

Interview with Rebecca Hood
Mrs. Hood's home, Northport, AL
Monday, October 26, 2015 6:00pm
Interviewers: Hannah Niblett, Kimberly McQueen,
Trey Hicks

Mrs. Rebecca Hood was born in Greene County, Alabama in November of 1942. She is the youngest of seven children. At 72, she is now the only living member of her immediate family. During the first part of her life, the family lived on the Roebuck Plantation as sharecroppers for a white family, with whom she recalls having a good relationship with. She recalls her father as a quiet, tall man and her mother, who was part Native American, as very "headstrong." Rebecca's family moved to Tuscaloosa when she was six years old. She was a student at multiple primary schools, and later attended and graduated from Druid City High School, all of which were segregated. Upon moving to Tuscaloosa, her family joined Plum Grove Baptist Church where she has been an active member ever since. After her graduation, she moved around for a while because her brother was in the Air Force, but was always in and out of Tuscaloosa. Mrs. Hood recalls members of the Ku Klux Klan riding through her neighborhood as a child, walking about a mile to her school when she lived next door to a white school, segregation in restaurants, stores, theatres and buses, and times where she was discriminated against simply because of her race. She participated in sit-ins as a young woman in Tuscaloosa where she was denied service, and was wrongly failed on her literacy test when registering to vote. She is married to her husband, William Hood, and they now live in Northport, Alabama, in her late sister's home.

Hannah: Okay, well we'll start at the beginning.

Rebecca: Uh oh.

[laughs]

Hannah: We just want to know a little bit about your upbringing, and where you were raised—about your family?

Rebecca: Okay. I'm one of seven kids. I was the baby of seven, and I'm the only one alive. I have no aunts, no uncles, no sisters, no brothers, just some nieces and nephews. I was born in Greene County, but we moved to Tuscaloosa when I was six years old. So, I'll go around then, y'all need to ask me questions.

[laughs]

Rebecca: So when we moved to Tuscaloosa, I started school at Dry Creek across the river down there...Fosters. And then we moved to Taylorville. And I can't remember...there's two things I remember about going to school at Taylorville is, I mashed this finger. See that finger how it's made? I mashed it in a car door.

Trey: Oh wow! That had to hurt.

Hannah: I could show mine right now that I got...

Kimberly: Oh! [examining finger]

Hannah: It's just...yeah, it's completely crooked.

Rebecca: And it's been so long ago, they put the tape on it too tight, and that is why it's disfigured. I remember that, and I remember I lived next door to a white school that I couldn't go to. I had to walk about a mile on the busy highway to a little three-room, or whatever it was, but I lived *exactly* next door to the school. I remember those things.

Hannah: Okay, yeah. We'll skip to schooling then.

Rebecca: And then we moved to Foster's Ferry Road, where the church is at. I lived...

Trey: Where Plum Grove is at?

Rebecca: Yes.

Trey: Okay.

Rebecca: I grew up...that was my years that I remember.

Trey: Okay.

Rebecca: We were about a mile up the road.

Trey: Yes ma'am. So did you grow up going to Plum Grove?

Rebecca: Yes. That is the only church I've ever been a member of.

Trey: Wow, that's awesome.

Rebecca: Those were the years where everybody in the neighborhood raised you. Because if the neighbors saw you do something and your mother wasn't around, it was just like Mama was there, because she got you, and then Mama would get you again when she came home.

[laughs]

Trey: Yes ma'am.

Rebecca: Those were the...that's the kind of neighborhood that we grew up in.

Trey: Yes ma'am.

Hannah: Okay, so about your school. What was the racial ratio?

Rebecca: When I graduated, I graduated from Druid High, where Central, where...no that's Central on 15th Street, isn't it?

Hannah: Yes ma'am.

Rebecca: Well what is this over the hill on Martin Luther King?

[Pause to think]

Rebecca: That's Central High—

Mr. William Hood (Mrs. Hood's Husband): That use to be Central Elementary. Use to be Central.

Rebecca: It's still a school! It's got to be a schoo—

William: It used to be Druid.

Rebecca: Yeah, when I graduated from it in 1960, it was Druid, and there were—it was totally black. There were no white teachers, no white students.

Hannah: What were the resources and funding like for the school?

Rebecca: Well, you know, then it was...you may have had to pay, parents may have had to pay a few dollars, and we walked to school. We walked.

Trey: So y'all didn't have school buses to come and pick you up?

Rebecca: You know, I can't remember.

Hannah: But you were close enough where it was—

Rebecca: Yeah, and it was like, nobody walked alone, all the kids, because that was a big neighborhood, because that neighborhood goes off of Foster's Ferry Road, into several off streets that is called Washington Square. So everybody from those, you know, you went together and you just about came back together.

