

# TELLING THEIR STORIES

*In these short audio clips from our Oral History Trust, Northside Community Mentors tell stories about their experiences and share lessons they have learned. We've included short bios and transcripts. Teachers can use these clips to introduce lessons on the history of segregation and civil rights.*



**Ms. Carolyn Briggs** grew up on S. Merritt Mill road in a two-story rock house. As a child, she walked over a mile to go to elementary school in Northside – no matter if it was raining, snowing, or sleeting. She is a graduate of Lincoln High School and participated in the Civil Rights Movement in Chapel Hill as a teenager.

## **Audio: "Sit-Ins"**

In this clip, Ms. Carolyn talks about a sit-in at Longmeadow Dairy on Franklin Street in downtown Chapel Hill.

## **Transcript**

"Most of the students that were in there-- we were 14, 15 years old. So you marched and you demonstrated. The older ones experienced some hostilities. But the younger ones-- it was fun to work, to grow and to know that you could make a difference, that you could do something that would make a change. And with the movement, the marching, the sit-ins, I did get-- as they say-- in trouble. I didn't consider it trouble. Yes, you were arrested going to some of the sit-ins, but we were too young. So they'd take you in and kind of scare you-- you'd never been to jail. But then they'd let you go, because you were just a child."





**Mr. Ronnie Bynum** was born in Chapel Hill in 1959 and was one of seven children. His grandparents were from Chatham County and moved to town for work. His family spent many years living on Lindsay Street and Mitchell Lane in the Northside. Ronnie joined the military at the age of 17 and served for 7 years. He returned to Chapel Hill in 1991 and now spends his days volunteering at St. Joseph CME, where he is an active member.

## **Audio: "Carrboro Klan"**

In this audio clip, Ronnie Bynum talks to Heidi Dodson about what it was like in Carrboro before and after desegregation.

## **Transcript**

RB: "As far as Carrboro back in the day was, at 5, 5:30, before it gets dark, you can't be across the railroad track by Rise Biscuits. Because you couldn't go to Carr Mill Mall or that area. Why? Because the Klan would hurt you. You got to fight your way in or fight your way out. Or you just don't go there. And so it was a known thing, that even though we came together, it was just a known thing. Hey, you can't go into Carrboro at night. Not at night. Don't get caught across that track."

HD: "What about school activities? Didn't you go to Carrboro Elementary?"

RB: "Carrboro Elementary, the majority of it, we were chased on buses to go to school by the Klan. When we got off the bus at Carrboro school, they would run us into the school."

HD: "They would chase you?"

RB: "From the bus to the school. Or whenever the bus picked us up to take us home, they were there. So, they were holding ropes and burning crosses with flames, or whatever, torches. They were there. And it

took a lot of younger black men in high school, at Lincoln High School, to say, 'Y'all are not going to do this. We're not going to have that. And so it came back to where they had to fight for us, for us to just be in school. So, and not only Black Americans. There were also Whites that were standing with them, fighting side-by-side, saying, 'No. We're going to school. And this is our friend, and this is my son and grandson's friend. And they have a right to be here.' ... I look at the Freedom Fighter's wall and I'm like, okay, in these pictures, there is a lot of White America, White Chapel Hill and White Carrboro in those pictures that loved us, where it was okay, to grow up in Chapel Hill."



**Ms Linda Carver** grew up in Northside and participated in the Civil Rights movement even though her parents strictly forbade it. She once wrote, "I did participate in many marches at Colonial Drug Store, Fowler's Food Store. I am so glad that I did not, as the song says, 'Let Nobody Turn Me Round'!" She remembers the difficult years going to school right after desegregation, something she talks about in her oral history. Ms. Linda is married to Terry Carver who also grew up in Northside, and she is best friends with Ms. Carolyn (see above)!

### **Audio: "I Used to Sit at the Counter"**

Ms. Linda discusses what happened when "Big John," a local shop owner, refused to serve black customers --who made up the bulk of his business-- at his lunch counter.

### **Transcript**

"During civil rights, when we found out that he was so racist, it was just such a shock. When we were little, he and my father were good friends. And so we could go in his drug store. And he would say, 'Y'all can sit there. You know, kids, they don't know nothing about it why you can't sit down at the counter. So we would jump because we'd go in to get cherry Coke or something like that. We'd get up at the counter and he'd say, 'Y'all can sit here, but if you see somebody white come in, y'all gotta get up, you know because I can't let them see you sitting there. And so we sometimes forgot and somebody came in and they said something about us sitting at the counter, he's say, 'What are y'all doing at that counter?' He'd act like-- play it off like he didn't know we were there. So that was for me one of the hardest things. But he, at the end, he ended up having a nervous breakdown because it was just so much. And he fought it and fought it. His children fought it. His wife would stand over people when they were going to jail and she would urinate on them; his wife would do that. But they were the ones-- that was one of the places-- that was the hardest to get to change because he was not going to let--. And it was just a little counter that people just could get a hotdog. Not a Not a restaurant; just a little, small counter. But to fight that! And his business went completely down because his business was mostly black, more than white. And white. And so that made a big difference for him. But

