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Othro Drew

Rosie the Riveter
WWII American Homefront Oral History Project

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Interviews conducted by
Sam Redman
in 2012

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Warren G. Gaines and Othro Drew

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Interview #1 June 21, 2012

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01-00:00:00

Redman: All right. Today is June 21st and I'm in Stockton, California with Othro Drew. And I'd like to begin. Can I just ask you, that's a pretty unique first name. I'm wondering if you could state that for me and then spell it.

01-00:00:16

Drew: It's Othro.

01-00:00:16

Redman: Othro.

01-00:00:18

Drew: Right. And it's O-T-H-R-O.

01-00:00:20

Redman: Okay. And Drew spelled D-R-E-W?

01-00:00:24

Drew: Right. Now, Othro, that's {Audi?} Indian.

01-00:00:31

Redman: Interesting.

01-00:00:31

Drew: And it means the last warrior.

01-00:00:35

Redman: Fascinating.

01-00:00:36

Drew: So technically the name is never to be used again.

01-00:00:41

Redman: Tell me about where you were born.

01-00:00:43

Drew: Oh, I was born in Coffeyville, Kansas.

01-00:00:46

Redman: Kansas. So that seems like that would play into the story behind your name potentially.

01-00:00:53

Drew: Well, that goes back a ways, too. It's quite interesting because on my dad's side my great-grandparents were part of the Trail of Tears from the Everglades. They were in Florida and they were force marched from Florida to Kansas. And what was interesting—at that time my great-grandmother was pregnant. And this is the wintertime. And she wanted to lie down and die but

my great-grandfather wouldn't let her. He said, "You're going to go if I have to carry you all the way."

01-00:01:32

Redman: That's amazing.

01-00:01:33

Drew: And so they ended up in Kansas, near Coffeyville, Kansas, which was quite interesting because Kansas was a pretty—at that time it was the Wild West really. Coffeyville was Bad Lands. That's where all the rustlers and all the ne'er-do-wells hung out there.

01-00:01:59

Redman: And what year were you born?

01-00:02:01

Drew: I was born in 1930.

01-00:02:01

Redman: In 1930, okay. So can you tell me just a little more about what your parents' situation was when you arrived. Were they farming? Were they running a homestead by that point? Or—

01-00:02:15

Drew: Quite frankly, I'm not really clear on that. I know they were farming. But, see, I lived with my grandmother until I was age twelve and I really never knew my parents that well. And my father left, I understand, when I was like about four years old. And my grandmother told me that he stated, "I'm leaving because he's never going to amount to anything anyway," which was always my driving point.

01-00:02:44

Redman: Interesting.

01-00:02:46

Drew: And my mother just never was there. So at twelve years of age, I was at the—World War II had started and they had the shipyards in Richmond. Some people were migrating to California to work in the shipyard. And so from what I understand, my mother had come to California. So my grandmother told me I was coming to California. I was under the impression that at last I would have a chance to live with my mother. But instead I ended up living with an uncle in Berkeley for a year. A nice man. Just indifferent. Totally indifferent. He had a daughter that was a little bit older than me, and he fed us, clothed us and this type of thing, but he just never was involved.

01-00:03:29

Redman: Now, had your mom come to Richmond?

01-00:03:32

Drew: My mother had come to Richmond, right.

- 01-00:03:34
Redman: To find work at the shipyards?
- 01-00:03:36
Drew: She was literally working at the shipyard from what I understand.
- 01-00:03:39
Redman: And you were living for that first year with your uncle at Berkeley?
- 01-00:03:43
Drew: First year with my uncle in Berkeley. Then after I completed that year of school, I came home from school and was informed that, "You're moving to Stockton to live with another uncle." So just like that I'm in Stockton, which was the most horrid place I could have ever imagined. The population there was like—it was around 50,000. Strictly agriculture. Nothing else but agriculture. In fact, trucks were lined up down on what we called Center Street and people would go down there to go out, work in the crops. And so that's what I did. I would go down there. But back up a bit. When I lived with my uncle here in Stockton, Uncle Ben, from the start it was like, "I don't really want you here but you're my older sister's son, you have no place to go, so you are there. I'll provide you with a place to stay, I'll provide you with food, everything else you're on your own."
- 01-00:04:47
Redman: This sounds like a tough upbringing.
- 01-00:04:49
Drew: Yes. It was weird.
- 01-00:04:52
Redman: Unusual, sure.
- 01-00:04:53
Drew: And so I never had a childhood because when other children were playing and going to the movies and things I had to go down there, catch a truck and go out and work in the crops. Pick potatoes, tomatoes, onions, whatever was in vogue at the time. And so I had to work, especially in the summer, to earn enough money to buy clothing for school and books or whatever supplies I needed and everything. And then to pay for my living with him, with my uncle. He owned quite a bit of property. He owned a piece of property next door to his house and he decided to build a house and he decided he wanted a basement. My job was to build a basement with a spade. And this is all adobe. So then he would mark out so much in the morning. I did before I went to school. Then after I returned from school I had to do so much more. He had a son, my cousin, who was a year—I mean, was one month and one week younger than me. Spoiled rotten. Anything Junior wanted, he got. And, of course, my uncle's heart was his daughter. She was about three years older than me. And then there was like the pecking order. It was my female cousin, male cousin, my uncle's wife. If they were in first and second place, she

would have been like in sixth place. And then if there were ten places I wasn't on the chart at all.

01-00:06:38

Redman: Right, wow.

01-00:06:39

Drew: If my cousin said I did something or anybody said—if they said I did it, I did it, whether I did it or not.

01-00:06:51

Redman: Sure.

01-00:06:51

Drew: That resulted in punishment. Punishment was he'd take me out to the garage and with these—see, it was a rope. Some sort of rope. But straw like rope, the type of rope. Then I would get a beating for whatever I did or supposedly have done. So when I left I was fourteen. It was about a year later. He took me down, gave me a beating. It was a pretty severe beating. He left me lying on the garage floor. So when I got up, I knew that was it. And so I went upstairs and I told my aunt. I said, "You know, I'm going. I have to go." She said, "I understand."

01-00:07:35

Redman: Wow.

01-00:07:36

Drew: And later on, what was his name, {Rick Box?} had a joke about matching luggage. Like luggage was too—shopping bags, bags from the same department store. Back in those days that was my luggage. Two shopping bags. And I was never unpacked. I lived in Berkeley, I never unpacked. I lived with Uncle here, I never unpacked. That was it.

01-00:08:01

Redman: Wow.

01-00:08:02

Drew: Everything I owned was in those two shopping bags. And so when I left I had no idea where I was going or what I was going to do or anything. I just left.

01-00:08:10

Redman: At fifteen? At fourteen?

01-00:08:11

Drew: Fourteen. Right.

01-00:08:12

Redman: Wow.

- 01-00:08:13
Drew: I knew I wanted to go to school. That was a fixed thing. No matter what happened.
- 01-00:08:26
Redman: Where did that come from, do you think?
- 01-00:08:27
Drew: What?
- 01-00:08:27
Redman: That desire to go to school?
- 01-00:08:29
Drew: From the one thing that my dad had said.
- 01-00:08:32
Redman: That he had said, "He's not going to amount to anything"?
- 01-00:08:35
Drew: "He'll never amount to anything."
- 01-00:08:35
Redman: So there was a chip on your shoulder from that.
- 01-00:08:40
Drew: So every time I got ready to quit that would pop into my head. And so I went to school. I never missed a day of school. I was never late. And slept wherever. Slept at the parks, somebody's house, church, boiler room, school gym, anywhere. And so at sixteen I graduated from high school. So now what do I do?
- 01-00:09:02
Redman: Did your teachers know about your—
- 01-00:09:05
Drew: No.
- 01-00:09:05
Redman: —home life situation?
- 01-00:09:06
Drew: No. Nobody cared. If you were a black kid, who cared? They didn't care. You showed up, you showed up; you didn't, you didn't. It was just one of those kind of things. It was up to you. You wanted to get an education, that was up to you. And if you were pretty smart there might be a teacher that might encourage you or something. But barring that, no. And then like even going to school here in Stockton, which was quite an adventure. When I came here, they had just erected this high school, Edison High School, primarily for minorities and it was a two year high school because they hadn't completed it. If you graduated from there then you had to go to the other high school, which

was Stockton High. There was only two high schools. So you went to Stockton High School, which was more than an ocean. Stockton High School was on the north side of town, which blacks didn't go. You couldn't live over there and if you were over there you had to have a good reason for being there.

01-00:10:06

Redman: I see.

01-00:10:06

Drew: Like you worked. If you're a lady, you were a domestic. And you had like a uniform. You wore a white uniform. That says that she's working so she's okay.

01-00:10:18

Redman: Well, people might out and out ask you but the uniform could be sort of a signal of why or—

01-00:10:24

Drew: Right. Like South Africa. Women wore a certain uniform that said that they were domestics so they didn't have to be stopped. And then if a man was out there, he was basically working in the yard or doing this type of yard work. And at the high school out there, if you graduated from Edison High, two years, then it was deemed that you would go to Stockton High. Now, that was quite interesting because if you went to Stockton High the students didn't want you there, the parents didn't want you there, the teachers didn't want you there. Nobody wanted you there. And it was constantly reminded that you weren't wanted there. So, of course, as a result there was a very high dropout rate among minorities. Not just black, minorities period.

01-00:11:17

Redman: Did that make you angry?

01-00:11:18

Drew: No, it didn't because I didn't have time to be angry. I was so busy trying to stay alive. Instead of anger I had to—where am I going to get my next meal, where I'm going to eat. Where am I going to stay tonight?

01-00:11:36

Redman: So there's a very real aspect of survival.

01-00:11:39

Drew: Exactly.

01-00:11:41

Redman: And to what extent do you think—and this I think is kind of a complicated question—to what extent do you think it manifests itself in the way that you behaved that you know, hey, I need to perform a certain way or do a certain thing in order to get a bed or to get a meal? Does it drive the way you would behave?

01-00:12:00

Drew:

Well, the main thing it does, it makes you grow up before your time. Being somewhat of a private person, and I had an inability to ask people for help. Never have been able to ask anyone for help. It's sort of like how do I do it, what do I do? How do I wash my clothes? Where do I hide my clothes and stuff so [others] won't steal them. So these were always concerns. And like here in Stockton, down in the Tenderloin at the time, there was a few Chinese restaurants. Chinese American restaurants. Basically I would go in the same place and eat because there was no place for me to cook anything. I think the gentleman that ran the place, I got to thinking about it later, kind of figured that there had to be something strange. Of course, you know, the Chinese are not going to pry into your business. It's just culturally not done. So I think they figured there was something wrong because I would order and I would always notice that there was more food on the plate than what the order called for. And then I would leave, it would seem that I had so much food that they would fix me up with a, I guess, a doggie bag you would call it. "You better take this with you because we don't want to throw it in the trash." That was the rationale. "We don't want to throw it in the trash." And so I would eat there, and this would go on. Then in the summertime, every morning I would get up and go, get a produce truck and go out and pick tomatoes or whatever was in vogue. Which was great. It was like picking fruit when the fruit picking season came because you would go someplace and usually there were barracks. And so you had a bed and the food and stuff was all prepared and everything. So, hey, for the three weeks or whatever it was, it was like—to me it was like heaven. But what amazes me is the character of the people. I've never met people with so much character. With so little and so much character.

01-00:14:21

Redman:

[Tell me about] these people who were staying in the barracks with you?

01-00:14:27

Drew:

Oh, there were Mexicans, Filipinos primarily and a few whites. They were referred to as Okies at the time. So these were primarily the people that worked the crops. That's why I listen now to people talking about, "Oh, well, [working] the crops is easy" this type of thing. Try working them. And I was a kid. I was a teenager. You can imagine what it was like for these family men. We got people in their forties and their fifties. This is their livelihood. They have to take care of their families.

01-00:14:59

Redman:

Takes a toll on your body.

01-00:15:00

Drew:

You better believe it.

01-00:15:03

Redman:

You would have been very, very young when the Depression was really setting in. But I imagine you would have been a little older and still—maybe

before you moved out to California, when the Dust Bowl really started to become a problem in the Great Plains states.

01-00:15:20

Drew: Yes. Well, that's one thing that always perplexes me, is how my grandmother supports—because she had about four grandchildren. And she received what they call an old age pension, which was like—from what I can figure it was like less than a hundred dollars a month. But somehow or another, she fed us, clothed us, maintained everything and she was a person who—well, she was just a second generation from slavery. In fact, her mother was a slave.

01-00:16:01

Redman: Were there stories that had been passed down to you that way or—?

01-00:16:05

Drew: Not so much. I think that there was so much pain. People who {inaudible} and I suppose now a lot of people, they don't—I guess it's like military guys. They go and fight, they come back, and they don't want to talk about the war. I think it's that same type of thing. We don't talk about it. My grandmother had I guess the equivalent of maybe a second grade education. She taught herself how to read, write and do arithmetic and everything. But when we lived there she was dead set on us getting an education. And she would go to the school. We'd go down there. She would go down. She couldn't help us with our homework or anything but she would go to the school and ask the teacher, "How is he doing?" "Well, he could do a little bit better here." "Well, how can we help him?" "Well, there's a teacher coming in. If you send him over on Saturday she will tutor him." She knew she couldn't help me but she was going to make sure I could get the help. But I think the reason that she sent me to California was the fact that she figured that life in Tulsa was miserable if you were—or were blacks. Tulsa was, and still is, one of the most racist cities. Like Oklahoma is one of the most racist states in the union. Like Oklahoma and Texas surprisingly worse than Mississippi and Alabama. And like Walt Gaines [Walter Gains, friend and fellow ROHO narrator] was telling you. He's older than me, more lucid than I am. I envy him. He's still golfing and all these types of things. And so he remembers—they called them riots. [Tulsa Race Riots – 1921] They weren't riots. They were just literally murder. And that's a little bit before my time. But I—

01-00:18:01

Redman: You could sort of see that and how that context for your grandmother—

01-00:18:07

Drew: Right, very definitely.

01-00:18:09

Redman: —scared her in terms of your future in that state.

01-00:18:11

Drew:

Right. When I came to California, Berkeley, I went to a school that was all white. There was only two other black students in the entire school. I came from Tulsa. In Tulsa you went to an all-black school. There were three schools there. Elementary school, what they call the middle school now—they called it junior high then—and a high school and that was it. And if you went to a school, it was imperative that you graduated. You had no choice. You graduated. You didn't drop out. There was no such thing as dropping out. Everybody, a village to raise a child, the whole community knew you, they was on your case. Even if they didn't know you, they knew you. You walk down the street, some stranger walk up to you, "Hey, boy, come here." "Yes, Ma'am?" "What school do you go to? How you doing in school? How you doing in English? How you doing in math?" You'd never seen them before. "What's your daddy's name? What's your momma's name? What's your grandmother's name?" And it was that type of thing. And another thing, too, was because of segregation the community was inclusive, so everybody lived there. Doctors, lawyers, teachers. No matter who you—if you were black, you lived in that community, which simplified things in a lot of ways in that you had built in role models. If you were really interested in becoming a doctor, your dad may say to you, "Go down there and talk to Dr. Jenkins." You would go down there and sit down and talk to Dr. Jenkins. "Boy, what makes you think you want to be a doctor?" [They might say to you,] "Well, I'll tell you what. Take this book and read it and you come back this weekend and tell me what you think of it." And it was that kind of thing. "And what does your daddy do?" "Well, he's not working right now." "Well, I need somebody to clean up this place here, sweep this floor. So you come in on Saturday and sweep the floor for me, I'm going to give you a dollar," or fifty cents or whatever it was. So that was how the community operated. And if one person got a bag of potatoes, the whole community ate potatoes.

01-00:20:30

Redman:

It's sort of this irony of—potential irony and desegregation is that there's a potential of breaking that community up.

01-00:20:40

Drew:

In my personal community, the worst thing that ever happened to the black community was desegregating the community. Integration? No, integration was great. But [desegregation] no, because all of a sudden we're—blacks were self-sufficient. All of a sudden we are told that now you go down to Woolworth and eat. Before we could eat at Woolworth, black person would never eat that junk down there. I worked down there washing dishes. I see what they're serving. I would never eat there. But then all of a sudden, because we could, we did. All the black restaurants close up and all these places closed. And then they came up what they called block busting. That simply meant that some enterprising real estate people would figure out how to make money. So what's a good way to make money? We'll develop this piece of property over here and we'll build houses. And then what we will do, we'll go over in this other community and we will sell a house to a black

person indirectly. We'll get a white person to buy it for this black person. So now that there's a black person here, we go and tell the white people, "Your property values are going to drop down to nothing because there's a black person moving in the community." "Well, what are we going to do?" Now, they've got these homes that they paid for. Some of them they paid for for years. "Well, there's this community. I built these brand new houses out here. We're going to sell you these houses." So now all of a sudden they've buying houses at exorbitant amounts. Now they have payments. Then the houses that they're vacating, they're selling them to blacks at an exorbitant price. So the scams—and the thing about it, we knew we were being scammed but there wasn't anything we could do about it. It was that we'll put up with this to acquire. Because once you acquire that piece of property, it's yours.

01:00:22:40

Redman:

You talked about how the school that you attended was so different in terms of demographics in Oklahoma than in Berkeley. What was that like? What did that feel like to then be suddenly one of only two black kids in the school?

01:00:22:59

Drew:

One of three. Well, actually, in Tulsa you were constantly bombarded with the belief that if you were colored—I think we were "colored" at that time. I don't think—we hadn't gotten to be "Negroes" yet. [You were bombarded with the belief] that you had an inability to achieve. You couldn't go to school with whites because you weren't smart enough. You couldn't do these things because you weren't smart enough. And blacks couldn't work on these particular jobs because they weren't smart enough. Of course, they're not going to hire you. You could be the greatest black man in the world. If you showed up at one of the Tulsa white schools, they would have lynched you. Which was a sad thing that we were told this.

When I came to Berkeley and went to school, I believed it. I'm going to Berkeley, I'm going to be in the seventh grade. I was supposed to be in the seventh grade but they're not going to put me in the seventh grade. I'll be lucky if they put me in the sixth grade. And so that was my thinking. All of a sudden I go to school, I'm in the seventh grade. And I sit there and the teachers are talking. I had never seen a white student before. I had never talked to a white person before. And so whatever they would say do, I did. So I'm there and when they're teaching this I'm saying to myself, "They just must be reviewing last summer's, last year's work. But this still seems a little strange because this stuff that they're teaching now was stuff I had when I was in the fifth grade." See, because there was a whole different ballgame back there. When you went to these little black schools, you learned American history. You learned it from all the way [from] George Washington up. You learned it. You didn't just skim over it. You learned Indian history, which was Oklahoma history basically. You learned about black people. You leaned about Harlem [The Harlem Renaissance] and Langston Hughes and all these people. You learned all these things. And so I came to California, people

could care less. If you went to English you learned sentence structure, you learned how to parse a sentence. You know the meaning of them. You learn how to write a paper. When I walked away from there, I could have written when I went to college. It was the same things I learned there when it came to writing a paper.

01-00:25:31

Redman: And yet, despite all of this, you were told, and you believed to a certain extent—

01-00:25:35

Drew: Well, why wouldn't I?

01-00:25:37

Redman: Yes.

01-00:25:38

Drew: Why wouldn't I?

01-00:25:38

Redman: You had no other experience.

01-00:25:39

Drew: Right. And so while I'm going to the school, they called me in like after about a week. I'm told that, "You have to go to the principal's office. The principal want to see you." "Uh-oh. It's time for them to ship me back." So I go to the principal's office and he explained to me to bring your guardian in because we are going to have to transfer you. And so told my uncle. Of course, my uncle wasn't interested. So my cousin, in effect, was my guardian. She was just three years older than me. So she goes out and they tell her to take him to this room, he's not in this classroom. I was so, I guess, dumbfounded or whatever the case may be that I failed to realize that this was supposedly the junior high school. So that meant that they couldn't be sending me—if they were going to send me back it would have been to a different school, the elementary school. So I report to this room and I'm sitting there. I have no idea what class I'm in, I have no idea who the teacher is. I have no idea about anything. And so I sit there and I remember asking the kid sitting next to me, "What grade is this? What's our teacher's name?" He looked at me like he's—this guy must be nuts. He doesn't even know what class—"You're in the eighth grade." I'm saying, "The eighth grade. Wait a minute. I was just in the seventh grade. Now I'm in the eighth grade." And this went on for a while. Still this was like—I'm learning the same things I learned when I was in the sixth grade and they're telling me that, "Yeah, next year you're going to start learning pre-algebra." I had pre-algebra in the fifth grade back then. And all these things that they're supposedly—they're glossing over these things. The kids are amazed by learning all these things. I learned this stuff already. In fact, we had already embarked on European history and here we are just starting to sort of gloss over European history. They never really learned European history. You probably don't know European history. Just give you enough of this, that,

just bits and pieces. This happened, that happened, this type of thing. But nothing real.

01-00:27:59

Redman: Tell me about Franklin Delano Roosevelt? I often ask people what their parents thought of Franklin Roosevelt. But do you –

01-00:28:08

Drew: I kind of vaguely remember and I kind of remember people talking, especially teachers, because I hung out around the school as much as I could. That was my sanctuary, was school. And I can remember teachers—their position was that Roosevelt was in a position where he could really do something to help everybody, because he was given *carte blanche* to solve this depression problem. But he didn't do anything. Black people they could go out and dig holes in the streets and this type of thing. But other than that, nothing was done. Like people said, well, Roosevelt was a great president and everything. I don't see it. To me, he was one of the most failed presidents. When you're placed in a position where you can do anything you want to do without really being opposed—the Republicans, of course, everything he did was wrong, this type of thing. But literally nothing they could do about it because he had the power. And even he couldn't stand up to them beyond a certain point. A couple of times even there he failed. In addition to creating the jobs that he created, he wanted to create infrastructure. He wanted to do some other things and then the Republicans said, "No, no, no," so he caved into the Republicans, so it got sent back. The Depression prolonged. Really the only thing that saved us from the Depression was World War II. Really, when you come right down to it.

01-00:29:50

Redman: So how old were you when the start of the war comes up? When Pearl Harbor happens in 1941?

01-00:30:00

Drew: Eleven.

E1-00:30:01

Redman: Eleven. First of all, did you have a radio growing up at all? Would you listen to the radio?

01-00:30:09

Drew: Yeah, there was a radio. In my house, like most households, the radio was placed on the religious station. So the religious music came in. And most of the kids, and my grandmother was no exception, we would have access to the radio probably an hour and a half a week, on the weekend, when the programs, *Lone Ranger* and those programs came on. They'd have our program. So we would have access to the radio for maybe an hour and a half. That was it. Other than that, it was just the religious music. Because news wasn't as we know it now. People read the newspaper for news. I gave so much credence to the newspaper, because early on, before story was printed, it

was investigated and it was sources, two sources or three sources, whatever it needed. So when a person would say—would recite, would make a statement, they'd say, "Where'd you get that from?" "I read it in the paper." It was just like saying it came straight down from—

01-00:31:30

Redman: It's from heaven or something. Yeah, yeah.

01-00:31:33

Drew: Yes. Because you knew it was true. But not like today. You read something in the paper, you question it. Well, you should question it right away but a lot of people don't.

01-00:31:43

Redman: Right. Let me ask about Pearl Harbor, December 7, 1941. What do you remember about that Sunday?

01-00:31:50

Drew: Confusion. Utter confusion. I remember that was the one time that the radio was changed. My grandmother got the paper and I think the headlines—I can almost see them, that Pearl Harbor bombed, something. And then the news. [Not every household had a radio.] It was like maybe within a block there may be three radios and everybody would sort of gather, hunker down around the radio to hear what was going on. No television, of course. Which I think was great because your mind conceptualized what was going on. You would sit there and you could imagine exactly what was going on. And I'm listening to them talking about how the planes came over and bombed Pearl Harbor. Pearl Harbor, I didn't know Pearl Harbor from Adam. I didn't even know where it was. Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. Anyplace. These were all like a foreign language. But why would these people want to kill these Americans? See, Japanese, they weren't—there might have been but to my knowledge there wasn't any Japanese in Oklahoma. And then once this event happened, then the Japanese were portrayed by the papers and everything as just absolutely evil, animalistic people. They had no souls, they didn't understand. Although, of course, their civilization was thousands of years older than ours. But they—

01-00:33:39

Redman: Could you see how that would shape the perceptions of someone who had never met a Japanese person?