Trey: Okay. So you just gathered in the neighborhood in the morning, and walked all together?

Rebecca: Yes.

Hannah: That would be fun.

Rebecca: And you better not be late.

[laughs]

Trey: Because then your teachers would get you, then your Mama would get you later, right?

Rebecca: Yeah, Mama would get you if you were late coming home.

Trey: Yes ma'am.

Rebecca: Those were the days that all of that...now down by the church where all those houses are, those were...Plum Grove is named Plum Grove because all those were plum trees. There were no houses. I think there was one, one house on up the road, and there may have been a couple across the street, but all of that was. And then when you come on up, it was...on the...if you...Plum Grove, you know, Plum Grove splits the street.

Trey: Yes ma'am.

Rebecca: If you go the other street, beautiful neighborhoods up there, but it was all cotton fields then.

Trey: Okay.

Rebecca: I use to love to go out there. I didn't pick. I use to go out there to be where the boys were.

[laughs]

Rebecca: I tried picking cotton *all day long*, and I may have had twenty pounds.

[laughs]

Trey: So you'd just go to hang out with the boys?

Rebecca: That was hanging out with the boys.

Trey: Yes ma'am.

Hannah: Okay. So you went to a school that was segregated?

Rebecca: Yes.

Hannah: Well, we spoke to a retired teacher from the Tuscaloosa area, her name was Mrs. Gray, and she believes that segregation is returning in schools. She said that...

Rebecca: I remember Mrs. Gray. What's her name, Imogene? I don't know because her mother...

Trey: Something like that.

Hannah: She's a member of First—

Rebecca: First African, yes. Her mother was a wonderful lady. I didn't know Imogene that well. She's a little older than I am. But her mother was—was Mrs. Gray a principal? I believe her mother may have been a principal. She was a sweet lady, and she was big in the religious congress. She was big in that. Oh, could play a piano, oh man she was good.

Hannah: So, what are your thoughts on that statement? Do you think this is an active choice by administration, or just purely coincidental? Or have to do with zoning? As far as segregation returning to schools. Do you see that being a problem?

Rebecca: Well, you know, I think it is because at one point I use to go to—I never had kids—but I use to go to a lot of the meetings, and I had to stop going because they would make me mad.

[laughs]

Rebecca: Because I see...yeah, some of it is coming right back to the '60s! I don't know exactly how to explain it, but it's coming right back. The way they're zoning, they're

putting all the certain kids in this area, and zoned here, you've got another certain kids in this area, so it's all coming back to the same thing. It's just making a circle.

Trey: Back to where it was?

Rebecca: Back to where it was.

Trey: Do you think that's a conscious effort? The administrations want it to be segregated like that? Or do you think it has just happened by chance, where neighborhoods fall in?

Rebecca: I don't think it's happening by chance. Now maybe I'm wrong, but I think somebody is doing some serious, serious thinking.

Trey: Yes ma'am.

Rebecca: I really think, because you know, I don't know. It's [pause]. I think somebody is sitting back, and saying, "If we do this and this, and if you do this and just wait so many years, and do that...it's all just going to fall the way we want it." Which has been a normal thing all the time, you know. That's just the way life pretty much is. And it's really because, if you don't get out and—I've voted ever since I was able to pay poll tax and vote. I don't miss elections voting. And you know, most people don't realize that that's the only way that...and even if you get out and vote, a lot of the times it doesn't change things the way it needs to be changed, or the way it *should* be changed.

Hannah: There are a lot of people who believe that their vote won't affect anything, so they'll just sit back, but of all the History classes I've been in, and all the times, and seeing what people went through just to be able to vote—women, you know, all across the board...I can't imagine not participating in such a—

Rebecca: Yeah, I think I may have mentioned when we were at church...Stillman. You know where Stillman is? The Presbyterian church that sits just before you turn to go in, well we actually had to go to class to take a voting test. And no matter—me and my sister sat beside each other and we put the same thing on our paper. They would pass one and flunk one. You had to come back next week, and pass one, flunk one, no matter what you put down.

Trey: So when y'all did it, one of you passed and your sister failed, or vice versa? They just passed or failed—

Rebecca: She passed, I failed.

Trey: Really? And y'all put the same thing?

Rebecca: Same thing down.

Trey: Wow.

Rebecca: And then everybody started noticing a pattern.

Hannah: Wow.

