

Interview with Thelma Caldwell for the YWCA of Asheville 100 Years Oral History Project by Dorothy Joines on November 18, 1992

JOINES: This is November the eighteenth 1992, Dorothy Joines, talking with Thelma Caldwell. And I first heard about you from Florence Ryan who last week turned ninety-eight. And I said, who is Thelma Caldwell. And it was a great introduction for me because I made up my mind that one way or another I was going to have some time with you. And I went to the meeting where all of you were being honored. And we'll talk about that as we go on historically. But start out with you and where you began and how you became involved and what you did.

CALDWELL: Well, I was born in Rockingham, North Carolina. And that's a small town on the other side of Charlotte, North Carolina about seventy miles. And I went to school, college, Shaw University in Raleigh. And after I graduated from Shaw University I taught school in my hometown for ten years. And that's where I met my husband. He was a CCC Camp director and he was being transferred to Portland, Maine. And so it meant that I had to resign if I was going to be with him to go to Portland, Maine, so I resigned teaching and went to Portland, Maine.

And it was an experience that I, that's hard to describe because I could never, could never forget it. It was my first real contact with a white person. Our superintendent came to the schools and he, of course, distanced himself.

We went to town every afternoon. I have another friend that I just visited recently in Washington. And we laughed and talked about it every afternoon. We didn't have anything else to do. We walked about a mile to town, looked around, window shopping, bought a little stuff and then came on back.

And, after going to Portland, Maine, though, it was an experience like day and night. I'd never had any contact, as I said, with a white person on a social level. And there, oh, we were just on the dance floor and we were going places together. And someone heard about me at the YWCA and invited me up to a public affairs meeting. And I went there and fell in love with the YWCA. And I'm still in love with the YWCA. They took me in like I was a long lost friend. I'd never felt so welcomed. I just felt like I had been knowing them all my life.

So I started taking classes there. I took an art class. Didn't even know anything about art, but I just took an art class there. And I visited their various public affairs attendance. And, one day they were going to bring Joe Lewis there. And I was to bring a few friends from the USO. All of us went. And that place was really, really crowded.

They'd never seen--. They didn't know that that many blacks were in Portland, Maine, because when I went there there was only five families, five black families living there. And we worked with the sailors as they came in from the ports, my husband did. And I just worked with (unclear) just did anything to make programming.

We had all kinds of little games and activities and naming. And would start sometime with one person's name in a row and see how many could remember each person's name all the way around until you get back to the next person. And that was stuff even they hadn't gotten, you see. So that was new to them.

So, after I got so good in Portland--. I guess I was in Portland, Maine. I just felt like that I went there first as a volunteer and they kept saying you do so many little things up and out of the place so much that they suggested that I become a professional worker. And they wrote themselves, the director did, to Wilmington, Delaware. And they made me the teenage program director.

And so I had three applications from the YWCA and (unclear). I said what kind of place is this where you can get three applications to go to work. I could have gone to Philadelphia. I could have gone to New Jersey and other places in New Jersey. And then I chose Wilmington, Delaware. And that's where I went for three years as a teenage program director.

And it was the most widening experience I think I ever, I really ever had. I just don't know. It just beat teaching all together, and yet I thought teaching was great because I had the eleventh grade and then the twelfth grade. It was first eleventh grade and then extended it by a grade to the twelfth. And I just thought boy, this is something. I put my whole self into it and before I could do anything they were saying come to Dayton, Ohio. And that's where I went and spent, I think it's eleven or twelve years in Dayton, Ohio.

And I went there as a branch, what they call a branch executive. And as a branch executive director you, you work in your neighborhood which was in my particular case, it was a black community. So it was called the Phyllis Wheatley YWCA. So I worked there in Dayton until, oh, I got promoted I guess I would say to associate executive director. And then I retired and came home. My husband's job gave out and came home.

And wasn't home before too long before they said they--. I got a letter wanting to know if I'd like to go to Horton, Papua, New Guinea. And I said, Papua, New Guinea, where in the world is Papua, New Guinea. And they laughed and they, we knew that was the first thing you were going to ask, where in the world is Papua, New Guinea. I said, yeah. I'm just ready to go. So, maybe it was six or eight months later that I left here and went to--. I left here on a leave of absence I would say and went to Papua, New Guinea.

And when they saw me--. I don't know what they were expecting because they had the picture. But they stood there and just looked. They didn't come to embrace me. They didn't do it. They just looked. And finally, the girl from Australia who had was, had married one of the Papua, New Guineas, she put her arms around me and then the other girls all came up and put their arms around me. What was this like?

