
Interviewer: Hello Ms. Carolyn

Carolyn Nix: Hello.

Interviewer: So today I will be asking you about what it was like growing up in Huntington, West Virginia.

Carolyn Nix: Alright.

Interviewer: So where were you ... were you born in Huntington?

Carolyn Nix: Yes, I was born in Huntington, West Virginia at C & O Railroad Hospital.

Interviewer: Were there lots of hospitals?

Carolyn Nix: There was three main hospitals: St. Mary's, Cabell and C & O Railroad.

Interviewer: Were they optional to African American people?

Carolyn Nix: Yes.

Interviewer: What street did you grow up on?

Carolyn Nix: I grew up on 9th Avenue and 19th Street.

Interviewer: Did you have lots of friends in your neighborhood?

Carolyn Nix: Yes, I had lots of friends in the neighborhood and I have a lot of friends now.

Interviewer: Was your family and open family who knew everybody in your neighborhood?

Carolyn Nix: Yes. They were truly and open family. It was just like I spend a night over somebody's, they spend the night at my house. We went to parties ... little parties and stuff. I had a good time growing up.

Interviewer: What's your fondest memory of living here?

Carolyn Nix: My grandsons. They play for D.C. Express. My oldest grandsons, then my great grandsons is out there now. I have a cheerleader out there. I had a cheerleader then. It's been a good time for me to watch my grand babies.

Interviewer: Describe the neighborhood the way it was when you were young.

Carolyn Nix: Green, beautiful, neat and clean. They kept their yards ... trash, everything was just perfect in the yards. Flowers, everything.
Interviewer: Tell me about your parents or your family background.

Carolyn Nix: They come from Greenville, South Carolina. There weren't too many jobs there, so him and her came this way. And then they had my mom and my aunt, and then us.

Interviewer: What was your parent's religious background?

Carolyn Nix: My grandparents religious background was Baptist, and my mother's was Baptist and mine too.

Interviewer: Okay. Was there any specific churches that y'all went to?

Carolyn Nix: Yeah The Chapel A.M.E Church on Artisan Avenue. My sisters attend that, and my grandfather and them attended 16th Street Baptist Church.

Interviewer: Okay, so what other relatives did you have contact with growing up?

Carolyn Nix: Both aunts, sisters, brothers ... all of it.

Interviewer: What do you remember about your grandparents?

Carolyn Nix: I remember my grandparents were very loving people. Very church. Wanted you to do the right thing. It was a nice home to live in. Very nice.

Interviewer: What makes you say that?

Carolyn Nix: It makes me say that because my grandmother cared about everybody. If you couldn't afford to get your hair done, she would do your hair. My mother would curl it. My grandfather went out and cut elderly people's grass and flowers and cleaned their yards, and cleaned their porches for them. You know, just to have something to do for the people.

Interviewer: What was one of your fondest memories living here in the 1950s?

Carolyn Nix: I don't remember too much about the 1950s cause I was born in 1951. I remember it was a lot of prejudice, a lot of anti-war. Space ... people going up in space. I really haven't felt too much animosity between blacks and whites until the late 60s. That's when I found out things wasn't right.

Interviewer: How was that different from the 1970s or the 1980s?

Carolyn Nix: They were more faster. Things were slower in 1950, 1960. It was alright to live in. I especially liked going to see colleges and different stuff, people doing different things. We used to take trips traveling to go to different colleges to see what was really going on, for us to want to choose which college we wanted to go to.

Interviewer: What was school like?
Carolyn Nix: School was a good time for us, because the people that you went to school with, or junior high school with and high school with, is who you graduated with. They friends to the end and they're still friends. What are you laughing at?

Interviewer: What ... never mind -

Carolyn Nix: What -

Interviewer: Hello, Ms. Carolyn.

Carolyn Nix: Hello.

Interviewer: How has your day been?

Carolyn Nix: Very well.

Interviewer: Today, I will be asking you questions about where you were born and what was it like growing up. First question, were you born in Huntington, West Virginia?

Carolyn Nix: Yes, I was born in Huntington, West Virginia at C and O Railroad Hospital.

Interviewer: What street did you grow up on?

Carolyn Nix: Ninth avenue and 19th street.

Interviewer: Were there many people that lived around you?

Carolyn Nix: Yeah, we had a loving community. Everybody helped each other. They grew flowers. We did everything as kids.

Interviewer: Was your family fond in your neighborhood?

Carolyn Nix: Yes, very fond. Still is.

Interviewer: Describe your neighborhood the way it was when you were young.

Carolyn Nix: Well, you could wake up in the morning and it'd be sun shining and the block would be so clean. You could smell ham and bacon and eggs and things when you wake up, all the way around. I played with the people nextdoor. We weren't allowed to go too far, but we had a nice community of people that we played with.

Interviewer: Can you describe the energy or rhythm of the people on eighth avenue and Fairland?