Rebecca: It's just...you know, it's a mindset. And the mindset is just not going to change for some people, no matter what. It's not going to change. And when you've been through...I remember living on Foster's Ferry Road. When we were young, I remember the Ku Klux Klan riding through our neighborhood with their hoods on. And I remember the parents with the kids playing in the street, the parents would gather the kids out of the street, and they would ride through our neighborhood, slow, looking. This was usually on a Sunday afternoon. There was nothing you could do, you know. This was before the Civil Rights Era. But, you know, a lot of people lost lives. I remember sitting—I didn't march the day that the gas was put on the people at First African, I didn't march, but I remember after then, we would go to...I can't remember the name of the little coffee shop or restaurant, or whatever it was, but we would go. And we would go in and sit down and they would not even acknowledge us as being there. They would turn their back and talk to each other. I remember it so well. I didn't go through any stuff like some people, but—and that's why I get so mad at our young black men and women. People got out there and were hurt, were killed, everything! And you can't even get them to vote. You can't even get them to go to school. People fought too hard for them to go to school. They won't do anything! And I could just take them and just...[hand motions strangling]

[laughs]

Rebecca: I could. And I remember my mother taking me downtown to Cedar Crest, which I use to work at Cedar Crest, but it was later years. We would go down there, and they had the white water fountain here, I remember it well. It was on that side [motions with hands], and the black water fountain here. And if a black person drank out of that white water fountain, they would actually call the police on you.

Trey: Hmm.

Rebecca: It was just...it was hard! Because I remember, you could be in a store, in a line to pay for whatever it was that you were going to buy, and if a white person came up, and they knew that person—"Oh come on up, Mrs. So-and-so, I'll take you." Well you just had to stand there because there was nothing you could do. It's been some hard times. Now if I live to see November, I'll be 73, and people older than I am, they went through some hard times. And for the kids now, they just don't take advantage of anything that they can, which has been fought so hard for, for them. It was some hard times.

Kimberly: I have a question. So I've tried to talk to my grandmother. She's from North Carolina. That's where she grew up, and when she was seventeen, she actually took the SAT and just went to college. She didn't even finish her senior year, she just, had to get out of there, I guess. And, I've asked her several times what it was like, but she has never elaborated. She doesn't really talk about it, she just says, "That's just how it was." Like,

the power dynamic and segregation and everything, she just doesn't ever tell me any feelings she has about it, or how it made her feel at the time. She just says, "That's just how it was, and you just accepted it." So...

Rebecca: Well, you know, that's pretty much because at that particular time, before '65, back when the Movement really started, it was just, "I want my education, and I'm going to do whatever it takes. If I can't walk on this side of the street, or you curse me out and I can't say anything, I'm just going to take this because I've got to get where..." And in her mind, she probably had a goal as to where she wanted to go, and was going to do whatever it was that would get her to where she wanted to go. In doing that, I can imagine she endured a lot of stuff. A lot, a lot. I remember, my brother...there's a neighborhood not far from the church, beautiful neighborhood, and he was the first black family that moved into that neighborhood, and he had to fight for it. People, they would do anything, and he just had to sit there with his gun. He said "I'm not leaving." And they would write all kinds of stuff and throw all kinds of stuff in his yard and damage his property and everything, and he said, "I'm not going anywhere. I'm going to stay here. I'm buying this." He's dead now, but his ex-wife is still in that house.

[laughs]

Rebecca: And that has been a long, long time ago. I never... You know, like people can say "I've been hungry" or "I didn't have clothes." I can't say that, because my mother and father always had some food on the table, and even though—flour, y'all probably don't know—but flour use to come in the twenty-five pound sacks and it was beautiful material.

Trey: Had little flowers on them!

Rebecca: Yeah, and my mother made my dresses, and I went to school dressed as neat as everybody else. My mother hand sewed my dresses, so I can't say I never had clothes or I never...so I can't say that anybody just challenged me to where I had to fight. I would have though.

[laughs]

Hannah: That's what matters.

Rebecca: My mother's grandmother was full-blooded Indian. Let me show you a picture of my mother.

[Leaves table to retrieve painted portrait of mother]

Rebecca: My mother would fight! My mother died in 1977. [Showing picture] You can tell she has Indian.

Trey: Her cheekbones.

Rebecca: She would fight anybody. Carried a knife at all times.

[laughs]

Rebecca: You did not see her when she didn't have a switch-blade knife, one of those that pop open.

Trey: She just carried it on her hip?

Rebecca: Yeah! [laughs] But I remember in later years, we were at...down on Skyland, it was a grocery store that sat up on that hill. No it wasn't a grocery store, it was something like a K-Mart, or something, but it sat up on that hill on Skyland. And we were in there, [laughs] it's funny, the line—I think it was the grand opening of something. There were lines everywhere. We were standing in this line, and I remember it was me and my oldest sister and my mother, and this lady walked up and she said, "This line is halfway to the back of the store," and she said, "Can you take me next?" And my mama looked at her and said, "Hell no."

[laughs]

Rebecca: She said, "If you don't get your ass to the back of the line, I'm going to beat the hell out of you."

[laughs]

Trey: Is this the white woman she was talking to?