And all the way in the car to the YWCA they talked, the, the New Guinea language, a pigeon language. And I couldn't understand what they were talking about. But they would laugh and talk and just be very excited about what they were saying. I sat back there and my stomach just going

around and around. I was wondering well, who are they talking about? Is it me? I would know if they was talking about me. So I gave it up as being meek because they finally, I could see they did accept me. And I stayed there and worked with them and—

DJ: Did they ever tell you what their reaction was?

TC: No. I don't think I ever asked them. And they were all colors. Because a little girl put her arm out beside mine one day and she said, brown, brown like me. But they varied in colors. They were almost as light as you are as far as light skinned would be because they were mixed with the Australians already, you see. So that made them a different—

DJ: But you never found out what they expected?

TC: No.

DJ: You still wonder.

TC: They accepted me. And figured it must have been all right.

DJ: And you were there for a year?

TC: Yeah. I stayed there one year. And, I didn't know how you would describe it except it was hot. And that would be, that would be the truth, hot, so hot that you could not put your hands on the table to write or anything like that unless you put a cover or a piece of paper or a towel or something under it. It was just hot. And there were two seasons, the rainy season and the hot season. And it was hot all the time, although the season that it rained it was real muggy, muggy hot.

DJ: And you had to make your own clothes?

TC: Yes. I loved to do embroidery work anyway. Needlework was one of my hobbies. So I began to take their patterns. And then be very reasonably could making my own embroidery around the yoke and the neck and down the front. I made several like that.

DJ: You couldn't wear the clothes you took with you.

TC: No. It was too hot for that. I carried mostly slacks. I had a dress or two but mostly slacks. And the dresses just didn't look like their dresses so I wanted to get in their clothes. And yet, Mr. Morie, I think that was his name, SiMorie, said that he would like for people who came from outside of his country to wear their garb so that they could see how we dressed and how people from other countries dressed rather than coming and copying immediately, you know, putting on what they had on. But that's what I did.

DJ: So it made you more acceptable.

TC: Yes. I felt that they accepted me more.

DJ: Did you learn their language?

TC: Just a few words. I could say buma-ha and like that and good morning and good night and good morning, you know, little things like that.

DJ: You said earlier that you loved teaching but there was something about Y work that was even more special. Can you tell me about that?

TC: Yes. I think it was. It was not a subject so much that I was teaching but it was teaching, working with people. And there we were in to changing

attitudes and ideas. And it seems to me that that was how you would get to really know them. You just wanted to be with them. You learned to love them instead of loving your subject. You know you weren't teaching English or teaching history, you were really just being with the people and working with them in a way that they felt--. They didn't really know they were being taught I don't think. I mean I think they just kind of accepted you and you accepted them and kind of mingled together.

DJ: You touched a lot of lives.

TC: A lot of lives, I have. And I have to look in my scrapbook sometimes to bring them all back. And then, when I do look at the scrapbook I can remember, oh, yeah, I see now what happened.

DJ: And you could see changes because of you.

TC: Yes. I could see myself changing, too. [Laughs] I learned as much from them it seems as they did from me.

DJ: You had a lot of shifts that you had gone through, a lot of shifts from going into a northern city and finding that the Y was very accepting, and then, knowing that--. With coming to Asheville, had you any experiences in Asheville before? Did you know about the city when you were--?

TC: I had a schoolmate here. And she's passed since I've been here. But I knew she was here. And that's where I stayed the first two or three nights and then after---

This house right here was being built, the Slaughter house, Mrs. Slaughter. And then I moved in with Mrs. Slaughter and I stayed for the year. And after that year I built this house with my husband, we built the house here. We bought the land from Mr. Daly and built a house here.

And so, I saw them build my house. And every morning at eight o'clock, I declare, I've never seen anything more punctual, those hammers would stop. They were on time. They worked and then when time for lunch, they'd stop and they'd start right back on time. They did not waste time. I just couldn't help but admire seeing someone look as if they were enjoying the work that they were doing.

And Mr. Robinson really enjoyed building this house. He would show it off and tell people different features about it and things that he let me add to it and things that he had brought in from, you know, a design that he had found. And we just worked together on building it. So it's really my house.

DJ: You have a beautiful location and view of the city, and a neighbor behind you that you cared about and lovely rockwork at the front.

TC: Beautiful rockwork. They took pride in doing it. That was one of the things that made me happy about it. They, they enjoyed it.