Carolyn Nix: I don't know too much about them on eighth avenue because we weren't allowed to go on eighth avenue from ninth avenue until we got grown. I don't know what they were doing.
Interviewer: Where was your family originally from?

Carolyn Nix: Greenville, South Carolina.

Interviewer: What made your family come to West Virginia?

Carolyn Nix: Shortness of work. He came to Huntington to visit some people and go at job at C and O Railroad and went back and got my grandmother and my mother.

Interviewer: What do you remember about your grandparents?

Carolyn Nix: I remember somebody always there. I remember somebody that always was there when things was down and things was up. I remember somebody telling me, "Let's go buy a new pair of shoes." My grandparents were my life. My mom was there, but my grandparents took care of us. You seen about my music. He wanted to do everything to help me. All of them. It's them.

Interviewer: Did you have a lot of friends growing up?

Carolyn Nix: Yeah, I still have the same friends. Some of them died, but I still have the same friends that I started out with in the first grade.

Interviewer: What's one of your fondest memories living here in the 1950s?

Carolyn Nix: I don't know too much that was going on in 1950 because I was born in 1951, but all I remember is the space and I don't remember too much about then because I wasn't around.

Interviewer: How was that different from the 1970s or 1980s?

Carolyn Nix: 1980s and '70s was hippie. That's the way I remember it. Hippies. Everybody wanted to be a hippie or didn't nobody want to be tied down. That was just the frame of the situation where everybody wanted to have their own voice and you can't have a voice unless you find yourself. That's where I found my voice at.

Interviewer: Describe a time when you felt most proud of someone in your family?

Carolyn Nix: I'm proud of my grandsons and my granddaughters for making the DC cheerleading squad and the DC football team. I wish they could have went further.

Interviewer: Describe the house you grew up in.

Carolyn Nix: I grew up in a two story, four bedroom home. It was nice. Big front yard, flowers everywhere. My granddaddy sang. Neatly cut backyard. He used to grow vegetables. I don't remember much. I remember when they'd go fishing and bring fish back. I was scared to death, but he did a lot. I mean, I seen a lot my grandfather and grandmother did.
Interviewer: What was your room like?
Carolyn Nix: Who?
Interviewer: What was your room like?
Carolyn Nix: Huh?
Interviewer: What was your room like?
Carolyn Nix: I had a big room. Double beds, twin beds, so did my sisters and my brother. Everybody had a very nice room. My grandfather made nice money and he took very good care, good care.
Interviewer: How many children were in the family?
Carolyn Nix: Four.
Interviewer: Where were you in the lineup?
Carolyn Nix: Second in lineup.
Interviewer: What were your duties around the house as a child?
Carolyn Nix: Clean the room. Make sure the dishes were washed. Help cook. Keep the front yards and stuff clean. You know, just regular everyday things.
Interviewer: When did you learn to cook?
Carolyn Nix: When? When I was seven.
Interviewer: Who taught you?
Carolyn Nix: My grandmother.
Interviewer: Was it fun?
Carolyn Nix: Yes, to smell hot rolls rising. Making rolls from flour. My grandmother could make anything.
Interviewer: What was the first thing you cooked on your own?
Carolyn Nix: Fried chicken.
Interviewer: Were there any family recipes?
Carolyn Nix: Homemade macaroni and cheese. There's one thing that I really love cooking is turkey and dressing.

Interviewer: Do you still cook as much, today?

Carolyn Nix: I don't cook as much, today as I did back then with my kids because my health is bad, but I still cook.

Interviewer: What was school like here?

Carolyn Nix: It was hard for me at first because I was big and I didn't understand the borderline of big, small, medium, but when you make friends and you're in a school, and you make friends, you have true friends. No name calling and no ... I had been through all of that and that's not what I like at all. School was all right because the people that I started with is the people that I graduated with.

Interviewer: Did you have any best friends?

Carolyn Nix: Yeah. I have two best friends. Three best friends. Two of them died.

Interviewer: Describe what your siblings were like.

Carolyn Nix: One was bossy. Aaron's crazy. I'm mean and Lele's sensitive.

Interviewer: Why would you say that?

Carolyn Nix: She might used to take sides, but she would always end up on my side. That's what I liked about her.

Interviewer: Who was your favorite?

Carolyn Nix: I had no favorite. All of them were my favorite. All three of them.

Interviewer: What did you do on Christmas, Thanksgiving, birthdays, other holidays?

Carolyn Nix: I spent them with my kids. I spend them with my grandchildren, my great grandchildren, my nieces and my nephews. We cook and eat. That's the happy time. The happy time is with us being together, including my oldest son whenever he comes, but that's my most exciting time is the holidays.

Interviewer: You remember any times when money was tight?

Carolyn Nix: Plenty. It was hard, but I had a boyfriend that helped me every step of the way.

Interviewer: Do you remember having to do without things you wanted or needed?
Carolyn Nix: Yeah. It was hard. It was hard because I didn't have anybody to help me. I had to take the little money I had got from my children to pay rent and do for them and try to buy clothes and it was hard. People don't understand hardness; you going without. Sometimes you go without eating to see that your children ate. I have four kids. I have an older son, I have ... I have Chris, I have Eric, I have Anthony and I have Andrea and those four have been my life ever since the day that they were born.

