

TMP-022

Interviewee: Orlando Bartlett

Interviewer: Jessica Taylor

Date: July 28, 2013

T: This is Jessica Taylor interviewing Orlando Bartlett on July 28, 2013 in Ark, Gloucester County, Virginia at 1:45 p.m. Mr. Bartlett, can you please state your full name?

B: My name is Orlando A. Bartlett.

T: Okay. Where were you born?

B: I was born here- well, in Newport News, Riverside Hospital.

T: Oh, great. So, when were you born?

B: 1971.

T: Okay. Do you have any siblings?

B: Yes, I have one.

T: Brother or sister?

B: A brother. I had two brothers in between us that have passed, so it's just me and him now.

T: Oh, okay.

B: That's why there's such a span between ages.

T: Oh, okay. What were your parents' names and occupations?

B: My father's Theodore Bartlett, and he was a welder with the shipyard, in Newport News Shipbuilding, and then my mother was a teacher. Her name is Cecilia

Bartlett, and she taught in King and Queen High School, and taught there for about almost forty years.

T: Okay, great. I know you've led many lives [Laughter] but what do you do?

B: Right now, I'm currently a realtor in the county, and I also have a little part-time job at 7-11. But I'm a realtor here.

T: Okay, great. Have you always been a realtor?

B: No, I've done many things. [Laughter]

T: Yeah? Do you wanna enlighten us?

B: Let's elaborate. Well, start it this way. After college, I moved to Hawaii, and while living in Hawaii, I worked in a bank and then I started doing property management. I worked for a friend there, and I did vacation rentals for all the different islands. Then, well, I moved to California; I didn't work when I was in California. I just lived there. After that, I came back here. After being on the west coast, this was so different for me to get back into it again, so I kind of was ready to get back out. So, I left after about two or three years here. At that time, I was working for MCIA Telecommunications here. I transferred with them to Austin, Texas. So, I stayed out there for a long time. Actually, I was out there six and a half years, and two of those years I worked Hyatt Corporation and Hyatts of Texas, and I ran all of the accounting departments for all of the Hyatt hotels there. Then, I left that again and got back into real estate and property management. I guess, overall, real estate is where my life is.

T: Yeah.

B: [Laughter] So I've always gravitated to that and here I am again, doing it again.

T: Yeah. Do you feel like it was your conscious choice to move back to Gloucester?

B: I'll say it like this. For me, it's no. It wouldn't be a conscious choice. I'm very religious, so with that being said, now, I'm not a saint but I'm trying. [Laughter]

T: Yeah.

B: I say it like this. God has a will for people and God has a plan for people. It's what I like to believe. Though sometimes our plans may be one thing, they may not be what His will is for us. That was for me to come back here. I had a great friend when I first got back here that asked me, what did I think brought me back to Virginia? For me it was, I told him, I thought it was because I needed to be humble. I say that because I've lived; as we just talked about, all the different things I've done. I've lived pretty well, you know? I lived from where I went everywhere in limousines and that was just my life. I've lived where I didn't know where my next food was coming from, to be honest. I think we go through things for many reasons, and those reasons always have an overall plan. That's where we are now, and I see those plans coming to fruition for me now.

T: Okay. You've lived in Gloucester multiple times in your life. Where does Gloucester fit into the overall plan?

B: Overall plan now? That's a very good question. [Laughter] I say it like this. Gloucester has done a lot for me since I've been back. It allowed me to get