DJ: What was Asheville like when you first came? You came with the hat and glove time.

TC: Oh, yes. I, you wouldn't dare go to church without your hat and gloves. And, and it was nice, you know. I mean it makes you feel good going with



your hat and gloves because you knew Sunday was Sunday and that was one of the ways you would know.

DJ: What church did you go to?

TC: I went to--. I attended all of them. My husband hadn't come. I used to visit around several churches and finally settled at Mount Zion Missionary Baptist Church. And it--. Of all the churches, one of them girls told me, of all the churches, you would go and choose that one. But that's, that's where the young lady that I, you know, replaced was speaking at the church on something. I've never really known too much about it. She spoke up and whatever she said didn't please the pastor or something. And he said something about, you told me that. And she dropped in her seat and she stayed in a stroke period for the rest of her life until she died. And so that was the period that I, that was that situation.

DJ: This was in church that it happened?

TC: It was church where the girl dropped down back into her seat from something that the minister said to her. And I never could it straightened out. But I didn't know that at the time. And so when I joined the church is when the preacher said you would go and join. I said that was the one I wanted to go to.

DJ: Well, you were called then because she was incapacitated.

TC: Yes.

DJ: And they needed--. They needed somebody.

TC: Yes. I had resigned from Portland, Maine. I was home not a whole year before they needed, they called me to come. And so I decided, well, I'll come and see. But I had made a reservation and had transported everything to go overseas with my three friends from Dayton, Ohio, two friends from Dayton, Ohio. And so they waited because that was in March and I came here in September.

DJ: And you were going to do what overseas?

TC: Oh, just visiting.

DJ: No Y work?

TC: No Y work, no, just, just going from place to place. When we got in Ireland the friend that was with us, that was her home. And so we went sightseeing all over. That was just my year. [Laughs] That's my treat to me.

DJ: And then they got you again.

TC: Yeah. I wasn't sure that that was--. I was through with the Y. I wasn't going to have to--. I wasn't even--. Any job I've ever worked on had teaching and was teenage program director. I would always leave that job with a good spirit (unclear) because you never know when you want to come back. You never know when you're going to get a reference. And, oh, I wouldn't leave otherwise so I was, I was in good spirits when I left.

DJ: Were you surprised when they called you?

TC: Yes. I thought, well, these guys, you know, I'll try it again.

DJ: Well, you really got yourself into a very difficult period.

TC: But see here there was two, there was a branch and a central. That's what we called them. The one on 23 Grove Street was called the central and the one over here on, what's the street over on, Ashland, that was called a branch. And my job, of course, having come from Portland, Maine, I knew it could work, you see. And my job was to see that they, they got together. We integrated. We went to break it down desegregation and at the same time we were getting exposure and maybe learning from each other things that we'd never learned, you see, in the classroom because you didn't have that kind of a contact.

So, when we moved here, when I came back, we were in the midst of building. They already had raised most of the money for the building. And they were going to build over here on South Richfork, the lower end. And someone found a better location. So I know that one of these pictures on January the thirteenth, I think the early morning (unclear) Mrs. Bryant was on, well that was when we had the dedication, the breaking of the ground. So I helped build this one up here because that was mine. That's where I started from the ground up when we built the YWCA. And they stayed there until I went over, till I retired and then I went overseas.

DJ: Tell me more about Asheville when you were here and the changes that you saw.

TC: Well, when I came it was just two, two separate buildings. And one night we went up there for what they call electoral. They had electors, I think they were called. There was members who could vote. And we had an

annual meeting. And I carried evidently too many. And that was a little more than Winston Hull wanted to see.

DJ: I don't understand.

TC: We carried too many blacks. This is one of the first occasions in which a lot of black people went to the central building. And see they would come for our annual meeting, be one or two. But when they had their annual meeting I just carried a batch of them. So there were too many for Mrs. Hull. She said she wasn't coming back if you were going to take over that one, too. Said we wasn't planning on taking that one, too, but we were there that night.

DJ: She was the director of the—

TC: She was the president of the YWCA. She was executive director---. I beg your pardon. She was the executive director of the YWCA.

DJ: Who were you all responsible to, headquarters, YWCA headquarters?

TC: First, it would be before we integrated and such, it was local YWCA that was responsible to the central YWCA.

DJ: So you were responsible to Mrs. Hull?

TC: She was the president. I was responsible to Mildred Parker.

DJ: Mildred Parker.

TC: Do you know that family?

DJ: I know the Parker family.

TC: Yeah.

DJ: That's Mary Parker and Frank.

