



Shavana James
Southern Maid Donuts
Bossier City, Louisiana

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Jaime Cantrell: This is Dr. Jaime Cantrell, a contributor with the Southern Foodways Alliance. It's February 23rd, 2022, and we're in Shreveport, Louisiana. I'm at the Southern Maid Donuts on Barksdale Boulevard, Number 5 with Shavana James. I'm going to go ahead and ask her to introduce herself and give your date of birth.

Shavana James: My name is Shavana James. My date of birth is 2/22/80.

Jaime Cantrell: So you just had a birthday yesterday.

Shavana James: I did, I did.

Jaime Cantrell: And you mentioned that you grew up in Shreveport.

Shavana James: Yeah. Grew up in Bossier City.

Jaime Cantrell: Yeah, Bossier.

Shavana James: I lived in Shreveport a little while of my life with my dad and my mom when they were married but we moved back to Bossier City after they divorced.

Jaime Cantrell: Okay. So tell me about your childhood in Bossier.

Shavana James: Childhood? Um, I really didn't have a childhood.

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I was one of those ones that had to grow up fast.

Jaime Cantrell: Working early?

Shavana James: Well, working early but Mama was always at work. I was one of the older siblings that had to take care of the younger sibling from cooking to cleaning to-- everything early.

Jaime Cantrell: Um-hm.

Shavana James: And a lot of households that young it's expected you help with the younger siblings. But childhood really wasn't a childhood. I didn't really go and play and have fun like other kids did and sit around, play with your toys all day because I couldn't. I had adult responsibilities to do.

Jaime Cantrell: So you lived with your mother, and you had siblings. Tell me about your siblings.

Shavana James: Well, I have two other siblings. She's older but she didn't stay with us. She didn't grow up with us.

Jaime Cantrell: Um-hm.

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Shavana James: Of course, we knew her, but she stayed with my grandmother to help her because she was older, so she needed help. But me and my younger brother we stayed with Mama in the house.

Jaime Cantrell: And so your mother's name is . . . ?

Shavana James: My mother's name is Loretta.

Jaime Cantrell: Loretta. And your brother?

Shavana James: And his name was Quantas.

Jaime Cantrell: Okay. Spell that for me.

Shavana James: Q-u-a-n-t-a-s.

Jaime Cantrell: Got it. So what do you remember doing as a child in terms of chores?

Shavana James: Oh, God. [Laughter]

Jaime Cantrell: I recall a lot of dusting and mopping.

Shavana James: My mama, she was a clean freak. Our house was always clean, but we knew when it was time for her to get off work, I would go in the closet and get some Pine-Sol and just put it in the toilet or wash the sink so the smell would be in the house because if she didn't smell that, oh, we was in trouble, honey. And I would just sweep the floor a little bit or vacuum a little bit, do this, do that, because everything was always clean!

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Jaime Cantrell: Um-hm.

Shavana James: So we would get up and do something to reassure her that her house had been cleaned before she walked through that door. But every day, it consisted of doing something. Dishes every day. There was not a doubt. Every Saturday we had to go to the washateria. I was driving at 12. [Laughter] I had to go down the street to the washateria. She'd give me a quarter and say, "Call me when you get there and let me know you got there." I was 12 driving the car down the street, because we had a neighborhood washateria. And so I would drive the car down the street, unload the clothes, and be like, I put 'em in the washer. "And make sure all my towels are dry!" And I'm, like, "Okay." [Laughter]

Jaime Cantrell: It's always the towels that stay a little damp and you have to run 'em again.

Shavana James: Yes. Yes. And she would give me enough quarters for everything.

Jaime Cantrell: So tell me, you said you had a neighborhood washateria, what neighborhood in Bossier?

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I've only recently moved to Shreveport, so . . .

Shavana James: Well, we just called it the hood behind Food City. That's the store that we all went to down here.

Jaime Cantrell: Um-hm.