closer to my family, so that was very important, because when you live away— and I lived thirty-five hundred and sometimes five thousand miles away from them—you don't see them as often. So, to be back here--like, my mother was ill and while she was ill, that's how I moved back here into the house. That made me become very close to them and stuff. That's probably what was needed, you know? I think a lot of times people take for granted their families. I say that about my family because it's my blood, but it doesn't matter if it's your blood family or not. Whoever your family is, it's your family. You know what I mean? Whether it's friends, if that's who you make up as your family, then make it up as your family, because that's what it's about. I just needed to do that. Gloucester did that for me. Just a few weeks ago, we had my family reunion for my mother's side of the family. Unfortunately, she couldn't be there for that. But it was just amazing to see where my family--the history that we have here. I've always known I've got a long history in Gloucester on both sides of my family. My father's side of the family, they are Howards on my grandmother's side. That family has been here over a hundred and maybe sixty years, or something like that. Probably even longer than that, but that's what I can trace it to now. Then, my mother's side of the family, well, they've been here for hundreds of years. I don't know if you've talked to anyone from like the Guinea area? Have you? Actually to be honest, they've always had like the stereotype that people from Guinea were prejudiced and everything. Well, they couldn't have been too prejudiced, because my mother is a **Greene** from Guinea. [Laughter] That's our family. During our family history, they traced back that we were actually already here, to be honest. That's

something in the history books, I guess, that a lot of people don't--I guess that becomes a controversy of who discovered America and who was here and when it was discovered. But we've come to find out that my family--well, the blacks were here already and stuff along with some of the Indians. One of my great-great-grandmothers is a Pamunkey Indian. We were here, and then they put us as freed slaves, and so that's how our family got here. That's back in the 1600s. Pretty old. I got some roots here. [Laughter]

T: Yeah. Tell me if you're uncomfortable with this question, but I've always just kind of wanted to know. Why does family history--why do you feel the need to trace it back and kind of know all the little branches?

B: Okay, that's a very good one because recently something just came up. I won't elaborate on that; that's a personal issue.

T: Okay.

B: But I've always been a believer that you don't know where you're going until you know where you've come from. Like for me, I've lived all over and have lived a great life and everything. But you can start to see when you go through your family history why maybe some of the things you do you do, you know? When I lived in Hawaii, I had a great friend that had given me this book one time and it was *Race and Culture*, and it talked about this man that traveled for--I think it was forty years he traveled all across the world. He kind of set himself into all these different cultures and races and just started studying them. Just as you're doing this interview, that's what he did. When he did it, he started learning why

people do the things they do. I've always been curious of the human person, you know what I mean? The human mind and everything. So, I've always loved to go places and live places where there are many different types of nationalities, origins, and backgrounds and everything. For me, when I go through my family history, I can see some of the drive that I have: well, look. I had a grandfather that was like that, and he stood for this. That kind of thing is really cool to me. Now, with that being said, sometimes there are branches on that tree that you might not want to discover. But, they are still a part of that branch, to be honest, so you just have to let that be as well and just go for the things that are good. If you stand for good, you do what's right. But, everybody has a history, and it's good to know it. And if you know it, you're so much more knowledgeable and you can become so much more knowledgeable. With that comes wisdom, I think.

T: Okay. Upon discovering your family tree, when you said that you can literally discover the beliefs of people that have come before you, have you found it to either determine or alter your behavior or your own beliefs?

B: I would say on certain issues, yes. Going back to your question of Gloucester and what it's doing for me, I'll say it like this. My great-great-grandfather--we have the oldest black business in this county, which is Howard's Funeral Home, which is up the street. Hasn't changed much, but that's family again. [Laughter] But with that said, how that came to be--they had this great article that was written in, it was either the *Gloucester Gazette* or the *Gloucester Glo-Quips*. I can't remember now. I have the article. It was on the Howard family, and it's like two full pages and all of my family history's on it. But it talks about how the