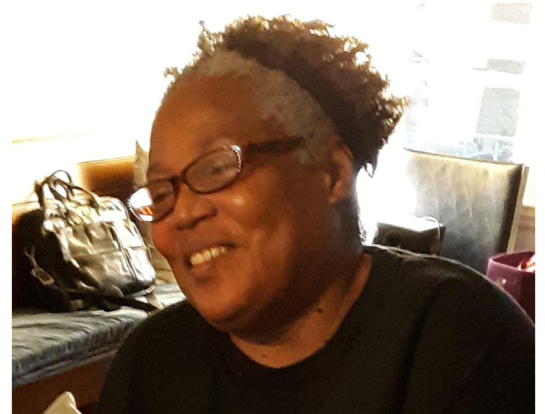
to fight that! And his business went completely down because his business was mostly black, more than white. And so that made a big difference for him. But that was when I knew about segregation the most, was during the civil rights movement, before I had not..."

### **Audio: "My Father's Business"**

Ms. Linda talks about the reason her father did not want his children to participate in civil rights marches.

### **Transcript**

"My father was never out to work for others. He did sometimes in between. But he was always out to own his own business. A lot of -- We saw that growing up. But during civil rights, it was hard because a lot of his customers were white. So the civil rights movement came around, and he told us we couldn't do anything with civil rights because he didn't know how that was going to affect his business. He was dealing with people who were going to, you know, maybe be his customers. So, we wanted to be part of it, so we knew we couldn't go to jail. But we would sneak and we would go and we were part of the movement, just because we would just go and picket and do all the things."





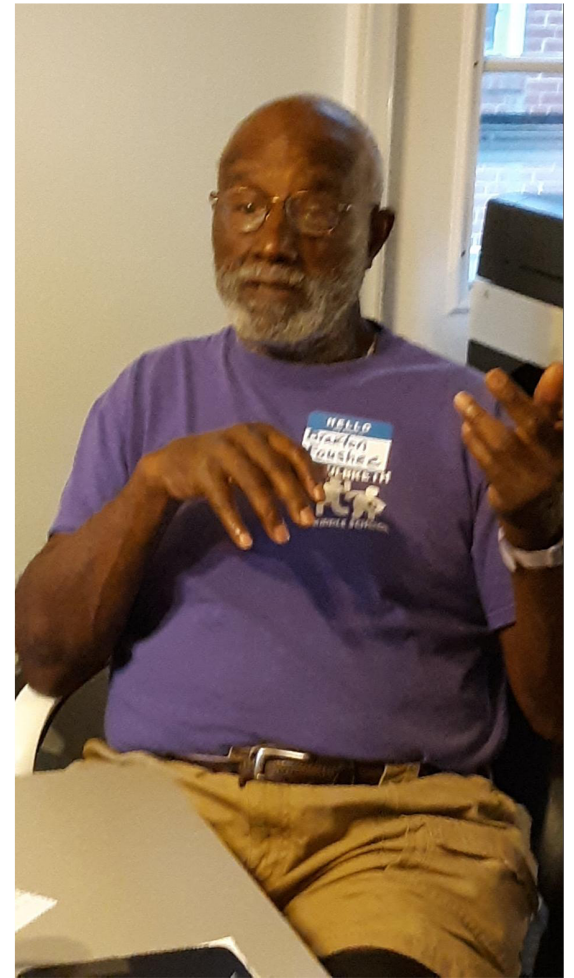
**Mr. Braxton Foushee** has so many memories of the civil rights marches and sit-ins since he, his brothers, and his cousins were all very involved. He remembers how important education was in his family and his community, how many black-owned businesses there were, and how long it took Northside School to get the basics the other elementary school had-- like a cafeteria. "Before we had a cafeteria, we used to get lunch at Bynum Weaver's [a little store close to the school]." He served as one of the first black Aldermen [town council member] in Carrboro and worked for the Chapel Hill schools for years.

## **Audio: "The Rock Wall"**

In this clip, Mr. Braxton tells the story of how the first sit-in in Chapel Hill was planned, just weeks after the sit-ins in Greensboro in February 1960.

### **Transcript**

"... it was a bunch of us guys in the neighborhood, and girls, we stayed in the old defined Northside, not the expanded Northside, and we used to meet on the corner every night and sit, and that was kind of where the neighborhood kids met at night. There was a streetlight, and we'd sit on the corner in front of one of our parents' homes. The wall is still there, but things have changed around there. But the wall is still there. And we used to sit out there and just sing and do stuff. So when the demonstrations started in Greensboro, we decided it was time to do it in Chapel Hill, too. So we started talking about what we were going to do and how we were going to do it, and we called a meeting. Of course, most of the kids were young, and we formed an executive committee and met and got in touch with some of the people in Greensboro. They came down and gave us some insight and some instructions and did some demonstrations. In a couple of weeks we started ours."