Interviewer: What schools did you go to?

Carolyn Nix: I went to Barnett. Then, I went to Sams. Then, I went to Lincoln Junior High School and then Huntington High. I graduated from Huntington High and I went to Marshall right here.

Interviewer: Which one was your favorite?

Carolyn Nix: Huntington High.

Interviewer: What makes you say that?

Carolyn Nix: My music. I've been singing ever since I was three years old and I just loved music. I loved to sing and that's what I did.

Interviewer: What were your parents' political beliefs?


Interviewer: Why?

Carolyn Nix: My granddaddy was republican. My grandmother was a democrat.

Interviewer: What story did you hear about all your ancestors?

Carolyn Nix: I just heard that we were from Africa and I really haven't chased it down like I should have, but it didn't make any difference.

Interviewer: What did people do for fun when you were younger?

Carolyn Nix: We had little parties and most of the time, go to Sunday School and church. That was fun.

Interviewer: What was your favorite place to eat?

Carolyn Nix: We didn't eat out. We never ate out when we were young. We always ate at home. We never went to dinner nowhere other than church dinner or something like that. Other than that, no.

Interviewer: Was it that your family didn't like to?
Carolyn Nix: They were more on the quiet side. They didn't associate with a lot of people. The people around us and our neighbors and people that we care about, yeah, but they were to themselves a lot. My sister is like that now, Lele.

Interviewer: What was your favorite place to shop growing up?

Carolyn Nix: Huntington Store.

Interviewer: Can you tell me about that?

Carolyn Nix: Huntington Store was the big department store and some people had bills and stuff. They pay cash and you go get anything you want and I loved that. The Huntington Store, the Style Shop and Four Norwoods. Them three shops right there.

Interviewer: Where were they at?

Carolyn Nix: Downtown, but they're gone, now.

Interviewer: Where the [inaudible 00:14:15]? Was the Huntington Store like a smaller mall?

Carolyn Nix: Yeah, but it was a store. It was maybe about three floors and it had clothes and shoes, everything that you wanted there. Buy expensive dresses and coats and pocketbooks and things. Yeah, I wanted to shop there all the time. I loved to go shopping.

Interviewer: What was your clothing style growing up?

Carolyn Nix: I basically loved dresses. I wore pants, but I loved dresses. I loved skirts and sweaters. That was my perfect style then because back then I had skirts and sweaters that matched, so I loved that.

Interviewer: Can you tell me about race in Huntington?

Carolyn Nix: The first time that I really went through that was we were going to school one day. I had just started Lincoln and these people were sitting on the porch. We were taught to say good morning, good afternoon to everyone. That was my grandmother and them's thing for us. On the way to school, these people were on the porch and they called us niggers. Well, I had never been through that because we were crossing from 20th street going to 21st street to Lincoln Junior High School and they were really prejudiced down that way. I lived a block from them and had to go through it. A lot of them people knew me and their people. You know, it was a bad time for us. I didn't like being called out of my name and stuff.

Interviewer: Was it segregated?

Carolyn Nix: No, not really.

Interviewer: Where did people go on dates?
Carolyn Nix: I don't know because we didn't go on none.

Interviewer: How did duties break down by gender; household duties?

Carolyn Nix: The older you are is the more that you do. Me and Wilma did most of it because Aaron and Lele was little and as they grew, he cleaned his room, she cleaned her room, I cleaned my room and Wilma cleaned her room. Everybody worked together. My grandparents, they cleaned their room and then you had to go downstairs to clean the bathroom. It's just things that automatically falls on you. If you're told to do this, then that's what you do.

Interviewer: Did you garden when you were younger?

Carolyn Nix: Garden? No.

Interviewer: Did anybody in your family?

Carolyn Nix: My grandfather.

Interviewer: Can you give me an example of that?

Carolyn Nix: Of him gardening? He loved flowers. He loved greens. He would grow greens out the grown. He'd water tomatoes. Anything that you name. Plums. My grandfather was good at doing things with the soil.

Interviewer: Did you have expensive stuff?

Carolyn Nix: We weren't poor, but we weren't rich. What we wanted, we mostly got. You know what I'm saying? I learned how to babysit and make my money. I would babysit in the evening for my mom's friend and I would make money and I would take that money and buy clothes and stuff with it; what I wanted. I didn't need for nothing. My grandfather and them provided everything that I needed.

Interviewer: What was your favorite thing to do growing up, out of everything?

Carolyn Nix: Sing.

Interviewer: Why was that?

Carolyn Nix: It's just dear to my heart. I've been singing every since I was two, three years old.

Interviewer: Do you still sing?

Carolyn Nix: Yeah.

Interviewer: That's all I have for today.
Carolyn Nix: All right. Thank you.

Interviewer: Thank you.