funeral home came to be. It came to be because, of course, right now it's a majority Caucasian town and everything, but there are a lot of blacks and there were a lot of blacks here at one point. During that time period, this was back in like the [18]50s; there were racial issues at that time. During that period, if a black person died, they were either buried in their yard, and that's why you see a lot of graves at people's homes and stuff like that, or they had to go to a white funeral home. Well, a lot of times the white funeral homes did not want to work on a black body. But even if they did, then they'd charge them an arm and a leg. Black people didn't have money back then, you know what I mean? My great-great-grandfather decided, well, this is what he was going to do. He would start his own funeral home. They had this little slogan. Oh, I wish I could remember it now, but it was regarding blacks having to rally together. He marched on the Courthouse and everything, rallied up a lot of black people together and let them know that he was going to do this funeral home. That's how the funeral home came to be, so that blacks wouldn't have to pay all this money to be buried. To be honest, with me talking to you about that right now, it just brought something else to light. I've always felt like my uncles, my great-uncles, my dad's mom's brothers, that they were always like very kind people. Anybody that you talked to in this town, you asked if they knew any of the Howards, they'd tell you that, that they always helped this community. They always helped especially the black community. If you needed anything, you didn't have to do anything but just go and ask, and they did it. No matter how much it was or whatever. That's how they ran that funeral home. So now I think that's my drive, because I love giving back.

I love helping people and I'm always trying to do things. But I also feel that I'm here in the community now to make some of the changes that still need to occur here. If you look at like our board of supervisors, we don't have a good black representation. We don't have it for many. I think boards should always be reflective of what they serve. So, if they are to be reflective of what they serve, then there should be some blacks on it; there should be maybe some Hispanics now that we have more Hispanics here--or should I say Latinos, I'm sorry. I look at it like that, so then that is my drive now, now that I'm in the community doing the real estate and I've won a couple of awards of organizations. That's my goal, and that's what I like to do, is rally the people together. Not to make it a racial issue, but to make it a come-together issue. I'm working with my church right now, with my pastor and the head of our board of Christian education, and we're going to be putting together a sort of program for building the kingdom. If you've heard of like kingdom-building in churches? What that really is--a lot of people may take that to just building the church up, but your kingdom is your community and everything, you understand me? In that case, then, I feel like we need to come together. We should show this county how we have come through the ages from slavery to now. I'm going to do it by music, and just have a bunch of groups coming in and singing, and just inviting the whole community to come out and take part of this. That will be a part of what I do, and you never know. Maybe one day I'll be on the board of supervisors. You just don't know. [Laughter] So that's where I am with the county now.

T: Okay. I guess I have a lot of follow-up questions from that.

B: [Laughter] Sure.

T: Okay. One of the first things that you said at the beginning was that you noticed specifically that one of your grandmothers was part Pamunkey. What does the Native American connection mean to you?

B: It means a lot. All my life, I didn't know that she was Pamunkey. I knew that she was an Indian, and I knew that the way that she passed was she, of course, had real long hair and she went to put wood in--they had a wood stove back then. When she went to do it or something, her hair caught on fire. So she ran out of the house and she was running around, and of course that made it inflame more. Once it did that, it caught her body and she died from being burnt. But I always thought that she was like--I just tried to do research on the Indian cultures in this area, and I thought that maybe she was Mattaponi. But during this reunion, my cousin was able to find out that she was actually Pamunkey Indian. To me, I would love to know more about that culture. I've always loved Indians. Like I said, my mom was a teacher in King and Queen County, and there are a lot of Indians that go to school up there. I've always known a few, and they are Mattaponi Indian. [Laughter]

T: Yeah.

B: So that's why I thought I was.

T: Yeah.

B: But I come to find out that I'm not. So now, I would like to start doing more research. I'm going to try to see about trying to go to the reservation. You know what I mean?

T: Yeah.

B: I just want to know because just as I talked about earlier: we do things because of stuff that's instilled in us. It doesn't have to be that I even knew her, but because her genes flow through my body, you understand me? That is true. That is a connection that people have. Our genetic makeup is that of our ancestors, so whatever that is, that comes into you. Now what things become more dominant, that's the key. Of course, my mom and dad are dominant because I live with them, and of course, their actions are the actions that I tend to have. Some of that, I think, comes from the will of my ancestors. I think there's a strong connection with Native American Indians. I love nature. That's my favorite thing. [Laughter] I've always been like that. My mom used to say I carry the weight of the world on my shoulders. She worried about that because from a child I would tell her, Mom, if that tree were crying I could feel that tree crying. I do feel like that somehow. [Laughter] I've always been connected. If I have issues going on, I feel sad or something like that, it's nothing for me to go outside and just look up in the sky, and just get connected again back to the world. Or go to my favorite little spot down in Capahosic and just sit down there, and look out on the water and get connected again. That means a lot to me.