Rebecca: Yes.

[laughs]

Rebecca: *Everybody* was dying laughing. It was so funny. She looked at her and she said, "Go to the back of the line." It was hilarious. That's the kind of person she was though.

Trey: That's funny.

Rebecca: It was funny. It tells you the kind of person she was. Plum Grove use to have windows that you let up, because we didn't have any air. And one Sunday [laughs] we were sitting there, and a wasp came in and the preacher was just preaching, and she said "Oh shit!"

[laughs]

Rebecca: Oh she was hilarious, but all she had to do...well, back then, all people had to do was...parents, if they heard a noise, they would look back and give you that eye. They didn't have to say a word. Whatever noise that was, you better straighten up.

[laughs]

Trey: That's how my Mama is. She'll cut that look at you, just give you the look, and you're like [makes face].

Rebecca: Yeah all they had to do was give you that look and whatever you were doing you straightened up.

Trey: Sit up straight and shut your mouth, yes ma'am.

Rebecca: But, you know, it's a lot of things. I remember my sister and I, I think this may have been before '65, we traveled from Tuscaloosa to Salt Lake City—no. We went to Ogden, Utah, by Greyhound. And you're talking about segregation. You couldn't get on the bus before all the whites were on, and all the stops that the bus made, you had to go to the back of the place and order your food, or a little hole in the wall for a bathroom. It was terrible. And there was a white lady, I can't remember from...she was from some part of Mississippi, and she said, "*This is not right.*" She said, "Tell me what you want, and give me your money, and I'll go in to get it." And she did it *all* the way.

Trey: Wow.

Rebecca: She said, "This is just ridiculous." She said, "I can't see people being treated this way." She said, "I wouldn't treat nobody this way." So, she went in and got our food all the way, because it was, it was so bad. I mean, where you had to go, a little hole in the bathroom or they handed you your food out of the back. It was...so, you know. When kids...kids have got it good now and they don't know it. Even though things are not the way they *should be*, you know, our kids could do a lot better, with as many people that have died for them. They could do a lot better. Now I never got a chance to meet Martin Luther King, but I use to work where Central Elementary School is on 15th Street, right across the street from it was a restaurant and a hotel. It was Gallettes Restaurant. And as a matter of fact, we were so good, the food was so good, that we catered on the campus of the University, but they had to do it a certain way. They had to come and pick us up and we all had to be, it was like, they herded us in where basically nobody saw us, or what have you. I remember doing three or four, and that was back in the early '70s. But that was the meeting place for Reverend Shuttlesworth, Oscar Adams, Demetrius Newton, all of the lawyers out of Birmingham, and all the people out of Atlanta, that was their meeting place. I never got to—

William: Answer some of their questions.

Rebecca: Hmm?

William: Let them ask some of their questions.

Trey: No, we're loving it!

Hannah: No, this is awesome! She's doing our job for us.

William: Been doing that all night.

[laughs]

Trey: That's fine with us. Yeah, that's really, really cool. So you were a waitress at the restaurant?

Rebecca: Yes.

Trey: Okay.

Rebecca: We did all of Stillman's fraternity and sororities, and it was back [laughs]...I remember, Doctor...who was he...He was a black doctor in Tuscaloosa. [To self] Oh man, what was his name? And one of the ladies was Mrs. Glenn. But they served the kind of food that a lot of the people around here had not heard of, and she would get us in a couple hours ahead of time and explain to us what it was and how it was served, so if anybody asked us any questions, we could tell them [laughs]. Because a lot of the stuff we served, people were not familiar with it.

Trey: Yes ma'am. Just curious, what did your parents do for a living?

Rebecca: My mother did—when we lived in Greene County, we lived on the Roebuck's plantation...or maybe not a plantation, a farm. They were farmers, sharecroppers, or whatever you call it. But I remember them so well as not being, I don't know how to put it, as not being just de-prejudice, they were—my mother worked at their house, and that's all I remember my Mama ever doing. And my daddy farmed. The reason I said they weren't, they being the Roebucks, I think they use to make ribbon cane, and sorghum syrup, and all of that stuff, and they never treated us different. I remember all of my older brothers, the young men from down in—we lived in Union, and the guys—the Roebucks had a son named Jerry—as a matter of fact we use to go visit Jerry until he died—and his friends from down in Utah use to come up to play. They would play ball on Saturday and Sunday, and they could not use the word 'nigger' or anything, and if they did, they made them leave. So they were not—they never treated...as far as I know, they did everything for our family that they could because they were good people.

Hannah: That's good.

Rebecca: But it's not like some of them.

Kimberly: Did you ever have any, I guess, run-ins where people were just being blatantly discriminatory towards you or against you?

