a while. That was getting out of the field because here was no cotton to chop and pull during the wintertime. And so you wanted a job that would last year-round. Most blacks did seasonal work, so this was getting away from that seasonal work.

Daddy came home and said that they needed someone to work at Pugh Mortgage Company in the kitchen. They said, "All you would have to do is make the coffee for coffee breaks, watch over the donuts and keep the office clean after hours. That would be year-round."

That was fine. So then I started working for Pugh Mortgage Company, that was fantastic for me.

**JE:** How long did you work in that position, for the mortgage company?

**LJ:** I worked in that position for Pugh Mortgage Company from the '60s to, I believe it was, 1984. In the meantime, Friends School was giving typing lessons. So I went to Friends School and brushed up on my typing, during December and January when they were getting ready to send out the statements, interest statements and so on. I would ask those young women, same age I was, or looked the same, I would ask them to allow me to work on their computers. "Let me run that for you."

**JE:** Computers?

**LJ:** Yes.

**JE:** You mean typewriters?

**LJ:** No, no, no, I'm talking, they had a big NCR, a big computer.

**JE:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**LJ:** That they would take the cord—

**JE:** Oh yes.

**LJ:** ...and put it in that computer.

**JE:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**LJ:** And that computer would read off that interest, read off those payments, post those payments. So after working hours, I would clean up the kitchen, get all my work done, go to all the individual offices and make sure that I'd done all of my work. If there was anyone left there doing work then I would ask them to let me help them with their work.

You see, it all comes back now from working and being with my father, who said, "Respect people." And I had to respect white people. I knew how to respect them. I knew how to speak to them, to be a part. "Allow me to help you." Those women were getting the work done and they didn't have anything to do but sip coffee or go in the break room and get a Coke or whatever they wanted to do, and Loretta was doing the work.

When I heard about the law being passed—

**JE:** The Civil Rights Act?

**LJ:** The Civil Rights Act.

**JE:** In 1964.

**LJ:** Yes, when I heard about that it didn't funnel here.

**JE:** Right.

**LJ:** It didn't get here. In 1967, I then applied for a position with Pugh Mortgage, when Mr. Smith, who was the office manager, he came in for his coffee on break. "Mr. Smith," I said, "I understand that the person who is working in the computer room will be leaving, that Glen will be leaving the posting machine." I said, "I'd like to work on that posting machine."

He looked at me as if to say, "What are you saying?" He looked at me just momentarily like, "I know I didn't hear this." And then he said, "You want to work in the office out there? You want to leave what you're doing here?" He said, "I'll need to speak with Mr. Allen," who was one of the owners, president of the company, he said, "And I'll get back with you."

Before he came back, Mr. Allen came in said, "Loretta, I understand that you want to work on the posting machine."

And I said, "I would love to, Mr. Allen."

He said, "Fred will talk with you about it."

That was that morning. We came back in the afternoon, Mr. Smith said, "If you leave this position and you can't do the work we'll fire you."

I said to him, I said, "Mr. Smith, if you hire me you will never fire me for my lack of my doing the work."

They asked me if I would work there until they hired someone else. I would then help that person, and then I could go into the computer room where the posting machine was. The advantage, because I had worked in those different areas, the escrow, and I would

go into the insurance department, anyone that was working after five, I worked in all of the areas, I would help with all of that. So I knew the operation of the company because I posted. I did all of their work on that posting machine. I did the general ledger and I balanced that, so I knew the operation, I knew every department, and I learned that. So I knew that I could do all of that work.

**JE:** They did not know, did they, when you asked the question, "Would you hire me?" that you had been working after hours?

**LJ:** No, no, they didn't know that.

**JE:** And so they were just hiring you cold blank.

**LJ:** Yes.

**JE:** As far as they were concerned.

**LJ:** That's right.

**JE:** And then, lo and behold, here is somebody that we hired her, where did she learn all of that?

**LJ:** Yes. It had been over time that I learned the operations. But see, I could help each person in the different departments because I posted their work. They sent it into the bookkeeper. And that bookkeeper then would have those different numbers for the different ledgers. And I knew that. I had to learn where the ledgers and where this posting was, that posting was, for this department, for the different departments. I had to know that.

**JE:** You were brought in as the first black to work in the office?

**LJ:** Yes. I was the first, that's right.

**JE:** There was no backlash about that, I would imagine, in the community when people came in and they saw you there working?

**LJ:** No because I was in the back.

**JE:** Okay, okay.

**LJ:** I was at the very back of the office. I was not out front. They didn't see me unless they was going to the kitchen.