T: That's wonderful.

B: [Laughter] Thank you. It's true.

T: You said that your grandfather marched on the Courthouse? I'm not familiar with that.

B: It was my great-great-grandfather. He did it because they were rallying up I guess to be able to get the business at the time? That was probably going to be an issue for them to own a business as blacks here. Again, he went to some of the local churches at that time and got some people together, and then they went down to the Courthouse and marched on them to let them be able to get the business. Something I was going to say to that, too...It just slipped my mind...Anyway, that's how we got it. This is what I was going to say. What they did is like, when they went to war back then, they would send money back up. If you know T.C. Walker, T.C. Walker raised--well, he didn't really raise—but my grandfather, my dad's father, lived with him. For some reason, I've come to find out on county records they have my grandfather as T.C. Walker's first adopted son. He had five of these black children that he had stay with him and that he kind of took under his wing. But my grandfather was, I guess, the first one. I didn't know it was on county records like that because--well, I actually never knew that, but I just came to find that out. So, one thing he always said is, if you were black and you wanted to get ahead, the only way to do it was to own land. That's how all of my family did. He was very close with them and advised them on many things, my great-uncles on my grandmother's side, because my dad's father lived with T.C. Walker, and that's how he met my grandmother, who was Rosa Lee Howard. T.C. Walker would go over to see them at the main--we call

this the main house right down the street, right beside the funeral home. All the kids lived in that house at some point. He would go down there; that's how he met my grandmother, and then they got married. But, he always said you had to own land to get ahead. So, when they made this money in the war, they just sent it all back here to my great-grandmother at that time. She was able to go ahead and get the funeral home. When she got it, they said that women couldn't own a funeral home. They had to change the name, so then it became under my grandfather's name, which is T.J. Howard or Thomas Jefferson Howard. That's how we got the name of the funeral home, because it couldn't be in her name then. But she was a [Inaudible 20:43] her name was Susie [Inaudible].

T: Okay. When did the business open actually? Do you remember what year?

B: Maybe...I'm not sure.

T: Okay.

B: I'm not sure. I couldn't tell you right now.

T: I was just trying to figure out, if it's your great-great-grandfather, like how early would that march have occurred?

B: Yeah. It would have been maybe the late 1800s or early 1900s.

T: Okay.

B: Yeah, somewhere around there.

T: Okay. Did any of those stories from that period get passed down to you?

B: No. I know little bits and pieces, like I said, about T.C. Walker and stuff like that, but he's later than 1900. The rest of it I just knew from the newspaper article. It's really interesting. I wish I could put my hand on it right now, but we've been moving stuff around since Mama. Because I would show you that whole history of it.

T: That's totally okay.

B: All right.

T: But you've never met T.C. Walker, right?

B: No, I didn't. My father has.

T: Do you have any particular opinions about him?

B: I'll tell you this: I have a friend that he doesn't know T.C. Walker or know anything. He knows little things about him that he's read like on the Internet, but he likes to say that he thinks that I have the spirit of T.C. Walker. That's a big accomplishment to me. Now, some people don't like T.C. Walker. He's got a bad rep, too, because he was hard on black people, too. [Laughter] Again, you know people for what you know them of. I say that because everybody's got good in them, and everybody's probably got a little bad in them. You know what I mean? If you know them for the good that they did, just continue to know them for that. Understand that, yes, they may have done some things that might not have been correct. But you know what? We all have done things that are not correct, so you can't pass judgment. You know what I'm saying? That's how I live. I'm not going to pass judgment on anyone, because I've had things in my life. There's not a

person who doesn't. If you believe in a higher being, like how I believe with God, then that doesn't necessarily matter because God knows that. He knows that we were born sinners, if you want to take it to the Bible that way. Then if you were born a sinner and everybody was born a sinner and Jesus Christ died to save us for our sins, then the best thing we can do is try to live our lives and be as good as we can. That doesn't mean we're always going to be a saint or be good, because we're going to do things that's in our human nature. That's the human versus the spiritual realm.