01-00:33:48

Drew: Of course. And the first time I really met a Japanese person was in Berkeley.

01-00:33:54

Redman: Wow.

01-00:33:55

Drew: And, in fact, when they started relocating the Japanese, the area where I lived—the house—in fact, the house I lived in had formerly been owned by a Japanese gentleman. And so just before the relocation was complete I got to

know some of the kids that lived around there. I thought they were tremendous. I thought they were just wonderful. They were kids. They were just like me. We'd laugh and talk and everything. And they would speak Japanese. They could speak Japanese to their parents and I ask my {inaudible}, "What's that?" That's Japanese. And then they would go to explain to me about Japan. In that short time between meeting them and their being relocated, I did learn something about Japan. I loved the Japanese. I loved the food, because I'd go to their house. I would eat. Something about them. There was a cleanliness about them. And they're ritualistic people. You'd go in a house, you'd have dinner at one of these Japanese people's houses. And it always amazed me how good—like what happened? Dinners over with and within minutes after dinner's over with you can't tell me what they've eaten. The dishes are all washed, everything's put away, the place is clean. How do they do that?

01-00:35:28

Redman:

Was that hard for a kid when his friends were relocated to internment camps?

01-00:35:36

Drew:

It was a while before I understood what was going on. Because they would say that they are the enemy. How could these kids be an enemy? How could these Japanese people be an enemy? They're hard working people and they mind their own business. They don't bother anybody. They're self-sufficient. They don't ask the government for anything. What's wrong with them? Ad nobody could ever fully explain it to me. Well, they could do these nefarious things. They could commit sabotage and that stuff. Then later on the question that came to me was we have all these Germans in this country and they are. They're not maybe committing sabotage, they are committing sabotage. They're doing all types of dastardly things but it was like who cares.

01-00:36:27

Redman:

Nobody's talking about that.

01-00:36:28

Drew:

Who cares? It's like World War II. Black soldiers were—they were segregated. The military was segregated. When I went in the Army it was segregated.

01-00:36:38

Redman:

I want to get back to that in just a moment. The question I have is you talked a little bit about, in Oklahoma, learning about what—some things that were going on and what we call the Harlem Renaissance with artists and painters emerging out of Harlem, people like Langston Hughes and many other musicians. Those things seemed to resonate for you in Oklahoma. There was also during World War II a campaign that emerges, the Double Victory Campaign. This notion that if we're fighting abroad against fascism we also need to fight for civil rights at home. Those trends, though, it seemed they set up in some ways the Civil Rights Movement. In some ways anticipate them.

But in another sense, I wonder to what extent that may or may not have affected you as a young man.

01-00:37:32

Drew:

Well, early on it didn't. Not at all. Our business was what happened in the community. Outside the community is—we learn about all these types of things, what's going on, but it's really—you can't get your mind around it. How do I deal with it? How does it affect me? That's the first question. How does it affect me? Like I love music. Can't play anything. Totally almost tone deaf. Love art. Can't paint anything. Because I remember one of the most unpleasant experiences I had was, I guess I was about a second or third grader, and my art teacher—it's an amazing thing. The only teachers that I remember in my whole history of going to school, whether it was college, high school, anything else. The only teachers I remember were my elementary school teachers. They were interesting in that—like music. I always wanted to play an instrument or something. I couldn't. I wanted to sing. No voice or anything. And I would get frustrated. And so my teacher, Mrs. Randolph, asked me to stay after—come by and see her after school. So I came by. She explained to me, she says, "Some people can play music. Some people can't. Some people can sing. Some people can't. But that doesn't prohibit you from learning to enjoy music. And so you can enjoy it as much as the next person." And the same with my art teacher, Mrs. Meeker. It was amazing.

01-00:39:06

Redman:

Right, yes.

01-00:39:09

Drew:

That's, what, almost eighty years ago.

01-00:39:11

Redman:

Yes, that's great.

01-00:39:13

Drew:

And art the same way. You can enjoy art. You may not be able to paint anything but that doesn't stop you from enjoying art. You look at it. And I learned how to enjoy art. As a result, even years later, to this day, I go to a place—like I've visited probably fifty countries. And the first thing I look up when I get there, I go to the museum or the art gallery. It's the first place I go. When I went to France, or when I had to go to the Louvre—in Paris I go to the Louvre. When I was in Amsterdam I had to go to the Rijks Museum. When I was in London I had to go to the Tate Museum. And on down the line. I've wasted my time if I go there and I don't go to the museum. There what you find is quite interesting, especially today. Is that Americans have, I think, the least sense of history, of their history, than any other country. You can go to a European country and a ten year old, you stop a ten or twelve year old child, and he can tell you the entire history of his country. And you got people here that can't even tell you the name of their principal at school or their

congressperson or the mayor. They know nothing. And it's sad. It's absolutely sad.

01-00:40:41

Redman: Let's talk about the start of the war. So your mom at a certain point gets a job at the Kaiser shipyards. Can you summarize for me in just a couple of sentences, to the degree that you know it, what she did there? Do you know?

01-00:40:57

Drew: No.

01-00:40:59

Redman: Okay. Did she think of herself as a Rosie the Riveter?

01-00:41:04

Drew: I don't know.

01-00:41:04

Redman: You have no idea?

01-00:41:05

Drew: I had no contact with [her] at all.

01-00:41:05

Redman: Interesting, okay. So let's talk then about your time in—you said you were in the Army during—

01-00:41:15

Drew: Right. I graduated from high school in 1946. Then I worked out in the crops and fields [thinking] this is not going to get me anywhere. I always wanted to go to college but there was no way I could go to college. The only college we had, we had the college in the Pacific, which is now the University of the Pacific. It was segregated. They didn't accept non-white students. It was a Methodist school and so that was out. And so how do I go to college? I want to go to college. And so luckily I was walking down Main Street one day and there was a recruiting office there. The old Uncle Sam wants you. And so I'm sixteen. I walk in and I ask the man about joining the Army. At least I get in the Army, I have a place to live. And so in the course of discussing it, they says, "Oh, yeah, if you join the Army, for every year that you are in the Army we will give you, provide you with a year of education. We pay for your education for a year." But the only problem was it was in increments of three. And so I definitely didn't want to spend six years in the Army. So I said, "Well, I'll try for the three years," and then I would have to crowd a four-year education into three years. And so they had to explain to me, "Well, that's the deal. If you're eighteen or older, you can sign up now. If you're seventeen, your parents have to sign for you. If you're under seventeen, we can't accept you." So I left and then I said, "Well, I've got to go in the Army." I wrote a note saying that I was seventeen, took it back down there. And they said, "Well, okay, you have to take an aptitude test." So I took the aptitude test. They said, "Well, we can't accept you." I says, "Why?" And the fellow says,

"Well, I'm going to have to let whoever's in charge explain it to you." And so he take me back into his office and he says, after setting me down, he says, "Well, if you are colored and you pass the test with over 120 points on aptitude, we can't accept you unless you sign in for six years to go into officer's candidate school." I said, "But I was told that there weren't any black officers." "Well, in the east there are a few there and we could probably relocate you there." And so I says, "No, I'll just—if I can, I'll just try for the three years." And he said, "I don't know what to tell you. Maybe you can go over to the Navy. Maybe the Navy will accept you." In other words, "When you go over there, don't be so damn smart." And so evidently he was looking at his paperwork. This was toward the end of the month and I suspect that they hadn't filled their quota.

01-00:44:08

Redman:

Quota, yeah.

01-00:44:08

Drew:

So he says, "Well, I'll tell you what. I'm going to make an exception." And he says, "Can you be out here the day after tomorrow?" whatever it was. I said, "Yes." "Now, if you get down at this time in the morning, the bus is going to be taking recruits to Fort Ord in the Bay Area, in California." Okay. So I showed up, they put me on the bus, took me over to Fort Ord. Said, "You'll take your physical exam over there. Then if you pass your physical exam they'll accept you in the Army." So I go over there. I figured there would be doctors or someone to take your physical exam. Instead they lined up the guys. They said, "Okay, here's what we want you to do. It's time for your physical. Drop your pants, spread your cheeks and cough." You're holding your testicles and cough. Then spread your cheeks, whatever we did. And then after that it was, "Put your hands back up. Take two steps forward. Hold up your right hand and take two steps forward." And you were in the Army.

01-00:45:06

Redman:

That was it?

01-00:45:08

Drew:

That was it. That evening I'm being shipped to where? New Jersey. New Jersey. What's with the New Jersey thing? Yeah, you're going to Fort Monmouth, New Jersey. Okay. So get ready. They put me on the train and away we go to New Jersey. And we get part along the way, then they stop the train. Then there's a switch take place. Black troops have to move to the back of the train.

01-00:45:47

Redman:

Interesting.

01-00:45:48

Drew:

And the white troops move to the front of the train. Then all the way into New Jersey.

01-00:45:56

Redman:

Wow.

01-00:45:57

Drew:

So we got to New Jersey and by that time it's lunchtime. We go eat and so we go to eat. I eat this food and I was so sick I thought I was going to die. I'll never forget. It was ribs cooked on the stove with all this grease and stuff. I wasn't accustomed to eating greasy food or anything. Because mostly I ate at Chinese food restaurants, which was a totally different way of eating. So I was sick. From day one I was sick. I'm [committed,] they're not going to send me home because I need these three years. I knew nothing about the Army either. I had never met a soldier before. I'd never read anything about the Army, never read anything about soldiers, so I knew nothing. I'm here. All these guys, they're talking about ROTC, what they did back there and this type of thing. And I'm like, "Duh," which was quite interesting. It was three of the worst years of my life. Three of the most wasted years of my life and the government's life. Because, like I said, I was so accustomed to being self-sufficient and the Army, they would tell you to do something and I had a better way of doing it, which is the worst thing you can do the Army. You don't have a better way. You do what you're told. That's all it is. You do what you're told. And I would come up with my better way. Well, they teach you that you don't have a better way. We're going to send you to hike out to the airport, which was—I loved that because I loved to run. I always did love to run. So I'd get a bicycle, take him out to the airport and bring him back. March him out there and bring him back. I'd be running along there. This poor guy on the bicycle, he's about to pass out. I would be passing. I said, "Go ahead, you sit there. You stay right by the chair. I'll go out there and I'll come on back."

01-00:47:45

Redman:

Push it out.

01-00:47:46

Drew:

Because I was in trouble. Then they had KP duty, which was like cleaning grease traps. I don't know if you even know what a grease trap is.

01-00:47:56

Redman:

Right, yeah.

01-00:47:57

Drew:

Okay. And that was my job almost every day because I was always in trouble. After I finished in the evening, I would put on my work clothes and I'd go down there and start cleaning out the—every day.

01-00:48:09

Redman:

So during the day, you'd come—you'd done something.

01-00:48:13

Drew:

Nothing.

01-00:48:13

Redman: Yeah.

01-00:48:15

Drew: Supposedly I was being trained. I learned nothing. I never learned to march. They would try over and over again to teach me how to march. I had no rhythm. I couldn't march. I learned to march. I had been out of the Army four years before I learned to march. And how I learned to march, I saw two sailors walking down the street and they were ramrod straight. And, "Oh, that's how you march." I've been just walking. But while I was in the Army, I was never assigned to any location. Before I left basic training, we went out on the maneuvers and I slipped in some poison ivy or poison oak and so the sergeant came over, he saw me in this, and he says, "Well, go down and report to the dispensary." So I went to the dispensary and they said, "Well, we're going to keep you overnight and check you out." So keeping me overnight and checking me out, this maneuver thing was the very last event. You report back and you pack your bags and your papers are there for you to go to the next place. Okay. Because I have to spend the night at the dispensary. I go back, everybody's gone. I'm the only person there. What do I do? I repeat basic training. One day now. And this other day, nothing has happened. Do I repeat basic training or do they send me home? They decide, "Well, we'll send him home. We don't want him anyway." So I go to the next place and it was more of the same thing. I just didn't fit in. And when they would have the parades or the drills, this type of thing, they would tell me to go down to the signal shack and hang out—and hide out. And it was that kind of thing. And then after a while they'd give me a promotion, send me someplace else. "We just really can't use you here." So the whole time I was in the Army I never learned anything. I was attached to an outfit and never went out anywhere with them. They was out on maneuvers and doing all these types of things and I would be cleaning up the [kitchen] and cleaning up the day room or what it was because they didn't—finally they found out there was an opening someplace else and they'd give me another stripe and send me there.

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02-00:00:00

Drew: In the black units, all the officers were white. Non-commissioned officers were black, all the officers were white. And usually the white officers that was assigned—

02-00:00:14

Redman: Okay, I'm sorry, go right ahead.

02-00:00:15

Drew: Yes. These were the guys that were the low men on the totem pole. They know that they were never going to advance in the Army. They were there because they were the low men on the totem pole and they didn't like it. They didn't like Negro troops, as we were called by that time, because they knew

that, "This is all I'm going to ever do. I'm never, ever going to be in a white unit. I'm never going to command anything." So they were nasty little people, to say the least. And the captain who was in charge—interesting, I remember his name coming to me. Captain Casey. Captain Casey was a drunk and just the opposite of the Army, where they demanded that you were shaven and that you had on a clean uniform and everything. Captain Casey was unshaven, unkempt, hair down to here, eyes red and rheumy. And same uniform day after day. [We knew he wore] the same uniform because by this time the salt had calcified around the collar. So he would show up once in a while. But with me, they just didn't know what to make of me. Me either. I didn't know what to make of the Army. So I was lucky enough I met this fellow from Chicago, Braxton. Braxton was his name. And he was in the Army for the same reason I was. He wanted to get an education. So we would talk about it. So he says, "Well, you ever think about taking correspondence courses?" "What's correspondence courses?" He said, "Well, I'm taking correspondence courses from the University of Chicago and I get credit for it. So when I get out I'll have enough credits where I will be able to complete my education in those three years." And so I applied to the University of Chicago for the same thing. And it's fine. So during the time I was in the Army I was able to take the correspondence courses and everything. So when I did get out I had a year, almost a year and a half of college already under my belt just with correspondence courses. But the Army, I think any day they were going to throw me out, because why would they have me in there? I am totally useless. When I say useless, I mean useless. I can't cook. I don't work in the office. I can't work in the chaplain's office because I wasn't religious. So what you going to do with me?

02-00:02:51

Redman:

Can I go back to the war for a moment? So we often think about rationing and blackouts and all these sorts—but I wonder what an average, everyday—when you were still in high school, what a general day was like during the war and how the war might have effected you in your life.

02-00:03:13

Drew:

Well, early on I guess the war was just a vague foreign thing that was taking place, like when I was like thirteen or so, twelve, thirteen or so, and it didn't become real until later on, I guess to some degree. It piqued my curiosity when I was about fourteen or fifteen years old. I would wonder. I'd be out maybe sleeping in the park or something. I said, "Oh, this is probably what the troops—the soldiers are doing or something." The soldiers had the tents and the same thing. But it always came back to me. Me, me. How does it affect me? Not how it affected anybody else. But I guess the only thing during this time that wasn't me was that if I could help someone I would help them. Because my grandmother was that type of a person. She was an ultra religious person in the truest sense of the word. She was the type of person—if she heard that somebody across town, a woman she done never heard of, the woman is sick, she's got three or four kids and she need help. My

grandmother would get up in the morning. She don't even know the lady. Of course, telephones was at a premium, so she didn't phone her. And riding the bus was something else, again, I think because we never rode the bus. And so she would go over to the woman's house, cook dinner, take care of the kids, and do [laundry] come back home. And so from her I kind of learned that. She'd go down in the street. She'd see some guy that was homeless, or some lady who was the local prostitute, and, "I want you to come to my church. Sunday we serve dinner. We want you to be there." And she would tell the lady. I was with my grandmother. Then she says, "Now, if you don't come to the—when the last time you had a home-cooked meal?" "Well, I haven't had a home-cooked meal since I can't remember." "I serve dinner at four o'clock. This is my address. You be there. If you're not there, I'm going to come out here and look you up." That's the type of person she was.

02-00:05:14

Redman: Interesting.

02-00:05:16

Drew: If she said something, people listened to her. Mrs. {Buford?} said it, then you listened to her. But in spite of her being an ultra-religious person, she was a practical person. I had a cousin who's fifteen when she started smoking and my grandmother—in her religion, no smoking, no drinking, no wearing of jewelry. You didn't go to the movies, you didn't go to games or any of that type of thing. So now my cousin is smoking. If she found out about it, she's going to kill her. Then my grandmother asked her, "Doris, where you getting the cigarettes from?" She said, "Well, I ask people for cigarettes. They give me cigarettes." She said, "Well, I don't want you asking, going around asking men for cigarettes. Now, if you need cigarettes, if you can't stop smoking, you come to see me and I'll buy you some cigarettes." That's the type of person she was.

02-00:06:13

Redman: Interesting, yes.

02-00:06:14

Drew: Like today, even now, things that she said that I didn't understand then that came true. Like during those days, she says—she made us learn how to cook, sew. During those days, those were girly things. Boys didn't cook, boys didn't sew. Those were sissy things. But my grandmother—all of us, she'd get all the boys around the neighborhood. She'd bring them in and teach us how to cook. We had to sit down and darn our socks. She would always have a glass and needle and be darning our socks. Had to learn how to cuff our pants. How to clean up, how to wash the dishes. All these things she taught us how to do. And she says, "I guess you wonder why I make you do these things?" I said, "Yes, they're sissy things." She said, "Let me tell you, when you grow up, when you get grown, it isn't going to be like it is now. Women will be working just like men." Granny's gone batty. [laughter] Women don't work.

A few white women work. At that time they had switchboard operators and a few other maybe working at a little office work. But nothing serious.

02-00:07:26

Redman: Right. Nothing like—yeah.

02-00:07:28

Drew: And my grandmother's telling me that when I grow up women are going to be out there working just like men. They're going to be lawyers and doctors and all this. This lady, she's losing it. And what happened? I got grown up and there it is.

02-00:07:44

Redman: Have some of those memories returned to you over time? And it seems like maybe a memory like that is something that you would interpret maybe twenty years later or thirty years later but then many, many years later it's such a different meaning in your mind, that statement of someone saying that.

02-00:08:02

Drew: Yeah. Well, you wonder how could she even envision that. I never talked with anyone who ever even—even later on, that thought women would be working. Women didn't work. They were too dainty. They couldn't do things that men could. And women don't think. Ha-ha. And all these stupid things. But then the things she said at that time—I guess she sort of foresaw that my time with her would be limited. So she told me a lot of things that I didn't understand. And I can't remember exactly what it was, but I was about sixty-five and something happened. I said, "Oh, that's what my grandmother was talking about." This is her. That's my grandmother up here [points to picture on wall].

02-00:08:54

Redman: Oh, wow.

02-00:08:56

Drew: I said, "That's what she was talking about. Oh, I see now." And so it's led me to one of my little nieces, who was giving her mother a bad time, because her mother was telling—she was sixteen. She says, "And when I get out of high school I don't want to go to college. Because I don't have to go to college because I know this and another thing." And so I remember my grandmother telling the same cousin of mine. She says, "Doris, you're sixteen," about this time, "you think you know everything." She says, "But when you get sixty-five, you're going to find out some of the things you think you now know, you'll be just learning them," which was true. Things that she had said back then, I didn't understand them. I'm sixty-five and I understand them. Finally. Finally it dawns on me what she was talking about, what she meant. Because she had a simple way. And then all these simplistic sayings they had. These things come pop in my mind. And they're just marvelous. These are wonderful things. The different stories that we were told. I had an uncle, he was a fiery little—I thought he was a giant really. Last time I saw him I was about eleven years old and I thought the guy was like six-three, six-four or

something. So later on I had been in the Army, I had gotten out of the Army, graduated from college. There was like a family get together or something. So I'm there and I ask, "Is Uncle Joe coming?" She said, "That's your Uncle Joe right there." "That can't be my Uncle Joe." He was a guy about five-seven. [laughter]

02-00:10:42

Redman: [laughter] To a little kid he was enormous.

02-00:10:45

Drew: Yeah. Then I could remember—like I was a kid and Uncle Joe always passing himself as being a preacher. One of the most vulgar, vulgar people you'd ever met in your life. And I remember, I guess I was six, seven, eight or something, it was his birthday and asking, "Joe, what do you want for your birthday?" And I remember just as clear as it being said today, says, "You know what I want for my birthday? I want a great big heaping help of leaving me the hell alone." [laughter] At the time it didn't mean anything. Later on, I said, "What a marvelous way—"

02-00:11:32

Redman: That's amazing. That's really amazing. So there's something I want to ask about. And I know we're jumping around a little bit in time but that's A-okay. But there's something that's really important that I needed to ask about and that's in June of 1944. There's an explosion at a place called Port Chicago. And I understand you can tell me a little bit about that.

02-00:11:54

Drew: Not too much. I thought about it later. I was there. I went to Port Chicago after the explosion and I remember they wouldn't let you go in. They stopped you outside. I don't remember how I got there. I don't even know why I was there. But I guess there was somebody that wanted to go there to see what was going on because [of] these poor sailors and they said they were being court-martialed because they wouldn't go back to work loading the ship, putting the ammunition on these ships and everything. After I guess a thousand of them had been killed. It had blown up and everything. So they were court-martialed and it wasn't until years later, I think Johnson was the person that absolved them of this. And most of them were dead by then.

02-00:12:46

Redman: So I've asked a lot of people about Port Chicago and there—in terms of people who just lived in Berkeley and Oakland and San Francisco at the time and I get the sense that a lot of people may have heard about it because of the explosion right away but that so many people were ignorant to what actually happened.

02-00:13:09

Drew: The government. The government. It was closed off. Like I say, you go there, you couldn't go in or anything. It was closed off. Information wasn't forthcoming or anything. We got information. It was only the most like

secondhand information and it was from Washington. No local information about what was going on. In fact, there weren't even—I remember seeing a picture. I think this person must have been the only person—I actually got a picture of this after it happened. But it was very, very, very closemouthed. There was just nothing. Like even in the local paper. I don't remember reading too much about it in the local paper. It happened but there was no particulars.

02-00:13:54

Redman:

Did people in the black community have a particular interest in it or was that another thing that—

02-00:14:02

Drew:

That's how they treat us. And the black community was kind [of]—we can't do anything about it, which most instances we can't, then why should we agonize over it? It was that type of thing. And when you think about it, why should you if you can't do anything about it? And it wasn't until years later that, many years later, the whole landscape had changed, the whole atmosphere had changed, and I heard her saying that you can't beat city hall. The most you can do is go pee on the door or something. I questioned that. Then later I found out that isn't true at all. It's not true at all. One person can make a difference. One person can change. I moved here and the street down a couple of blocks over was just rutted. It was so bad you would drive your car in a zigzag fashion. And when it rained you didn't dare because those ruts, you would tear up the axel in your car. So I asked the people around here why didn't they do something about it? Well, we've talked to city hall but they won't do anything about it and it's like we just wasting our time." I said, "Well, why don't we all call city hall?" The all meant my next door neighbor to down the corner. So I said, "What we're going to do, we're going to call city hall every day twice a day and ask them when they're going to repair the street." And so after about two or three days they started asking me, "Well, didn't I just talk with you yesterday?" "Yes and you're going to talk with me again this evening, too, because I'm going to call you until that street is repaired," until it was repaired. We [kept] calling back and forth. So about a week or so later, I'm driving downtown and I look and I see all this equipment down there and the roads are blocked off and everything. And they repaired the road.

02-00:15:53

Redman:

That's amazing. So when did you come back to Stockton permanently to reside?

02-00:16:00

Drew:

In 1996.

02-00:16:02

Redman:

Ninety-six. Let me ask about the end of the war, because on the one hand the Nazis surrendered in Europe and then several months later the atomic bombs are

dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. When you heard the news of that, could you comprehend that and to what extent did you have a feeling about it then and have your feelings about the decision to drop the bombs changed over time?

02-00:16:31

Drew:

No. I thought it was one of the most inhumane things that I'd ever heard of then and as I get older, it seems more inhumane. Not less, but more inhumane. That any person could just wantonly kill that many innocent bystanders, women, children, old people. It just boggles my mind. How do you do that? How could you call yourself civilized and do that? I don't understand. There's a lot of things I don't understand but that's one of them.

02-00:17:07

Redman:

At the end of the war, there's both the confusion and all of the emotions wrapped up in that, but also I understand there was partying in the streets and elation at being done with the war. Was that—

02-00:17:23

Drew:

Did it translate to the black community?