**JE:** Okay.

**LJ:** And see, when I was sitting down at the posting machine someone could come in that wanted to talk about their escrow, they could come in and sit down and they would never see me because the windows was up high in the computer. So I wasn't visible. It wasn't one of those things that, "Here they've hired a black at Pugh Mortgage Company." No.

**JE:** But you went on and you served as a manager and assistant manager of the Second Mortgage and Consumer Loan department, included service personnel and second mortgage loans, working in the origination department. You were a loan officer, a processor, you worked as a chief teller, savings account clerk, assistant loan supervisor for American Express International Banking in Germany.

**LJ:** Yes. In Germany, that was a different experience too because they had not had someone that would have the knowledge of working.

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**Chapter: 08 - 2:40****Loretta in Germany**

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**Loretta Jackson:** I married Harold Jackson, who was in the military, he went overseas and we then had an opportunity to go to Germany. Cynthia, my oldest, was going to finish school.

**John Erling:** Okay, your children, how many children did you have?

**LJ:** I had two children.

**JE:** And their names?

**LJ:** Cynthia Wyvonne Jackson, now Anderson, and I had a son, Limon Jackson. Cynthia was going to graduate while Harold was stationed in Germany. So I needed to support that. I'd been working all the time. When I went to American Express to apply for a job it was German, they spoke German, and they called it, I think I'm saying it right, Swatski, meaning "a black person is here looking for a job." That was kind of a laugh.

Miss Coltzer said, "What can you do?" She spoke English. But they talked about it, they spoke it in German, finally she said to come back, I could work in the bookkeeping with Mr. Erstleiger but I would have to be able to count the money. They had to have an interpreter because I had to take the money to the Dresnic Bank downtown and I needed an interpreter so that I could make that transaction.

Sometimes I felt a little intimidated because they spoke German. They would look at me, they would laugh. I heard them say Swatz when I talked to some others about it. They said that that meant that you're black. I would go home and I would discuss it with my husband. I said, "I'm so tired of that. I don't know what to do." I said, "But you know, I'm going to stay until Miss Coltzer tells me that I'm fired. That's what I'll do."

So I stayed there up until coming home. And I've got a letter that I received from the bank from American Express International Banking thanking me for my services and what I did for them.

**JE:** And the only black in that area?

**LJ:** Yes, the only black.

**JE:** Yeah.

**LJ:** They had never hired a black person before.

**JE:** Right.

**LJ:** And they thanked me for my service.

**JE:** So, you know, maybe it was a good thing you couldn't understand German because maybe they were being disrespectful to you as a black, in German, and you didn't hear it.

**LJ:** Well, that's what some would tell me. But I worked for the American Youth Association. I gave time, spent time with that, helping with that program.

**JE:** In, in Germany?

**LJ:** In Germany.

## Chapter: 09 - 8:45

### Verden Separate School

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**John Erling:** You were certified as a real estate instructor for the Oklahoma Real Estate Commission, worked for fourteen years as a real estate instructor. You taught the pre-license course. You've been involved in so many areas here that I don't have time to get into. But you really dedicated forty, fifty years of your life to your community, state, and nation. You've been involved in efforts to bring about understanding and improve the quality of life. That's got to make you feel good as part of your legacy.

Let us talk about the Verden Separate School. This is a special project, and special baby, I can say, to you. What does that mean to you, the Verden Separate School?

**Loretta Jackson:** Let me tell you, that means everything to me. It is a project that I must say that I believe was God-given. A lot of storms that came to Chickasha came from the Verden-Anadarko from Snyder and on around.

**JE:** Storms?

**LJ:** Storms. Bad storms. We didn't call them tornadoes until later years. We called them those big storms that would come. And I when I researched the record that Allen Toles obtained the land through the Homestead Act of 1862, and on that land he built the schools so that children, during inclement weather, when they couldn't work on the farm, they could go to school and get an education. That would be only maybe two months or three months sometimes in January, February that they could go to school. They had to work on the farm, that's why families was in that area because they needed to work on the farm.

**JE:** Was Allen Toles a black person?

**LJ:** Allen Toles was a black man that obtained the land. And they thought that he was there working for a white farmer. He actually owned the land. When Allen Toles died, a white farmer, S. C. Loveless, purchased the land and went out to see what he had purchased. And this school was there. He said he stepped inside and class was going on. They had a teacher from Attadarko to come to Verden to teach those children.