**Ms. Patricia Jackson** grew up in Chapel Hill, NC, and has been a member of St. Joseph CME for over forty years. She is active at Northside Elementary, the school she attended and her grandson now attends. Her mentors were Fred Hargraves and Howard Lee, and she also was influenced by strong women in her life, including her sister, Gladys Pendergraph-Brandon and mother-in-law, Marian Cheek Jackson.

## **Audio: "Fire Hose"**

In this audio clip, Ms. Pat (speaking with Della Pollock) tells the story of the time she went to Franklin Street and got caught up in a protest at Big John's pharmacy.

## **Transcript**

PJ: "From this church [St. Joseph CME] I remember growing up as little kids we could walk from here and go to Big John's pharmacy, which was just on the corner there on Franklin Street. But when desegregation time came, and when the students and the White people that were in charge, now we couldn't go there. So everytime we went You could go by there but you couldn't sit down. 'What do you mean we can't sit down? We sat down before.' So we went in and sat down. And you know what happened to us? They called the police from Chapel Hill. They came down, hooked their hoses, and hosed us out of the place. We were kids. We were 10, 11 years old. With a big water hose. We were inside and we were told to get out but we decided we weren't going to get out. So they said, 'Oh, yeah. You're getting out,' turned the hoses on us and hosed us. That's why I wanted Carolyn to stay. She and I were together when that happened to us. Horrible."

DP: "So, what actually happened to you?"

PJ: "So by the time we got hosed, now we're so humiliated at the time. But then, too, we wer 12, 13

so it was kind of funny, so you just kind of brush it off and get up and run home and tell what happened to us. Horrible."

DP: "So, what actually happened to you?"

PJ: "So by the time we got hosed, now we're so humiliated at the time. But then, too, we were 12, 13, so it was kind of funny, so you just kind of brush it off and get up and run home and tell what happened to you. And then your mother is saying, 'Okay, now,' your mother who is still coming from the era of, this is still the university, some place that they laud and magnify: 'What were you doing?' So we got a beating for being down there."





## ***Ms. Gladys Pendergraph-Brandon***

Ms. Pat Jackson's oldest sister, lives by one of her favorite sayings: "When life gives you lemons, make lemonade!" She runs "Heavenly Groceries/Comida Celestial" and has been a long-time active member of St. Joseph CME. Gladys' home on Merritt Mill Rd. was built by her grandfather, who was one of Chapel Hill's famed masons who lent their expertise to UNC's stone walls and walkways.

### ***Audio: "Lemonade"***

In this audio clip, Ms. Gladys talks to Della Pollock about her approach to life.

### ***Transcript***

GPB: "You gonna give me a lemon. Am I gonna sit there and suck on that sour lemon constantly? Or am I gonna take the lemon and make me some lemonade that's going to be sweet?"

DP: "Do you think of this as personality or do you think of it as having been raised up in the church a certain way?"

GPB: "I think that I was blessed with a good family, good strong women in my life, good, strong grandmother, my great-grandmother, my father, my mother. You know I never had nobody to tell me what I could not do. I always thought, I can do anything I want. You can be anything you would like to be. But you have to be what you would like to be. Sure, it's not all been good. And I'm sure, I've had some bad things. I haven't had a patch of roses. But through the wisdom, through the good Lord, through something, I had a good foundation to build on."

DP: "So, if somebody described you as lacking in some way, you need somebody else's help, somebody presumed that you needed help, how would you react?"

GPB: "I would probably ask them, 'What do I need help with?' That would be my question. Because I don't presume to know it all and you know, I have a very strong personality."

DP: "Yes, I've noticed!" [Laughter]

GPB: "But I think I'm hopefully, hopefully, that I'm bigger, that I have that foundation, to accept criticism. If something could be better, I would love to know."





**Rev. Albert Williams** was the minister at Staunton Memorial CME Church in Pittsboro. As a Lincoln High School student, he was one of the students who participated in Chapel Hill's first sit-in at Colonial Drug on Franklin Street, making him one of the so-called, "Chapel Hill Nine." He is a lifetime resident of the area and was the first African American firefighter in Chapel Hill.

## **Audio: "I Had to Be Interviewed"**

In this short clip, Rev. Williams tells the story of his 1968 interview for a position with the Chapel Hill Fire Department.

### **Transcript**

"I had to be interviewed by a panel of fire personnel. They were fire chiefs and fire officers from various departments around the state. One of the questions, one of the many questions that stood out in my mind-- they asked me, 'What would you do if you were given an order to put the fire hose to break up a crowd. Would you do it?' That was a hot question to me, at that time. And in my mind, I said, 'Well, here goes. I won't get the job.' I said, 'No, sir, I would not. I would not put the firehouse on a crowd to break up any type of disturbance, use a firehose on people.' Mind you, I had already been in the military service. I had had riot training, you know. And the year that I was hired-- in 1968-- the civil rights demonstrations were still peaking, you know. They had burnings, even in Oxford, in Durham, around the area of Washington, D.C., in Greensboro. In Durham they had called-- that was before the interview-- they had called out the national guard."