T: Did you get that ethic from your parents?

B: I think it came from them, but I think it came from studying my history and my church. I've always gone to church; I believe also in it takes a village to raise a child. I truly believe that. Because my parents were working, I was a latchkey kid. [Laughter] Do you remember that term? Yeah, I was a latchkey kid. I would always be--like, there used to be a house right beside us here, which was my other great-aunt's. This is all family down in here. Anyway, I would go over there after school and stay with them till my parents came home. I would always stay at someone's house. There's not a house going down 17 that people can't say that I've been in it, playing or [Laughter]. By the time I come home, if I had done something, it was known. They knew it before I got here because they all raised me, pretty much. My parents raised me, but everybody had a hand in it. I knew when to be good. [Laughter]

T: Yeah.

B: Yeah, that's how I look at it. I think that ethic came from many different things in my life. Some of just me making mistakes and some of it being my family and a lot of it being from my church background.

T: Which church is yours?

B: I go to Bethel Baptist Church in Sassafras, Virginia. We are like the mother church of seven churches here. If you're familiar with like--churches branch off, so then they have, like, little sister churches. Well, we were, I guess, the mother church of seven of them here.

T: Oh, okay.

B: Yeah. T.C. Walker's buried there.

T: Yeah.

B: A lot of people were in that church. We just had our church anniversary. I think that was a hundred and maybe fifty-one years, or something like that?

T: Wow.

B: Yeah.

T: Wonderful. Congrats. Did your father ever tell you about his childhood?

B: He's told me some things about it.

T: How would you say yours was different?

B: That's interesting. I would say I don't know that it was so different. I'll say it like this: from what I know from my dad, and what I know from other people

[Laughter] my father was very spoiled. He's still to this day, is kind of that way. Not saying that to be bad or nothing, but he was spoiled. My grandmother didn't have him want for anything. Just recently, one of my great-uncles died on my mom's side, and I was at the funeral. One of my other great-uncles was telling me about Dad and talking about how he remembers when they were going to school. His hair was always like--back then, black people would like kind of press their hair and stuff. You know what I mean? [Laughter] Dad had like this perfectly long, pressed hair. He was talking about, oh, it's never out of place. And had the finest of clothes. He's always had the best of everything. So, I will say for myself growing up, I was pretty much that way, too. [Laughter] But I guess they had been accustomed to that, and so my parents made sure that me and my brother didn't really want for anything. I think there's probably only one thing that I truly ever wanted as a child that I didn't get, and that was a three-wheeler. [Laughter] Because they thought I would kill myself on it. I still hold that resentment, if you can't tell. [Laughter] Naw, but that's about it. I've pretty much had everything I wanted to. And then growing up, because like with him, too, the whole family was a very close-knit family. He was raised with all his cousins and stuff. Here with me, I was raised with all of my cousins, too. I think we're very similar in a lot of that, to be honest. He may take it a step further than me. I may not have been as wild as him, but yeah. It is what it is. [Laughter]

T: Yeah, absolutely. So, what would bring you down to the Main Street area of Gloucester Courthouse?

B: What brings me down there?

T: What would have if this is the [19]70s and [19]80s?

B: Huh. Well, we would always go like to Morgan's Drugstore during the early part of the [19]70s. There was Tucker five and dime. Actually, Fairfield Foundation is doing a dig out there right now, I see. [Laughter] That will be very interesting. I wonder if there are any of those cool toys he had. He had all those little metal toys back then. [Laughter]

T: Yeah.