In a letter, Kay Loveless said that he backed out, went back and asked the other farmers whose school that was? “Who was schooling those black children? Who was permitting them to learn to read and write?” Blacks was not supposed to learn to read and write. If you do, you will not work on the farm.

The farmers said, “You’ve got to get rid of it.”

Kay Loveless said that it was discussed at home and her father made the decision to allow the school to continue.

**JE:** Mr. Loveless?

**LJ:** Yes. Allowed the school to continue. In 1935, all of the county schools were closed down and the children that attended the Verden Separate School were then bused to Lincoln School here in Chickasha.

**JE:** Consolidation was happening.

**LJ:** Yes. That school sat from 1935. When the children left, Kay said her father turned it into a barn. He then put supplies in it and he used it for just a lot of different farm related activities.

**JE:** When did it come to your attention?

**LJ:** During the video *The Color of Hope*. And we decided on that title because it was during the '30s, in that era. Who was looking for hope? Was it black, white, who was it? The Depression was hard on everybody. And so, I then called in Dr. Sam Loveless. Bill McVay was another white that lived in the area. But I called in those individuals to have them talk about what it was like during the Depression for whites.

On the tape, they told me that the white would keep some of the black children, those children that wasn't old enough to work so that the parents could work. But they came together to survive. And so we titled this *The Color of Hope*. Was it black, was it white, what color was that hope during that time?

**JE:** And you were too young to understand the Depression.

**LJ:** Yes.

**JE:** Because you were born in '35, just after it was over.

**LJ:** Yes.

**JE:** And then the Dust Bowl, of course, was happening—

**LJ:** That's right.

**JE:** ...in that time period as well.

**LJ:** Yes. Um-hmm (affirmative). They talk about how that impacted the lives of both black and white.

**JE:** So here we have during that time whites helping blacks.

**LJ:** And vice versa. And they talk about that.

**JE:** Here we are in 2015, we still have constant battle between whites and blacks.

**LJ:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** But here in this community it doesn't seem like you had that.

**LJ:** We have had that, so they tell me, and I have no information on it, that there was a lynching of a black man here in Chickasha. But I don't know about that. I have not researched that.

**JE:** Klu Klux Klan, did you feel their presence here?

**LJ:** I have not felt that. They say that there was when they lynched this young man, but I have not...

**JE:** The Verden Separate School, you told the story about that. How did it come about so that you decided, "I need to protect that school building"?

**LJ:** Yes, let me tell you. During this interview—

**JE:** I—

**LJ:** ...*The Color of Hope* I asked Edna Irby and Janie Roberts, "What did you do besides work on the farm?"

And they said, "We went to school and we went to church."

I said, "Where did you go to school in an all white community?"

"Verden." And they told me that there was a little school in Verden.

And I said, "Whose farm did you work on?"

They said, "We worked on the Loveless farm."

I then went to the courthouse, did the research. Because of my real estate background I could do that. I researched that and found the Loveless Farm, S. C. Loveless. I then took that information, had them print the document off, where Allen Toles owned this land and obtained it through the Homestead Act of 1862. S. C. Loveless purchased that land after Allen Toles died. I took those documents to Kay Lee in Verden.

Kay Lee was Loveless's daughter, and I didn't realize that her husband, Bill Lee, I had worked with him at Pugh Mortgage Company. He worked with the insurance department. He didn't ever say anything about Kay, never told me about her, that part of his life, where he was from or anything like that, never. So when Bill came to the door, he said, "Loretta, what do you want?"

But at any rate, we talked and talked and I told him about this and Kay said, "That little building, we've turned that land over to the kids. They're going to tear it down."

I said, "Don't do that, let me have it." Because I knew Bill, I said, "Bill, I don't have a place for it right now." I said, "Let me think about it."

He said, "Yeah, you can have it."

Then Kay said, "Well, I don't know, let's think about that because we've got the kids that need to go to college and we'd like to get something for it for the kids' education."

And so I said, "Okay." I came back, I was with my husband, Harold. I said, "Harold, I can't do anything with the school."

He said, "But you can." That same reinforcement that I'd heard from my mother my husband said, "You can do that, Loretta."

I said, "Harold, a school? Did you see that school?"

He said, "Yeah. He said, "But you can do it."

I said, "Okay."

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**Chapter: 10 - 4:15****School Moved to Chickasha**

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**Loretta Jackson:** So we talked about it, I called my daughter, I talked to different land owners where to put the school. So where the school is now on Ada Sipuel, we thought that that was a good place to put it because it ties in with education.