TC: Yeah, Frank and Joe, that, that part, that family.

DJ: And they were involved with the Y as—

TC: It was their--. It was their Art I believe who was the executive director of the YWCA when--. I think so. I may have it mixed up, but I think it was their Art (unclear).

DJ: So how would you function and meet and make plans in the city? How would--? How would these two separate organizations—

TC: Only through--. At first it was only through the president, the chairman of the committee, or administration and myself. We would meet with the executive director and the board. That was the only connections we were having.

The black and whites were not mixing as such. And that's where I came into play was to try to get these two organizations as one. So the one organization--. It was one organization when I left and it's still one organization.

DJ: And, your experience in Portland let you—

TC: It freed me, I would say.

DJ: You knew.

TC: Because I knew it could happen. I knew it could work without the fences and the walls up because I had that experience with the USO, the girls coming and going and the sailors coming and going. It was, it was just like day and night experience. You went from a small town in the south where there was no mixing to, to a place where they went out of their way to mix, you know. And that was sort of the differences.

DJ: And knowing that you were able to convey that faith and competence to other people.

TC: I tried to and I think I did.

DJ: And you had a lot going for you, too. It was fortunate that you both had a new building.

TC: Yes. The central building was not new but it was, it was a residence and it was the Y. It was called the Y. And then when we started here and built the YWCA I guess what years was in between, like three or four years maybe, that building was, we were spending too much money on it. The plumbing was costing and everything. The electrician was costing. All this wiring and things were wearing out. They decided that we could try working in one organization. And so it was in building this, this branch here became just the YWCA.

DJ: That was fortunate.

TC: Yeah.

DJ: It was fortunate that you weren't dealing with two brand new buildings.

TC: No, just the one.

DJ: And, then you'd have that as an additional hurdle. The Y pool is very impressive. And that must have been not only very expensive to build and a lot of background on that, but a cohesive factor. Can you talk about that?

TC: Well, I think the--. It was something that they felt maybe blacks wouldn't use too much, you know. There was just all kinds of little excuses on the side for not really building it. But once we closed, was in the process of closing the Grove Street building, we knew we would have to have a pool.

DJ: Was there one at the Grove Street?

TC: Yeah, that was it. That was the only place there was a pool was at the Grove Street building. See, the branch didn't have a pool. And they pretended we wouldn't use it anyway if we had one because at that time blacks didn't want to get their hair wet. And they thought that might have something to do with it and so they wouldn't be attending. But, they didn't. They would go in the pool about as much as they've always gone in the pool.

DJ: And the fact that it was too expensive could fix that up.

TC: Yeah. That was it. Too expensive because they would say there was, catch hold of one of the pipes and it would break above where they were holding and so they couldn't--. It was just going to be too expensive to fix over.

And I remember one of the trustees was a Mr. Gill. And he said that he just felt like now was the time when we did it. Just go ahead into it. I

had good support. There was some, of course, who did not, who said they wouldn't be back, you know, that kind of thing. But we still moved on.

DJ: You mentioned the boosters. Can you tell me about that?

TC: Yeah. The boosters is a club that was--. The boosters got started while I was overseas. Jo Duckie was the executive director while I was gone. She was the program director while I was here. And so she was the executive director while I was gone. She was acting executive director.

And I don't know how the boosters got really started, under whom. I believe just a few of the black women decided they wanted something that they called their own and they started the booster club. And it became very supportive for the YWCA but it was separate. They met as a black unit.

And of course I had been working so hard. I had worked so hard to get everything integrated, all the fourth grade swimming classes and all those things. I just thought (unclear).

DJ: Two steps forward, one step back.

TC: And I remember Mr. Hite who said I would never integrate it. And I said I was going to integrate. And surely enough, we got it integrated but--. I think the only thing to do was to--. Asheville's, the YMCA finally did it. They just didn't need two as small as this community is.

DJ: Besides, it was against your principle.

TC: Right.

DJ: Now what did you do about integrating the boosters? Were you able to?



TC: They, they just happened since--. That's recent. I think they integrated while--. They hasn't been over two, three or four years, I don't think. Times flies so. But they just integrated. I was determined that we was going to be integrated all the way through. I, I--. It was going to be from all the grades and all the clubs.

I had one-third--. We'd go to these meetings. See we were working on--. See the whole community and the city and, and all was working on integration at that period. Well, I had one-third white, one-third black and one-third we would get all we could of various kinds of people with skills. It didn't make any--. So, so it was a well integrated board, black and white.