B: That would be cool to find some of those, now. Yeah, I think that was a cool place to go to. I loved to going to Morgan's. At one point, Morgan's didn't allow blacks to come into it. They had that little window outside, and you could only go to it. My great-grandmother was very fair-skinned. She looked white, I guess. The saying always was, and I've heard this from many family members, most people thought she was white. So they let her go in the stores, and they would always say, why do you always hang around those black people and everything? Maybe black people wasn't the term that they used back then, but you know what I'm saying [Laughter] because she was. I forgot who this one lady was. There was a story about one lady that said that to her, and so then my great-grandmother said, oh, no. I am black. And the lady said, oh, you're so funny. Why do you tell jokes like that? She just would not her believe her. What she did--and this is evidently what they say, how they got married--she said she was going to marry the darkest person in this county so that they would know that she was black. And evidently that's what she did. [Laughter] Then, here is the rest of us now. We have all different gamuts of color in the family, of course, because like the

Lemons--and that's what side of the family she came from. If you've heard of any of the Lemons here, you know they're very light and stuff. A lot of people back in the day, they wanted to still kind of keep that color, because it was good, I guess, back then. They wouldn't try to go outside of that. We're all different gamuts of color, and I guess that's why we were called colored people for a while, because we were every different color under the sun. [Laughter] I don't know.

T: So, if you couldn't go into Morgan's, and I understand Grey's was also the same way?

B: Mm-hm. Mm-hm.

T: Except perhaps more severe?

B: Mm-hm. Mm-hm.

T: Were there black businesses that would treat black people equal to white customers?

B: I don't know of any. I really don't know of any. I can't think of anyone ever telling a story about a black business like that. That's a good question. I've never even asked that, because where would they go to get stuff? I guess certain stores they had to allow them to go into. Maybe like Wallace's? Wallace and Gurley at the time?

T: Mm-hm.

B: They were good people. I don't know if they always were, but when I came up they were. I guess maybe they just went there. And then I guess they probably

lived off of the land. A lot of blacks were farmers and stuff back then, too. Maybe they did a lot of butchering. I know as a child growing up just down this street, my babysitter at that time, they farmed and they killed hogs. That's what they ate. I'll never forget being a little child and watching them. I could tell you the whole process of killing a pig and gutting it. [Laughter] I remember me coming outside their house one day, and seeing the pig up in the tree being held up by a string. He had just shot it, and was taking a knife to gut it, so all the intestines to come-- you know what I mean? I guess that's what they did. I couldn't tell you.

T: Yeah.

B: Because I don't know too many black stores, unless they were very small little corner spots.

T: Yeah.

B: Have you ever heard anyone talk of any?

T: Yeah, actually, but obviously they're like ten thousand years old than you.

B: Mm-hm.

T: So they have a different perspective. I was going to ask you, and now it might be gone...if you ever went to the Edge Hill Service Station with your family.

B: I did, not when it was owned with the Brown family or any of that. I went there in later years, because it was closed for quite a time. I went when it was--well, we called him Pudgy: Larrimore, when he owned it. It was closed many years before that. I don't know of going there as a child or anything like that. I do know a lot of

the history of it now, because I looked into the place. [Laughter] So, I did have a lot of that history, because that land was also owned by T.C. Walker. Knowing my history, yeah, it's good to try to recover some of that. That's also why I think I'm back in Gloucester, because that's my goal here, is to again buy up a lot of the land and stuff that was in my family or my family was connected to. That's what I'd like to do. That's my goal here before I leave again.

T: Are you going to leave again soon?

B: I will leave and go back to Texas. That will be my home more than likely, but again it's under God's will and plan for me. Right now, I know he has a plan for me to do a few things here. So, I'm going to stay here and do that. If that leads me to something else, then it will. But if not, I will go on to Texas and carry out life there.

T: Okay.

B: But I will still keep connection here. It is my home.

T: Okay, great. Not a lot of people have told me about the time when George Larrimore owned the gas station, and I'm actually going to go interview him tomorrow. So, I was wondering if you could tell me a little bit about the experience under George Larrimore. And the mischievous smile on your face.