Shavana James: Because Jack's Quarters is on the other side of the railroad tracks. I didn't stay in Jack's Quarters, but we stayed across the street behind Food City.

Jaime Cantrell: Okay.

Shavana James: So I don't know exactly-- we didn't call it a certain thing. But of course, my friends and I that we went to school with, we were the Barbara Street clique. [Laughter]

Jaime Cantrell: Okay. So spell the street. Bar- . . . ?

Shavana James: B-a-r-b-a-r-a.

Jaime Cantrell: Oh, Barbara Street. Barbara Street clique.

Shavana James: Barbara Street clique, yes.

Jaime Cantrell: Oh, my goodness. So tell me about school. What school did you go to?

Shavana James: I loved school. I went to Bossier High.

Jaime Cantrell: Bossier, okay.

Shavana James: I graduated in [19]98.

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I loved school from freshman year right on up to senior year. I had a blast in high school. It was awesome. I was friends with a lot of people. I was well known. My nickname is "Stuff."

Jaime Cantrell: Stuff, okay.

Shavana James: And that's what a lot of people know me by. A lot of people don't even know my real name. Honestly, they don't. They're, like, "I didn't even know that was your name!"

Jaime Cantrell: I'm glad you told me then. [Laughter]

Shavana James: That's my nickname. That's why this is on my mask.

Jaime Cantrell: How did you get it?

Shavana James: My mama actually had it made for me and she put the sun right here because she says I'm her sunshine.

Jaime Cantrell: Um-hm.

Shavana James: But my mom passed away last year in 2021, January 28th, from COVID. I found her on the floor deceased. So it's been hard, but with God anything is possible. I'm going, you know.

Jaime Cantrell: Um-hm.

Shavana James: It's hard living without her 'cause we were best friends, but that's life.

Jaime Cantrell: Did she give you the nickname?

Shavana James: Yeah.

Jaime Cantrell: Okay.

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Shavana James: She gave me the nickname 'cause she said when I was little-- I don't believe her-- but she said I used to eat a lot. And she said at first it was "Stuffed Pig." She used to call me Stuffed Pig. And so my auntie, my Aunt Wanda, she's, like, "Stop calling her that. Just call her Stuff." So they dropped the pig and so I became Stuff. [Laughter] But it just stuck with me.

Jaime Cantrell: And it's lasted . . .

Shavana James: Forever. It's just one of those nicknames. 'Cause my brother's nickname is "Smurf."

Jaime Cantrell: So there's a nice sort of sound . . .

Shavana James: Yeah. Stuff and Smurf. That's what we are.

Jaime Cantrell: Got it. And so it still stuck in high school and everything?

Shavana James: Um-hm, yeah. Teachers called me Stuff, everybody. That's what they knew me by. But I enjoyed high school. I loved high school. I did. I had a lot of friends. Some of us are still friends. Of course, you always have haters or enemies or whatever you wanna call 'em, but I see 'em now, they still won't speak.

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But I'm, like, girl, get over it. It's been twenty-three years later. You know what I'm sayin'?

Jaime Cantrell: Oh!

Shavana James: Grow up, basically.

Jaime Cantrell: Yeah. But any town is gonna . . .

Shavana James: Yeah.

Jaime Cantrell: Any high school. So my first job in high school was at McDonald's.

Shavana James: Mine too. [Laughter]

Jaime Cantrell: Was it? Okay. Tell me . . .

Shavana James: My first job was McDonald's on Barksdale. Mr. Griggs, I think he still owns it.

Jaime Cantrell: Did you say Griers?

Shavana James: Griggs.

Jaime Cantrell: Griggs. Okay.

Shavana James: G-g-s, um-hm.

Jaime Cantrell: Okay.