02-00:17:26

Redman:

Did that?

02-00:17:25

Drew:

No.

02-00:17:26

Redman:

No.

02-00:17:26

Drew:

No.

02-00:17:27

Redman:

Why was that not the case?

02-00:17:30

Drew:

It wasn't the case because the soldiers would return, black soldiers would return. Most of them were from the south. A large number of them were from the south. They would go home and they would get lynched for wearing a uniform. They just came back from war. During the war, some of them would come home on leave and they were perplexed because the German troops that they captured were being sent to America. A lot of people don't even realize that. They were sent down south. They were put in supposedly concentration camps down there, whatever the case might be. But they were given leave. They could get on the bus, they could go to the theater. They could eat at the restaurant. This is the enemy. Blacks couldn't do that. And even getting on the bus. It was up to the driver even if he'd accept you on the bus or not. If he says, "You can't get on my bus," you couldn't get on his bus. Oh, you a taxpayer, you pay your taxes but you couldn't get on the bus. If you did get

on, you fake, you bow and scrape and then take your seat as far back as you could, the last unoccupied seat. Then by the halfway point, it could be nobody sitting there, one white person, that's—but you can't sit in those seats.

02-00:18:52
 Redman: If you're a black man who's from California and is in the Army and is in the south for the first time, would another black soldier explain those sorts of things to you or would you have to sort of pick it up?

02-00:19:09
 Drew: No, you'd know it before you got there.

02-00:19:11
 Redman: Interesting.

02-00:19:12
 Drew: The word would get to you that when you go to Mississippi, this is how you act. You go to Georgia, this is how you act. And so my position was I should never, ever go south, which I never did. And people tell me, "Oh, you won't last a week in the south. You're too outspoken. Your attitude, your don't believe anybody's better than you and with that attitude you'll get killed."

02-00:19:35
 Redman: Wow.

02-00:19:36
 Drew: I never went. The first time I was ever in the south—well, when I was in the Army, I spent a couple of weeks at an Army base in Arkansas. But as a civilian, the only time I was ever in the south was I spent a night in Miami on my way to Antigua. Just an overnight. So I wasn't really there. And I met a couple of people there. I had been all over the world and these people were more foreign to me than the people I'd met in other countries. And this fellow was sitting there and he's talking to me. And this one fellow is literally interpreting for me what this American southern white guy is saying. And I never {inaudible} said words to, "Would you like to go get something to eat? Get something to eat?" I says, "What?" I said, "What did he say?" "He says would you like to go get something to eat?" I said, "Oh, no."

02-00:20:33
 Redman: It's another language. Yeah.

02-00:20:35
 Drew: But that was my only experience. But I met southerners and I found that early on that black—later on I worked for American Airlines. I was manager of passenger service for American Airlines. And so we had a flight that went to Dallas, between San Francisco and Dallas. And Dallas is the connecting point for all the points south. So as a result, on that flight it would be a lot of southerners. And the interesting thing, you get one southerner by himself and he would sir you to death. "Yes, sir," or "No, sir, you don't have to go out of

your way, sir. That's okay, sir. You go ahead and do what you got to do, sir." Two of them together, "Well, boy, what do you—how do you like it?"

02-00:21:17

Redman: Wow.

02-00:21:18

Drew: It was that attitude.

02-00:21:22

Redman: Cultural attitude, okay. Yes.

02-00:21:24

Drew: Not the fact that this guy—he's the man who runs the whole place. He's the manager of this whole thing here. That didn't mean—

02-00:21:31

Redman: Oh, gosh.

02-00:21:33

Drew: The one flight we had that was delayed and so we had this group of southerners. And the flight was always packed. And so they would come into my office, these couple of guys. "When's the flight going to go?" So we had to set up for meals and all this type of thing. So these two guys came in there. And so I said, "Well, have a seat," and I poured some coffee. So they got right at home and then says, "Are you from California?" Said, "No, from the south." "How long you been up here?" That's up here, California's up here. "Oh, it's like this whole time." "Do you ever miss {home}?" I said, "I sure do. I sure do miss being down there." And so I go through this game thing and everything. And, yeah, I know how it is. A lot of these boys come up here and they get uppity and all. So we go through this. And so finally the plane's repaired and it's time for them to board. So I go out to make an announcement and I thank them for their patience and everything and these two guys are sitting there. And then I look. After I finish I look over at them and I said, "You boys behave yourselves, you all hear?" And they red faced. [laughter]

02-00:22:44

Redman: Could not believe it.

02-00:22:45

Drew: They couldn't believe it.

02-00:22:49

Redman: Yeah. Oh, man, that's funny.

02-00:22:50

Drew: But that's the thing about it. I guess because of the mistreatment and the use of certain words and everything, black people get—we are very sensitive in a lot of areas. But I learned to fight my sensitivity with coming up with answers. I would welcome these things. Like my brother and I were walking down the

street one day and this guy says, "I can't stand niggers." I said, "You know what? Me either." I said, "I can't. And by the way, how do you put up with your momma?" I said, "Is your last name nigger? Is your—" I said, "Now, wait a sec. If your last name is nigger, that would make your mom a nigger." But these guys wanted to fight me." And my brother wanted to fight.
 [laughter]

02-00:23:38

Redman: But you were more—

02-00:23:40

Drew: I just welcome these things. I just loved it. One day a customer said I called him a son of a bitch. I said, "I never called him a son of a bitch. What I said was I hoped when he got home his bitch bite him on the leg." [laughter] But you got fun with it, you know.

02-00:24:05

Redman: Right, yeah.

02-00:24:07

Drew: Because you find a lot of the people are so damn stupid.

02-00:24:09

Redman: Because you've found humor in the situation but it seems like a lot of people would respond to that in less productive ways.

02-00:24:19

Drew: Oh, yeah. Oh, right.

02-00:24:22

Redman: Right, yeah.

02-00:24:23

Drew: Yeah. Get shot, get cut, anything.

02-00:24:25

Redman: Okay. And that's on an individual level. Let me ask about civil rights on a broader spectrum in terms of there's the strategy taken by groups like the Congress of Racial Equality [CORE] or—

02-00:24:39

Drew: I was the employment superintendent for the Congress of Racial Equality [CORE] in San Francisco.

02-00:24:50

Redman: Oh, wow. Okay.

02-00:24:51

Drew: Which was one of the most effective units in the country.

02-00:24:54

Redman: In the Bay Area.

02-00:24:56

Drew: Period.

02-00:24:56

Redman: Yeah. Well, no, the CORE's representatives in the Bay Area were the most effective in the country, [you mean]?

02-00:25:01

Drew: Right. Were among the most when it came to like job—see, people don't realize that during the Civil Rights Movement, that San Francisco, for instance, there weren't any like—there was one black policeman, almost no black school teachers. Absolutely no bank tellers. No black people working in department stores, anything like that. Even the so called trucks, sales trucks, delivery trucks, bread trucks and all these types of things, no blacks. No black automobile salesmen. Didn't any of these people exist in the Bay Area. Grocery stores, nobody, no black clerks anywhere.

02-00:25:44

Redman: Okay. I want to ask several questions because this is such an interesting topic. But the NAACP nationally wants to take a strategy of legal increments. So fighting through the courts to get those step by step and CORE takes a little bit of a different philosophy. It's talking about civil non-violent disobedience. There are encouragements for things like shop-ins and sit-ins in order to—boycotts. Don't buy where you can't work. That sort of thing.

02-00:26:18

Drew: We started that here in Stockton about 1950, long before the Civil Rights Movement. Like about 1952 or so.

02-00:26:26

Redman: Wow.

02-00:26:27

Drew: [Warren G.] Gaines was one of the initiators. There were about six of us. And during that period of time, we did. We'd walk down with the sandwich boards on, with the sign. Exactly what it said, "Don't shop where you can't work." That's exactly what it said. This was part of why I left Stockton in the first place. Because I was picked up one night by the policeman, a couple of policemen. In fact, there was three of them in the car. They took me out east, out by the waterworks, and they explained to me that I had thirty days to get out of Stockton or else, that my family was going to be injured. And so within thirty days we had moved to San Francisco. Most of my friends didn't even know I was gone or anything. Just like that. Stockton is an extension of the south really. They have the KKK, active KKKs in Stockton. The whole shooting match. Very few jobs are available for blacks in Stockton. They just had the plan to reopen the airport. So they were interviewing 1,500 people for these jobs. One black person showed up out there and I talked with the guy and he said that by the time they got through giving him the runaround and everything, he was ready to just leave but he just refused to leave. He said,

"I'm not leaving until I fill out an application." And he said he was one of the last fifteen, ten or fifteen people there after being one of the first ones to arrive. But Stockton is just—it's that way.

02-00:28:07

Redman:

Interesting. So what were your feelings at that time? I've sort of said that—I hope I'm characterizing this in a way that you would find to be accurate. If there's the legal component and the non-violent disobedience and the actual civil action, a lot of people talk about the Civil Rights Movement, say that these are somewhat opposed strategies or they preferred one strategy and not the other. But other people talk about those strategies as complementing each other in the black community. What do you think?

02-00:28:40

Drew:

They complemented each other because the legal aspect of it, the NAACP's approach, it was long, time consuming. Even when Thurgood Marshall was on the courts or when Earl Warren was chief justice. That was a surprise. That was the ultimate surprise, because he was governor of California and a very conservative governor of California. And he's appointed as Supreme Court justice and does an overnighter. He said that the first time he realized that, "I am responsible for interpreting the law for all the people." All the people. Which I've never heard another Supreme Court justice say that. Not even Thurgood Marshall when he was there. Like they talk about the gangbangers. They say, "These are people that have been alienated. They went to school." Okay, first place, let's look at school. If you go to high school, I'll ask you a question, why should you graduate from high school? Why should you? If you're not going to college, why should you graduate from high school? I used to ask myself that when I was going to—only reason I graduated from high school is because I knew I was going to college. My head just told me I was going to college. But I couldn't see any useful purpose for high school, not even then. And even then, if you were high school graduates, you could get a job. You could work for the government, these types of things. Like today, high school graduate, you could for McDonald's. Not much more than that. Maybe a government job or something, a warehouseman's job, but you're not going to get anything more than that. I lost my train of thought.

02-00:30:38

Redman:

We were talking about the different approaches.

02-00:30:40

Drew:

Right, right. And like CORE. When we formed CORE, we started formulating what we wanted to do. What are the problems? These are the problems. We've got problems, people needing work. We've got legal problems. We've got all these people. School problems. Got all kinds of problems. And so how do we approach this? Can we do it one at a time or what? So we end up setting up committees that we had for schools, for education, for employment. And so during the course of employment, we—so before we start saying what we're going to do, these types of things, we're going to do our homework. We'll do

our due diligence. We're going to do all of our research. We're going to find out how many people are working there, why they're working. We can find out why they don't hire black people or minorities. And so we spent maybe six months or so just on that. Why doesn't the Bank of America hire blacks? How many blacks did Bank of America hire? California we found out less than three-tenths of one percent. And they had one assistant branch manager in Watts, of course. And that was it. Safeway, same thing. What about Safeway? Safeway's got these stores in the black community, and we found out a lot of things. We started working for Safeway. We found out that the Safeways, with the food that was in the white communities, in the store in the white community, like the produce, the meat, they would pack them up. This is San Francisco, this is not the south. Then they would bring them down and put them in the Safeways in the black community.

02-00:32:36

Redman:

Wow.

02-00:32:37

Drew:

And then the prices. You would think the prices are going to be exactly the same. But the prices in the black community were higher than it was in the white community. And then when the question was asked why, well, that's to make up for shoplifting. And then we do the research, we find out that shoplifting in the black stores was the same as in the white stores. Right across the {inaudible} border. So then as we're going through all this research, like there were bakeries in San Francisco. No blacks. Dairies in San Francisco, no blacks. And so what do we do? What is our strategy? Now, you say it's non-violent. We're not going to go down and shoot up anybody. So we say, "Okay, Safeway, this is what we're going to do. We're going to go into Safeways, we're just going to inconvenience them." We're going to go in and we're going to get baskets. We're going to fill them up with food. No perishables.

02-00:33:37

Redman:

At Safeway.

02-00:33:39

Drew:

The idea was we would fill up baskets of hard goods, like canned goods and pasta and stuff like that and we'd take the baskets up front and just leave them. But the rule is no perishables. No perishables. We're just going to inconvenience them. They don't want to hire blacks? They'll hire other people to put these things away. Bank of America, our approach was just a little bit different. We would go into Bank of America. I would go in there, put a twenty dollar bill up and ask for change, twenty dollars worth of change. And then over the course, they'd give him a couple of sleeves and stuff. And he'd go back, he'd take the change out of the sleeves, get back in the line and go back and he'd want to convert his change back into a twenty dollar bill. We got tens of people in line. And you can imagine what the regular customers are thinking. They are getting pissed off. Highly pissed off. "How do we get

rid of these people? Well, we'll hire a token black." "No, that's not going to be good enough. We want to know that this is an active process and we want it in writing that you're going to continue to hire the best person that shows up for the job." So they started hiring blacks. Safeway started hiring blacks.

The hardest nut to crack was Automobile Row. And a lot of us ended up going to jail for sitting there and this type of thing in Automobile Row. And it was shown that blacks bought more Cadillac's in California than any other car and any other group of people. If blacks stopped buying Cadillacs, they couldn't even sell Cadillacs in the area. The dealers would go out of business. And so we talked to the dealership and they said, "No, no, no, no. You can't tell us what to do. We hire who we want to." Said, "Fine." So we went across the Bay to Oakland where they had a Cadillac dealer. And so we said, "Would you consider hiring a black person if we sent you all these black people?" They're not dumb. They know what the statistics are. All these black people in San Francisco buying Cadillacs and they come from the East Bay—I mean, from across Sausalito and this area. They come over to buy Cadillacs. And so then the word get back and so we go back and tell them, "That's fine. You don't have to hire blacks. We've talked with what's his name over in Oakland. He says he's willing if we send him a qualified black person. He'll hire them right away." And all of a sudden, "You send us a qualified black person."

02-00:36:12

Redman: That is amazing.

02-00:36:14

Drew: Again—

02-00:36:15

Redman: That must have been a pretty exciting time—

02-00:36:17

Drew: Oh, it was.

02-00:36:17

Redman: —to be a part of the Congress of Racial Equality. I understand it was a biracial organization, as well.

02-00:36:24

Drew: It was. Very much so.

02-00:36:26

Redman: It must have been exciting to find like minded people who would be interested in this.

02-00:36:30

Drew: It was. And it wasn't just young people. There were lawyers. It was like the B'nai B'rith. We had lawyers, a number of Jewish numbers. Plus Gold by that time was head of the stevedore's union and he and his wife was there and he

had a son that just graduated from law school, a couple of them in law school. So we had all of these resources.

02-00:36:54

Redman: So really smart people.

02-00:36:56

Drew: Oh, yeah. We had tremendous resources. In fact, the chairman of—the president of the Congress of Racial Equality had a master's degree, plus he had written several books. Had written several books after that and everything. So we were an extremely effective group. And not only that, but by this time part of the Fillmore was changing and so they had all these empty buildings. And so we went to the city in sort of a threatening manner. "If we can't get these buildings we're going to have thousands of people sitting here at city hall. They're empty anyway." Said, "We'll clean them up and this type of thing." So then we set up what we called the Black Man Free Store, and we'd go down to different stores, discontinued merchandise. We went to the department stores, we'd go to stores and get food. Dubuque Meat Company come to this neighborhood, give us meat. Because we had all these freezers and things there. We had people that came in and made sure that it was running and everything. And then we had racks and racks of clothing. So people come in and getting stuff free. As I said, it was free. Everything was free. You wanted to leave a donation, you could leave a donation. And the donation was used to help kids going to school. Helping them get their books, help them with their transportation, whatever it was. And that was it. And then later on we even appealed to some of the people in the outer reaches of San Francisco, because almost everyone at that time, even today, they have an appliance, a workable appliance in their garage. They don't want to pay to get rid of it. It's there. We'll take this thing. Just call us, we'll come and move it, move it away. Then we had mechanics, people that would come in, they'd go over these appliances to make sure that they were perfect. Then we would deliver them. We had people with trucks, we got the rental trucks and things. And we would deliver these to people's houses. People would come in, get whatever they wanted. They wanted clothing, come in.

02-00:39:06

Redman: That's amazing.

02-00:39:08

Drew: But you know the—

02-00:39:09

Redman: Did you meet a lot of people that way, too?

02-00:39:11

Drew: Oh, sure. You can't help but meet a lot. That's when you learn that the best people are the simple people, the poorest people. They're the most honest. Like the people would come in and you could tell who was who. If this person had a little something, he'd drive up in the—the Cadillac at the time or his

Chrysler and he would come in and he'd get a basket and he would fill it up with clothing and everything. He'd try to take everything. That poor person would come in, and she's got two children, she get maybe two outfits for this child, two outfits for this child. They had a little food and that's it. You didn't have to say, "Don't try to take it all." They weren't. This other guy, this guy of means, "Please, Sir, would you mind leaving something for some other people?" And our place was bigger than this whole house and just racks and racks and racks of clothing. We'd get them from everywhere. And plus, there were people would leave clothing there. We'd come in the morning, open the store and there would be bundles of clothing where somebody—the kids might have outgrown the clothing. Be nice clothing or people just—the style has changed and so they don't want to go with that style. And so it was a very successful store. We had the free clinic there. You know, you go there, you needed a shot, get a shot. You need an examination. You need a tooth pulled. All these things. This was not just a black thing. This was like an interracial community. The Haight Ashbury Clinic. It even operates to this day.

02-00:40:46

Redman:

San Francisco, did you find it—I imagine the war had changed it. The war had changed the whole Bay Area so dramatically. But maybe you could talk about what San Francisco was like as a city in those days and how it was maybe different from today or from earlier in some sense.

02-00:41:06

Drew:

San Francisco was always a town for—a tourist town. And most things were catered toward tourists. For instance, if something bad happened, someone got killed or something dastardly happened, it was understood that this would never be printed on the front page. It's on the back of—we don't want the tourists to see these things. To the point of one year when they were talking about murders for San Francisco and Oakland, *San Francisco Chronicle* reported that there were fifty-seven murders in Oakland last year. Come to find out there were fifty-nine murders in San Francisco, but that was way on the back page. Oakland was front page.

02-00:41:53

Redman:

Interesting. Wow.

02-00:41:56

Drew:

Now it's got to the point where there's very few blacks in San Francisco any longer. Methodically gotten rid of them. Bought the properties from under them and this type of thing and just phased them out. Like with the Fillmore district. When they came in and redeveloped the Fillmore district, they gave these people these vouchers. Now, once we build this housing, we building low income housing and we're going to build moderate income housing. Never was any low income housing. When this house is built, you can bring your voucher back and we'll give you a place. The damn place. That was some of the most expensive low cost housing ever. It still is to this day.

- 02-00:42:44
Redman: Let me ask you. So feeling does change in the Civil Rights Movement and there's critique from Malcolm X, from then the black nationalist community, from different—in Oakland there's the vibrant black power movement.
- 02-00:43:07
Drew: Black Panther.
- 02-00:43:08
Redman: Black Panthers.
- 02-00:43:08
Drew: Right. The most misunderstood group ever.
- 02-00:43:14
Redman: Talk about that.
- 02-00:43:15
Drew: The Black Panthers primarily—the white communities saw them as a threat. Guns. We'll protect ourselves. That's when they said, "We're not going—they never killed anybody. We're not going out to kill anybody." But we're going to protect ourselves. People are not going to run over—police are not going to run over us any longer. They set up food banks. Food programs for the schools. They bought—kids buy books and everything. They donated food to the people. They set up one of the first areas where people could come in eat. You could go in. Like some of the church things. You go in there and get a prepared meal and this type of thing. So they were really an extremely useful—and even black people don't understand. The black people today, they don't understand it. Do you realize that there are grown people in their twenties and thirties that know absolutely nothing about the Fillmore district? Nothing. They don't even know that it exists. They say, "Fillmore district? Wherever's that?"
- 02-00:44:23
Redman: Right. So on the one hand what you're describing is interesting because the activities behind the scenes of CORE and the Black Panther party are in some ways pretty comparable. They're both—
- 02-00:44:40
Drew: Right. Exactly. Well, we worked with them.
- 02-00:44:43
Redman: Yeah, okay.
- 02-00:44:44
Drew: Yes. We worked with them. In fact, I was attending a meeting over there for CORE, as a CORE representative. When I came out of the meeting, I just got off from work and came by there. Got my suit, my briefcase. And I walk out and all of a sudden I feel this tremendous pain across the side. This policeman had hit me across here and broke my ribs. And then when he took me to the

hospital they said, "Well, we're going to have to put you in the hospital. We have to operate to fix the rib." I said, "I can't afford to be out. I have to go back." They said, "Well, your ribs are never going to heal right. They're going to overlap. We could wrap them," which they did. They never healed right. They still overlap. It's just like this to this day. And then, see, Oakland was one of the most brutal police forces.

02-00:45:26

Redman: Did you ever have a sense of why the police officer cracked you like that?

02-00:45:29

Drew: No. Well, the sense was that we're going to teach these people, these blankety-blanks a lesson.

02-00:45:36

Redman: Just for meeting?

02-00:45:36

Drew: Yes. They didn't know me from Adam. It wasn't like I was walking around with a black jacket on. I got my suit on. Like I said, I was working at American Airlines. I got my suit on and my tie and my briefcase because I left work and I walk out. I could've been a lawyer, anybody, an executive somewhere. But then I'm lying there and the interesting thing about it, the gentleman that came by was the director of Kaiser Permanente and he called the emergency to have me taken over there for treatment. So afterwards he said, had this lawyer came by and he says, "We're going to initiate a suit against the city of Oakland. I want you to go get a copy of the police report." Ha. Ha, ha. There was no police report. This never happened. It's just my imagination.

02-00:46:33

Redman: Somehow you broke your ribs.

02-00:46:34

Drew: Yes.

02-00:46:36

Redman: Yes.

02-00:46:36

Drew: You probably got this—slipped or something and you just want to—you're doing this for dramatic purposes. Nothing ever came of it.

02-00:46:44

Redman: Wow.

02-00:46:46

Drew: Nothing. I couldn't prove anything. And the people that was in the area where the meeting was taking place, it was primarily a white area, they could care less.

02-00:46:59

Redman:

Now, I know we're flashing forward many years later but this is in my mind because it was just in the news this past week that Rodney King passed away. I'm wondering if, in light of the context of your treatment by the Stockton police and the Oakland police, the stuff with Rodney King must not have surprised you very much.

02-00:47:20

Drew:

No, none.

02-00:47:21

Redman:

Maybe what happened afterwards may have. I don't know.

02-00:47:24

Drew:

No, it's the frustration. You can push people so far and then they just break, which is going to happen in this country with the poor people. It's going to happen. I won't be here when it happens but it's going to happen. It was this police force all over the place. Like in Berkeley. I lived in Berkeley. The Berkeley policemen, at that time there was the so called zebra killing. And this black person was supposed to kill somebody. I never got particulars on it. But they were stopping black people in Berkeley and I was stopped three times. Again, I would commute to work by helicopter. It was nice days, so I'd just—I'd walk down to the heliport and take the helicopter, go to work. And I'm walking along. And then all of a sudden, I see all the policemen. They turn in. I said, "God, what, somebody try to run the bank?" because I was near the bank. And they, "Hey, you?" And I'm looking around to see who they're talking to. "You with the briefcase. Put the briefcase down and up against the wall." I said, "What the heck's going on?" "We're checking out—" I said, "I've been stopped two times already." I was in a group coming out of the grocery store with my family and I'm stopped. And that's the most embarrassing thing. And how do you tell your children that the policemen are their friend? You tell them that and they see this happening.

02-00:48:43

Redman:

Right, right.