B: [Laughter] Because that set a bad precedent with me, to be honest. I don't know if I really would want to bring that up. [Laughter]

T: No.

B: I'll tell you like this, okay. I had looked into possibly trying to purchase that land at one time and everything, but in doing that there was a lot of bad stuff going on then. Just to be honest, I felt like the person that was representing the Edge Hill Station was not so knowledgeable, but I...I should put it out there. I'm going to put it out there. All right, anyway, what comes of it will come of it. God has a plan. If we had tried to go through with the deal, I was probably going to end up putting out a lawsuit, to be honest, and that was where I was going to be with it because of--certain things weren't done properly that I knew should have been done because I was a realtor. [Laughter] But I let them do what they wanted to do. With that being said, when I'm going through and I'm doing my research on the property, I ended up going to Richmond because I want to know everything about it. I ended up going to Richmond and going to the DEQ. up there—the Department of Environmental Quality. I went up there, and they were more than happy to work with me, and told me to this day if I ever wanted to try to do something, just let them know because they showed me a lot of paperwork and everything of things that went on during that time. I say it like this: I'm not going to be judgmental because people do things for their own reasons. I'm sure it was a money issue, that they were trying to just get this money out of it, but I also feel knowing this town that some of the old ways are still within people. Even though they may smile in your face, some of those old prejudices are still there or in that background. They feel like if they can get over on someone, they will do it. I see that in the community and the county quite a bit and stuff now with things. Even my broker, when I came to work for my broker, she said, listen. You know I'm

going to get flack about hiring a black person. This is my broker telling me this in 2013. [Laughter] But to say that she's going to get flack for hiring a black person because they've never had a black person hired in that real estate company-- they knew. But she didn't care, because that's who she was. She loved everybody and she didn't feel like that. We're all people and we all bleed. So she wasn't going to worry about that. But there are people that have issue with that type of thing. I'm going back to the Edge Hill, but I had to do this side cameo--but a lot of times I think people feel that we as blacks are not knowledgeable. We can't be as knowledgeable, and that's because they're still coming from their old mentality. So if you come from that, you will think that way possibly, because you didn't want us to learn anything. This is a new age, and it's been age for quite some time now, so it should come to you that we can be knowledgeable. We can actually be a little more knowledgeable than you. We've gone to school; we've gone to college, universities and everything else, too, in there. In that, when it came to Mr. Larrimore, he hadn't really done his research. He will probably tell you that tomorrow, because when I talk to him, that's what he said. He's like, he was so glad to see that I had done my research because he didn't do it and look at what it did to him. My understanding is that when he went into purchase the Edge Hill Station, he did it under owner financing type of deal, then that's when DEQ came in because VDOT was putting up the stoplights, when they found an old tank underground. Then actually, that was not a good thing. So they made him have to pay to get that up, but then they had to do tests to see about other tanks. They gave him a certain time period to clean all those tanks up from

underground then that were there. Now, Mr. Larrimore's the owner of it, but evidently, the way the people in Richmond have told me is that Mr. James knew this. I'm just going to say it. That's how I don't want to be all like that. They showed me the documentation of them sending letters and everything else to get that done. Bu then, he sold it so then Mr. Larrimore had to be responsible for it. When he became responsible for it, then anything that they sanctioned on him he had to do. In doing that, that's a lot of money. That's not a little bit of money. Well, he just got the station. He's still paying for it. Well, he ends up going kind of bankrupt because the company that was doing that, they evidently went bankrupt, too. And all of this is documented with Richmond. That left a bad taste in my mouth because, look at what you did to this guy. Then, after you did that, he finally got the place cleaned up. Well now, he can't pay you because he had to pay all of these hundreds of thousands dollars to get this done. Now, the property goes back to Andy James free and clear. But now, me stating that is stating this: that is something that has gone on in this county for a long, long time, where things like that have happened. Not saying that that was done intentionally through Andy James or anything like that, but that type of thing has gone on for a long time in this town, where that person gets kind of crapped on, so to speak. Excuse my language. [Laughter] Then it goes back to the person good. Those types of things are the types of things that I would like to make people a little more knowledgeable of, to not let yourself get into situations like that because it's only gonna hurt you. Just as with land: I see so many blacks that we own like prime pieces of land, and this has happened for many years as