Shavana James: Griggs Enterprises. I got hired when I was 15. So I had to give them a little form and signed and whatever. But I wanted to work to help my mama because she was always struggling. She was a single parent. My dad was in my life, though. I can't say he wasn't

there. I went over my grandmother's house all the time. I loved my grandmother. Me and my dad's mama, my fraternal grandmother, we were so close.

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Jaime Cantrell: And what was her name?

Shavana James: Her name was Lucille.

Jaime Cantrell: Lucille.

Shavana James: Which is actually my middle name.

Jaime Cantrell: Okay. Loretta and then paternal grandmother Lucille.

Shavana James: Yeah. That's my paternal-- fraternal-- whatever. [Laughter]

Jaime Cantrell: Yeah.

Shavana James: Yeah. That's my fraternal grandmother. My maternal grandmother, her name was Tenner, T-e-n-n-e-r.

Jaime Cantrell: T-e-n-n-e-r.

Shavana James: Uh-huh. Tenner Bale.

Jaime Cantrell: And on both sides of your family were your grandparents from Louisiana, from this area?

Shavana James: Yeah. They were all from-- well, on my mom's side I think she said Tuxedo, they grew up in Tuxedo, whatever that is. I don't know. Behind the levee. [Laughter] My dad's side, they were all from Mooretown, Shreveport. Mooretown, Louisiana, Shreveport. That's a hood, I guess, off of Illinois Street in Shreveport.

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And that's where I was . . .

Jaime Cantrell: With Lucille?

Shavana James: Yes. And we called her "Maw-maw," which was Tenner, my mama's mama.

Jaime Cantrell: I called my maw-maw "Maw-maw."

Shavana James: Did you? She stayed in-- it's called the projects off of Hamilton Road.

Jaime Cantrell: Hamilton?

Shavana James: Um-hm. That's where I was most of my childhood also, with my sister. Her name is Mycola.

Jaime Cantrell: Okay. Spell it.

Shavana James: M-y-c-o-l-a. And that's where she grew up.

Jaime Cantrell: Okay.

Shavana James: So we were there whenever Mama was at work or whatever, that's where she took us, to the projects. And we had fun in the projects. I mean, we didn't have a lavish childhood, but it wasn't like we were missing anything. We didn't need anything. We had food, clothes, the latest hairstyles, all that, but we just didn't have the big, nice houses and we weren't born with a silver spoon in our mouth.

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But it was okay. Now, it was a lot of stuff that went on in my childhood, and a lot of families-- well, for me it was rape, molestation, and stuff like that when my mom wasn't around. She didn't even know about it. So I turned that into a testimony also to other people if they're going through-- you don't have to be subject to depression, mental problems because it's all in how you process it. It's, like, it happened, God seen me through it, He allowed it to happen for a reason. I feel like it made me a stronger person. But I'm okay with it. But it wasn't my mom's fault, 'cause a lot of people, "How do you still . . . ?" 'Cause that's my mama and God only gives us one. That was my mom, and The Bible says, "Honor thy mother and father." And that's what I do, and that's what I did until both of them died, 'cause my dad's deceased also.

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Jaime Cantrell: And so your childhood with Maw-maw was around Hamilton?

Shavana James: Right. In the projects.

Jaime Cantrell: Okay.

Shavana James: You can put the projects. They'll know what you're talking about.

[Laughter]

Jaime Cantrell: Right. I got it.

Shavana James: You can put it.

Jaime Cantrell: I got it. So your first job at 15 . . .

Shavana James: Was at McDonald's, um-hm.

Jaime Cantrell: Because I recall that life too, the sort of early employment.

Shavana James: [Laughter] Right, yeah.

Jaime Cantrell: The sort of little window . . .

Shavana James: They always hired young kids. I guess to start training them. And my mama got me fired.

Jaime Cantrell: Oh, goodness. Why?

Shavana James: [Laughter] I got into it with one of the managers and he was telling me, "You better go in there and do this and you better do that." And I looked at him, I was, like, "Listen, just because I'm young you're not finna to talk to me like that. You're not finna keep tellin' me what I better do because my mom don't tell me what I better do." He was, like, "Well, clock out and go home! Clock out and go home!" And I was, like, "Okay. Whatever."