Rebecca: Oh yeah. I don't think there is anybody that didn't run into some of that. I just can't, right now, you know—I'm getting old now, I can't remember this stuff.

[laughs]

Rebecca: I can't remember what it was, but my sister just passed, as a matter of fact this was her house. She passed two years ago, and she was the good kid. She would always tell me, "Shut up, Becky!"

[laughs]

Rebecca: Because I was a lot like my mother. My dad was a quiet man. Quiet, tall, just as black as that thing there [points to recording device], and he never raised his voice. His worst curse word, what was it Will?

William: Shit.

Rebecca: Now he was mad if he said that!

[laughs]

Rebecca: But, I had a brother, my oldest brother, who was an alcoholic. So he would come home drunk, and my daddy would sit there. My brother would be up just talking, and he'd say, "Sit down, boy." My brother would keep on talking. My daddy would get up, and BAM [motions a slap], and sit back down like he hadn't done a thing.

[laughs]

Rebecca: I don't ever remember him whipping not a one of us. My mother always did that. If he ever raised his voice a little, you'd better sit down. But you know, life just—I got out of high school and I just, I don't know how to put it, but when I got out of high school—my brother was in the Air Force 32 years, and I was in and out of Tuscaloosa. I was in and out living. I lived all over Florida, Oklahoma, Texas, places. It was such a difference when you lived on a military base and when you came back home. It was, you know, a big difference. I guess I learned how to deal with both sides of it. Because it was there, I can't put my finger on anything, but I was always into it about something.

[laughs]

Kimberly: Was your brother in the military before the military was desegregated?

Rebecca: Yes, because...[to self] how old was he, next to the oldest...so he was much older than I was...and [to us] they wanted him to—it was when they were drafting kids

out of high school, and they wanted to take him, and my mother wouldn't let them take him out of high school, but he graduated from high school one day and left for the military the next. Yeah, it was all kind of stuff that he use to talk about. He was such a good guy. Now you're talking about somebody who loved the Lord. [laughs] He was one of those. He died with Hodgkin's cancer. But he was one of those. He was, what was his rank?

William: He was a Chief. Chief Master.

Rebecca: Chief Master in the Air Force. I mean, it's wherever...but you know, when we—all of that—going from...leaving here, and going to Utah, Salt Lake City—Ogden, Utah. You go through all of that trying to get there, in those nasty bathrooms, food out of the back door, everybody having to get on the bus before you, and then you go to a dance at the NCO Club, and the guys, the white guys, were asking us to dance as if we were white! And it was mind boggling to go across country and see the difference.

Hannah: Yeah.

Rebecca: So I tell people all the time, I've seen it all. But it's still—because a few years ago, well it's not just a few...[to William] When were we in Canada?

William: A few years back.

Rebecca: Some years ago, we were in Canada, and we were trying to get a taxi, and there was a white taxi driver that would not pick us up. And the guy told us that there were like, five people that reported him. And he said, you know, "Black people didn't ride in his cab." That was in Toronto, just some years ago.

Hannah: Canadians are supposed to be known for their hospitality!

Rebecca: Yeah! Everybody else was, except him!

[laughs]

Rebecca: But he would not pick us up, and I'm saying, you know, you think it's getting better and then that. But, you know.

Hannah: I have a question. You mentioned the lady who took your money and bought the food on your way to Utah. What was your opinion on, during that time, on white sympathizers with the Movement? Because I know a lot of people, I mean, they would—they were kind of irked by it.

Rebecca: No, we had, it was kind of like that we sort of bonded because we had two small—my sister had two small kids and you know, she said that, "I can't see these kids being treated like that." We had *really* good conversations the times I wasn't asleep. My sister would say, "You just slept on me!" [laughs] But it wasn't a thing. You would say,

“Everybody in this world is not bad.” And I remember, after I’ve started talking about it, she was from Mississippi, and you know, I had heard so much stuff about Missi—well, Mississippi is worse than Alabama. And you know, there are some good people everywhere. [pause] I’m not going to talk anymore. Y’all ask me any questions.

[laughs]

Trey: One question that I kind of have too is: Do you have any opinions on Malcolm X’s ideologies versus those of Martin Luther King? In regards to the Movement?

Rebecca: I sort of never cared for him.

Trey: Never cared for Malcolm X?

Rebecca: Mmhmm. And I just can’t truly tell you why, but it’s probably something that he said that I didn’t like. Because if you say something I don’t like, I can get an attitude with you in a minute. I told them, I have to watch my mouth. My sister, I don’t have my sister here now to tell me, “Becky straighten your face up.”

[laughs]

Rebecca: My pastor can look at my face and tell what I’m thinking. If he’s saying something that I don’t like, I have got that look. I’ve got to stop it!