**John Erling:** So you moved it from Verden—

**LJ:** Kay Lee was so nice and kind to let it stay there two years before we could move it. We moved it from Verden and I've got pictures. They put it on a truck and brought it into Chickasha. And let me tell you, we had different ones that came and spoke. Kay Lee was a teacher; Kay then had the FFA to clean the school out. We had educator, the day that they moved the school to Chickasha, and that was in 2004. We had Clara Luper, an educator, to come and talk about it. We had Susan Winchester, she spoke. We had Senator Price talk about the school.

**JE:** It sits on?

**LJ:** Ada Sipuel.

**JE:** Street. Did you purchase the land? Whose land was that?

**LJ:** The land belonged to me.

**JE:** Oh, it did belong to you?

**LJ:** Yes, uh-huh (affirmative).

**JE:** And you'd purchased that a long time ago?

**LJ:** Yes, it's railroad land. I worked at Pugh Mortgage Company, I stated that. Coming home, I couldn't see this house because the weeds, the railroad didn't cut grass like they cut it now. You couldn't see the house, you couldn't see anything, Johnson grass, everything grew. And so I went to the railroad, I said, "Sell it to me and I'll cut it." I said, "I'm tired of looking at the grass."

So they said, "Okay."

At that time, it had been turned over to a state agency and they said, "You'd need to go and talk to the governor, talk to this..."

And I said, "Well, I can do that." Well, I knew George Nye and I knew some people on state level, so I went through the process for the state to release and give me the right to purchase the land so that I could cut this Johnson grass so I could see my house. And that's what that was all about.

But that was years, that was years and early on and no one knew that. They just knew that the grass was cut now. So when they found out that I owned this land, then they said, "How did you get railroad property? You can't own railroad property."

Well, let me tell you. It has been God's gift, he has worked through all of this, every step of the way I've had to pray about it. And I learned that early on. I was a youth supervisor. I've worked in church all my life. I joined church at the age of six, so I worked in church all my life. So praying and talking these things over, I get in my car or from walking down the hallway or going to the governor's office, going to this place, to whisper a prayer to say, "Give me the right words to say, the right thoughts. I don't want to be intimidated, I want to do it right. I want to be very humble and yet firm."

The other is, "Have you done the research? Do you know what you're talking about?" So that's why I have all these papers. I would research, know what I'm talking about before I introduced myself to an individual or to a group of people.

**JE:** Nobody contested once you owned that railroad land?

**LJ:** No one contested that.

**JE:** They just thought it was strange—

**LJ:** Yeah.

**JE:** ...that you bought that land.

**LJ:** Yes, they wanted to know how then did you do it?

**JE:** And here you were doing a good thing, you just wanted to cut the grass down, is what you wanted to do.

**LJ:** Yes, I just wanted the grass cut down.

**JE:** And, and—

**LJ:** Yes.

**JE:** ...the God you serve upstairs was preparing that ground for this Verden Separate School.

**LJ:** That's right.

**JE:** That's the plan.

**LJ:** He knew that, he knew that.

**JE:** Yeah.

**Chapter: 11 - 4:20****Museum**

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**John Erling:** So now you have it and it's open to the public? And do—

**Loretta Jackson:** It's open to the public.

**JE:** ...you have school tours and trips that come around? And are you able to speak to the groups?

**LJ:** We do that. And then last August 22nd, in connection with the Grady County Free Fair they had Kids Day. And they had 512 kids on that site for Kids Day from the Grady County Free Fair. I spoke to the kids before they left the fairground to tell them about the school, the history of the school, Allen Toles.

About two days after we moved the school to the site some individuals came and they said, "That was our grandpa." Allen Toles did have a family.

**JE:** Hmm (thoughtful sound).

**LJ:** But in connection with the Grady County Free Fair we had 512 children. The university, USL, supplied about 40 different students and teachers to come and help the students play those games that they played way back then.

**JE:** Well, I went into Verden Separate School before we did this interview and it's just like walking into a time capsule.

**LJ:** Yes.

**JE:** To see those old desks and to only imagine all the black children that got a boost up.

**LJ:** Yes.

**JE:** They got an education that Mr. Loveless says, "Yes, you can continue to teach these black children."

**LJ:** Yes.

**JE:** We have no idea how many came out of there and went on, do we?

**LJ:** No I don't.

**JE:** Can you name them?

**LJ:** But I went back and I got the school record and I've got a letter from one of the individuals that attended that school that went on. Very successful and praised that school. She named different others that went to school there. There's an individual on the tape from Lawton that, very successful.