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So I go home and my mama, she's, like, "What's wrong with you?" I was upset. And I was, like, "Me and him got into it and we were going back and forth." And she say, "Unh-uh. Ain't nobody finna to talk to my baby like that!" So she gets in the car and go down there. She, "Come on!" I'm, like, "Oh, Lord." And so she comes and she, "Where is he at?" So he comes to the front. And she's, like, "You don't be talkin' to my child like that. I'll pull your ass over the . . . "

[Laughter]

Jaime Cantrell: Let me pause it. [Pause]

Shavana James: So he comes to the front, and she say, "You don't be talkin' to her like that. You don't tell her what she better do 'cause she's a teenager." And he was, like, "Well, ma'am, I was just tellin' her . . . " She was, like, "I don't care. I will pull your ass over this counter."

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And by this time I'm pullin' Mama by the arm, like, "Come on, Mama. Let's go. Don't worry about it. It's fine." And she's, like, "No, it's not fine!" I mean, she was firecracker, okay? And I get a lot of that from her. Because she was such a sweet person but to make her upset like that it had to be something like near and dear to her, close to her. You had to push her.

Jaime Cantrell: And to defend you.

Shavana James: Right. Right.

Jaime Cantrell: Yeah.

Shavana James: But yeah, that's how I lost my job, my first job. [Laughter]

Jaime Cantrell: Well, do you remember eating Southern Maid Donuts as a kid?

Shavana James: I do. I was with one of my aunts. We call her "Bess," but her real name is Elizabeth. She took me-- it was a car full of us, I guess my cousins and everybody. We went to the one on Hearne.

Jaime Cantrell: Okay.

Shavana James: And she got out and she was, like, "Y'all stay in the car." So we was, like, "Okay." I remember sittin' in the back, but I was scrunched up with all these cousins. She had all of us in the car.

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And she came back with this box, and we got donuts out. I remember it being big and fluffy and just-- it looked so good. [Laughter] But there were so many of us I only got one. And so I

remember eating it and I was, like, "Yes! This is so good." And they didn't buy us donuts a lot when we were younger, but we did get 'em. So they would always go to the one on Hearne.

Jaime Cantrell: On Hearne?

Shavana James: Yeah. That's where everybody used to go until the one on Swan Lake, on Highway 80 opened, then I think they would go there sometimes for the hamburgers and the different foods that they sold. But yeah, I do, I remember eating donuts. Not many, like I said, 'cause I was already fat. [Laughter]

Jaime Cantrell: So how did you end up being here so many years and having this legacy at this location?

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Shavana James: Well, I was 19.

Jaime Cantrell: Okay. So soon after you said your mother got you fired.

Shavana James: Yeah. After I got fired. [Laughter] I was 19. I was drivin' down Barksdale. I was takin' one of my friends home. And I was, like, "Oh, they're puttin' a Southern Maid right there," 'cause it was just being built. And so I was, like, "I guess I'm gonna go and see about it when they get done building it." So when they got done, me and the same girl-- she was 17 at the time and I was 18, about to turn 19-- but we both got out, came in, and the owner then, she had it built. Her name was Virginia Horn. We called her Ginger. I filled out my application and she hired me on the spot.

Jaime Cantrell: Did your friend get hired too?

Shavana James: She did. But then when she seen her age, 'cause you had to be 18, she told her she couldn't hire her because of the equipment and all that type of stuff that's in the back.

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So she didn't get hired. But she was, like, "But if you want to come work, you can." And I was, like, "Okay. I guess. I ain't never had an interest in making a donut but okay."

Jaime Cantrell: So you opened this store?

Shavana James: Yes. Yes.

Jaime Cantrell: And what year was that?

Shavana James: That was [19]99.

