

Margaret Fuller

Side 1:

She starts the interview by paying homage to her great great grandmother, for whom she was named, who "came out of slavery." She has not done a family search in deference to that ancestor who gave birth to children "against her will." Her grandmother had three children: her mother, Georgia, and two aunts, Bessie and Christine. They were all domestic workers. Her mother stopped school to help her grandmother who was a laundress. [Dora Wallace, Georgia Scott, Bessie Richie, Christine Williams]

[42] She and her three sisters and three brothers grew up on Jason Street - off Hill Street. It was a community where everyone knew each other and lived side by side, where the amount of income made little difference. Mr. Harper and Hooney "Mac" McQueen were Pullman porters. Meetings were held in the YMI. [Mr. Harper, Erline McQueen]

[56] She attended Hill Street School (now Isaac Dixon) and graduated from Stephens-Lee where she had unique teachers with whom she still has contact. [Miss Gladys Forney, Mrs. Ethel White, Mrs. Burchett, Mr. & Mrs. Cooper, Mr. Charles Boland, Mr. & Mrs. Washington]

[68] She attended Hill Street Baptist Church which is now building an addition. Avery baptized her and her children. There was a strong sense of community. [Rev. Nilous Avery]

[73] She never "felt the sense of being less than anyone else." Her mother told her that you could do whatever you want to. Her mother worked for Mr. Fletcher before Maria became Miss America. [Beale Fletcher, Maria Fletcher]

[100] She worked in the garden as a girl. Her Aunt Bessie was a cook and a naturalist.

[115] She didn't know about the full effects of segregation until she moved to Chicago when she was eighteen years old. She was used to going to town on the bus from Montford and shopping for her mother on Patton Avenue. She learned to be independent this way. She was brought up with the sense she could achieve. The houses were substandard and pipes froze and broke in the winter, but "excellence was not based on what you have but what you were." She passed this on to her children. They didn't know they were poor. There was always food. "Pop" Ben Jones worked for the Asheville Ice & Storage Company and delivered ice for the ice boxes of the community. ["Pop" Ben Jones]

[168] She feels that both black and white women have a strong bond [both subservient to men] and, though close to each other during the day, they could not recognize each other on the street. White women, knowing she is divorced, seem to feel this is easier [or to be expected] in black families. She said that in slavery the men were separated out of the house, which is not natural.

[206] She feels she was molded by her teachers and church had an integral part in her life. She still teaches Sunday School. Her four children went to college. She is an elder in her church

[This title does not relate to age] and talks to young people with problems. [Miss Gladys Forney, Miss Rumley]

[250] She understands white women who face the "glass ceiling" facing women of both races.

[255] After Margaret graduated from high school, her sister Mildred Scott took Margaret and their mother to Chicago. Scott didn't want her younger sister to end up cleaning houses. In 1962 Asheville was supposed to integrate schools but didn't do so. [Mildred Scott]

[279] A Sunday School teacher, who also owned Roland's Jewelry store, was an advocate for equality and organized a picket of the A&P grocery store which stood where the Health Department is now. The store submitted and hired black bag boys. [William Roland]

[333] She has been administrative coordinator at the YMI for three years. She refers to herself as a semi-professional who lends support to professionals. For fifteen years she worked for the city on the switchboard at the Civic Center. When her children were grown and she was offered the chance, she took the risk, which she found scary, and was employed at the YMI. Gallery manager Connie Bostic taught her a lot about curating exhibitions. [Connie Bostic (owner of Zone 1 Gallery on Biltmore Ave.)]

[370] During her youth, she went to day camp and visited the library at the YMI, so this is a return home for her.

[430] When she returned to Asheville, she heard the Board of Education burned the books used by the blacks when schools were integrated [Lettie Polite said this was not true - only the unusable books were destroyed]. She attended the Stephens-Lee reunion (see Harrison and Haith tapes) which she referred to as the Castle on the Hill. The teachers molded values and cared about students.

[420] She did not recognize the city when she returned in 1976, having been gone twelve years. The highway divided neighborhoods at the cost of the loss of the black community. The barracks-like structures, appropriate for men temporarily on military bases, did not create a home-like atmosphere. [Logan Delany]

[500] Young people have been fooled into thinking they could have the "grand life" with no effort. They were enticed into selling drugs and tricked into thinking that you are what you have.

[540] For five years she lived in Deaverview (a project) where there was a sense of community; however, this needs to be cultivated.

Side 2:

After the YMI was renovated, many activities were possible. The Jesse G. Ray multi-purpose room gave space for shows and bazaars. [Jesse Ray]

[2/30] The YMI Cultural Center [part of the Pack Place Art Center] exhibits works by local, national, and international artists. The center did not have funds to pay an artist, so they "just asked," and "Big Al" [Carter] came and painted the mural. In it (see enclosure) there is a black man under a tree with a book in his hand, a man representing Stephens asking Vanderbilt to build the center, according to Baxter, who had been an advocate, and a member of the YMI Jazz Band. [Wanda Henry Coleman, Alan D. Carter ("Big Al"), Prof. Edward Stephens (Principal of first black public school), George Vanderbilt, Johnny Baxter]

[2/65] The 12th Goombay Festival which just finished was started in 1988 by friends of the YMI. There are committees for various programs which interact with other cultural centers. [Sophie Dixon, Jackie King, Wanda Henry Coleman]

[2/91] Goombay was started as a way to raise money and offer exposure to businesses that were not mainstream. Crafts people were charged for their booths and had a chance to test the market. Entertainers were paid.

[2/101] The African Expo, held in the Ray Auditorium, gives African Americans an alternative market. They may not want to mainstream. [I attended and found the room crowded and filled with some 'upscale' merchandise as well as craft products and books by black authors.]

[2/113] At 70 Wall Street a woman has just started selling children's clothes she had made. [excellent taste] (Her card is enclosed.)

[2/117] When the parking garage was built, which faces Biltmore Ave. and has a side on Eagle Street, 5 business shops were built. This is under the Economic Development program.

[2/125] Her four children have gone to college. [Sharon, Kimberly, Tyrone, Kenneth]

[2/150] She reviews her philosophy and her appreciation of the women in her life - mother, aunts, and grandmother.

[2/291] She was going back to school to get a degree in cultural art but feels fulfilled and validated in what she is doing