**JE:** That came out of that Separate School?

**LJ:** That—that—that came out of the Separate School. This little school over here. So we have documentation of individuals that attended the school. Kay was on our board.

**JE:** Who?

- LJ:** Kay Lee, Loveless's daughter. But when we found the school, in order to preserve it we had to form an organization. So we did that and took the documentation of the school to the Corporation Commission. It was supposed to be temporary, just so we could save the school and move the school and have a nonprofit organization.
- JE:** And now you have plans, here in 2015, to build a building that would be a classroom where you could bring the children into a building and then you could talk about the history. There'd be more room for them than in the schoolhouse. Also that would be kind of a museum.
- LJ:** Yes. The museum and one-room school. We have the blueprints, we are just shovel ready. We're ready, all we need is funding. The one-room school will be the center, but then we will have a museum to showcase black artifacts.
- JE:** You're in the midst of raising money for that and as each year goes by then I suppose the price goes up for it.
- LJ:** The price goes up, yes.
- JE:** Yeah, right.
- LJ:** When I first spoke to the mayor about it and told him about the school, I told him what the plan was, that we was going to bring it to Chickasha and restore it and this, that, and the other, he laughed and chuckled and jumped in his shoulders, jerked his shoulders jumping. He said, "Do you realize that will cost you \$75,000?"
- JE:** Hmm (thoughtful sound).
- LJ:** Let me tell you. We received \$70,000, the Centennial Commission in 2007, designated that one-room school as a Centennial project. They gave us \$70,000. A check initially for \$50,000 to restore the school. So the \$75,000 that he thought was a lot of money turned into \$240,000. From \$240,000, the last time that I had someone give me an estimate on it, it was then up to \$800,000. So the price just keeps going up. Somewhere there is, I know, someone that will build us a museum.

## **Chapter: 12 - 3:55**

### **Run for Mayor**

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**Loretta Jackson:** But I wanted to tell you this, my experience, helping the city, at one point in time I'd served on every board except the Salvation Army and maybe one other board. I thought that I could promote Chickasha, so I elected to file for the office of mayor in 1989. The only woman, black, white, or whatever to seek the office of mayor of Chickasha. I was ready, my mind, my everything. I thought that I could take Chickasha to heights.

**John Erling:** Were you elected?

**LJ:** No, no, I lost—listen, I lost by 190 votes, I think they said. And they wanted me to contest the closing of a poll, but this is where I live. I'd rather just take that loss and move on with it and support whoever is elected. And it was a man.

The other time that I felt, for lack of a better word, that segregation, when they completed, overlaid Ada Sipuel, when they got to the black community they failed to put in the proper drainage and so on. I was told then to file a grievance and go on to court with it. The concrete wasn't there so evidence was to support that. But I did not do that.

Along came a city manager that spent more than \$15,000 to put in a drain that you see in front of the school and around that school, that drainage.

**JE:** You finally got the drainage?

**LJ:** I got the drainage years later.

**JE:** But you remained in politics of sort. You were the first black elected as a Democratic Party official in Grady County.

**LJ:** When I was elected, and that was in the '70s—

**JE:** When you were elected co-chairperson and secretary/treasurer of the Grady County Democratic Central Committee?

**LJ:** Yes. Early on I started working at the voting poll. Mr. Joe Prince was in politics heavily and he said that I should work where you vote. They need somebody black there, there's a lot of black people voting. And so I went and they hired me. I reported there at seven o'clock that morning. I was going to be a counter. They refused me, they said they didn't need any Negroes working at the poll, they didn't allow that. So the inspector did not allow me to work.

Mr. Prince came by to see how I was doing and I told him. Then he said, "Go downtown and tell what's going on."

I then did that. They told me just stay there and I would get paid for that day. They got rid of those individuals one at a time. I went from counter to judge and then I became an inspector.

**JE:** You were the first black to work at the election polls as counter, judge, inspector in your ward.

**LJ:** Yes.

**JE:** And a tabulator for the Grady County Election Board.

**LJ:** Yes.

**JE:** And then you organized and participated in mass voter registration drives.

**LJ:** Yes.

**JE:** Locally and statewide.

**LJ:** Yes. I would always just organize individuals. I would go from door to door to say, "It's important for you to vote." And, "Have you voted? If you haven't voted for a period of time then they'll drop your name and you need to go back and register again and vote." And before every election I would be one of those individuals to go alert everybody, put the announcement out, leave the announcements on the doors and whatnot.