02-00:48:45

Drew:

Then San Francisco, same thing. I've been stopped so many times. Even back here in Stockton, I was—believe it or not, I'm driving—it's the street down here, Airport Way, and you go down a ways. They have an overflow ditch there, a flood control ditch. On either side there are abandoned warehouses. They've been abandoned like thirty-five years. I'm driving along about ten o'clock in the morning. There's no traffic. Ten o'clock in Stockton there's no traffic. And so all of a sudden I see the policeman up on the side. I wave at him. And I'm driving maybe ten miles, fifteen miles an hour because I know if I made—I just made the green light back here and there's no way I can make the next green light, no matter if I speed or slow. So I'm driving along and then next thing the police pull me over. And I said, "What's the problem?" "We want your driver's license, your proof of insurance and your

registration.” I said, “What did I do?” Because at that time I was driving my BMW. I was in good—I said, “I know my car—there’s nothing hanging off my car, the light’s working because I checked them already. I didn’t cross over the line. I’m not speeding. So what’s the problem?” And I says, “I know you’ve already checked my registration. You checked my registration before I even got out of—you got out of the car.” I said, “What’s the problem?” I said, “What am I doing wrong?” “You’re driving suspiciously slow.” Now I said, “Which ordinance is this?” “Well, you might have been trying to case.” “Case what? The flood control ditch? These abandoned warehouses here? What am I casing?” And these two guys, they’re so stupid. They stand there and they look at each other. I says, “What do we do? Now, I have violated an ordinance that doesn’t exist. Now what do we do?” And they looked at each other. They didn’t quite know how to get out of it. So I said, “I’ll tell you what. I’m going home. Is that okay?” They just stood there. So I got in the car and I left.

02-00:50:51

Redman:

Wow.

02-00:50:52

Drew:

Then the fascinating thing. About two weeks later there was a young man that was running for supervisor—city councilor from this area. And he came by and he was seething. I said, “Well, what’s the matter?” “I just got a ticket,” at the same place where I was. I said, “Yeah.” He’s like, “They said I was speeding. I wasn’t speeding. I know darn well—“ I said the same thing. I laughed. He says, “What’s so funny?” I said, “I just got a ticket down there not too long ago for driving suspiciously slow.”

02-00:51:20

Redman:

Suspiciously slow.

02-00:51:23

Drew:

But that’s Stockton. Then I was walking down the street. I was crossing the street at that time before I broke my hip. And even then I had problems. So I’m walking with a cane, I usually wait to make sure that the light changes before I start because I’m not going to—if the light’s green when I get there, chances are I’ll be caught in the street. So the light changes, I start across the street and I hear this [slapping sound]. And this policeman is standing. He’s got this club. He says, “I haven’t kicked a nigger’s ass all day long. So just step on that line over there and give me an excuse.” Enough said. It really deflates you. How can this be now, in this day?

02-00:52:14

Redman:

My next question, it’s an impossible question, to ask you what that makes you feel emotionally to someone who can’t possibly comprehend what that’s like to go through.

02-00:52:27

Drew:

Well, a person that really do understand would end up getting injured because they would question it. And you don’t question the police, like police. Like

now it's even less so. Like policemen, they have ultimate rights. They can do anything. Like before, if you were stopped in your car, there was only three ways they could search your car. They would ask your permission. If you said no, then they would have to have reasonable cause. Or they'd have to get a court order. Now they don't have to. They stop you, "Get out of the car, step over there." And they can plant stuff in your car, do anything. You have no rights at all. Not just black, anybody. Nobody. And I listen to white people. "The policemen are our friends." I said, "Maybe be your friend." I have met the one black policeman in my—I mean one white policeman that I've encountered that I really had respect for. I wrote his captain a letter. My daughter was driving down the street and her car stopped on her. And so he called me. She gave my phone number. He called me, said, "Your daughter's car is stopped down here and I'm going to help her push it over to the side." It was toward dark. "And I'm going to stay here with her until you get here." So I got there and everything and he said, "Everything under control? Do I need to call anyone other—?" "Oh, no, her battery just needs cleaning. The cables need cleaning and everything." He says, "Okay. Now, this is my card. If you run into any problems, give me a call and I'll come back."

02-00:54:09

Redman: I mean, that's—

02-00:54:11

Drew: And I couldn't get home fast enough to write a letter.

02-00:54:14

Redman: Right, wow.

02-00:54:16

Drew: I went online and found out who his captain was and I wrote him a letter. I said, "This is a letter that I wanted to write all my life."

02-00:54:25

Redman: I want to ask a big question by way of summarizing. Now, you can take a minute to think about this if you'd like. We've talked about a lot of things today from your early childhood and upbringing all the way through coming out to California, what school was like for you and then the war and what life was like after the war, your involvement with the Congress of Racial Equality and the changing landscape of civil rights. If you look back on your time in—your childhood running up to the end of the war, how do you think that that shaped you in your viewpoints as it came later then after the war? What sorts of things, lessons or things or viewpoints did that instill in you?

02-00:55:20

Drew: Well, I became very conflicted about that. To this day there's things that I don't understand. There are things that just don't make sense to me. And stupidity is a word that I use quite a bit when it comes to people.

Begin Audio File 3 drew_othro_03_06-21-12.mp3

03-00:00:00

Redman: All right. Today is June 21st and this is my third tape with Mr. Drew. When we left off, I had asked you a question by summary.

03-00:00:16

Drew: Right.

03-00:00:17

Redman: And that was to summarize what the Great Depression and the war, those two experiences back to back, and the very unique way that you experienced them, how that shaped your life. And you said that those experiences left you somewhat confused ultimately.

03-00:00:34

Drew: Right. Ultimately. Especially when you have questions. You wonder about things and there's no one to explain them to you or people don't know the answers or they're also in the same position that you are, you're in. They have the same problems that you have. Why? Why did the policeman beat up black people? Why can't we go to school? We're just as smart as everybody else. Why, why, why, why, why? Even today. I'm eighty-two years old next month and I'm still asking the same question. Why? Why these things happening? Why do people do things to their own detriment? They were interviewing people about how they felt about welfare and this type of thing. And one of the guys was on welfare. And he's lost his home, lost his job. He's renting a house. He's depending on welfare, food stamps and his unemployment check to get him through the day. And when they ask him, "Well, what do you feel about the Republicans wanting to cut food stamps and this type of thing?" He said, "Well, they should." And he said, "Because we don't need them. We can get by without it." This guy, his rent is due the next day, he's \$250 short of his rent. Not his house payment, his rent. He doesn't even know whether his telephone is still on or not and he's got until the next day to pay his PG&E bill. He's trying to borrow, get money from his parents. This is an older guy. They didn't have it. His friends don't have it. But he's saying that if he didn't have these resources, that someone would help him. I'm saying now how stupid can you get. Now, if I thought that way about myself, fine. But I got a wife and kids. For my wife and kids, I'll do anything to support them. Give me food stamps, give me whatever is available to help my family. Now, to me, that's sheer stupidity. Or these women. We listen to these Republican conservative representatives that are damning women. Oppose all these things. Women this. And they want no equal pay for women. Women shouldn't have birth control. And you look around and who are the people standing behind these people when they said these things? A whole bevy of women. Women should be able to get anything they want. They constitute over 50 percent of the voting in this country. And nothing. They're not even represented, don't even have adequate representation in Congress.

03-00:03:29

Redman: So part of the story for you is about very basic survival of a certain aspect and that—

03-00:03:37

Drew: My whole life has been about survival. It's been about survival. In fact, the way I feel now, if I went back like sixty years ago, and I felt the same way I do now, I'd probably commit suicide. Just end it because I wouldn't want to go through the next sixty years. There's been some good times with the kids. My kids were born, when they going to college and all this type of—this was great. We went fishing, camping, and did all these things. That part was great. The family [stuff]. But other than that, even kids going to college was a hassle. Fighting to get my kids to go into college, get my kids into a decent public school and being able to buy a decent house for them in a decent community and everything. On and on. Just fighting, fighting, fighting, fighting. All your life. You spend your whole life fighting for things that just should be your rights. Your Constitutional rights. And that is a document that scares the hell out of me because the people that talk about the Constitution, like the women especially, they talk about the Constitution, and a lot of men, they don't know that when the write—they say, "We want to go back to the days of the Constitution." We don't want to go back to the days of the Constitution because if you go back to the days of the Constitution, you can't do anything. You can't vote. The only people who could vote were white men that owned property. White women, well, with the Constitution, lady, you don't have the foggiest idea what you're talking about. You weren't even part of the Constitution. You were property. You were almost as bad off as the slave was. If you inherited anything it went to your husband. It wasn't yours. And you would tell—

03-00:05:21

Redman: So people have clearly lost sight of that history?

03-00:05:26

Drew: Exactly. In this country, it's like if we don't talk about it, it doesn't exist. And if you write about some things—certain people are not going to read books anyway so it doesn't get different. The only way you'll get to them is on television and most of them are going to watch Fox channel on television. And if you're going to watch news, watch different channels. Don't watch Fox. Don't watch just NBC or CNN. Watch all of them. Be suspicious of all of them. Then go out and do your research. Get on your computer, go to the library, talk to people. Talk to your neighbors. This whole political system we have need to be changed. And you change it where people decide who their representative is going to be, not the Democratic party or the Republican party. The people that live in a particular area. What does my community need? What do we want? Let's find a person that represent us, not the person that the Democratic party says that should represent us or Republican party. But the people that represent us. You talk to people, they don't—oh, no, no. It's too much stuff. Nobody want to work. They want stuff but nobody want to

do anything. Nobody wants to get involved. Well, it's my Constitutional right. Right. You have never read the Constitution. You don't even know what's in the Constitution. Of all the people I've known, I've known college graduates, teachers, lawyers, believe it or not, and they've never read the Constitution. They don't have the foggiest idea. All they know is what they've been told the Constitution says. And I said, "Read that document. You go back and read it and you'll look at it in a totally different way."

03-00:07:25

Redman: I'd like to thank you very much for sitting down with me and talking. Thank you.

Interview #2 July 17, 2012

Begin Audio File 4 drew_othro_and_gaines_warren_g_04_07-17-12_stereo.mp3

04-00:00:04

Redman: My name is Sam Redman and today is July 17. I'm back in Stockton, California. Mr. Drew, would you mind stating your full name and when and where you were born?

04-00:00:16

Drew: My name is Othro Drew. I was born in Coffeyville, Kansas on July 24, 1930.

04-00:00:23

Redman: And Mr. Gaines?

04-00:00:24

Gaines: Warren G. Gaines, born in Langston, Oklahoma, or Goodnight, Oklahoma, whichever one you want to use. I was born on the farm. October 18, 1920.

04-00:00:37

Redman: All right, so gentlemen, one thing that came up last time during our respective interviews that I wanted to talk about a little bit more, to see whether or not some of these things resonated or if they didn't. I understand that much of what was happening that was important for the African American community in terms of art and in terms of music and things like that were happening in Harlem, New York. The Harlem Renaissance. I wanted to ask about Bessie Smith, Louie Armstrong and Duke Ellington, and see if those musicians were things that you guys would have listened to growing up on the farm at all. Would that music have been available?

04-00:01:22

Drew: Early on, those names are—they're saints as far as the black community is concerned. But early on—I don't know about brother Gaines, but my great grandfather and grandmother were slaves. My grandparents were the first free generation. During those days, music, especially if you're in the South, the only music that you had access to was white religious music, Western music, as far as radio and this type of thing, because blacks weren't heard on the radio. Or maybe at the street corner, there would be a group playing music, or

the church, or a club. That was the essence of the music. With me, for instance, I was in the Army in 1947 and I heard about jazz. You were saying Louie Armstrong, Bessie Smith, Duke Ellington, those people. I was saying, what's jazz? What's jazz? Fortunately, there was a young man out there that I was in who lived in New York. He understood jazz. There was the first jazz program that came on in 1947. It's called *Jumping with Symphony Sid*. For one hour, one day a week, they played jazz music. Then I found out that there were innumerable jazz clubs in New York. I'd get a leave, I'd go to these jazz clubs, and then I fell madly in love with jazz. Then I started doing a little studying of jazz. Jazz was a total different type of music. Probably the closest thing to jazz was blues and maybe Western music. But jazz was created out of misery, just plain misery. You listen to the old jazz songs compared to today's jazz, you can see the hurt and all the angst that happened when they were alive. The pain that they suffered from being denied the right. You go to college and you could study. You would get a Ph.D., and you couldn't get a job. You had a Ph.D., walking around Phi Beta Kappa with a key hanging on your keychain, and you were lucky if you were a porter for a train.

04-00:03:51

Redman:

Mr. Gaines, tell me a little bit about music. What do you think?

04-00:03:54

Gaines:

What about music?

04-00:03:55

Redman:

Yeah.

04-00:03:56

Gaines:

There was something you said there before we got on the air. You said you'd go back to the past. I quote a lot of people that says, to know the future, study the past. Without the past, there is no future. Let's go back to the past. I mean the real past. Before jazz, before this music you're talking about. This is one thing—you're telling a story of humiliations you've had when you listen to what they call Negro spirituals. Now, let's take one song, "Carry Me Back to Old Virginia." Let's take that one. It was written by a black guy, but who got the credit for it? A white guy. He took it and did—same thing with the cotton gin. Take the cotton gin. It was invented by Jim Ellis. But they never tell you this.

04-00:04:51

Redman:

Eli Whitney—

04-00:04:52

Gaines:

Oh, shit. Oh, excuse me, excuse me. I hate to be vulgar. These are the biggest lies. Why don't they tell the truth about who actually built this America? You won't believe the rice production was produced out of South Carolina. The biggest rice production in the world right out of South Carolina. Who did the work? You listen to these newcomers come in, "Who built America?" "The

immigrants built"—immigrants didn't build it. The thirteen original colonies was built by black people.

04-00:05:29

Drew: Slavery.

04-00:05:30

Gaines: Slavery. And look, they were built by slavery, because here's what happened. These people that come over here were too ignorant to do anything. But the ones that they brought, the slave masters, the poor whites that they brought over here, they had to do the same thing, make them the boss over the slaves. But look, George Washington, for instance. I give anybody a thousand dollars right now can find me one white man named Washington, George Washington, and prove that he's not mixed, he's white. There were two people come over, George Washington and his brother Henry. Henry went back to England. Martha was barren. He had almost a thousand slaves. If you went on his plantation, it would be more mulattos there. You understand?

04-00:06:27

Redman: Right. So—

04-00:06:28

Gaines: When you start talking about let's go back to the past, now you're talking about radio. I was born in 1920. Radios wasn't even in our community clear up until 1930, because you had electricity. Where I lived in the country, they had a few battery radios. We had to go to the next neighbor's house, way down, to listen to the radio. In so far as phonographs, Bessie Smith and all this, yeah, they had all this.

04-00:06:55

Drew: Years later.

04-00:06:56

Gaines: But look, here's the problem about music. Music is fine, but we should stop putting all our hopes in music. Let's see about getting some education. Now this is where the real problem comes in, in education. I called Othro the other night and told them to read the story about a guy named Jordan. This guy, Jordan, was born a slave. He ran off—

04-00:07:24

Drew: In Virginia.

04-00:07:25

Gaines: He ran off and went into Ohio. Understand? He got a job over there and was making money. Made \$11,000 while he was working there. The slave master—this was during slavery time—he'd run off, and Ohio was a free state—told him to come back and work on the plantation. Now, he's a slave already, but he's in a free country, and he wrote him back and told him—he was a man that didn't know how to read or write, so he learned how to read and write, and he wrote the slave master a letter. Excuse me a minute. Back.

Here's what he said. Here's what he said about coming back to be a slave and work for him. He said this, and I quote, "According to available records, Jordan Anderson was born in Tennessee in about 1825, and by the age of seven or eight, he had been sold to a plantation owned by General Paulding Anderson. In Big Spring, Tennessee, Patrick Henry Anderson was one of the general's son in the eighteen and forties." So when he said, "Come back," he said, "Would you want me to come back and take my girls, my two daughters, to be humiliated by your sons to produce some more children for you?" This is showing you one thing, how smart this African descendant person was. But you see, here's what happens to most whites. They do not understand. You should read Frantz Fanon's *We Wear the Mask*. Have you read it? You read it?

04-00:09:23

Redman: Yes.

04-00:09:24

Gaines: Well, you understand, we wear a mask. Most of us wear a mask. When you look at me, you don't know what I have in my head. You understand? Here's what happens. When you don't educate these people—I see children every day in my business. Some little kids like this are geniuses. They don't send them to the better schools. You understand? What they do to them—he's hyper. Let's give him some—what do you call it? Ritalin.

04-00:09:56

Redman: There are a lot of topics in there that I want to get back to. The Frantz Fanon ideas, I feel like I also want to talk about writers like Ralph Ellison and Richard Wright after the war. But before we get that far ahead in time, I want to ask about something that happened when you were very young. You were probably not aware of this, but in 1927, there was a great Mississippi flood that affected a lot of people in the Deep South who were living in—

04-00:10:35

Drew: In the Delta.

04-00:10:35

Redman: In the Delta. A lot of people criticized this at the time. They criticized Calvin Coolidge and the government as being incapable, and a lot of people compared this to—we think about that as being, oh, that was in the 1920s, but then of course what happened with Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans, we're reminded that these sorts of things are alive today. Is that something that people talked about at all? It seems like that's a forgotten moment in history, these disasters that happened in the South.

04-00:11:10

Drew: Black people have been written out of history completely. We're taught by the same history book, public schools, that you have access to. But I sit there and I read this book, and I don't exist. When I was going to school in California, there were three black people existed. That was all. You had Carver, Booker

T. Washington, and there was one other, and that was it. You had about two lines for each one.

04-00:11:46

Redman: W.E.B. Du Bois, maybe?

04-00:11:48

Drew: No, no, no, no. Oh, no. He was too radical. Much too radical. What he was talking about, wearing the mask, they didn't understand that Booker T. Washington, George Washington Carver, they say, they're good niggers. They don't cause no problems or anything. Very radical men. Blacks are always—they'll say, "They don't know what they're talking about." There's always been this double talk. I'll give you a for instance. The word "peckerwood." White people use it now. Initially, it was one of those words that blacks used among themselves to describe white people. "He's a peckerwood." Then white people would say, "Certain niggers so damn dumb, they don't even know what a woodpecker is." They were saying "peckerwood" instead of "woodpecker," and the blacks sit there.

04-00:12:52

Gaines: You mentioned this flood in 1927. That was when they had the flood down there. They don't mention the Tulsa riot in 1921.

04-00:13:04

Redman: I know the Tulsa riots, we talked a little bit about last time, and how your two uncles were—

04-00:13:11

Gaines: Passed away. But now, listen. Do you know anything about the Rentiesville situation that happened in Rentiesville, Oklahoma?

04-00:13:23

Redman: No.

04-00:13:24

Gaines: You see, here's where I am a little bit different than most African Americans, because I wasn't produced and raised up in a segregated community. I was in a black town, all-black. Drugstores, everything in there, was black. I didn't come in contact with whites. Black schools and everything. I was taught who I am. The first thing, you've got to find who you are. I know who I am. Most people don't know who they are. I know who I am. So when you would find out who you are, then that makes you a better person. I want to go back to slavery. Sure, we'll go back to slavery. I know who my mother was. My mother was an Ashanti. I did research and found out why. I met a gentleman in my shop the other day. We were talking and I said, "Where are you from in Africa?" He said, "I'm from West Africa." I said, "What tribe you come from?" He said, "I'm an Ashanti." I said, "What?" I said, "You may be my cousin." I said, "Do you know anything about the marks on Ashanti tribes?" He said a lot of tribes had different marks, just like we have the Indians in this

country. Here's the difference. People teach slavery and they teach history, but they only teach one side of it.

04-00:14:48

Drew: That's all they know.

04-00:14:49

Gaines: So look. I was taught, on the right cheek of my aunty, one of them, it was turned up like this. A half-moon. And the male's, on the other side, was turned down. I know that. Now, look. He said, "How do you know this?" I tell everybody one thing. I've been in every country of the world. Why? Knowledge don't fall out of the sky and hit your head. Knowledge is found in books. When you read, you understand this. When the riot come in Tulsa, that was in 1921. But before that, in eighteen and sixty-three, in Rentiesville, they had a riot there. It wasn't a riot. The Texas Rangers come down from Texas, about 600 of them, to Rentiesville. They heard there were some blacks. The blacks had moved in from Tennessee, Mississippi, and every place, come in to Oklahoma because it was a free country. When they came down to Rentiesville to try to take these blacks back to Texas, the Texas Rangers come down there. Now, it's in the book. If you study, you will found out, at Rentiesville, the blacks, in the First Calvary out of Kansas—not on the Confederate side, on the Union side—they met down there and they whipped these guys back, these Rangers back, and they had 400 handcuffs in there to take the blacks back to slavery. You understand? Now, this is not in your history books. If you go to your history, you'll find this stuff out. Once you find out, it gives you a lot of dignity.

04-00:16:45

Drew: One of the main things that escaped, when it came to the Tulsa riots, *so-called* Tulsa riots, there was a Greenwood District. The Greenwood District, in those days, they were black communities. They were inclusive. You could live in the black community. Everything that you needed was there, whether it was a lawyer, doctor, dentist, department store, grocery store, whatever. The Greenwood District was one of the richest districts in Oklahoma, white or black. The average income there was unbelievable, because all these businesses were located there, plus there was a university, Langston University. Blacks couldn't go to white universities, but they'd crowd—the black universities were full of them. They produced unbelievable people, teachers, black teachers. Almost all my teachers came, when I was in grade school, came from Langston. Like I've told you before, when I came out here, I came out here thinking I was this poor, dumb black who was incapable of absorbing the knowledge of white people. I came out here, found out that I went to this little school and these teachers were so successful that I was two years ahead of the children I was going to school with. What he was talking about, about inventions, one of the things that has escaped everybody, even blacks, primarily, have you heard the term that necessity is the mother of invention? This was absolutely true. Most inventions during that period of time was created by blacks, because it was a matter of, "I have to ride this

wagon all day long. Carry loads and loads of cotton. This thing is wearing my bottom out." So we developed the springs for the wagon, to ease my butt. All of these inventions, but who gets credit for the inventions? The master, because the black slave was what? Was *property*. Whatever he produced, he didn't produce it. I produced it, because I'm his master. And on through history, like railroads. You start reading up on inventions, railroad inventions. A hundred and twenty-something railroad inventions, black, out of necessity.

04-00:19:22

Gaines:

When you mentioned railroad, the man that invented the wigwag that goes up and down, his name is Richard Spikes I worked for him doing my apprenticeship as a barber. I worked for him starting in 1945. He still had a shop in Stockton. His hair was about that long. He'd go back there and play his violin. He has a bunch of inventions. Now, you take the Big Ben. The Big Ben clock that is in England, you know who put that there, don't you? Benjamin Banneker. Benjamin Banneker. *Big Ben*. He's the one that designed that clock. He also set up the laying out of Washington, D.C. You've read about Benjamin Banneker. If you don't have the money today to produce these things, you're in the same shape. Just like right now. I have a book that I got 800 pages of real book. I'm going to publish it soon, because it's telling the straight facts.

I have a grandson. Excuse me for skipping around. I have a grandson who's a four-point student. Real smart. When he talks to me and I talk to him, just like my dad talked to me—I want you to read something, and I'll let you read it in a few minutes—I asked him one day, I said, "Hey"—he's fourteen years old—I said, "What about the Pyramids? Who build the Pyramids?" He says, "Pop, slaves built the Pyramids." I say, "Oh yeah?" I say, "If the slaves built the Pyramids, how did they get these stones up there?" He said, "Slaves put them up there." I said, "Okay, but the stones that's in the Pyramids, the stones in some of the Pyramids, are not from that area. They're from 300 miles up the Nile. Tell me, how did they get them down there?" He shook his head. He said, "Pop, I don't know." I said, "Then tell me about the Stonehenge." He said, "I really don't know." I said, "That's in your time." He said, "Well, the book says that they don't know how they put"—then I say, "Just tell me about the Terracotta soldiers in China." He says to me, he's been real red, he says, "Well, I don't know." I said, "You see? Here's a fallacy in your Bible. The Bible tells you that we're 7,000 years old. Explain to me about the Terracotta soldiers. Or explain to me about the Stonehenge." You see, here's what happens. History has been distorted.

04-00:22:06

Drew:

Of course.

04-00:22:09

Gaines:

When Hannibal crossed the Alps and went into Italy, come out of the boot, he had seventy-five elephants and 25,000 soldiers. He saw all these people living

in caves with long blonde hair. They thought they were rats or something. I'm not kidding.

04-00:22:28

Drew: It's true.

04-00:22:29

Gaines: The truth. Because that's how they lived, because it was cold. Then when the soldiers captured Rome, they were there for twenty-five years. The soldiers were black. There's a lot of Italians that have kinky hair and everything.

04-00:22:45

Drew: Sicilians especially.