DJ: How'd you go about that?

TC: Well, I knew that--. I knew leadership--. Florence Stradley Christmas did, too, was here in the community. Florence Rhine, and there were several others, Mrs. Johnson. I can't even recall her name, Betty, Betty Johnson. All of us were working at it. Jo Denton.

And we, we knew people who, who we could approach the same way when we wanted to integrate the swimming pool. We got two little black boys first who said they didn't have to worry about their hair or anything and got the mother to consent. And it wasn't long before the mother went in with them and it, you know, grew from that.

It was intentional, everything that we did. It was no haphazard thing. We sat down and calculated the risks. And we also sat down and said who would help us do it. And, and (unclear). There were so many who were

just glad to be part of trying to break, you know, what was on that side.

Wanted to be saying that they were helping so we didn't have that much of a problem.

DJ: So you divided your board so that you were balanced?

TC: Yes. We were well balanced.

DJ: Did you work with people in education and the schools? Were you all--?

TC: Yes. We had a one-day--. It was a--. I don't know how often they would do it. But once a month the school would let the children come to the YWCA. And we broke them down into groups. And they had a day--. It was--. I think it was high school groups. We had a whole day with them there and worked with them in trying to--. Well, at that time, integration was so new. We were just trying to expose them and, and let them see that, you know, nothing was going to happen and everybody could get along and all that.

DJ: Interesting that the schools and the Ys have been more successful than the churches.

TC: Right. I, I guess the churches, that's the last hold. I guess they figure (unclear). They're not going to turn it a loose.

DJ: Interesting that.

TC: Yeah. At my church we had--. I know there was one white member, Miss McCoy. I know--. And she still lives but she's been ill for a good while. I know that. And there is a Nix family there. I think she's from one of the

islands. I'm not sure. But they have two lovely children. And I think that's it.

But the churches don't--. I don't know what it is about that, it that keeps them, except, I guess, it just feels like that is something that belongs to each person, their religion. They don't mix (unclear).

DJ: Could be theological that—

TC: Yeah. It could be that because each has his own.

DJ: You have difference in emphasis in the black churches just as you have in the white, I would imagine.

TC: I would think so. I really do. It would be—

DJ: You indicated you have tried out several churches.

TC: Yeah.

DJ: Did you find much difference between one and the other?

TC: Well, I just felt like--. Well, you know, I guess one of the main differences is I found more of the Mount Zion members working in the Y. And they would vie with each other. And that was one of the largest churches. And we--. One of the things we had was a big yearly membership drive. And that church brought in the most members. And so I went down there.

DJ: You went where your friends went.

TC: Yeah.

DJ: That, that's a large part of going to church. And, also, there is a theological difference between in, in the Christian from the very austere all the way through.

TC: This, this, this was kind of formal. It's getting so now it's not as formal as it used to be. We used to be real formal down there. But we have a young black highly educated minister. He has his Ph.D. He delivers a good sermon and he has some good organization. And now we're in the process of beginning to make plans to building--. I guess we'll renovate the building that we're in now starting with the roof which leaks, I understand, and then coming on down and completing the sanctuary as far as decorations and other I guess necessary--. I guess, I guess it's just to make the sanctuary more of a sanctuary. And then start into the Sunday school rooms and the recreation rooms that's in the making. We've been meeting now in the—

DJ: You've mentioned that there was a mixed family there. Do you see many mixed families in Asheville? And, if you do, how, how do they fit into the community? Is there—

TC: I don't run into too many of them. I'm pretty--. I guess I'm pretty close myself. I just go now to the church and maybe to the mall. And I have one friend who is white and we run around together. And that's just about the extent.

DJ: I know that sometimes they're more comfortable in big cities like New York, San Francisco—

TC: When I go to New York that my sister goes to, the church she goes to is just mixed, you know, thoroughly mixed. And so is the one Lawrence goes to. And Lawrence is (unclear). But he's a Methodist so he's--. I'm the only Baptist. The rest are Methodists. My mother was a Methodist. My mother was Baptist and then, and she married my father she went into the Methodist with him. And when he died she went Baptist. And of course, I had to go into a Baptist school somewhere. And when I came back I taught (unclear) Baptist school.