Chapter: 13 – 3:10

## A Generation Forgot

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**John Erling:** What is your feeling here in 2015? It seems like voter registration is being more and more difficult.

**Loretta Jackson:** I think we took it for granted. And integration was supposed to help with what I experienced in the hand-me-down of instruments. When the school system bought instruments for a school they would buy for the entire school. Or when they start overlaying streets or when they do one thing for one community they would do it all. Integration was supposed to solve that. But integration did not put that in writing and it wasn't in the minds of the people.

So to some African Americans integration meant I can work on jobs, I can go to this restaurant, I can go to this place, places that the parents weren't allowed to go to, they were allowed to go there. They were allowed to go to the schools. There's a generation that forgot how they got where they are. That was not taught in school. The parents didn't tell it at home that there was a day and time when you couldn't go into this restaurant. There was a day in time that you couldn't live in Chickasha across 4th Street.

And so for that reason there is a generation that came up not knowing and so they took it for granted. They didn't realize, my opinion, that voting said something for a community. This was a black ward so we had to have that strength. That candidate had to know, "If I want to win I've got to get those black people to vote for me."

Today that idea somehow, in my opinion, does not exist. So they are not looking for that vote. So all nationalities need to make their presence known if they wanted to be represented. Does this candidate represent me and my thoughts and what I'm looking for, what I'm out for? I think that in that sense that's why registration is down. Why should I vote? They're going to do what they want to do anyway. But they will not do it if they know that if I don't keep my promise then those people are not going to vote for me.

**JE:** So it's a combination then of not feeling like I need to vote, but then the combination of voter ID cards and all that seems like it's making it more difficult.

**LJ:** Yes.

**JE:** For blacks, perhaps, to vote.

**LJ:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** And so it's a lack of desire, for one thing. And then they say, "Well, they're just making it so difficult for us," and so they give up.

**LJ:** Yes.

**JE:** In 2015.

**LJ:** That's right, yes.

**JE:** And you would have thought by this day and age we wouldn't be even discussing it.

**LJ:** Discussing it, no. You'd be going to the polls and vote.

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**Chapter: 14 - 3:10****Civic Involvement**

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**John Erling:** Martin Luther King, were you taken with him and his message, the march to Selma and all that era?

**Loretta Jackson:** They had some marches here in Chickasha but I wasn't involved in that. But I was appreciative of what he said and how he—

**JE:** Now let me stop you. You said marches. Not here in Chickasha.

**LJ:** When they marched in Oklahoma City and had the sit-ins and all of that, at one point they came through Chickasha going to Lawton because there was a park in Lawton. That was my understanding. And they came through Chickasha so that anyone who wanted to join that march for rights, they could do that.

Chickasha has been one of those places that when they opened the door, to my knowledge, I don't know of one place of blacks having to march on it or do something to become involved. When they integrated the schools and the children went to Chickasha school, some of the teachers that left Lincoln Elementary, they went to the other elementary schools. And those that was in high school went to the high school, gradually. It wasn't sudden, it was gradual. That was okay.

**JE:** Did you participate in any marches?

**LJ:** No. No.

**JE:** And why not?

**LJ:** At that time, I was working and that didn't permit me to become involved in a march. See, you couldn't be on a job, you had to have that time.

**JE:** Yeah. You were involved in other ways, right?

**LJ:** Yes, politically I was involved in it. If they had a meeting to make a decision on what is best for the community, that would have been at Bullock Center, is what they called it. Dr. Bullock's home, when Dr. Bullock passed away.

**JE:** Here in Chickasha.

**LJ:** Here in Chickasha on 1st Street. Then it became a community building. They would have different meetings there. And then they would meet at the Washita Valley Park

on decisions on what direction the black community should go. I was always at those meetings. I participated in those meetings as to say, "What's the next step?"

**JE:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**LJ:** "And how do we proceed?" So I was involved in that. I have been involved in the community with the decision making about the progress and because I have tried to look on the brighter side, be like Martin Luther King, without that fight, we can talk about it. Someone is right, someone is wrong, we come to that common place, that place where we can all agree that this needs to happen. And that's where I've been. I've sat at the table to work those things out.

## Chapter: 15 - 5:30

### Double Ceiling

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**John Erling:** You sound like President Barak Obama. He's soon going to finish eight years. You would have never thought there'd be in your lifetime a black president.