well, and many will speak on that, that they've owned this land, but then people come in and say, oh, well, I'll buy it from you. They give them pennies, to be honest. Twenty thousand, forty thousand dollars for a piece of land that they're gonna turn around and sell for two hundred and fifty, three hundred thousand dollars, because the black doesn't know any better. Or they just are like, well shit, I need money right now. That's a good amount of money. But no. Your land is more valuable than that, and if you didn't know that, you should think about what T.C. Walker used to always say. The only way that you're gonna get ahead is by holding on and keeping your land and buying up land. So then, do that, because as long as you have that, you have money. It's the honest-to-God truth. That goes for anybody. It doesn't have to be black, white, whatever. If you own land, you're always going to be wealthy because they aren't making anymore.

[Laughter] You know what I'm saying? That's the one thing that you can own and you will never have to worry, because as long as you got that, you can get money off of it if you need to, you can sell the timber off of it, if you need to split a piece of it to sell a piece of it, maybe you could do that to get yourself in a better situation. You'll always be wealthy if you have land.

T: That's a good way to put it. Is there anything else that you wanted to add, share with the entire population of University of Florida?

B: [Laughter] Gloucester County is a great county. I have run through the woods, all of these woods pretty much all around here, as a child. I could tell you all the back roads, little old trails for like when 17 wasn't here and stuff, because I've been all through it. I think there's a rich culture here. That culture is that of more

of a historical culture, but to me, I pride myself in knowing that my relatives own land that presidents have been on, because we have. We can have that documented, that presidents have been on some of the land, and that George Washington ran through these--you know what I'm saying? That it's gone through this. That to me, that's sacred to me. When I look at the country as a whole, it bothers me. I have a lot to say about that, because I feel like we're always talking about, oh, let's take it back to the Constitution. Let's go back to our history and everything. Well, do you really know your history? I know mine. My history envelops all that you're talking about, because I know my history all the way back that far. For me, there are things that have gone on throughout history, good and bad, but we are still at a time that we should be doing good. The problem is, I feel like, we have gotten--and that goes for this county; it goes from the local level all the way to the federal level--and that's what I see. When I look at myself, I look at myself as an eye to the world, kind of. I hate to say it like that, but I mean it like, if you look at your history and see all the stuff that you can do, and you understand people as I try to understand people, then people make mistakes. People do things. When you see like these politicians that are out here having all kinds of scandals and stuff, now, if that's not going to bother them making sound decisions on helping others and doing the right thing for this country, I could care less because I'm sure if I were to go in your past I could find something that you've done that people might think are not good. You know what I'm saying? I don't care about that type of stuff. It's about doing the right thing and that's helping others. That's what my family did, as I told you, when they started their

funeral home and they helped all the people in the county, to what I try to do now in getting involved with the county and starting organizations. I'll do it whichever way I see fit. As a realtor now, I'm doing build-to-suit homes and stuff. To me, I'm putting my little mark that way right now, these little communities, because I have a lot of land listings. I'm working with a builder. We look at that community we're designing the house for, and then we're letting people come in and buy it and they can design the inside the way they want it. They will keep the aesthetic of how I think Gloucester should be, because many people in this county have their own opinions of it, but most of these people haven't been--and I hate to be like, oh, those come-heres or anything like that-- but they don't have that root to understand like, yes, Gloucester has to grow, but in its growth there's a way to make sure it's done properly. It's not always done properly. But I would love to see my community grow properly, and we all come together a lot better. So that's it.

T: Great.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

Transcribed by: Jessica Taylor October 3, 2013

Audit-Edited by: Jessica Taylor November 5, 2013