DJ: You mentioned, you mentioned family. You have--. Your, your sister you said is—

TC: I have a sister who lives in New York. And she'll be here for the Christmas holidays. And I have a brother who lives in Rockingham. And he'll be here for the, for Thanksgiving. So he's coming next Thursday. He'll stay with me because I'm alone now. My husband is in--. You know he's in the retirement--. It's home, health, Fletcher Home Health. It seems like it has a home health center. It looks like it has another word in it. But he's there and he's been there just about two months. So I'm, I'm really living here alone and that's a new experience. Opening the house at night or in evenings--most of the time I don't go out at night. But opening the house and finding no one here when he stayed here all the time. He never went out.

DJ: What did he do after he retired? Did he--?

TC: He just worked with--. He sold stock and bonds. (Unclear)

DJ: In Asheville?

TC: In Asheville, yeah.

DJ: But he came because you had your—

TC: Yes, because we'd gone to Rockingham to retire. That's what we thought.

DJ: And then you were how long--? How long were you with the Y here, fourteen years, wasn't it?

TC: I think I saw something in there, but I thought I stayed here fourteen years.

DJ: Yeah, I think so. And you've seen a lot of change in the city.

TC: Yes. There's been a lot of changes. People move now with much more ease. You know it's no question as to whether will I be served or won't I be served, you know, that kind of thing going and waiting.

I know I've gone it was mainly in Dayton when we were really breaking down some segregation was there. I'd go first and wait and see if they were going to serve. And, of course, we probably won't get any service. And then as soon as your white friends who've already planned this come in you get service. It was that kind of a, of a thing. It was the little nitty gritty, breaking down little things. It made you--. Well, when people see one person being accepted it gave them courage to go and do it, too, you know.

DJ: You were always on the front edge, weren't you?

TC: Yeah, pretty much. It didn't hurt my feelings that much, you know. I kind of thought I understood what it was all about and kind of felt sorry for, felt sorry for them. They didn't give me a chance to know them and they didn't, didn't get the chance to know me.

DJ: That was their loss. Good for you. Well, Florence was telling me about Mrs. Roosevelt coming to town.

TC: Yes.

DJ: And I don't remember very much about what the meeting was, but she contacted you and the meeting was held at your Y.

TC: Um-hmm.

DJ: And, evidently there was so many people there was a problem about whether the floors would hold her. The police would said it was overcrowded. Do you remember anything about that?

TC: Just vaguely, but I do remember.

DJ: He was coming through about the TV, TVA, wasn't that it?

TC: That was it. It was the Tennessee Valley or something like that. They were coming through. And, you know, that's very vague, but I do know that Mrs. Roosevelt came. And I had the opportunity to meet her and sit with her. And I don't even know what we talked about or anything. But it was just the idea and the thrill. And it was just a rich experience.

DJ: Well, the fact that she was doing that.

TC: Yeah.

DJ: And it was very symbolic.

TC: Very symbolic, yes.

DJ: Because I remember the experience in Washington, D. C. with Maryann Anderson. And she'd been a member of the DAR or Colonial Dames or something--

TC: The DAR is the one that wouldn't let her in, wasn't it? She had to sing on the Capitol and, you know--

DJ: Yeah. And so Mrs. Roosevelt resigned.

TC: Yes. I remember that, too.

DJ: That was a big boost, wasn't it?

TC: Um-hmm, it was.

DJ: Was that something your people were, were happy to see? Was that--?

TC: Yes. It was just another lift, something that they knew could happen, you know. And I think they were just proud, proud of being a part of it and being in the company of Mrs. Roosevelt. I had just about forgotten that one. But it was an interesting--. It was exciting. I just tell you. I just lived to the fullest.

DJ: The lifts that you've had you probably can remember high points. Were there others, anything that happened here in Asheville?



TC: Well, let me see. I know that--. I'm just sure there, there had to be.

DJ: The Parkers must have been—

TC: Yeah. We, we were--. We worked together in Church Women United. And I worked with ABW and I worked with United Nations Association. I, I was on a lot of boards. A lot of times it happened because black women were working a lot, you know, those who could be exposed were working a lot and couldn't make the meetings in the daytime. And I could make daytime meetings. When I worked at the Y I could still get off and go to daytime meetings. See that was a part of my job, too.

DJ: There are a number of organizations in town that I know nothing about. I went to the Gambe Festival.

TC: Gumbe.

DJ: Gumbe?

TC: Um-hmm. That was connected with the YMI. Is that what you're talking about? Yeah. That's once a year, too, and--. I didn't go this year but I've been a part of it, you know, in the past. And they have, I know, all kinds of food, do dances and things of that nature.

DJ: Tremendous spirit, tremendous.

TC: Yeah.

DJ: And I realize that there are a lot of organizations that I didn't know anything about. Can you speak about any of those?