**Loretta Jackson:** That's right. I think that him being president brings together, for lack of a better word, all of the training, all of the education, all of what I was taught that you should do, prepare yourself to make that next step. And it may not be you, but pass it on to the next one. And keep passing it on. They passed it on to us.

Mr. Parish, our principal, he was an oratorical person. Very, very, very. Alexander, they called him Prophet Alexander, very, very intellectual. We had teachers that told us, "One of these days you're going to be here. One of these days you will have an opportunity. Will you be ready? When that door opens for you will you be ready?"

And so when I see him I think that the door opened, he was ready. His voice, the intellectual about him, he is ready. But all of the obstacles that's coming before him, all of those things, I would tell him, "That's okay."

And they told us, "Everybody's not going to like you but you do it right. You do it right."

So I think that he is the person that the teachers all prepared us for. And I would like to tell him, "I went to the top, I was the first African American to be elected president of the Oklahoma Federation of Democratic Women. And I didn't realize that there was a ceiling there."

Or I'll go back before, when I was elected secretary/treasurer of the Grady County Democratic Party, a woman came to my office at Pugh Mortgage Company and she told me to come out to her car, she didn't want the people inside to hear her discuss what she wanted to discuss with me. She told me, "Now you've been elected but you don't handle any money, you don't do anything, you're just there."

I told her I had been elected and I was going to serve. And I did. When I became president of the Oklahoma Federation of Democratic Women they told me, "You're not supposed to help us with these decisions and carry that out."

I said, "But I can do that and I'm going to fulfill my responsibility as president." When that was over I was the first black to be elected for district chairperson. They fought me out of that.

My husband said, "You don't have to take that." He said, "You resign from that."

I resigned from that.

**JE:** They fought you and so you resigned?

**LJ:** Yes. I resigned from being Fourth District.

**JE:** Why did you resign?

**LJ:** Because it was so much hassle, people saying this and saying, "What are you going to do about this? You don't need to do this." And I would come home and discuss it with my husband. And so it was a hassle with that.

He said, "You don't have to," so I resigned from that.

When I got to be the first president of the American Association of University Women I then went on to be the first African American *elected* to be on the foundation board, taking care of millions of dollars, which was no problem for me because Morgan Banking and Banking was my background. Looking at money and talking about money was no problem for me, I could do that. And yet they thought, "No, there's something wrong with that." There was a ceiling.

**JE:** Okay, so yours was a double ceiling?

**LJ:** Yeah.

**JE:** Was it because you were black—

**LJ:** Yeah.

**JE:** ...and female?

**LJ:** Yes. I've had to encounter all of that. So all of the things that I accomplished in my life, it has not come without being black and a woman or a combination of both, but it has been through prayer that I have survived. I want you to know that.

And I've got to say, I would tell any individual whether it is black, white, whatever, "Be who you are." I have had to be Loretta. I have had to be black when I walk out of this door. I can walk on a state level, on a national level. When I met with Hillary Clinton, when I met with President I was a black person, I'm always that. What comes out of my mouth after that, uh, I can help you with whatever but I am who I am and I've never denied that. I've never tried to be anyone else, I've never tried to be that. I'm just Loretta.

I've got pictures to show you with the President.

**JE:** Which president?

**LJ:** Jimmy Carter.

**JE:** You met Jimmy Carter?

**LJ:** Yes. I was invited to the White House to discuss black community concerns, to help this community.

## **Chapter: 16 - 7:10**

### **How to Be Remembered**

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**John Erling:** You were talking about the ceilings of black and female and you were first in many areas. But it all comes back, as you started at the very beginning, your mother killed “I can’t.”

**Loretta Jackson:** That’s what she said.

**JE:** And that stuck with you to this very day.

**LJ:** To this very day.

**JE:** And you have fought on because there is no “I can’t” in Loretta’s mind.

**LJ:** No there is no “I can’t” in my mind. I will find a way, there is a way to accomplish whatever comes before me.

**JE:** How would you like to be remembered?

**LJ:** I would like to be remembered as a person that family-oriented, love your family, God in the midst of all of that. That love for community. In every worthy endeavor you try. I would like to be remembered as a person that worked for an understanding for the betterment of society. If I can accomplish that then I will have worked for my family first. I have said, “Thank God for my being, and allowing me to serve.” And so I’d like to be remembered for my service.

**JE:** Tremendous service. You went through the ’30s, the ’40s, the ’50s, segregation, integration, all of this that we’ve talked about, yet today, 2015, you’re in Oklahoma at the University of Oklahoma. We recently had fraternities on a bus and had a very ugly chant about race that was captured on video. There was an apology by the boy yesterday, publicly, but do you think by now we would have gone beyond that? Is this going to continue on?