Jaime Cantrell: 1999.

Shavana James: March [19]99.

Jaime Cantrell: Wow.

Shavana James: That's when it opened, March [19]99. I think I started a week or two after they opened.

Jaime Cantrell: Wow. Wow.

Shavana James: And I remember working with Ginger's family. Actually, the dad was here, all these people actually are on this board here. I worked with some of these people.

Jaime Cantrell: Uh-huh.

Shavana James: 'Cause the owner's husband, his mom ran the one on Mansfield Road at the time. She opened that one.

Jaime Cantrell: Okay.

Shavana James: And they taught me how to fry the donuts and make the dough and all that. And they were all really nice.

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They was, like, "Don't be scared." 'Cause I was, like, "This is a big thing of grease!" [Laughter] And so you have to learn to pick up the screens with the wooden blocks and not burn yourself, and I got scars everywhere from learning to fry 'em and touching the screens and sticking my hand in the grease one time. It was crazy.

Jaime Cantrell: So I feel such a community with you right now because I recall picking a fry basket up at McDonald's, one in each hand, and turning one over. And as I turned the next one, I remember--

Shavana James: The fries? That happened to me too. [Laughter]

Jaime Cantrell: Yeah. Yeah. So how do you fry a donut?

Shavana James: Well, it's really nothing to it 'cause we put 'em on this-- we call it a screen. You lay 'em flat on the screen and we have a-- I don't know what the thing is called but we place it on the little thing that helps us pick the screen up to put it in the grease. And you just put it in there. They float on top of the grease.

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And then, we have wooden sticks that we turn 'em with. It's two minutes on each side. They cook really fast.

Jaime Cantrell: How many go on one screen?

Shavana James: Here we put three-and-a-half dozen, but you can put four dozen on the screen.

Jaime Cantrell: Okay.

Shavana James: But if you put four it's kind of pushing it 'cause it makes it uncomfortable for each donut to have room to turn in the grease.

Jaime Cantrell: Okay.

Shavana James: So you want all of 'em to get brown and look the same basically.

Jaime Cantrell: So two minutes on each side?

Shavana James: Yeah. And so we flip 'em all by hand.

Jaime Cantrell: How fast do you--

Shavana James: Fast. Fast. Now, some Southern Maids have a machine that they-- the conveyer belt, it cooks 'em for them, and it flips 'em for them. But at Southern Maid on Barksdale we do everything by hand. Yeah, by hand.

Jaime Cantrell: And so you develop this muscle memory.

Shavana James: You do. 'Cause you start at the top and you flip-- just go down at the bottom.

Jaime Cantrell: I was gonna ask if you had a process where you start--

Shavana James: Yeah, you do.

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You're supposed to start at the top of the fryer and then you just flip 'em going down. And so you'll know that the ones at the bottom are being cooked last and the ones at the top are being--

Jaime Cantrell: So you get the ones out first . . .

Shavana James: Right. Right.

Jaime Cantrell: Yeah, that makes sense. Okay. So walk me through how we get to the fryer.

Shavana James: Okay. First you have to make the dough.

Jaime Cantrell: Right.

Shavana James: You have your flour. In the flour we put water and yeast because the flour doesn't have yeast in it. And then we put water. Then you put it in this big ol' mixer and it mixes. You get it to the right consistency-- it's like you just know. It's like cooking almost. Everybody does it different, though. If the dough comes out too thick or too stiff the donuts take longer to rise.

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But it depends because if it's hot-- they totally depend on the weather. So now it's cold. I'll have to make the dough a little bit slack, little bit softer.

Jaime Cantrell: Wetter?

Shavana James: Right.

Jaime Cantrell: Okay.

Shavana James: A little bit softer today. Now, if it's hot outside like the summertime, you make it a little thicker, a little stiff because they're gonna rise fast anyway.

Jaime Cantrell: The humidity.