Trey: You sit there with your arms crossed and just like [takes on position and face]

[laughs]

Rebecca: [Nodded] [Acting out position and face] “Now what the hell is he talking about.”

[laughs]

Rebecca: But, you know, as years go by, and you see things happen...the pastor of First African Baptist Church was Reverend T.Y. Rogers at the time. Well, T.Y and I were really good friends, and it just nearly killed me when they killed him. His car was bombed on the way, it was to or from Atlanta. But he was a good guy. He was a good guy.

Kimberly: You said his car was bombed?

Rebecca: Yes.

Kimberly: Oh, I—

Rebecca: I *think* his car was bombed.

Kimberly: Okay. Because I think we were told he was just in a car wreck, and then passed away. I didn't know he was bombed.

Rebecca: Now I was actually told that they found out later that the car had been bombed. Now that may not be true...

Kimberly: Yeah.

Rebecca: ...but I was told that.

Kimberly: You're probably right, to be honest.

Rebecca: And I use to love all of them. They would start coming in from different places. [Remembers workplace previously mentioned] It was a hotel and a restaurant and they had an upstairs, and I do know one thing: I don't think they ever met in the same room.

Trey: Hmm. Just for safety?

Rebecca: Yeah. They would always—and you could always see people start—my boss, would start darting around, and you'd see this one go this way, and that one go that way, because they had to be careful. They had to be careful. And it was always the group—I know some of the guys but I can't remember their names, but I remember [pause]

Hannah: Reverend Linton?

Rebecca: Oh yeah, Reverend Linton. You know Reverend Linton is a distant relative of mine. I don't know what...you know, they always said everybody was kin!

[laughs]

Rebecca: But he was big in...he was really big.

Hannah: We got to talk to him. But he would talk about their Monday night meetings with all the Reverends and so...

Rebecca: Yep. And then there was always a group from Stillman that was a part of it. And I'm always standing, I'm just a little waitress, but I'm standing back looking and watching everything. And like I said, they were going to speak to you and, you know, this one would introduce this one, and this would introduce that, so, that's how I got the chance to meet a lot of them. But like I said, I never got to—I don't even know if Dr. King was ever there or not, but I know I never got a chance to meet him.

Trey: Yes ma'am. And you talk about being good friends with Reverend Rogers and Reverend Linton, were you involved with the organized Civil Rights Movement? With sit-ins and things like that here in Tuscaloosa? Or do you have any stories about that?

Rebecca: No more than after it was on...it was after they put gas in the church that we did some sit-ins downtown, that's what I was telling you. They wouldn't even acknowledge you being in there. They were...it was terrible.

Hannah: When you mentioned that, I wondered if y'all did that on purpose...to go in there to ask to be served.

Rebecca: Oh yeah! Yes.

Hannah: Okay. Wow, see you were just...I mean you were part of it.

Rebecca: But now, I wasn't, like I said, I wasn't there that Sunday or whatever day it was that they put gas in the church. And I can't remember where I was at. I cannot [pause] remember where I was at. But that's just, you know, when you start thinking back...it's just mind boggling the things that went on, the things that people had to go through *just to get a drink of water*. [laughs] The things you had to go through just to get a *soda*! It was like...well, the Bama Theatre now, well the blacks were not allowed to go to the Bama Theatre. You had the Diamond Theatre, which was right next door to the Diamond Drugstore—my sister worked at the Diamond Theatre, I worked at the Diamond Drugstore. And during those years, the Mayor Snow Hinton owned the drugstore at that time. But he was a good guy. They were going to all do their thing, but he just didn't blatantly do anything that was just so prejudice.

Hannah: So how did, amongst all this stuff, how did your Faith play a role in your involvement with the Movement? Did you feel more inclined to do so, or was it more just like a matter of just, moral injustice?

Rebecca: But you know, like I said from the beginning, at that time, we were young, and we had confessed hope in Christ and we remembered church, but it didn't play a big part in, you know, it's just like if somebody hit me, I'm going to hit them back. I think as the Movement went on, and Martin Luther King preached nonviolence and that sort of thing, I really think Faith began to play a big part with everybody. Not just because—some of us...you walk out there to fight, you know. If somebody did you wrong, I'm going to fight you. But then I think with his nonviolent movement and all of the ministers, and all of that, I think it had to touch a lot of people's Faith. I think it had to bring—that movement had to bring your Faith—it had to bring your Faith out. If you had anything to do with the Lord, it had to bring it out, not to fight back, because there had to be something really strong within you not to fight back. There would have to be, because you just can't do it on your own. But you know, [remembers] A little girl Sunday, she joined the church, and so, her mother was telling her, "You can't go to them parties no more! You can't go to no parties, now. I'm trying to tell you. You tell her she can't go to them parties!" I said, "Hold on now, wait a minute now. This child hasn't been baptized yet, and you don't just [snaps fingers] stop doing what you're doing like that." I said, "Now, as she studies the Bible, she studies and reads God's Word, and she prays, and she gets in Sunday school, and she gets in everything," I said, "Then, her faith is going to

take over. Her Faith is going to move the parties out of the way.” I said, “Now you can’t jump on her.” Did I tell her right?