You know, you can have rules and I think you talked about it earlier, you had rules, “This is the way it is,” yeah, you have rights to go and do, to vote, all this, but what about our hearts?

**LJ:** That’s right.

**JE:** We haven’t apparently changed hearts and maybe we never will.

**LJ:** But I think that when you get in a certain position, if you’re in with the wrong group, and when I say that, you need to set goals for yourself. Who am I? Find out first who you are, who am I? And Mama would tell us and I told my children, “If you’re there in the midst of it,

before it escalates you can see it, you know that, then you get out. Don't you be a part of that because that's not you."

Back to what I told you about my daddy saying, "Don't disgrace, you belong to me, you're a Blunt. You carry my name, you don't disgrace that." Somehow when I saw that they forget they had parents or what kind of home did they come from.

**JE:** You're talking about the University of Oklahoma?

**LJ:** Yes, yes.

**JE:** When you saw that chant?

**LJ:** When I saw that chant. Where are they from? Where are you coming from?

**JE:** Yeah.

**LJ:** Who did they belong to?

**JE:** Yeah.

**LJ:** And did they know better than to get involved in that? I just thought for 2015, it was a disgrace. It was something that I would not have believed would have happened.

And again, my daughter attended the University of Oklahoma, got her masters at OU. My granddaughter received her masters, and my son-in-law. And my husband, Harold, we bought season tickets to the OU games from the time that he retired from the military in '76, until he passed in '04. A lot of memorabilia that they sold, he bought it, and we supported the University of Oklahoma.

That was very disturbing, and his apology, I accepted that. He said that he really didn't realize what he was doing. And that's a possibility.

**JE:** You're saying the young man who was leading that racist chant, he said that he didn't realize what he was doing?

**LJ:** Yeah.

**JE:** Which is kind of hard to believe.

**LJ:** Yes. He knew what he was saying.

**JE:** Um-hmm (affirmative). And he knew what it meant.

**LJ:** Yes.

**JE:** And he was putting down a race.

**LJ:** That's right. But then to say about hanging.

**JE:** About a lynching.

**LJ:** Lynching.

**JE:** And it just went so far. Probably came from an upstanding white family, yet children do their own thing.

**LJ:** When they go off to college. And you've got to really talk to them and stay close to them. You really got to stay close to them. It's a world.

**JE:** Yeah.

**LJ:** It's a world. When I heard him speak I felt a little remorse for him.

**JE:** I think this is going to go on forever and ever because we're human beings.

**LJ:** Yes.

**JE:** Anti-Semitism seems to be arising again in Europe, and Jews have been leaving and going to Israel. The fight between Palestinians and Jews, we're human beings and it's going to continue. We just have to, apparently, fight it at different levels but know that it's still here.

**LJ:** Yes. But—

**JE:** It's probably here in a more refined way than when it was way back when, say the '30s, '40s, and '50s, it's so refined now.

**LJ:** Yes, but that's why I said to you, "I never forget who I am when I walk out that door." And so, in saying that, I know that I respect my position. I respect Loretta, my family, who I'm attached to, who I'm representing, I respect that.

**JE:** Well, now as a result of this interview being recorded for generations to come we now know who Loretta Young Jackson is. And I want to thank you so much for giving us this time. We just admire the work you've done in the community and I guess one of your major legacies is standing right over here in the corner in that building. That will live beyond your time—

**LJ:** Yes.

**JE:** ...because you had it refurbished and it will live on.

**LJ:** That's right. We hope so. And we'll continue to educate. The school will continue to educate.

**JE:** Oh sure.

**LJ:** Uh, because when people come they talk about this same thing that we're talking about now.

A family, a man and his wife and three boys came to the school and one of them was a light-skinned black boy. He was dark enough and two white boys. Sometimes I don't have to say a word. This woman told a story about before integration and what it was like during segregation. And said, "Do you know that you all couldn't sit in the same class?" The black boy and one of the white boys was in the same class. She had adopted this black boy and she gave that story.

So it's just going to be a living history.

**JE:** And those kind of lessons quell what has just recently happened, what we just talked about.

**LJ:** Yes.

**JE:** Thank you, Loretta.

**LJ:** Thank you.

**JE:** It was my joy to visit with you.

**LJ:** Yes.

**JE:** I admire you a lot.

**LJ:** Thank you.

**Chapter: 17 - 0:33****Conclusion**

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