04-00:22:50

Redman: This is a big question now. How does the Great Depression affect the black community? It seems like some of the advances that were made in the 1920s in terms of the black community, that the possibility of even making a Tulsa where there is a black Wall Street, some of that sort of gets rolled back by the Great Depression in some sense, because blacks are the first people to lose jobs and lose economic possibility. But that's sort of my assumption. Can you tell me about how blacks were affected by the Great Depression?

04-00:23:28

Drew: I think blacks were affected differently than white folks. Number one, you had black communities. A black community is totally different from a white community in those days. A black community, everybody within a black community knew everyone. It was like a family. If a person on the street got a hundred-pound bag of potatoes, everybody around there had potatoes. Even the one black policeman that was in that community, he was—when you said your policeman is your friend, he was your friend. He would see your two kids standing on the street corner, and he would—"Boys, what are you doing standing here? Does your daddy know you stand out here on this corner?" "No, sir." "You get home and tell your daddy I sent you home. I'm going to stop by and let him know that you've been hanging out on these street corners." That was the relationship within the black community. You read about all the poverty in the white community. Well, we already had poverty in the black community. There wasn't too much more you could do to us. In fact, there were some gains made in some areas as far as blacks who had never been able to work at all. They got shovel jobs, digging holes and this type of thing.

One of the big myths between blacks and whites—like he was talking about, *wearing the mask*. Blacks have always been able to do more with less. I guess we always will. Even if we talk about education, school. When that black person went to school, it wasn't to get an education for himself. He was obligated to the entire community. Even today, in the South, there are kids that live in poor neighborhoods, very intelligent black kids, no way he's going

to go to college with the fees and this type of thing. The people get together in that community. The churches and the lodges and all these people get together. They get together and raise money to keep this one boy in school—or girl—and when they're graduated, they're obligated to come back to that community and share the knowledge and try to improve that community. But then you've got this large, large volume, too large a volume, of just so-called black elite. They've done the same thing that a white person would do. If a white person lived in this community, he got a million dollars, hey, I would expect him two weeks from now, expect they'd end up some other people. Black people do the same thing now. It's constant—

04-00:26:14

Gaines: So-called bourgeois.

04-00:26:15

Drew: This constant knocking of, "Those blacks don't want to get ahead. They don't want to do anything." Who do we hear it from? From Bill Cosby, of all people.

04-00:26:25

Gaines: People forget one thing, and I tell them this every day. Look at that. Here you have a president of the United States of America. Got a college degree, cum laude and all this other jazz that goes with it, his wife, Michelle, but he's still considered, as I, an uppity nigger. I'm telling it like it is. When you come back to the Depression, I'm with the original *Grapes of Wrath*. These are facts. When the Depression hit, we were very good livers. We had 160 acres of land and everything in Oklahoma, and around us was nothing but blacks and a few German people, and whites that own land. You understand? When Depression hit in 1928, I was eight years old. First time I've seen my daddy cry, when we started losing everything we had. But my daddy didn't lose his farm because it was paid for and everything. The Depression lasted from 1928, clear up until 1941.

04-00:27:40

Redman: That's a long time.

04-00:27:41

Gaines: Hitler eliminated the Depression when he marched into Germany. Now, there's another thing that I'll mention here. I mentioned it before. We were supposedly being freed, African Americans, slaves, in 1865. Eighteen and sixty-five, we were just like the Mexicans here now. We were immigrants.

04-00:28:05

Drew: We were worse.

04-00:28:06

Gaines: We were immigrants *and* we were slaves. We didn't become citizens until 1869. Put these in your head. We were not citizens. We were here working.

04-00:28:21

Drew: We were property.

04-00:28:22

Gaines: We were property. After that comes the worst thing, as bad as slavery.
Peonage.

04-00:28:29

Redman: Jim Crow.

04-00:28:30

Gaines: Peonage and Jim Crow. Peonage is worse than Jim Crow.

04-00:28:34

Drew: Slavery.

04-00:28:35

Gaines: It's slavery, taking you and putting you in jail, then send us a nigger to Mr. Bubba's farm, and you work there for life. A life sentence. One of the great senators right now in Alabama made his money off of slavery in the steel mills in Alabama. He had peonage going. Read your books and find out who he is. I'm not going to tell you. Let you do the research and find it. He's up there right now. Look, here's what happened to me. I was sixteen, seventeen years old. I was going to school in Langston High School. I was born in the black town. The high school was on a college campus. Now, here's the law in Oklahoma. Oklahoma has one good law, its educational law. If you live in Oklahoma, you're going to go to school until you finish eighth grade, or the truant officer is going to come around in small towns and make you go. Got a hold of your parents and made you go to a school. I went to school on a college campus. When I got ready to graduate, four months to graduate, my brother came to California. We had a hard time. People do not know what it is to be poor. I mean, really poor.

04-00:30:05

Drew: Not poor. Way back, they were called po'. You were *po'*.

04-00:30:09

Gaines: I know what it is to be poor. My brother had been in California, working. He had come out here in the thirties. This is 1937. I got on a freight train in Guthrie, Oklahoma and rode down to change trains near Parker City. When we got on the train coming out here—I've seen this. People on freight train, on boxcars, flatbeds. Stacked with people. Lawyers, doctors, and everybody else, white and black, no discrimination, on this one flatcar. This white guy was on there with his wife and three kids, with a goat to feed them milk. This is how hard times work. My sister-in-law, my brother's wife, had graduated from Langston. She was a schoolteacher. She got on the train with us. All of us on the train coming to California. I tell people this. California, to the black man and poor whites, is what God promised Moses. This is the promise land. You read *The Grapes of Wrath*?

04-00:31:11

Drew: Up to a point.

04-00:31:12

Redman: Up to a point!

04-00:31:13

Gaines: At that time, this was the promise land, because—

04-00:31:16

Drew: Yeah, it was promise, but we find out the promise wasn't kept.

04-00:31:20

Gaines: But it was a haven from what we were going through, even for the whites. Just look at *The Grapes of Wrath*, what happened. They tell it in the movie, but they don't really tell you the whole story.

04-00:31:34

Redman: There's something that I was a little surprised that—sorry. Do you have one more thought on the Depression that you want to add?

04-00:31:41

Drew: No, the only point I was going to make is that there's been a continuation of the Depression. Actually, before the Depression, right up through the day. Right now, we talk about the recession and compare it to the Great Depression. These things seem to go in cycles. We get the same thing over and over again. The only difference is the people get dumber and dumber. Not smarter. They get dumber. They roll with it. Well, what can I do? What can I do? I've been unemployed for two years. I've joined unemployment. Now the Democrats want to renew the unemployment bill. The Republicans say no. I'm going along with the Republicans. I don't get care if I've got a couple kids and a wife. I agree. They shouldn't renew that thing. They shouldn't give us food stamps. If they didn't give us food stamps—I'm quoting a program—television. These interviews that was given on television. This is a gentleman with a wife, two kids. He lost his home. He's renting. He's so poor and bad off that he's sitting there trying to figure out how he's going to pay his rent. He's \$250 short. His rent is due the next day. He's going to go use his telephone, and he's not sure his telephone is still on. His gas bill is due the next day. He's sitting there and he's—"I'll call my mother." He called his mother and she said, "I don't have any money." He doesn't know anybody with any money. I'm opposed to all these giveaways and things. If they didn't exist, we would find a way to take care of our own. I'm saying, this man is stupid. I say stupid. I can feel that way about me. If I want to sacrifice myself, fine. I have the right to do that. But do I have a right to sacrifice my family? I don't give a damn what it takes to feed my family or to house my family, to take care of my family. I'm going to do it. If you want me to bend down and kiss your boots to take it, so what, your boots have just been kissed. But my family. Anything that's going to be detrimental to my family, and I agree to it,

there's something wrong with me, and that's why we have a nation of people like that.

04-00:34:13

Gaines:

But now, what Othro is talking about gets to be very deep here in this political situation that's going on today, because why is it the rich people can control the majority of poor and lower-middle-class whites? Why can't they see through what's going on? Just like in the Depression. During the Depression, Roosevelt saved this country from having a civil war, which would have eliminated the rich people so far. It's as close as we have come to socialized everything. Roosevelt stopped it. Then when Hitler came along, then they got back on to defeat the rich people, and they started producing, and it was going back into the same dilemma that we're in.

04-00:35:06

Redman:

Did the war, in that way, mask a lot of what was happening and the reality of it? The fact that a lot of people made a lot of money off of the Second World—

04-00:35:17

Drew:

Oh, worse.

04-00:35:19

Gaines:

The war changed the dynamics of this whole country. The South moved out, coming to Detroit and everything. Kaiser went up in Washington. Shipyards and everything. They brought a lot of blacks with them. These blacks, they were very well to learn and everything, but didn't have the proper education. Now that they've got the proper education now, there's more discrimination now than there was, just as much as it is—

04-00:35:49

Drew:

There's more.

04-00:35:52

Gaines:

I was looking at some of the things that this gentleman and I did here during the Civil Rights Movement. We stood on the corner. You couldn't work at Safeways. You couldn't work at the banks.

04-00:36:03

Drew:

You couldn't work anywhere.

04-00:36:04

Gaines:

Couldn't work anywhere.

04-00:36:05

Drew:

Anywhere. Just yard work, basically.

04-00:36:12

Gaines:

Here's one of the things that I have here, where Othro and I have stood on the corner, right there.

04-00:36:17

Redman: That's great. Okay. When is this article from? Do you—

04-00:36:21

Gaines: This is in in the forties. Let me see what date is on here. This was in the 1940s through the fifties and sixties. We were working in this capacity.

04-00:36:34

Drew: Actually, we started before the Civil Rights Movement officially.

04-00:36:38

Gaines: Riot here starts in California. In the same way it was in Berkeley or in El Cerrito and so forth, and Richmond and all those places. But here's what I cannot understand, getting through my small cranium. Why is it Europeans that are in charge hate the people that built this country, and hate the people that own this country? They treat the Indians just as bad or worse than we're treated. Why? Why is it in their large cranium or whatever they have, why is it this seed is planted down into the young kids now that blacks and Indians and these people are not as good as we are? What is wrong with them?

04-00:37:28

Redman: There was something that came up that I asked about that didn't seem to resonate with either of you gentlemen, and I want to ask about it now, related to the Second World War, and see why maybe that didn't—maybe it's a nonstarter. We can talk about something else. The *Pittsburgh Courier* started something called the Double Victory Campaign during World War Two. This concept of, why would we go off and fight fascism abroad if we don't have civil rights at home?

04-00:37:55

Drew: Don't have freedom at home. Just plain freedom.

04-00:37:58

Redman: Just plain freedom, right.

04-00:37:59

Drew: That's not civil rights, it's plain freedom.

04-00:38:00

Redman: Right. At the same time, there are a couple of other names that I just want to throw out there to see if these resonate. Both A. Philip Randolph, of course, became—

04-00:38:09

Drew: One of the greatest men of all time.

04-00:38:10

Redman: He becomes a major political leader in the black community. Then on the arts side, I want to point out Marian Anderson and her big concert at the Lincoln Memorial in 1939. Those are three sort of big, key things that I see. Then also, too, the Tuskegee Airmen, as becoming a big symbol for the African—

04-00:38:32

Drew: He can tell you about the Tuskegee Airmen. He has friends that were—

04-00:38:36

Gaines: My classmate was one. But look, when you start talking about World War Two—I was drafted in Sacramento, California. I was twenty-two years old. I had stayed on the Army before in 1941, early forty-two. When I was drafted, we all went to the reception center and everything. When I got to the reception center, of course I knew what segregation was. A lot of guys are—we call them black Portuguese. Some guys from—

04-00:39:10

Drew: Explain to him that, during that time, all military were segregated.

04-00:39:14

Gaines: Oh, yeah. All military. But some Portuguese, some of my friends, my same color, they came up from Cape Verde Islands. I speak a little Portuguese. Some of them, they didn't know what they were. But anyway, when we got to the reception center, then we went to Monterey. They say, "Okay, you fellows, you Negros, you get on over here. We're sending some of you to Texas." I was going to Texas. Now, we're on the train. We're riding along. When we got to Arizona, here comes the conductor. Say, "Okay, you Negros have to go back here in the back, because we're getting ready to go through Texas."

04-00:39:51

Drew: Same thing in California.

04-00:39:53

Gaines: Here I am, American soldiers going to—of course, I understood this. When we got down there to Texas, we had all white officers. There was 15,000 of us in the cavalry. Most of those guys were second lieutenants. They didn't know anything about anything, you know what I mean? Most of them were racist, because they didn't understand African Americans.

04-00:40:22

Drew: The other reason they were racist, too, there was such a stigma attached to being black that if a white person was forced to affiliate with a black, if you were an officer and they assign you to a black outfit, you hated blacks. Plus, number one, they tell you, "You're never going anywhere. You're never going to progress. You're stuck with this group of people, inferior people. Why do we send you there? Because we figure you're an inferior officer." You were talking about World War Two. For a short time there during World War Two, whites were so interested in this American thing about victory, winning the war, they sort of pushed us to the side. It was okay for us working the shipyards and things like that, because as soon as this is all over with, blacks will be sent back to where they belong, back to their proper place. Along with that, the fact that the military was segregated. You brought up Randolph. People give Truman all this credit about integrating the military, but the

reason that the military was integrated was Randolph. Randolph had Truman's ear. He had the fear of God in Truman. He'd already arranged to bring over 300,000 blacks to Washington. He explained to Truman, "If you don't desegregate the military, we'll have a million blacks out here permanently this summer." Truman got the message. I disagree with him a little bit when it comes to Roosevelt. To me, Roosevelt was one of the lousiest presidents we ever had.

04-00:42:23

Gaines: Racially, he was.

04-00:42:25

Drew: He was, because they gave him carte blanche because of the situation. "President Roosevelt, you can do anything you want." What did he do for the blacks? Nothing. He could have, with just a stroke of his pen. He was in a position, stroke of his pen, he could have—

04-00:42:41

Redman: Done much more.

04-00:42:42

Drew: He could have desegregated the military. He could have done everything. He could have done enormous things. He did nothing. But that nothing that he didn't do was better than the ones that had come before. [laughter]

04-00:42:55

Gaines: It's good to disagree. He's right. But I'll note one thing about Roosevelt. He did this for the country when he established the NRA, the National Recovery Act. Then he formed the WPA. That's the Works Progress Administration. There was no segregation in the Works Progress Administration, because he put black people on the WPA, because everybody was starving. Then he had the NYA, National Youth Association. Then he did the CCC. He saved this country from going communist or socialist. That's what he did. The same thing is going to happen now. Why you say they're games? Here's why I'm saying it. Right now, right now, today, over 40 percent of young black men are being arrested and put in jail. Fifty-two percent of them go to jail. Then, know what they do? They take away—

04-00:43:54

Drew: Their citizenship.

04-00:43:56

Gaines: They take away their citizenship. They take away everything. Here's what the drug program is producing. It's kept a secret now, but it's going to happen. The penalty for crack cocaine is different than the penalty for—

04-00:44:11

Drew: For cocaine, regular white cocaine.

- 04-00:44:13 Gaines: They have a new drug out now that's affecting poor whites, and they don't know what to do about it. It's a feeling of what's called—
- 04-00:44:24 Redman: Meth?
- 04-00:44:25 Gaines: Meth.
- 04-00:44:25 Redman: Methamphetamines? Yeah.
- 04-00:44:26 Drew: Also, that other—oxycontin.
- 04-00:44:29 Redman: Oxy, sure.
- 04-00:44:31 Gaines: This is what's happening. Here's what's happening. The third largest business in the United States, you know what it is today?
- 04-00:44:39 Drew: Prisons.
- 04-00:44:40 Gaines: The justice system.
- 04-00:44:41 Drew: Prisons.
- 04-00:44:42 Gaines: We're bringing back 35,000 people now, back from Louisiana, Mississippi, Texas, that we were farming out to prisons. Who's building the prisons? The same guy that built over in Iraq. [Dick Cheney] The same company is building—
- 04-00:45:04 Redman: Halliburton?
- 04-00:45:04 Gaines: Halliburton is building. You understand? Look, here's the problem. Here's the whole problem. The people that are supposed to have the brains, they don't talk about this, because he makes \$400 million a year.
- 04-00:45:22 Drew: He's a college dropout anyway.
- 04-00:45:24 Gaines: They are not going to tell the poor whites what's happening to them. When they wake up, if they ever wake up, it might be too late.

04-00:45:36

Redman: Let me ask two more questions on this tape. We talked a little bit last time about Port Chicago. Go ahead.

04-00:45:45

Drew: One thing I think is extremely important to bring up, *extremely important*, is that, during World War Two, [and] prior to World War Two, all we read about in history books, about some black person at American Revolution here and there, but [really] prior to that, if you were in the military, it was believed that if you were black, *you were incapable of fighting*. They didn't want you to fight. We don't want you to die for our country. You can drive trucks, you can do all these things, but you can't go on the front line and fight. We don't want you on the front line fighting. In Korea, they changed their mind, because these guys were so proficient. But before that, they couldn't. Like I said, even after World War Two—we talk about the GI Bill and all the rights that came along with this type of thing, like housing industry got started after World War Two, primarily because part of the GI Bill was to provide these guys with houses. They can buy houses. Before, they couldn't. But then only 3 percent of those houses went to blacks. The soldiers fought, they came back, and they couldn't [actually] buy houses.

04-00:46:55

Redman: Why was that?

04-00:46:58

Drew: Because of the system. Everything was white. The government was all white. There were no blacks in the government or anything. Whatever the whites said, it went. It was just like after the Civil War. The North won the war. What did the Confederacy do? They walked back into Washington like nothing ever happened and started demanding things. They had no contrition. No "We apologize for what we did, for the people that's killed."

04-00:47:27

Gaines: Is your [camera] still on?

04-00:47:28

Redman: Yes. Do you want me to pause it or—

04-00:47:30

Gaines: No, no. I wanted you to take a picture of this.

04-00:47:33

Drew: I'll just keep talking while you're doing that. This has been an ongoing thing, but like you were talking about, today, the difference today than, say, World War Two, World War Two it was always felt that once the war is over, we can always return the coloreds back to where they came from. Today, the situation has gotten a little bit different. The genie is out of the bottle. We can hate them. We can do bad things. We can try to pass the laws to try to put the genie back in the bottle, but it's not going back in the bottle again. Now we have to try to deal with it. We deal with it in a totally different way. We're back

almost like the segregation beforehand. We've got the South Side of Chicago. We've got parts of New York. Blacks are contained in certain areas. Then you say, "Well, if they would get an education." But how do you get an education when you've got—not only discriminate by black, by race, we discriminate by zip code.

04-00:48:46

Gaines: That's it.

04-00:48:47

Drew: You put all the blacks in one area, and then the board of education can say, "Well, we're going to send"—I'll give you a good example. Right here, Edison High School. Edison High School, about seven, eight years ago, had the lowest graduating rate of any high school in the country. Not California. In the country. They only graduated 27 percent of their students. Twenty-seven percent. The gentleman, Mr. Washington, Mr. Washington and I grew up together. He was a good friend of mine. I went over to his office to find out what's going on. It pissed me off when I read these figures. I went over and he was sitting there with his hand like this, shaking his head. I said, "What's the matter?" He said, "I know what you come in here for." I said, "What for?" "About the graduation figure." I said, "How could you let that be?" He said, "I have no control of it." He says, "You know what type of teachers that the board of education is sending me?" I said no. "First-year teachers, substitute teachers, and teachers that other schools don't want. That's the basis of the teachers that I have here." He said, "There's nothing for them to learn. They're talking about dropping out of school." I can understand that. What amazes me is that a child would get a high school education if he's not planning to go to college. High schools are prep schools. They're preparatory schools. Prepare you to go to college. That's all. You think of all the things that you learned in high school if you didn't go to college. After seventh or eighth grade, what did you learn that could help you in the world once you were out there? Nothing.

04-00:50:34

Gaines: I want to continue on education.

04-00:50:40

Redman: This is a T-shirt for a family reunion.

04-00:50:46

Gaines: Family reunion. What does it say?

04-00:50:48

Redman: 2005. "Still growing."

04-00:50:50

Gaines: This was in 2005, but this is 138 years.

04-00:50:54

Redman: "Educational, business, and vocational."

04-00:50:57

Gaines:

There you have it. I have twenty-something grandchildren, great grandchildren. Five generations. This is what I teach. Academic, vocational, or business. I've never worked for anyone in my life. I work for myself. All of us work by ourselves. There's thirty-something barbers in our family. Some of those barbers are now lawyers, some are dentists, some are doctors, and so forth, because [they work for themselves]. Here's something. When all my kids were born, I took a California gift to minors. Most people never heard of it. I take out a scholarship for them when they're born. They put it in the bank. They can't take any of the money out until they go to college. During the time when [Jimmy] Carter was president, I had some children born. When interest rates were 17 percent—you understand?—my kids go to college. None of them have got a student loan. They paid for it and they worked. They worked every day. My daughter worked for a clothing store. The other daughter worked for Old Navy. My sons work in group home. They helped to put themselves through school. Now, here's the point about education. If you get an education, you're ready to compete, but you can't compete with the money. That's why I bring in the business part. Let them go in business. I go in business for myself. Here's the point. When people get millions and millions of dollars to invest, they want to buy four, five different cars and all this other bullshit, when they should try to help to pick somebody else up, to give scholarships to these unfortunate blacks. There's a lot of unfortunate blacks that really can understand and have a high IQ, but when they go to classes, they're not taught in the school.

My wife is a schoolteacher. She said this guy—she got a student that comes and had thirty-five kids in the class. This is why the guy sent his kid over there and says, "Look, I have too many kids. This is a real bright kid." Says, "He's real smart. You'd be happy to have him." This is when they had the XYZ system, which you may not know about. Do you know what XYZ is? A kid comes into the first grade. He's put in the category of X group or Y group or Z group. Now, the teacher has to teach three different groups in that class. She has thirty-five students in there. You understand? How is she going to teach that many kids when we wanted to reduce it? So anyway, when she got the kids, she looked at his {queue?}. The kid was in the fourth grade. He couldn't read on a first-grade level. Now we're passing students out today, that's finishing high school, that can't read on a third-grade level.

04-00:53:56

Drew:

Which has produced thirty million adult illiterates in this country.

Begin Audio File 5 drew_othro_and_gaines_warren_g_05_07-17-12_stereo.mp3

05-00:00:04

Redman:

Today is Tuesday, July 17, [2012] and this is my second tape today with Mr. Drew and Mr. Gaines. When we left off, there was one topic that came up that seems to be important for African American[s]. Especially, at the time, servicemen, during World War Two, and something that was both known and

unknown at the same time, which is the explosion that takes place at Port Chicago. The legacy of that, of course, with the lawsuits that follow in terms of the mutiny trial and Thurgood Marshall's position. But at the same time, we talked about Port Chicago and it was [largely] covered up. It was more or less a military [or] government secret. To what extent do you think that [incident] resonated or didn't resonate with African American community? That here were these African American sailors who were subjected to unsafe working conditions, and this tragedy took place?

05-00:01:07

Drew:

It was such a cover-up that whites didn't know what was going on. Like I told you, I went to Port Chicago. It was off-limit. You could come up there, but you couldn't go in, you couldn't see anything. The press couldn't go in. That's why you saw almost no pictures of it. The few pictures you saw was usually shot from long range or something else. It's like—what's that place over in New Mexico?

05-00:01:36

Redman:

Roswell? [Los Alamos?]

05-00:01:37

Drew:

[1951]. Just like that. If the government decides to cover up something, they can cover it up, absolutely, completely, and you'll never, ever know about it. That's the way Port Chicago is. How did it affect the black community? The black community heard rumors. Rumors, that's all. No proof, just word of rumors. Maybe it happened, maybe it didn't. If you lived in New York or Pennsylvania or Texas or some place, did it really happen? People now are questioning, did a man really go to the moon? Of course, I lived in California, and they said that this rocket took off in Florida. Did it really go there? Other people have questioned, did 9/11 really happen? Did they really blow up those buildings? No, the government probably did it. When you can't get the facts, you create whatever you want. Port Chicago - the same thing. Almost all the information that we received about Port Chicago was what people surmised to have happened. They believe this happened. This could have happened. Well, maybe those blacks were—the blacks get uppity. Maybe they just didn't want to do their work. Maybe they were lazy and shiftless and didn't want to go up there and unload those ships. In fact, maybe they're responsible for blowing up the darned thing in the first place. Here we are in the middle of a war, and they're going to blow up the ship with all this ammunition and everything. It didn't happen, but—

05-00:03:14

Redman:

That's the way the conversations—

05-00:03:16

Drew:

If I tell you this, you tell your friend that, somebody else tells somebody else, their friend, now they can do it more effective, using the internet.