[laughs]

Rebecca: I said, “Because you can’t jump on—here’s a lady who just gave the preacher her hand, and you’re going to tell her she can’t go to parties?” I said, “Now wait a minute now. There has got to be something going on. You have to get some growing in there.” You have to grow. You have to grow in Faith. It doesn’t just pop up. And the closer you get to the Lord, it pushes all that other stuff to the background. And after a while, you’re doing what the Word of God says, and you’re not doing what you were doing—anything that you want to do. That’s the way I see it. I don’t know if it’s true or not. [laughs]

Trey: Yes ma’am. So, you said you grew up going to Plum Grove, right? Ever since you were a little girl. Was there ever a time in your life when you thought about going to another denomination or another Faith completely? Or were you always, just kind of always a Christian?

Rebecca: I was never—I always had a level head. I never did drugs, I never did alcohol, because I couldn’t—oh it was so funny, I have to tell y’all this...

[laughs]

Rebecca: We were in Mem—I think it was Memphis, I don’t know what we were doing in Memphis, me and my sister, and we decided we would go down to the bar. So, she ordered something, and I ordered something. The guy brought it, and then we looked at each other and we said, “Which one is which?”

[laughs]

Rebecca: So we had to call him back to tell us which drink was which, so that’s how much we drink. It was hilarious.

Trey: That’s funny.

Rebecca: So you know, I just... I was always one that, I’ll tell you what I’m going to do, and if I tell you I’m going to do it, I’m going to do it. And if I tell you I’m not going to do it, I’m not going to do it. And I think that I got more whippings than anybody, because I was going to have the last word.

[laughs]

Rebecca: I was going to have the last word with my Mama. She could beat me to death, but I was going to have the last word. She would ask me, “Don’t you get tired of getting whooped? You need to shut up sometimes!” If I didn’t do it, the last word, I’m going to

say you could kill them, but I'm going to tell you I didn't do it. I don't care what you say; I didn't do it!

Hannah: Okay, well we'll wrap it up if you want to? With our last few questions.

Rebecca: Okay!

Hannah: You kind of touched on this already, but we wanted to know, what are your worries for the coming generation?

Rebecca: Oh my Lord...

Hannah: What do we not understand? Or is there a major lesson from the past that we're missing?

Rebecca: I think that as I said before...well, I think the first thing is, because I am a Christian, I truly believe that Christ was born of a virgin, that He died, and He rose, and that He's coming back. Now, I truly believe that, and I believe that for the wrong we do, He's going to punish us. It may not look like it, but He's going to punish us at His own time. And I think that people believe in anything whether it's—now I have nothing against, I'm Baptist, I have nothing against the Methodist, the Presbyterian, the Catholic, or whatever, because I think people can reach the Lord in their own way. Unless you go outside of Christ being born of a virgin, He died, He rose, and he's coming back again. If you're teaching anything other than that, you can't talk to me. But I think people—I don't know what they think about the world, and what it's coming to. It's always scientists, the weatherman, and everybody always has a reason other than the Lord. But if you dig down, the answer is going to be the Lord. Whichever way you go, wherever you come out at, it's going to be the Lord. And I think we've lost that, because everybody is giving everything else credit for what has happened to them, or what is not happening to them. They're giving everything else credit, except the Lord, the God that I serve. And it's not going to get any better until we recognize Him as Lord. Lord of your life, and Lord of this world. But our young generation, I don't know what is happening to them. Everybody—nobody—I don't guess they want to talk. Everybody wants to shoot, and cut, and I just don't understand it. And it's not getting any better, and it's not going to get any better because we have forgotten about the Lord. We have taken Him out of the schools, and we as God's people are accepting anything that comes along. Whatever it is, it's okay. But it's time to say, "No, it's not okay." It's not okay.

Hannah: Do you think it's just a lack of education? Like, they need to be taught that there are civil ways to solve conflicts? Or...

Rebecca: I think it's a lack of education, but I don't think it's coming from the schools, it's coming from the homes. When you let your kids do anything, you let your kids tell *you* what to do, you let your kids come and go as they please, do what they want to, then, they're going to do what they want to! And when they grow up, they're going to do what they want to, to *you*. You know, it's just...I don't know, but...I always [laughs] They talk

about the weather—like I told you when you came, I accept the weather whichever way it comes.

Hannah: Yes ma'am.