05-00:03:26

Redman: Mr. Gaines, I wonder [if] can you speak to that? Port Chicago.

05-00:03:28

Gaines: Oh, yeah. I remember the story very well. It's all cover-up, the old shell game. You caused it, but we're going to settle this thing right now, and they never get to the bottom of it. They really don't know what really happened in Port Chicago. In fact, they really didn't even—they didn't care, because most of the guys that got killed were black. It didn't make—

05-00:03:51

Drew: Almost all of them were black.

05-00:03:53

Gaines: Most all of them black. They didn't even care.

05-00:03:54

Drew: We got rid of part of our problem.

05-00:03:56

Gaines: The first thing you have to understand is, when you've been in a segregated army, which I was in the segregated army, it is terrible. When you face segregation all your life, then you really look back and see how much bias was against you, that you couldn't really get ahead. You begin to realize what's going on now. Take Oakland, for instance. At one time, Oakland had more businesses, black-owned businesses, than Atlanta, Georgia. Oakland today doesn't have very many black businesses. What happened to the banks in Oakland? What happened to all the loan companies in Oakland? Here's what happened. There's discrimination in jobs today. I'm driving down here today. On the highway, I'm looking. About fifteen people working there. Not a single black. I live right down from this company, Enviroplex. They build schools to be sold to the counties and other counties. Government work. Not a single black, and 200 people working there. And they wonder why blacks are in the penitentiary. Just like this kid said in Fresno the other day, white kid, he said, "I will murder now, and I'm not going to sleep under the bridge. I'm not going to go hungry." Now, why did he say that? He was taken, when he was a child, and put in a foster home that didn't teach him manners. They didn't teach him how to get an education. They didn't teach him how to make a living. He stayed there until he was twenty years old. Nineteen or twenty. What's he going to do? He can't get a job. He's not qualified. He can't read. Naturally, he's not going to sleep under the bridge. How many foster kids do you have in this country? A lot of them. You know what the boys do? The boys go to selling dope or robbing or everything.

05-00:06:09

Drew: End up in jail.

05-00:06:10

Gaines: End up in jail. But that's where they want them, in jail, because they make—

05-00:06:13

Drew: It's profitable.

05-00:06:15

Gaines: They make \$41,000 a year off of him.

05-00:06:19

Redman: You brought up jobs and hiring, and then we've also brought up the lawsuits. Especially in Port Chicago, the mutiny trial, Thurgood Marshall. We're talking about a couple of different things that would become really important for the Civil Rights Movement as it took shape after World War Two. I'm thinking in particular about the NAACP and their strategy that they took, but then also CORE, the Congress of Racial Equality, and organizations like SNCC, Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. The people who were talking about civil, nonviolent disobedience versus the legal strategy. Can you guys talk a little bit about, after World War Two, starting to learn about some of these organizations and movements?

05-00:07:12

Gaines: I can tell you about the NAACP. I joined the NAACP when I was nineteen years old, in Sacramento. Reverend Muse was the president. I have been a member of the NAACP. This is where I worked. I worked for thirty-five years with the NAACP. I got guys together to picket Safeway, picket PG&E, picket the motor vehicle. They didn't hire any blacks. Here's one thing that happened when I was chairman of the NAACP labor committee. They said, "We're going to hire. Send me someone down here in the motor vehicle. If they can pass the test, we'll put them to work."

05-00:07:56

Drew: I think we should explain the NAACP in Stockton compared to NAACP in the rest of the country.

05-00:08:02

Redman: That would be great, yes.

05-00:08:06

Drew: The first time I joined the NAACP was in Stockton. We were a very aggressive organization. When I left Stockton, when I was forced to leave Stockton, and I moved to the Bay Area—

05-00:08:21

Gaines: He was the first black librarian here.

05-00:08:23

Drew: I joined the NAACP over there. It was like a social club. After about two months, I couldn't deal with it, and I couldn't make them understand—I was trying to explain to them what we were doing in Stockton. It was like, oh, shoot, they're not really members of the NAACP. It was two totally different worlds, the NAACP here and the NAACP across the country. I read about the other parts of the country. They were more akin to what was happening in the

Bay Area. Mostly legal. Legal, legal, legal. Compared to other—I'm sorry, brother Gaines, go ahead.

05-00:09:03

Gaines: No, no.

05-00:09:05

Redman: It would be a mistake, then, as a student of history, if I were looking at this and you see the NAACP does this, or the NAACP does that, that doesn't reflect all of the chapters, in your experience.

05-00:09:21

Drew: That's the crux of the entire matter. You can't pigeonhole blacks. Like you say, you've got all these different organizations that have different goals, different aims. You've got Malcolm X and all these different groups. Their thinking is different. Initially, when Martin Luther King was busy, it was almost you're either with Martin Luther King or you were with Malcolm X. Which, for my past, I was almost with Malcolm X, although I appreciated what Martin Luther King was doing.

05-00:09:55

Gaines: I appreciate it [the different approaches], too. See, I'm different. I was with the NAACP ever since I was a kid. Still belong to it. But there's certain things that I would not take, you understand? I was telling you about this gentleman here that wanted to send his daughters back—Anderson was going to send his daughter back into slavery. I was talking to my daughter, and I let her read the article. It was in the paper. I said, "This slave master was asking—this guy was freed—to send him and his two daughters back there to slavery." So I asked them, I said, "Now, what would you think about me, as your father, and I sent you back there?" I said, "If a bastard come to me and tell me to bring my daughters out here, I want to have sex, I'd blow his fucking brains out." Excuse me. You understand?

05-00:10:54

Drew: He'll edit it.

05-00:10:55

Gaines: But look. She said to me, she said, "Daddy, if you didn't do it, I wouldn't respect you." You understand? This is the kind of [feeling]. I was in the NAACP. I did all of this work. We're going to have a march that all of these dignitaries and teachers and everything else, we were going to march from the Stockton Hotel down to University of Pacific. I'm one of the guys that—Othro and I don't buy where you can't work and all this. They asked me, said, "Brother Gaines, you going to march?" I said, "No. You know I don't march." They says, "Why can't you march with us?" I said, "I told you, I can't march. I just don't march." Because my rearing didn't teach me to march. My father never taught me to let somebody humiliate me and do everything to me and I don't fight back. I was taught that. This is the way I am. So they kept on hounding me and said, "Gaines, you have to march." I said, "You asked for

this." I said, "If a son of a bitch spit in my face, I'm going to stick my fucking knife in his belly." You understand? This is what's happened. What happened to us is this. When you brought him over here and took all the fight out of a black man, you could do anything you wanted to with him. If he ever fought back, it would be a different thing. You understand? Everything would fight back except for rabbit. You go and run rabbit. You run off and leave his kids in the house. Son of a bitch come and—excuse me—if a son of a gun come in my house, I'm going to fight until I die to protect my family.

05-00:12:30

Drew:

On that line, white people do not understand blacks. Things that happened—you, even you, you're sitting there. I can see, the way you look sometime, that your mind just can't digest these things. It didn't happen to white people. It's going to be that way for probably another hundred years. They were saying blacks should have more conversation. We should have more conversation. All these things are right. But still, it's going to bring about some understanding. It's not going to bring about complete understanding. My generation would have to die out. Like I tell young people, the greatest thing that could happen to them is all old people like me go somewhere and just lie down and die. That's the greatest thing that could happen to young people, because young people have a better chance of progressing. They won't have all of us old people indoctrinating them with all kinds of ridiculous stuff. Some of the things that I say, and I consider myself a person that's fair—

05-00:13:39

Gaines:

This is the best Father's Day gift that I ever had from one of my sons. I want you to read it.

05-00:13:47

Redman:

You showed me this. Yes.

05-00:13:50

Gaines:

I want you to read it. Read it loud so it will be on there.

05-00:13:53

Redman:

This is—all right.

05-00:13:54

Gaines:

From my son.

05-00:13:56

Drew:

There was an author, (John Howard) Griffin. His name was Griffin. He wrote a book entitled *Black Like Me* (1961). Heard of it or read it? What Griffin did, he was so interested in what was happening with black people. This book was written about—when was it? About the fifties?

05-00:14:13

Gaines:

Oh, yes, it was back early sixties.

05-00:14:17

Drew:

But anyway, he decided, as an experiment, that he was going to pass himself off as a black person. He got these berries and dyed his skin dark, and his head and everything, and he went out to pass himself off as a black person. He tried this experiment for six months. Two weeks later—the man almost ended up in a mental institution. In his book, he concludes, he says, “I can’t understand how colored people can even live in this country.” People just thinking that he was black, he had been humiliated so much over that period of time and everything that he just couldn’t—his mind couldn’t digest it. Couldn’t deal with it at all. But we do this, what we deal with every day.

05-00:15:10

Redman:

I want to read this, and then I want to get back to a question about civil rights activism in just a moment. This is from your son.

05-00:15:18

Gaines:

My son.

05-00:15:20

Redman:

“From son to father, of all the wisdom you have bestowed upon me, I carry it wherever I go. Now that I reflect on the journey I have taken and the voices of conscious that guided me all the way, it has been yours. I see now the importance of true fatherhood. The burden of worry, the constant nagging of wanting more for your child. You have groomed me well. More importantly, you’ve made me a good person. With all the craziness in the world, you’ve protected me. I shall, for my son, only offer the same and encourage him the legacy that you have created. Education is the key to success, and no matter it be through vocation or traditional means. Thank you, from father to father. Love, Ali Gaines.”

05-00:16:03

Gaines:

The guys wanted to know who wrote this. I’ve told them, I’ve said, “My son wrote this.” But this was written by my dad. In his mind, this is what he wanted for all his kids. This is why I speak education, be it academic, vocational, or business. You’ve got to have that to get along. And respect. You see, respect. My kids give me ties. They give me golf clubs. This is what is passed down. The legacy is passed down 138 years from this, my father and my mother. But see, we’ve gotten away from that. We don’t teach our kids this. You don’t have to beat them. I don’t whip my kids. Teach them.

05-00:16:54

Drew:

One of the worst things that happened to blacks was desegregation. When desegregation came, [now[can do all these type of things, [but] prior to that time, Langston University, all-black university, you know what the graduation rate was for that university over ten years? The highest in the history of this country. Ninety-eight percent. Ninety-eight percent graduation. Your mind can’t even deal with it. Because the people that went there felt so obligated. If you flunked out and you couldn’t complete it, your best bet was to pack up and go someplace else, go down to South America someplace. This went

down the line. There were a few things that we were allowed, and a few things that we did well. It was the same thing with sports. They said, "Why are black athletes so good?" They had to be. Like Joe Lewis. Joe Lewis had to be good. During those days, if you were, say, a boxer, you were a black boxer, you lost a battle, a fight, to a white person, you didn't come back home. You may as well have somebody ship your bags to wherever you were going. Because say you went back home. It would be such a humiliating thing. There wasn't many things that we had. Most of all, I think, our black community, that was our lynchpin. That was our taproot. We drew all our strength from—the saying that it takes a community to raise a child, we believed that. Every child in that community was subject to whatever any grownup would tell. A grownup would never tell you wrong.

05-00:18:42

Redman:

There's one question I want to get at. When you were involved with the NAACP and with other civil rights organizations throughout California, one of the things that a lot of historians have talked about recently is, this is a different time, [but] women were treated differently within these organizations than you might imagine today. Can you guys speak to that? How women would or wouldn't fit within this—

05-00:19:09

Drew:

When the Civil Rights Movement started, women were most valuable. The other thing about black women in this country, black women, from slavery time, there were things that black women were allowed to do, black men couldn't. A black woman was like the maid of the house. She would—"Well, Ms. So-and-So, I don't like the way you're treating that child" and everything. "Well, that's my child." "Well, I don't care. I have to take care of him" and this type [of thing]. It was tolerated. The black guy out in the field, if he says something, or he just looks up—you don't look the master in the eye. One day, he can't take it no more, he stands up, he looks, he raises his head, [and] he's dead. When the Civil Rights Movement came along, it was almost like slavery time during the Underground Railroad. Black women could kind of ease out and do things that men weren't allowed.

05-00:20:06

Redman:

Rosa Parks is a symbol of that.

05-00:20:08

Gaines:

Yes, but see, here's what happened. We go back to Mary McLeod Bethune. You can go back to the lady [Harriet Tubman] that took all the slaves out and took them up over to Canada and everything. But look, the black woman has borne the burden ever since she got on the ship. It left the harbor in Africa. They left, and sometimes it takes six months to get here to America.

05-00:20:32

Drew:

If they got here.

05-00:20:35

Gaines:

The girls, twelve years old, were raped and everything else on the ship. Raped by saying, "Come on, girl, go with me." This is why, when I hear a young black man call a black woman a bitch, I look at him and I wear the mask. This man doesn't understand what that woman went through all her life. She had to have sex with the white man's son to break him in to sex. His daughters. Like that bastard that helped to write the Constitution. He had black babies, five of them, by Sally—Jefferson. You understand? And yet wouldn't give her *freedom*. You understand? When you mention a black woman, she has borne the burden. Any time we mistreat her—she was there scrubbing the floor. Oh, look at Sally. She's scrubbing the floor for the white—but sister Sally's daughter was going to go to school, or sister Sally's son. That's what she was doing it for.

05-00:21:44

Drew:

I was going to say something about the women, the black women. They kept us alive during slavery time. We talk about all the soul food now. Chitlins and all that kind of stuff [Chitterlings – also known as "Chitlins"]. This was throwaway food. This was stuff that whites couldn't [eat]—they'd bury it. They couldn't feed it to animals or anything else. Nothing you could do with it. It didn't make good fertilizer, nothing. They're getting rid of it. Oh, we'll give it to the blacks, let them eat it. So they come up with all these different—these women. Not the men. Man's working the fields. She takes this stuff and she does all these things with it and creates all these great dishes. Then you'll hear some white person from Georgia, "Yes, we had chitlins for dinner, and we ate this here." God, this guy doesn't even know!

I was in CORE in San Francisco after I left over here and I couldn't reach an agreement with the NAACP. About that time, CORE was starting. I read about this. We formed a CORE group in San Francisco. Very militant group. Was loaded with well-educated people. Before we did anything, we used to spend maybe a month or two just on homework, just going out. San Francisco, people around the world—and California has perpetuated this myth—San Francisco has always been a liberated city. San Francisco has never been a liberated city. If you think of the people that came here, the sailors and all these people that came here and the people in California, especially San Francisco, and that even when it comes to education, it was determined, since there were blacks moving in to San Francisco, how do we educate them? The first idea was separate schools. But there was a woman, single woman—they wrote a book about her.

05-00:23:46

Gaines:

Madame Pleasure. She ran a whorehouse.

05-00:23:50

Drew:

She ran a whorehouse. All the powers and divas visited the whorehouse. The mayor, the chief of police, all these people. She kept very great documents on what was going on.

05-00:24:01

Gaines: Kept the books.

05-00:24:02

Drew: When they were deciding on what do we do about education systems—we got all these blacks here, we feel obligated to educate them—they finally decided that they would have separate schools. She said no. “Nothing you can do about it.” “Oh, yes, I can.” She waved her little book then. Had all these clipper ships come in. This information—we can take this stuff to New York and it can be everywhere. They decided, okay, we’re going to segregate the schools, but we’re not going to segregate them. How do you segregate and not segregate? The classrooms, they put a sheet down the middle. Blacks sit on one side, whites sit on the other side. Same teacher. The education system, education, there’s a constant among blacks. Get an education, get an education. The whites are not—they’re surreptitiously saying, “Yes, you should get educated, you should get educated, but we’re not going to let you get educated.”

05-00:25:07

Gaines: Now you’re talking about—

05-00:25:10

Drew: We’re not going to let you get educated. We’ll make sure you don’t get educated, because we’re going to give you the worst teachers.

05-00:25:14

Redman: One of the things I wanted to ask about that we talked about, between 1960 and 1964, this is a really active, active time. I’m just going to mention a few big things that happened during this period, and I’d like to see if you could speak to them. In 1960, of course there’s the big sit-in at the Woolworth in Greensboro, North Carolina. We talked about the sort of idea of why would a black person even want to eat at Woolworth.

05-00:25:46

Drew: That’s a great, great question. Prior to people being able to eat at Woolworth, in the black community, black people said, “I don’t know how even white people eat that food, it’s so bad.” But then when desegregation occurred at Woolworth, blacks are lined up down there at Woolworth. The food that was served in the black community, it was such that whites would come down to the black community to eat. They’d come in, and quite often, like the barbecue places. Some of them would reach the point where it was a two-way street. Some of the blacks had to come around the back to eat, and some of the whites didn’t want to be seen, so they would be able to come to this window and get this black food, and sneak back and take it back and everything. When it came to the desegregation thing, the black community missed a lot of it. Missed it in that white people, they were money orientated. Let’s go over to Fillmore District. I can give you more exact point. The Fillmore District. Fillmore District was one of the most complete affluent districts anywhere, and especially the state of California. It was absolutely one solid block of

black-owned businesses, black houses and everything. Three hotels, two schools—I mean, two—

05-00:27:19

Gaines: All the way from Sutter to Haight Street. Nothing but black business down Fillmore.

05-00:27:26

Drew: The interesting thing about it, the whites had abandoned this area earlier, when blacks started moving in. This is right off the downtown area. You can walk downtown. When the weather is bad everywhere else, you can be in the Fillmore, you can look up to the sunshine. You leave the Fillmore district, someplace else, and it's overcast and everything else. That area, people, earlier on, before they came there to redevelop this area. Justin Herman. Justin Herman determined that the Fillmore District was an eyesore. Anywhere black people are is an eyesore, although we had the best jazz clubs and everything. White people would come down there. You go to some jazz club, there's more white people than there were black. Some of the restaurants, the same way. But they decided to destroy Fillmore. They did. They came in. They gave the people almost nothing for their homes and everything. So the question was asked, why didn't they fight back? Who are they going to fight? The judges are white. The system is white. The lawyers are white. Whatever they says, go. That's it. We had one—

05-00:28:40

Gaines: You wanted to talk about the sixties. That's what you—

05-00:28:42

Redman: I'll just say because in sixty-one, CORE has the Freedom Rides, and then a lot of Californians participate in that. Then in sixty-three and sixty-four, I understand that there are the shop-ins at Lucky in Berkeley, which are pretty famous, and then the Free Speech Movement.

05-00:29:01

Gaines: But you see, here's where CORE and all of them made a mistake. In this article that was written by the Stockton Record to me, here's what it says, "Gaines first came to Stockton in 1945. After leaving Sacramento, he has since then been constant voice of numerous committees and caucuses. One of the most successful was being labor committee chairman for the Stockton chapter of the NAACP, a committee which he headed for over thirty years at that time. Throughout this time, Gaines was busy organizing various groups in effort to attain better black representation in the job market. 'We have made a considerable amount of progress where employment is concerned. You can now see blacks working in many of the same places that they weren't allowed to go years ago.' He continued. 'It was our protest back in the 1950s and sixties that created the new position that blacks hold today. The white-orientated system didn't give anything to blacks. We had to take it.' One of the methods devised by Gaines through the NAACP was to have all blacks

pay their telephone bills in pennies, only to protest them not hiring blacks in the companies." You see, if you hit a man in his pocketbook, that's what hurts. The CORE was doing the sitting in the counters. All they had to do was boycott, like they did the bus system down there in Alabama. What I preach and taught, don't buy where you can't work. If you don't buy automobiles, you say, we won't buy any more Chevrolets this year.

05-00:30:51

Drew:

Like we did in San Francisco with the Cadillacs. They found out that the people that bought more Cadillacs than anyone else were blacks. We asked the Cadillac dealer down at Automobile Row to hire a black salesman. Across in Oakland was Patterson's Cadillac. We went over to Patterson with these statistics. We said, "If we could direct most of these black people over here to buy a Cadillac, would you consider hiring a black salesman?" You know what his reaction was? "Can you have one here this afternoon?" [laughter] Like he was talking about with CORE, down South, CORE did sit-in, this type of thing. San Francisco CORE was a complete different story, like I said earlier. We did our research on how many people worked here, this type of thing. Like, for instance, Safeway. Safeway, in the black community, was a total different entity than the Safeway in the white community. We stood up. We watched what was going on. We found out that the produce and meat that was sold in the white community, after the expiration date, it was brought down and put in the Safeway store in the black community, and the price was increased. They found out with the Bank of America, which was formerly the Bank of Italy, the Bank of America, three-tenths, or 1 percent, of all of its employees were minorities. Not black minorities. They said, "We have an officer working for the Bank of America." Who was the officer? He was assistant branch manager in Watts, an all-black community. We said, we've got to devise a strategy to change this. We've got to devise a strategy to take care of the Safeway situation. All these things. There were no such thing as, they call it, a driver salesman. The people who deliver bread and stuff to the stores, and wine and beer. It didn't exist. We devised a strategy, how do we get these people to hire? We did a lot of sit-ins and this type of thing. I went to jail so many times. I would go in, come out, go down to the place, and turn around and come back down there again. We had an enormous amount of sharp people, lawyers and this type of thing. They're standing there with bail bondsmen. We walk in, they book us, and demand to know what the bail is. "This man has never done anything. Release him on his own recognizance." Back out on the street, back demonstrating.

05-00:33:40

Redman:

Now, by this time, you're both a little older. I'm wondering if you could speak, just for a moment, your perception about the student movements, say, at Berkeley, where either the Free Speech Movement, a lot of white kids from California are going to the South, and for many of them, it's a really eye-opening experience. They're bringing that back. But on the other hand, you're in this multiracial organization, but are you ever looking at these young, naïve

white kids who want to help out with a degree of skepticism, or are you just happy to have their enthusiasm and involvement?

05-00:34:20

Gaines:

Let me tell you this. All white people aren't racist. We got some good breaks from white kids. Without the whites that come in—look at those guys was killed in Mississippi. What's the name of the lady that was killed? Listen, all white people don't think that way. Some white people are really down with being what is the right thing for the United States. This is one thing that's happening today. We are faced with a Mormon religion. Go to Salt Lake City, or go anyplace. You don't see any blacks in there.

05-00:34:58

Drew:

The first place I was ever called a nigger in my whole life—

05-00:35:01

Redman:

Was Salt Lake City?

05-00:35:02

Gaines:

What you talking about? It's the most—

05-00:35:03

Drew:

I was going to Utah to ski.

05-00:35:05

Gaines:

All black people—you can't go unless a white man take you. You read the Mormon religion. Okay. When I was listening to this, I was thinking about how we were treated when we tried to get these good jobs. Now, today, you would think we wouldn't have to sit in to get a job. But when I passed this place, what I did, every day I passed it going to work or going downtown or going down to my business, today they hired 200 people there, and not a single black worked there. Now, look, that's what you're talking about years ago, but we're talking about today. Why do you think a lot of black kids are in the penitentiary today? They can't get a job. Back to this white boy who said he wasn't going to sleep under the bridge. You're going to have trouble in this country if you don't start to equalize and give people a job. Look at the Mormons this week. Billions of dollars. They're opening up a new shopping center there. The Mormon Church is the richest church. They're richer than the Catholic now. Now we're going to put a head of the Mormon, or the head of the church, president?

05-00:36:30

Drew:

Also, another thing. I don't believe in religion.

05-00:36:32

Gaines:

Oh, no. Take religion away.

05-00:36:34

Drew:

I'm not religious. I can't understand it.

05-00:36:37

Gaines: I can't understand religion either.

05-00:36:38

Drew: When blacks came over here as slaves, the Christian religion didn't exist. The people in West Africa, they had totally different religions. They came over here, and to pacify the slave, maybe if we take him to church, let him stand in the back—you stood. You didn't sit in the back of the church, you stood in the back of the church. Take a look at the Bible. Find me one thing where it says something good about a black in there. Nothing. Everything that they say about blacks is bad.

05-00:37:13

Gaines: Let me tell you something about religion. I used to be a Christian. What do you mean, *used to be a Christian*? Here's what [I mean]. The Christian religion is the best thing in the world, but hypocrisy has taken over the Christian religion. I believe in the teachings of Jesus. The best teachings that were ever given, love your neighbor as yourself.

05-00:37:40

Drew: But Jesus wasn't a Christian. He was a Jew.

05-00:37:44

Gaines: What did I say? Listen. Listen. I believe the teachings of Jesus. I was talking to an African doctor, the biggest doctor in Stockton. He's a heart doctor. I went to him because I thought I had a little palpitation heart, whatever. I asked him about my heart. He said, "Whoever or whatever put this body together was a smart person." Now, you're laughing. But how did we get here? How did we get here? You see what happened the other day, didn't you? You see when they got this thing to try to figure the big explosion?

05-00:38:38

Redman: Smash atoms together. Yeah, sure.

05-00:38:42

Gaines: They smashed atoms together. How do you know what happened on a distant planet? Huh? We've gotten so now we can take the heart out and put in another heart. How do you think a person could do with putting in a new brain? Huh? It's going to be possible someday.

05-00:39:04

Drew: Oh, of course. We'll substitute the whole body. The question you asked the last time, you asked again, and I know it must be important to you, about the students at Berkeley. Were they naïve or this type of thing? We have the same situation today, only it's dealt with on a much larger scale. The kids go to college, they go to school, they learn. They learn a lot of the things that they were taught are not true. It was just opinion. Like today, you're told by the politicians, especially the Republican politicians, they say, "Those leftwing schools, they go to those"—

- 05-00:39:48 Gaines: California.
- 05-00:39:49 Drew: Like Stanford and University of California, Harvard and Columbia. Since Obama went to school there, we know it is, but I've never been able to quite figure this one out. He's a communist, socialist.
- 05-00:40:08 Gaines: He's a Muslim first.
- 05-00:40:09 Drew: What's the other one? Hitler was a—
- 05-00:40:12 Gaines: A fascist.
- 05-00:40:13 Drew: A fascist. He's a—
- 05-00:40:15 Redman: Communist and fascist.
- 05-00:40:16 Drew: Communist, socialist, fascist. I'm listening to Fox News, and who says this? O'Reilly. This is a half-way educated man.
- 05-00:40:25 Gaines: O'Reilly's getting paid to say that.
- 05-00:40:28 Drew: With the student thing, the main reason that [this] comes down to the students, because students learn—what do they teach you in college? *How to think*. To think. You don't accept, *you think*. You question. You write a paper. You write your college paper, you don't just take—or even when you get to college, you're writing a theme on a book. For this story, we want you to write a paper on this. So what do you do? If you're a half-way decent student, you'd say, this is one person's opinion. Let me go out and check on some other opinion. That's three or four different opinions. I read these opinions and I say, well, now, automatically, can't see this side, but these two here, they have possibilities. So now, all of a sudden, I've learned something new. That teacher back in high school, my parents told me, what they told me, may not be necessarily true, because these people are much more intelligent and better-educated than my father was.
- You've got youngsters going to college and they're learning these things. They're not going to segregated colleges. There are blacks in these colleges, there's Indians, there's Mexicans, there's Filipinos, everybody in that college. They're learning from each other. They're talking about what happened in his community. "Did you go home for the weekend?" "Yes, I went home." "What

did you guys do?" This is a white guy talking to a black guy. "Oh, we did this. What did you do?" "We did this, then we did something else." "Oh my. Really? Was that fun?" "Yeah." "Well, you're going to have to come home to my house." They were going back and forth. You've got these things going back and forth. That was the reason I made the statement earlier on about the greatest thing that we old people could do for young people is just lie down and die.

But Berkeley, there were those who saw this. There was a parallel between what was happening at Berkeley. There was a lot of students that demonstrated in Berkeley, and they were members of our CORE group. Our CORE group was an integrated group. Mostly we had these young people, and they were down there, they were going to jail, they were getting beat up by the police, all these types of things, because they saw what was happening. But then where I felt really bad, and to this day I'll go to my grave with this guilt, when the Civil Rights Movement was over, they declared the civil rights—we won our civil rights—and the first thing that came to my mind, we haven't won anything. They're talking about we had won our right to a job. We don't own anything.

05-00:43:02

Gaines:

Look, there's one thing I wanted to mention when you asked me about the whites participating in our activities for the NAACP. Here's one thing you have to look at. Who is white? This is a problem that most white people don't understand. The people that helped me, a lot of them, are black, but they thought they were white.

05-00:43:34

Drew:

The bourgeoisie.

05-00:43:35

Gaines:

Not bourgeoisie. These people had crossed over the color line. Over 50,000 black people crossed over the color line.

05-00:43:43

Drew:

More than that. Three hundred thousand per year passed.

05-00:43:48

Gaines:

Passed over the color line.

05-00:43:49

Drew:

Passed as white.

05-00:43:50

Gaines:

One of my best friends here, one of the guys, had a big {flooring?} company. He thought he was white. He'd come down to the shop. I'd close the windows down at night and straighten his hair. With the barber. I straightened his hair. I knew him very well. He owned the San Francisco {Flooring Company?}. A lot of people that you don't know that's passed over the color line, and this is

what I'm talking about. You don't know who is black. When I told you Warren G. Harding was black—I told my son, I say, "I'm named after the first black president," the other day, the same one. He's very smart. So he got on his computer and he was reading Warren G. Harding's background. When he got done, he says, "It was rumored that Warren G."—

05-00:44:37

Drew: It's always rumored.

05-00:44:39

Gaines: But look, look. It was rumored that Warren G. Harding was black, but his four sisters were teachers in Washington, D.C. But you see what I mean, what I'm talking about? All of these people that you think are white, they're not white. Look at Dinah Shore. Dinah Shore's mother was half-white. Who was her son? This is what I'm talking about.

05-00:45:05

Drew: The anthropologists during that period of time did some studying—I think it's from Vanderbilt—I believe it's Vanderbilt—they did some studying of the South. They had all this racial tension going on. Blacks are bad, whites are good. Blacks are bad, whites are good. You've got, like you said, all these mulattos, half-black, half-whites, this type of thing, people around there. So they went down there and they start researching. Looking at family trees. Somewhere along the line, we find out that his eighth cousin, his eighth cousin removed, was black, and on down the line. Their conclusion was that very few people in the South could say that they were white or that they were black.

05-00:45:57

Redman: That creates a big problem, culturally, for the South, because, for years, it's been the precedent of the so-called *one-drop rule*.

05-00:46:08

Gaines: I can tell you about that. You know the girl in San Francisco, she was suing this millionaire to get her inheritance out of Louisiana. They took her back to Louisiana and went through the records and in the books there. One-sixteenth drop of blood makes you black. The other fifteen drops won't make you white. This is the laws. I'm back to the cranium. What is in the white people's head that's racist that way, that makes them think—they're still 98.1 [water and] organic substances, just like everything else. Why does it make them think that they are [better]? Because they push themselves. Now, back to University of California. The white person has found out one thing. Most of the students are Asian. You understand? They've got so many of them that they're trying to keep them out.

05-00:47:11

Drew: They tried to pass a law in San Francisco to keep kids out at law.

- 05-00:47:23
Redman: I'm going to flip these around. I was going to ask about the Black Panther Party, but before I do that, can I ask about KKK in Stockton? Tell me—
- 05-00:47:32
Drew: It exists today.
- 05-00:47:33
Redman: Tell me about the KKK.
- 05-00:47:35
Gaines: I can tell you a lot about the KKK.
- 05-00:47:37
Drew: Go ahead.
- 05-00:47:37
Gaines: Because I appeared before the city council all the time when I was working with [NAACP].
- 05-00:47:42
Redman: But I understand that you've had a personal incident at your home.
- 05-00:47:46
Gaines: Absolutely. A personal incident at my home.
- 05-00:47:49
Redman: That's maybe a safe way to say it, "an incident."
- 05-00:47:51
Gaines: I went to the city council and I was talking about the vultures in Stockton. I call them vultures. That's the absentee landlords. The absentee landlords that owned all the buildings downtown Stockton, all dilapidated buildings that they'd moved out of and they started moving north. They rented to blacks, because we were on the certain part of town, then we were allowed to move up across Main Street. I rented one of those buildings from the Franzia Brothers Winery. I'm a person they called. They didn't do anything for the building. The health department wouldn't do anything for a restaurant across the floor like that. One day—this was in the barber shop—my barber, Lorenzo was there—a rat ran across the floor. A big wood rat ran across the floor like that. The customer jumped. He said, "Man, there's a rat!" Lorenzo said, "Oh, that's a pet rat. We raised him around here." Look, if a rat died in the hall in my building, I had to tear the wall out, put spray and stuff in there. These guys are millionaires and they wouldn't fix it up. You understand? Now, when I say the vultures, the absentee landlords that owned all the rent houses and things, didn't fix them up or nothing, the health department didn't—same thing today. But anyway, when I went up there, the KKK called me up over the phone and said, "Hey, nigger, we're gonna [get you]." They shot at my house. When they shot at my house first, I come out. Being a World War Two veteran, I come out and shot back with my thirty-ought-six. Wasn't in the

paper. Nothing said about it. They didn't come out messing around my house anymore. But see, this is what I'm talking about.

05-00:49:33

Redman: Was this incident, may I ask, was that during the day? Was it at night? Was it—

05-00:49:37

Gaines: Nighttime.

05-00:49:39

Drew: KKK is not going to do anything during the daytime. That's why they have white sheets. I guess it's on your bed, you've got a white sheet on there, so at night—

05-00:49:54

Gaines: I can tell you about the white man's—biggest army he's got. He has the best army in the world and the biggest army, because he talks to the ignorant whites. You know what his name is, let's. You know what let's is? "*Let's get him*". He may not go do anything himself. "*Let's get him*."

05-00:50:16

Drew: Back to the KKK here in Stockton. You couldn't separate the KKK from the police department, because there were so many—the KKK was peopled by—I mean, the police department was peopled by the KKK, so there was no difference. The police department lends legitimacy to the KKK.

05-00:50:38

Gaines: Do you know who the biggest KKK organization in the United States today is? Think. Think. What is the biggest organization in the United States today that says the same thing that the KKK says?

05-00:50:55

Drew: You wouldn't be talking about the Tea Party, would you?

05-00:50:58

Gaines: No. It's bigger than the Tea Party. I'll let you guess. Think a minute.

05-00:51:05

Drew: The Republican congress?

05-00:51:07

Gaines: No.

05-00:51:08

Drew: It can't be bigger than that unless you're talking about the Koch Brothers and that.

05-00:51:11

Gaines: I'm talking about the [National] Rifle Association.

- 05-00:51:14
Drew: Oh, yeah. Well, they—
- 05-00:51:16
Gaines: They're the KKK. "We believe in the Second Amendment."
- 05-00:51:22
Drew: But they only have 1,300 representatives in Washington.
- 05-00:51:28
Gaines: Only 1,300. [laughter]
- 05-00:51:29
Drew: Thirteen hundred lobbyists. There's 1,300 lobbyists, if you can imagine that.
- 05-00:51:33
Gaines: That's the KKK.
- 05-00:51:34
Drew: That's National Rifle Association.
- 05-00:51:36
Gaines: National Rifle Association.
- 05-00:51:38
Redman: We have time for one more question on this tape. Tell me about how the Black Panther Party is misunderstood by members of the public and why.
- 05-00:51:52
Drew: I was over there when the Black Panther was formed, the whole thing. Huey Newton and [Bobby] Seale and the whole group. Oakland was such a racist city that it was almost like being down South. You couldn't do anything. They would shoot a black person. He was just dead. That was all there was to it. Even today, it's true today. A policeman in Oakland is never going to be convicted of killing a black person. They have never been, never will be.
- 05-00:52:23
Gaines: Same here [in Stockton].
- 05-00:52:24
Drew: It's just not going to happen. This was so prevalent in the black community. Policemen are talking about shooting, about these gangs shooting. Cops do that. They can shoot a person [and] they know nothing was going to happen. These young men could be someone where they weren't going to take it anymore. Plus, all the food programs and things that were designed for the Oakland community went to the white school. So you've got all these black kids, some of them didn't have a meal all day long. They were expected to get up, go to school, and learn, without having a single meal. Part of their program was providing meals for these kids. They provided food for people. They did all kinds of things. Initially, they didn't carry guns. When they started doing this, the police started coming out, harassing them, shooting, this

type of thing. They said, okay, we'll have our guns for our protection. We're not going to carry concealed weapons. We're going to stand here with our guns and we're going to announce to the world, we're not aggressive. They never, ever aggressively went after anyone. They never shot a policeman. But their position was, *we're here to defend ourselves and defend our own*. That's all it was. The press across the nation [reported that] you got these radical blacks out there, they're threatening to kill everybody else. They're parading around with guns and doing these black hand salutes and stuff like this here. They're dangerous. Like today, even with Congress now talking about the new Black Panther Party. You know how many members there are in the new Black Panther Party? Eight people. There's eight people. Eight people, and it's dangerous. New Black Panther Party is threatening to take over the nation. They can't even take over a block. Couldn't even carjack.

05-00:54:20

Redman: With that, I need to pause and change tapes here.

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06-00:00:03

Redman: Today is July 17. I'm back with Mr. Drew and Mr. Gaines, and this is our third tape today. When we left off, we were talking about the Black Panther Party and how that is remembered or not remembered in terms of its impact in the Bay Area. Mr. Drew had a chance to speak to that. Mr. Gaines, I'd like to ask if you would speak to that.

06-00:00:24

Gaines: Okay. I'm just talking about the Black Panther Party? When they went to Sacramento and marched around with their guns—the guns were empty. They were unloaded, the guns. Here's what I have to say about the whole thing, is if you can keep your head about your losing theirs and blame it on you, if you trust yourself when all men—that's "If" by Rudyard Kipling. But here's what I say. If rabbits had guns, how many people would hunt rabbits? Huh? You're smiling.

06-00:00:59

Redman: That's a great point. You're right.

06-00:01:02

Gaines: All right. If black folks protect themselves and start shooting back, you won't have no problems. But as long as you don't have no guns and they have all the guns—now, what he and I were talking about, what you were talking about, when you asked us about the Black Panther Party. Here's what destroyed the Civil Rights Movement, *redevelopment*. Redevelopment destroyed the black community. It wasn't redevelopment. It was black removal. Now here's what happened. Like they did in Oakland, like they did in San Francisco, like they did in Stockton, California, Oklahoma City, and Memphis, Tennessee, they took and run the freeway right through the black businesses. In Stockton,

California, we had fourteen service stations, we had grocery stores, we had drugstores, we had hotels. This is the community I live in. We had one hotel, was seventeen stories high. What did they do? They run the freeway right down, wiped out all the black hotel owners. I moved four times, moved my barber shop. The last time I moved, I moved and bought a corner lot on Airport Way and Main. They tore down all those buildings. In Memphis, Tennessee, they run the freeway right down Beale Street and wiped out half the black businesses. In Montgomery, Alabama, Gaston had an eighteen-story building. They tore it down, wiped it out. They'd run the integration and the urban renewal, or black removal, destroyed all the black businesses. The same thing that happened now happened in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Black Wall Street had thirty-six square blocks of black businesses. They destroyed them. They sent to Oklahoma City in Piper Cubs and flew over Tulsa and dropped Molotov cocktails and set the whole thing on fire. But you don't find this in your history books.

06-00:03:12

Drew:

Those were government planes, by the way.

06-00:03:16

Redman:

This brings up a good point in terms of we talked about sort of the reflection at the end of the Civil Rights Movement, quote unquote, "the end of the Civil Rights Movement," in terms of what are we left with. What's interesting to me is that you've got the Civil Rights Act. LBJ passes the Civil Rights Act. Someone might be inclined to read this as, oh, this is this major advance, but then in 1965, a reminder of how life really is, there's a major race riot in Watts, Los Angeles.

06-00:03:52

Drew:

That brings back another point. The riots in Watts, these were just symptoms of things that were going on. At one time, it was sort of an unwritten thing that police could brutalize blacks and get away with this type of thing, and so they would do it wink-wink. They go out and take this guy out of his car, beat him up, wink, wink, wink, wink. Now we don't have to do that. With home security and all this type of thing, now they say the policemen have a right to do anything. White people don't realize that this affects them, too. One time, if you were stopped in your car, there was only three ways they could search your car. You gave them permission. Number two, they had to have reasonable cause, or a court order. That's the only way they could search your car. Otherwise, they could keep you there for three days if they had to go get a court order to do it. You said no, they had to get a court order. Now they don't [require a court order]. You can leave here right now, drive down the street, policeman stop you and you haven't done anything, he can tell you to get out of your car. "Stand back there, we're going to search your car." "But, but, but"—"No buts. Are you questioning me? Because if you question me, I can take you to jail." We have come to that.

When the Civil Rights Movement came to an end, and LBJ and the whole thing—I love LBJ. He's one of my favorite presidents. From his position, he did something absolutely great. But see, blacks, we were bamboozled. As Malcolm X said, we were bamboozled. We were led to believe, all the sudden, everything is going to be great. Everything is going to be wonderful. We didn't realize everything was great and everything was wonderful before this. When we had our own little communities, we were thriving. We were getting bigger, because the people over here on the edge of this community, they were unable to what they call block-busting. If we wanted to move out further, all we had to do was arrange for some white person to buy a house in that area. The black person move into the house, then all of a sudden, "The blacks are taking over this community. Let's go." There was flight. Now we have another couple blocks to add on to it, so we could always grow if we wanted to. But when the Civil Rights Movement was over, I was lying there thinking, oh, this is great. We've done all this great work and everything. Then it dawned on me, *we own nothing*.

06-00:06:38

Gaines:

We lost. We lost. We lost.

06-00:06:38

Drew:

We lost what we had. We owned nothing. I worked for months putting together a scheme. I [thought], what we could do, we don't have a lot of money to start all these businesses and everything. What if every black person in the country bought stock in whatever company we call it? We call it, say, Company X. Every black person bought—who could afford—just put ten dollars. Even welfare recipients could afford ten dollars. You buy ten dollars' worth of stock. Not donate ten dollars. Ten dollars' worth of stock. We'd put this money in certain banks, like the bank of Harlem or Chicago bank, and we'd give it a deadline. We're going to raise a certain amount of money by this deadline. If we don't, we're going to return your money to you with whatever interest is accrued. But if we reach that point, we are going to start building black businesses. We know we can't go out and build the biggest businesses. We're going to start with garages, small. The thing about success, once you show that there's success; people want to buy in to success. That piece of stock that you bought is now worth so much more. My money helped me buy that service station down there. By now, god knows where we would be. I talk to people about this. I talk to Bill Russell and Jim—

06-00:08:24

Gaines:

This is one thing that perturbs me, but I can understand it. The first thing they did after the Civil Rights Movement was supposed to be over, which it never will be over, they were supposed to treat you equally. When I started my business, I wanted to borrow some money to build [it]. I had been moved four times under urban renewal, black removal, and I bought me a lot. I bought a corner lot. It cost me \$25,000. I didn't pay for it, because I was being paid cash for it. The way I got it, I told this lady—she's a Jewish lady, and I told her I wanted to open up a business, and she says, "How much money you

got?" I said, "I don't have much money now, because," I say, "I'm working two jobs. Running a business and I would like to open up a grocery store." She says, "I'll let you have a lot." She says, "How much are you going to pay down on?" I said, "How much you want down?" She said, "Oh, you give as little as you want." I said, "I don't have much money. I could give you a thousand dollars down." She said, "That would be all right." I said, "How much would the interest be?" She said, "It would be 10.5." I listened. "Mmhmm. Yeah. That would be fine." I said, "But here's one thing I would like to do. I would like to pay on the principal without paying on the interest." She said, "I'll give you twenty years." I said, "That would be fine." She thought it over. I have her fooled. I had the mask on. My wife was working. She's a teacher. I worked in a barber shop, had my barber shop. Guy working for me. Then I worked longshoreman, too. I paid her off in two years. She flew up high, because she lost that eleven or twelve thousand dollars interest.

06-00:10:31

Drew:

See, that's where not only black people get bamboozled, white people, too. Until recently—

06-00:10:40

Gaines:

Wait, wait, let me finish. When I got the permit to build my building, I go down to get a permit to build a business, the guy says to me, building inspector—I had built several houses, rent houses that I had built with my own two hands—I says, "I want to get a permit to build this building." He says, "You can't get a permit. This is a public building. You can't get a permit." I said, "Why?" He said, "Because I say so." He was the building inspector. White boy. A little short white boy, skinny nose, funny-looking fellow. But anyway, I said, "I'm going to my attorney." I went to my attorney and I said—Jack Dozer was my attorney—I said, "Hey, Jack, I want you to tell me what article in the city charter says that I can't be the general contractor and hire subcontractors if I'm going to own the building." He called down there. He says, "I have a client by the name of Warren Gaines that says he wants to build a building. What article in the city charter says"—"Oh, send him right on back down." Found out later on, Burger King wanted that lot. So he was working with them, and they offered me \$87,000 for the lot. I told them to—you understand? But you see, here's what you have to understand. The atrocities that's been inflicted upon the African Americans in this country is beyond the human imagination. You couldn't imagine the things that we go through—

06-00:12:12

Drew:

I see you [Redman] sitting there sometimes, the things we say, you sit there like, I don't really believe that.

06-00:12:19

Gaines:

He understands. This guy understands.

06-00:12:20

Drew: No, there's a lot of things he can't [understand]. You'd have to be black. You would have to be black to understand.

06-00:12:25

Gaines: He's beginning to understand.

06-00:12:29

Drew: Black people don't understand white people better than—better than. They don't totally understand white people.

06-00:12:32

Gaines: Do you know the reason I can talk to him freely? He's read Frantz Fanon's *We Wear the Mask*.

06-00:12:40

Drew: I don't care how many volumes of black history he's read. I can tell by the look in his eyes, he's sitting there and he's saying—he's trying to figure out, how could that happen? How could people do that? How can people still live through that? You asked me the question the last time about if I had to go back through this again. I told you, no, if I knew this was going to happen to me, I had to go back through it again, I would kill myself early on.

06-00:13:10

Gaines: No, I wouldn't. I wouldn't.

06-00:13:13

Drew: You know why? If I had a vision, I think if I was twenty years old and I was told, "Now, when you get to be eighty-two years old, all these things will have happened to you," I would sit there and I would say, "Holy cow. I can't deal with that."

06-00:13:33

Gaines: The reason why I couldn't agree with him—you see this? A hundred and forty-six years ago, my dad looked down and seen what his kids would do, and this is what I'm talking about what my son can [do]. I'm living on the {inaudible} putting this into my son, and then my son will put it in, and we will continue to evaluate and get stronger. The generations that follow me will have our teachings in them. All of our stuff didn't die with slavery. You can't hold us down. They're going to try.

06-00:14:14

Drew: After all this time, the slavery mentality, slave mentality, still exists. It sticks—

06-00:14:24

Gaines: There's hope. Like they say, where there's life, there's hope. They say, where there's trees, there's ropes.

06-00:14:34

Drew: Basically, psychologically, that's exactly what it is today. Psychologically—

06-00:14:38

Gaines: Where there's trees, there's ropes. [laughter]

06-00:14:40

Drew: As long as you are a minority, and you don't control the money and everything—it's all about the money. The thing about it, like I said earlier on, poor white people are bigger victims than blacks, because they have been bamboozled into believing, you can become rich. Like today, what they tell you. You've got these poor white people who are saying that they shouldn't raise the tax on this [top] 1 percent.

06-00:15:16

Redman: I asked last time about one thing that surprised me, and I asked you maybe at the wrong moment. I asked you, Mr. Drew, I asked you about anger, and if some of the racism that you encountered, and some of the nasty things that people would say, made you angry. I was surprised [at the time], but your answer makes sense. It was that you didn't have time to be angry, because you were thinking about where you were going to sleep that night and where you were going to get your next meal.

06-00:15:44

Drew: That's blacks. Blacks are docile. The worst thing that ever happened in this country, the very worst thing, in my opinion, my humble opinion, that ever happened to black people, was Christianity. Christianity. Now we are more religious than any white group in the world. We can rationalize everything. This thing was so ridiculous that during the Civil Rights Movement, before it started, down South, they brought these black people into court because they had demonstrated or something. They got this white judge. You probably read about it. These black people were standing there, and this judge is reading all this racial hatred, spewing out this racial hatred, to the point where he had a heart attack. It's true. He had a heart attack. Know what happened? The black people that he was putting in jail came over and got down around him and prayed for him. He died, of course. Black people, the first thing that we—

06-00:16:53

Gaines: A lot of humility.

06-00:16:55

Drew: Yes. We rationalize everything, like Christianity. Like I said, they have nothing good said in the Bible about black people. No version of it. I think there's been like forty-something different versions of the Bible. Talk about being racist or segregationist. They took out twenty-nine chapters, because primarily it involved Jews or it was written by Greeks. True.