[laughs]

Rebecca: But, you know, everybody has their say about why the weather is doing this, or why the weather is doing that, but you know, everything that happens, God is trying to show us something. He is truly trying to show us something. And we're too evil to see it. We can always make an excuse for it, or come up with something lame, but everything that happens, it happens for a reason. It happens for a reason and, you know, until we make a change in the *home*, until we make some personal changes, you can forget about the teachers, because the teachers can't do it, because if you let them do anything at home, they're going to go to school and do anything. And you can't go down there and curse the teacher out, because the teacher didn't let your child do what you let your child do at home.

Kimberly: Preaching to the choir. Thank you.

[laughs]

Hannah: Kimberly is going into teaching.

Rebecca: But see, now they want to let the kids do anything at home, and then, when they go to school they want to do that. Well, the teacher is not going to let them do that, and then Mama will go down there and cuss the teacher and the principal and everybody else out, and see, that's where I would be in real trouble. I couldn't be a teacher.

[laughs]

Trey: You'd give it right back to them?

Rebecca: Yes. I could not be a teacher. I'd be telling everybody off.

William: That's what I tried to get the Sunday school teachers to see. I stayed the superintendent of the Sunday School Board for over 20 years down there, and I tried to tell them, just because the child is coming to Sunday school Sunday after Sunday, you can't take for granted that that child comes from a Christian home. So, you play a vital part in that child's upbringing and everything so you have to make every teaching moment count. You have to tell them what is right.

Rebecca: The church plays a big part, just like the home. The church needs to get back to some of that teaching they use to do because like I said, when I was—those old ladies, I remember them well. My Mama didn't go to church. Now my daddy didn't go to church at all until...it was after we married [to William] that he started going to church, but he

had confessed hope in Christ. It didn't have to be my Mama, because we use to go to all of those meetings, BTU, and all that stuff at the church. My Mama wasn't there, but you knew to act right.

William: As the African Proverb says, "It takes a village to raise a child." It takes a village, and everyone has to play a part.

Rebecca: Yes. But the thing now is, you can't say anything to anyone else's child. Like, we use to live next door to...it was back somewhere, you all probably don't remember, you probably weren't even born then, they made a movie about it. It was so funny, Mrs. L. Junior was gone, I think she had gone to the grocery store that Saturday morning, and Walter, and Cardale, and [to self] what was the other name? They were supposed to be hanging out clothes, and they were out there playing ball. My Mama said, "Just wait. Just wait until your Mama gets back. I'm going to tell her you were out there, not hanging up them clothes." You should have seen them throwing that ball away and hanging up clothes.

[laughs]

Rebecca: All the neighbors had to do was just say, and I mean, you listened, but now, you can't say anything to anybody's kids. I mean, you're in trouble if you say anything to anybody's kids.

William: See, they caught the mild part of it, but I grew up in Birmingham. I was right in the midst of all that, segregation and all that.

Rebecca: With that Bull Connor [laughs].

William: Bull Connor. And I remember, I dated one of the girls that got killed in that 16th Street Baptist Church. And I had just come from Korea and was walking over in Smithfield, the police came up there, and I had on my uniform. They threw a car beam right on me and some old friends, and made us lay flat down on the ground and everything, so. We caught it when Martin Luther King got put in jail up there. That's when they use to turn the fire hoses loose on us, stick the dogs on us, and everything, so. We caught it up there. I remember that was Martin Luther King's father's folks that moved here from Baptist church up there, and he didn't know that Bull Connor, Bull Connor was the police commissioner, he didn't know that he had died. So he asked Reverend Smith, "Where's Bull Connor at now?" and Reverend Smith told him, he said, "I don't know where he is, but if he hadn't changed in the last 10 years, I know where he outta be!"

[laughs]

Rebecca: Well I hope I was able to help y'all some. Because you know, like, as you grow older, and as I told the girl, you study your bible, and you read, and you pray, you change. You change and you think before you act. Back then, we would act before we

would think. Now I think before I act. But, it was some rough times. It was some rough times. To see, to stand up and see people talk to your daddy in a tone that they shouldn't and there was nothing you could do. You're younger, but there's nothing you could do. You had to do some serious praying, real quick. [laughs]

Hannah: Our professor wanted us to ask, is there anybody else that we could talk to? Anybody else you know that would have information about the Movement and their involvement? He likes to compile a list of people who would be willing to be interviewed or...

Rebecca: I don't...

Hannah: It's okay if not, it's completely fine.

Rebecca: I don't know because, like I said, at times, I lived in and out of Tuscaloosa and now my sister would have remembered everything and now I don't have anybody to ask.

Hannah: That's okay.

Rebecca: Did y'all...[opens church directory] I cannot think...I cannot think of anybody from our church that,

Hannah: We got

[End Recording]