06-00:17:28

Redman: Tell me about your thoughts on black leadership after Martin Luther King. One name that jumps out, of course, is Jesse Jackson. There are many more. What are [your] thoughts on black leadership?

06-00:17:44

Gaines:

Black leadership? That all depends on who you're talking about leadership. See, my black leadership man would be different than all you guys. I considered Malcolm X a black leader, because he was for the right thing. You're talking about picking up arms, no? Defending yourself.

06-00:18:07

Redman:

But that thinking is largely absent from the next generation that came along in the seventies and eighties.

06-00:18:16

Drew:

But it wasn't so much generation came along. Like I said, blacks had been fully indoctrinated, even those who could understand the unfairness and all this type of thing. But they had these so-called Christian values, which I don't know what they are to this day. I have no idea what they are. We don't want to hurt anybody. They've been told that you do good, you do right, you're going to go to heaven. You're going to get yours in heaven. But that is telling him, that is stealing everything he can get. Well, I'm not too sure about heaven. I'll sacrifice going to heaven to make sure I have a good time down here. But then they go and they read. It says, well, man was born in sin, and no matter what he does, he's going to die in sin, and you can't get into heaven if you're a sinner. I can't figure this stuff out. Like [Gaines] says [about] his pea brain. My minuscule brain can't deal with all these complex things.

06-00:19:21

Gaines:

What he's talking about, it makes a lot of sense. You heard me say I believe in Malcolm X. He taught blacks wanted to get their own businesses and everything. You can't get away from that. He taught one thing that I teach: don't let nobody push you around. You understand that? He also taught that. But I couldn't be a Muslim, because Muslims were the big slave traders in Africa. In the Muslim religion, they took black girls out of Nubia, brought them down to Saudi Arabia, young girls, and Ibn Saad had forty black sons. You understand? He had maybe a hundred eunuchs that he had castrated, young blacks, to run his compound. So how in hell I'm going to be a Muslim? You understand? Although Sonni Ali who went across Spain—he was black, he was a Muslim—went across Spain, all the way to Portugal. The last city in Alhambra was built in Spain by Sunni Ali. That's the reason the Portuguese language is the hardest language in the world, because it's mixed with Africa, Latin, and so forth. But you have to know who you are. That's why I say I know who I am. Just like I taught those Africans, here's the key to the whole thing. Ignorance. Africa, by 2020, will have a billion people in it. There are thirty-something states in it.

06-00:21:05

Drew:

Forty-two.

06-00:21:06

Gaines:

Forty-two. Do you know that literacy rate is only 14 percent? Eighty-six percent illiterate people in Africa. Now, the Chinese have gone in there now

and they're building schools. They ask the Chinese, "Why are you building schools and roads?" They say, "We want people to be able to trade with us." But the Europeans come in there and took the stuff out. You understand?

- 06-00:21:32
Redman: Two more questions. One, jumping forward again in time, in 1983, Harold Washington is elected the mayor of Chicago. Does this do anything for black politicians? Does this send a signal into the black community in any—
- 06-00:21:48
Gaines: It did, it did. It helped the black community.
- 06-00:21:51
Drew: In Chicago.
- 06-00:21:52
Gaines: In Chicago. In Chicago, because you couldn't go to Cicero. Blacks couldn't go to Cicero. They'd kill you if you go over to Cicero. The Italians were—
- 06-00:22:01
Drew: Or any of the towns around Chicago.
- 06-00:22:04
Gaines: In Chicago, you had the polacks on one side. One thing about Harold Washington, he appointed my niece as a judge there, and she just retired. Her son is the state senator, and she's in the politics. I called her up on the phone. I said, "You're not going to jail, are you?" I said, "That other fellow, the governor went to jail." Now Jesse Jackson, Jr. is in trouble. They say he's having a nervous breakdown, but I think he's scared, because here's what happened. Jesse Jackson, Jr. wanted to get that appointment. If he'd had got the appointment to the senator, my nephew would have been appointed to his position as being congressman. But my nephew is still the state senator. Politics in this country runs the whole country. It's politics.
- 06-00:22:57
Drew: Chicago politics is totally different from elsewhere. Like today, you hear the Republicans talk about Chicago-style politicians. What does that mean? That means that that period of time in America, Chicago is one of the few places in the country where blacks were involved in politics. The black—what do they call it? Not ward, but the districts. Ward healers. They called them ward healers. It was the leaders of these particular wards. You would move up. You'd sit there long enough, all these black areas, they would move up. They would become a part of the city government. That's why the Chicago politicians have been given more grief than any other city in this country.
- 06-00:23:53
Gaines: They'll put their gun to your head, too. Shit.

06-00:23:58

Redman:

The last question I want to ask—this is a big question, considering the entire scope of your lives and the experiences that you've been through. With the election of Obama, I wonder—some of the discussion that was taking place. We've talked a little bit about some of the problems that stem up when people say, "The Civil Rights Movement is over," or, when Obama was elected, people talked about, "Oh, now we're in a post-racial America." We see that that's a naïve assumption. But can you tell me—take a step back to 2008—how did you both think and feel when it finally came true? When it finally happened, when Obama was finally elected, how did that affect you both personally?

06-00:24:51

Drew:

Me, it affected me in that it was nice. It was nice to see him as president. But I realized it was just a smoke screen. What was happening prior to that, football. You had the Chicago Bears was down the tube. The Cincinnati Bengals and these others teams weren't going anywhere. The white coaches didn't want the job. Who did they hire? They went out and hired these black coaches. They never coached before. They're assistant coaches. Please save our teams. Like the guy that became coach of Indianapolis.

06-00:25:41

Redman:

Oh, the Colts. Oh, what's his name? He won the Super Bowl.

06-00:25:45

Drew:

Yes, won the Super Bowl.

06-00:25:47

Redman:

Tony.

06-00:25:48

Drew:

Tony Dungy.

06-00:25:49

Redman:

Tony Dungy.

06-00:25:50

Drew:

Dungy had the job down there with a team in Florida [Tampa Bay Buccaneers] before that. The team had never won anything. They had never even broken even one time. Nobody wanted the job. Dungy was an assistant coach and they gave him the job. Dungy turned this team around, and they never had a losing team after that. He kept forcing the owner to get the parts that he wanted. They would draft them and this type of thing. Finally, he said, "I've got all the parts that I want. Next year, we're going to win the Super Bowl." You know what happened? They fired him. Then they hired the guy that was coach of Oakland, and they won the Super Bowl. The players on the team were so enthralled by winning, they wanted to vote Dungy a share of the winning money. But the rules prohibit, because he was already coach of Indianapolis. The same thing with the President [of the United States]. This country was going down the tubes. We're headed for the biggest recession.

Bush is taking us to the biggest recession ever. Who wants the job, [John] McCain wants the job. Before 1999, I liked McCain. Back [in 2000] when he ran against Bush to become the Republican nominee, I switched over and literally voted for McCain. Most of the people on the Republican side, they didn't like McCain, because McCain's position to that point was the country. If it was a good idea, okay, me and [Joseph] Lieberman, we'll get together and we will hammer out a good—we're going to make this work.

06-00:27:44

Redman: But he moved away from that [after] 2000.

06-00:27:46

Drew: In 2008, he moved away from that. Two thousand, actually. He saw that if Bush can get voted in with the things that he's saying, that's the only way you can get elected. So he changed. You see what you have today.

06-00:28:05

Redman: Back to Obama, Mr. Gaines.

06-00:28:08

Gaines: Obama is a good man. Well-educated. Knows the law, knows everything. He got in. I'm glad to see him get in there, president, because we needed somebody with some sense in there. Bush was a numskull. We know that. He's a drunk and everything else. I don't know what else he did. But he had money, see. Obama didn't have anything. He come along, he wanted to do the right thing for America. The things that he's accomplished, they don't even talk about it.

06-00:28:46

Drew: He doesn't talk so that people understand it.

06-00:28:48

Gaines: They don't want to talk about him capturing and killing Bin Laden. They don't want to talk about how he wiped out the people with the bombs over there in—

06-00:29:04

Redman: Afghanistan.

06-00:29:05

Gaines: Not Afghanistan.

06-00:29:06

Drew: In Pakistan.

06-00:29:07

Gaines: Pakistan. What he's doing now, he ended the war over there. Now he wants to end the war over in Afghanistan, but Afghanistan is the survival of America. What are you talking about, Gaines? I'm talking about arms, ammunition,

supplies. It's a good thing to keep the country going. That's the same thing that happened in Iraq. You understand? It's a business. It's a business.

06-00:29:36

Drew: It's a business. Halliburton and—

06-00:29:38

Gaines: Now, what he wants to do, they're going to call it socialism. What he wants to do, he wants to put Medicare in there. Right now, if you've got to have a certain kind of pill, it will cost you fourteen, sixteen dollars for one pill.

06-00:29:54

Drew: More than that, some of them.

06-00:29:56

Gaines: You understand? See, he's trying to get something for the people. They're going to call him a socialist or whatever. But what I'm talking about now is you watch this country—I may not live to see it—this country is going to go different than what it is, a capitalistic society, today, because you can't have 350 million people and only about 10 or 12 percent of them are living good. You understand? You're going to have a social revolution, and I hope we don't have a violent revolution.

06-00:30:31

Redman: If you could tell a student of history, twenty-five years from now, fifty years from now, a hundred years from now, anything about your story and your life, what would be the things that you would point to?

06-00:30:46

Drew: Nothing. Because he wouldn't believe it.

06-00:30:49

Redman: You think people will read this and they won't believe the story?

06-00:30:54

Drew: No—

06-00:30:56

Redman: One of the other things, too, you said it's impossible to understand the full extent of the pain, and I want to hear a little bit about that, too.

06-00:31:09

Drew: That's a great question. If something is done to you, no matter what it is, from the day you're born until the day you die, it's repetitive. Over and over and over and over again. After a while, you become [de]sensitized to it. It becomes a way of life. The same thing that I would probably walk away from, you'd be ready to, "I'll knock your block off." Believe it or not, eighty-two years, I've never had a fight. I've never had a physical confrontation. Never found it necessary. I embarrass people. I could hurt them with words worse than I could ever do with hit—they want to hit me? Go on, hit me. I don't

care. The only thing that's going to happen is I'm going to get a broken jaw and you're going to get a sore hand. I say, "I know you can beat me." Or even if he couldn't, I d {inaudible}. "Oh, this nigger's crazy." And he walk away. But twenty-five years from now, maybe they would believe me, because I don't see things changing that much in the next twenty-five years. I really don't, because things are going south now. The gains that they claim that we made in the sixties, this type of thing, they're now being all tossed out. Women's rights are now going. You hear even our Supreme Court justices, Scalia, Thomas, talk about going back to—in fact, Scalia and Thomas, they've got to be—I don't know how these people can be judges.

06-00:32:53

Gaines: You're making my stomach hurt. [laughter]

06-00:32:55

Drew: These have to be two of the most ignorant judges that we've ever had.

06-00:32:58

Gaines: You're making my stomach hurt.

06-00:32:59

Drew: Literally. They said we should go back to the Constitution days, back to the days of the Constitution. Thomas doesn't realize that the days of the Constitution, not only would he not be a judge, he'd be out there working the fields. Scalia, being an Italian, he couldn't even come to the country.

06-00:33:17

Redman: Mr. Gaines, what would you say to a student twenty-five or fifty years from now?

06-00:33:21

Gaines: I'd have them read my book. That's the first thing I would do, because it tells the whole story of my life. There's hope. I teach my kids the same thing.

06-00:33:30

Drew: There's rope. [laughter]

06-00:33:31

Gaines: Where there's trees, there's rope. I believe this. Without progress, we don't advance. [Just] two words, progress and advancing. Through education and ownership, you can advance. But you can't stay in that same hole and expect to get freedom. What I mean is total freedom. You've got to have all of these things, these three things that's all you need, and then advance. Listen, we live in a society where you have to have money. You can't get money unless you have means to get it besides robbery. We know the people at the top are robbing you, because any time that you have gone and paid 31 percent on a credit card, if you're stupid enough to have a credit card, then you're stupid enough to be ignorant enough to stay in that same hole the rest of your life. You understand? I try to teach my kids. The legacy that I try to leave is the same legacy as my father left for me, and it's going on down through my

grandkids and great grandkids. Teach them this. You can't be this way and have a heart in you to where you have separation in races. All people are the same, just like I said. Ninety-eight point water and two points organic substances. That's it. So what you do, have respect for everyone. You understand? Now, so far as religion is concerned, choose a religion that you want that doesn't make me any different. Because whatever you want to believe, that's your belief, but don't treat your fellow man wrong. That's the wrong thing to do. *Do unto others before they do it to you.*

06-00:35:19

Drew:

We were discussing religion, and I said if I was going to form a religion, I would call it "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you" religion. That would be the name of the religion.

06-00:35:30

Redman:

I missed something fundamental and so silly. Can you tell the story of how you two met?

06-00:35:37

Drew:

How did we meet?

06-00:35:38

Gaines:

I don't know.

06-00:35:39

Drew:

NAACP I guess it was.

06-00:35:41

Gaines:

When I first met him, he was working for the city then. When did you work for the city?

06-00:35:52

Drew:

To give you an idea of how racist Stockton was, I went to college, got a job as—what?

06-00:36:01

Gaines:

What were you doing?

06-00:36:02

Drew:

Assistant—

06-00:36:04

Gaines:

Janitor.

06-00:36:04

Drew:

Assistant librarian. People don't even know who a librarian is. They put a picture of me in the newspaper. This black guy is assistant librarian.

06-00:36:16

Gaines:

He went to Cal, see.

06-00:36:17

Drew: You know what my job was at the library?

06-00:36:21

Redman: What's that?

06-00:36:23

Drew: You couldn't be out front if you were black. You couldn't be at the desk. So I didn't wait on anybody. I would put books on the shelves and I'd wipe dust. This was my assistant library job. That was it. But just one more point, if I may. You were talking about education. You kept emphasizing education, education. But then we look at the country as a whole. We are declining education-wise, continually. What was it? The last survey they took, national survey—I mean, a world survey they took—we have now dropped to seventeenth in math and science degrees. We have dropped down. We were the world's leader at one time in education. We are no longer. We are seventh and dropping. Just a year ago, we were fifth. Now we're down to seven, and dropping. Statistics, not too long ago, eighth-grade math education in this country, math education among the average eighth-grade public school student was so bad that it was declared that eighth-grade math was to be considered math illiteracy. We are that bad. A lot of areas, we're so bad that we don't have them anymore. English. When it comes to learning sentence structure, parsing sentences and all this type of thing, it doesn't exist anymore. Teachers don't even know how to do it. They don't have to know how to do it.

06-00:37:53

Gaines: Diagram a sentence. They couldn't do it.

06-00:37:54

Drew: Can't do that. When it comes to learning how to write, printing is fine. You don't have to learn how to write anymore. It's not going to be taught any longer. We are getting dumber and dumber and dumber. We are still operating schools the same way we did a hundred and fifty years ago on the agrarian system, when summers was needed for kids to work in the field. Now it's no longer needed. We're still doing the same thing. European schools, especially Scandinavian schools, they're so far advanced, they have reached the point where a child is interested in a particular area. If you're interested in computers, we have schools designed for you to learn computers. You learn all these other things. You're learning the Norwegian language and all this math and all this kind of stuff, but you're also learning about the field you're interested in. In Ohio, Illinois, some years back, the high school dropout rate was the lowest in the country. It dropped down to 49.5 percent. They said, what can we do to change this? So they went around and they were talking with kids. "Why did you drop out of school? Why did you drop out of school?" This type of thing. "I don't see any reason why I should go to school. I'm not going to college, so why should I go to school?" Like I said earlier, nothing I'm learning in high school is going to help me once I get out of school. So they decided, well, what we will do, we will teach the regular

curriculum during the first half of the day. In the evening, we will steer this child into whatever it is he's interested in. If he's interested in mechanics, we will find some elite garages, and we will, the board of education will, give them money to teach this child how to become a mechanic. Same thing in the medical field, whatever area. Within a few years, the dropout rate had gone from 49.5 percent, and now the graduating student rate was 60 percent, which was based on the European system. You tell them that—talking to them about 60 percent dropout rate. "Are you crazy?" What is a 60 percent—

06-00:40:10

Gaines: What you're talking about is true, but he wanted to know about—your perspective, what you told him, was right. But now here's what I see about—the whole thing is based upon education, and that's the reason that I teach my kids this. I teach my children this. You have to have an education. It has to be academic or vocational or business.

06-00:40:34

Drew: Let me stop you here. How many Gaines are there out there? How many non-Gaines are there out there?

06-00:40:39

Gaines: But this is what I'm talking about. This is what I'm talking about. Here's where you get sidetracked with education. You put entertainers in our group of people. You put entertainers as our leaders. Like—

06-00:40:55

Drew: Jay-Z.

06-00:40:56

Gaines: Jay-Z. Not him. I'm talking about entertainers. Football players. Basketball. Baseball players. Entertainers.

06-00:41:03

Drew: The people in sports, role models.

06-00:41:05

Gaines: They don't have to invest any money. They don't do a damn thing. Ninety percent of them can't read on a high school level. My kids don't have no football, baseball, basketball, track. They don't do that. Because if you're not the top, you don't get there. Look. The only ones that do, prosper, and you don't hear of them. The mayor of Detroit now.

06-00:41:34

Drew: [Dave] Bing.

06-00:41:35

Gaines: Bing. But you know what he had? He has a steel mill. Work 800 people.

06-00:41:42

Drew: Five of them. His four daughters that head four of them, and he heads one.

06-00:41:47

Gaines: You see, this is what I'm talking about. Now they talk about this numskull up there now. He's a basketball player. A hundred and fifty million dollars a year. He doesn't know how to tie his shoe so far as I'm concerned.

06-00:41:59

Drew: He knows how to buy wheels.

06-00:42:02

Gaines: Because what could he do with \$150 million? He could open up some enterprises. Look at that other fool down there. He got thirty-something cars.

06-00:42:14

Drew: And shoes. A whole room designed for nothing but shoes.

06-00:42:17

Redman: It doesn't make any sense.

06-00:42:18

Drew: It makes no sense.

06-00:42:18

Gaines: It doesn't make any sense at all. Like I told this lady yesterday—she's a professional woman. I was telling her about investing your money. She's an insurance lady. She and I are good friends. I was going to change my insurance to {inaudible}. I told her, I says, "The average person don't understand business. They don't understand interest and percentages." Here you put your money in the bank, draw 0.5 percent on it. Maybe you draw 2 percent on your money. I told her, I said, "Look, people with brains invest their money where it's going to make the best money." I said, "Now you look at your insurance company. You're with AAA." I said, "Look at Omaha, Nebraska." We have a place here, have 240 apartment houses in the ghetto. They're all rented.

06-00:43:11

Drew: Projects.

06-00:43:11

Gaines: Project houses. You know who owns it? Omaha, Nebraska [Mutual of Omaha]. Now, look. If you take your money that you have now saved up, and put it in the banks, and you draw 1 percent, 1.5 percent, take that same money, buy you a duplex, when you get it paid for, you get 80 percent profit. Twenty percent upkeep. That is deductible from your income tax. You're making a 90 percent profit. People don't understand this country is built on money. Now, the people that run this country, like your future president—

06-00:44:00

Drew: Like you're saying, but all these people come from the same universities. It's a repetitive thing, same—

- 06-00:44:04
Gaines: But they know how to manipulate that money.
- 06-00:44:06
Drew: Of course they do. That's what they learn in college.
- 06-00:44:08
Gaines: Look. Here's what's going to happen. Men running around with three houses here and a house there like that, all that money, someday, somebody's going to come up with a party—not like the Tea Party—they're going to destroy all these millionaires is doing. Democracy won't be the same. Guys like—what's his name, with the [National] Rifle Association?
- 06-00:44:31
Drew: Oh, yeah.
- 06-00:44:33
Gaines: Down here at Carmel. He'll be dead.
- 06-00:44:36
Drew: He is dead. Didn't he die?
- 06-00:44:38
Gaines: Not yet. That movie actor [Charlton Heston 1923-2008].
- 06-00:44:41
Drew: I thought he [died].
- 06-00:44:44
Redman: Is he still alive? He might still be kicking around.
- 06-00:44:49
Gaines: He played Moses in—
- 06-00:44:50
Drew: Moses, yes.
- 06-00:44:51
Redman: With that, gentlemen, I'd like to say thank you both for participating and sitting down and sharing your memories. Thank you.
- 06-00:44:57
Gaines: I enjoyed listening to my buddy here talk. He and I went through a lot. Hey, man, we know—listen. When you talk to us, we're going to give you the straight facts. About these bourgeois blacks, they don't mean shit to us. They don't.
- 06-00:45:13
Drew: See, the difference, the reason I keep emphasizing the thirty million people that are illiterate, these are people that are lost. I don't care what kind of business you've got or what it is. You're lost. You're incapable of really

learning anything. Like politics today. These adults, most of them are going to vote. Thirty million illiterate people going to the poll.

06-00:45:42

Gaines: Tell him about your buddy Bill Cosby.

06-00:45:45

Drew: Bill Cosby. He goes around, and he talks about the people should be ashamed of themselves in the ghetto. They're not getting an education, they're not doing this. But then I asked a question, "When's the last time you've been down there to help out? When's the last time you went down there to educate someone?" "Well, I gave twenty-three million dollars to my alma mater, Temple University." Big deal. You're going to give to Temple University, you'd have paid it in tax, so what's the big deal? What have you done for the people down in the ghetto? This community here, for instance. There is not a black policeman here, schoolteacher. That low level. Doctor or anything else. Where are they? They're all out in the suburbs someplace. Now, I expect this kid down the street—he's got the potential to be a doctor. I expect him to be a doctor. How does he become a doctor? He's going to one of the worst school systems there is, public school system. There's nobody. He doesn't have a person he can even talk to. The only time he sees a doctor is when he takes his card and goes down to Medicaid or whatever it is, and the doctor, he doesn't want to see him. All he wants is his money.

06-00:46:53

Gaines: He's talking about Edison High School, their graduation [rates]. Franklin is the same way. Four of my kids graduated from Franklin. But if you go to this ghetto school and you get the right thing—and all five of them have master's degrees now. But here's what happened. Excuse me. My kids went to Franklin. Three of them went to Franklin, and the fourth one, my baby daughter, they said, "Daddy, don't send her to Franklin, because the curriculum isn't high enough for her to get into a first-rate college." They were going to Fresno State, which is a good school. Fresno State University. She said send her to Catholic school. I sent her to St. Mary's. It cost me money to send her there, but she got a better education at St. Mary's, and they told me why. When they went to Fresno, they had to take bonehead English. You understand? One of them graduated with honors. The other graduated without. I don't expect them to all graduate—but the point is this. They got their degree. They could have went to barber school or whatever. Education is the key. You can't open that door without it. That's what I preach. That's the main thing, is to get an education. In this society, you have to have it.

06-00:48:18

Drew: The thing I can't even get brother Gaines to understand—okay, I'm going to ask you. How many men have you met like him? White, black, or anything else. How many men have you met like this?

06-00:48:29

Redman: None like you.

06-00:48:30

Drew: That's the point I'm trying to get him to understand. He's got the personality, he's got all the tools to do that with his kids. What about the woman that's on welfare, that doesn't have the—

06-00:48:41

Gaines: Wait, wait, wait. Here's what I want to say about Franklin. Franklin produced the only astronaut we have in Northern California, [Jose] Hernandez. Now listen, that's Franklin school. That same Franklin produced the salutatorian at Stanford, Tubbs, who's running for city council. Oprah Winfrey gave him \$10,000. Young black kid that went to Stanford, got his master's degree at twenty-one years old. If a kid has it in him, it's putting him in the right position where he can get the education, he will get it.

06-00:49:17

Drew: But you said he's put in the right position. He's put in the right position. But when you grow up in this community, you grow up in this community, what chances do you have? In the first place, there's no encouragement. There's no encouragement to graduate from high school.

06-00:49:32

Gaines: Listen. If you can keep your head when all about you are losing theirs and blaming it on you, if you can trust yourself when all men doubt you and make it—

06-00:49:40

Drew: Mr. Kipling.

06-00:49:41

Gaines: But if you can dream and not make dreams your masters, and if you can think and not make thoughts your aims, if you can meet with triumph and disaster and treat these two imposters just the same—

[End of Interview]