Shavana James: Yes. Right. Right.

Jaime Cantrell: Okay.

Shavana James: So you make the dough, then you take out the pot. We put it in loaves. We knead it to get the air out of it and let the loaves stay on the table to rise a little bit.

Jaime Cantrell: So you're working your arms.

Shavana James: Yeah, of course. Yeah, it's work. A lot of people think, oh, you just go to work, play in the dough. No. We go to work to work.

Jaime Cantrell: Yeah.

Shavana James: Especially making everything by hand.

Jaime Cantrell: Right.

Shavana James: Everything's made in-house, so we don't have anything sent to us that's already made and we just pop it in the oven.

Jaime Cantrell: Like the premade mix or something.

Shavana James: Yeah. The only thing we don't make, of course, are the sprinkles, the coconut, peanuts.

Jaime Cantrell: Sure. The decorations.

Shavana James: And the jellies and stuff.

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We don't make that stuff. But we do make the maple icing, the pink icing, the white icing. We make all that stuff. Our own chocolate, our own glaze.

Jaime Cantrell: Wow. What's the most popular flavor?

Shavana James: The most popular, of course, is glazed. Everybody loves glazed donuts. But at this shop it's the glazed and I would have to say the apple fritters and cinnamon rolls.

Jaime Cantrell: Really?

Shavana James: Um-hm.

Jaime Cantrell: Wow. When did those get added to the offerings?

Shavana James: They've been here since--

Jaime Cantrell: Day one?

Shavana James: Yeah.

Jaime Cantrell: Really? Wow.

Shavana James: Yeah.

Jaime Cantrell: Okay.

Shavana James: And we've always made ours at this shop big, and the fritters are flat and crunchy.

Jaime Cantrell: So like at the fair?

Shavana James: Right. Yeah. But I know how to do all of it, everything.

Jaime Cantrell: What's the hardest part?

Shavana James: The customers. [Laughter]

Jaime Cantrell: Yeah. Fair.

Shavana James: 'Cause it's easy to come in and do your work and put it out there, but the customers . . .

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Jaime Cantrell: Dealing with people.

Shavana James: Some of 'em are the sweetest. You'll be, like, "Oh, here's my favorite customer. Here they come." You start getting they're stuff together 'cause you know what they want. And then there's some of them you see comin'-- and I'm not trying to be mean-- there's some of them you're like--

Jaime Cantrell: You see 'em coming.

Shavana James: --really? Here she come. I know she's finna to . . .

Jaime Cantrell: [Laughter]

Shavana James: It's, like, why do you have to act like this, and you know you've been here a thousand times?

Jaime Cantrell: You've seen me [0:22:25 inaudible].

Shavana James: Yes. Yes. It's, like, "Do she hate me or what is it?"

Jaime Cantrell: So tell me about some of the regulars that you feel good when you see them coming.

Shavana James: Some of the regulars. Some of them I don't know their names, some of 'em I do. I just know 'em by faces. But it's this one particular guy, his name is Mr. Ed. [Laughter] He's a older guy. He was in the military.

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He used to come when everything was open and normal, he would come in in the mornings, get his one cinnamon sugar and one glazed or sometime two glazed, but he liked 'em hot on the plate. And we knew that. And he would come in, "Hey, Shavana." "Hey, Mr. Ed." "Yeah, give me on those . . ." this or that, whatever. And I remember this one time me and my husband were trying to buy our house and I was telling him how the mortgage company had messed us over and I needed the five-thousand-dollar down payment. And he was, like, "Well, if you don't get it let me know. I'll help you out." And he came back, he was, like, "Did you ever get it? I was gonna give it to you." 'Cause he say he's well off. He don't have nothin' to do, he's retired, and his money just goes to the bank, basically.

Jaime Cantrell: Um-hm.

Shavana James: But he's really, really sweet. If you looked at him you would think he was just this mean, just ugh man. You know what I'm sayin'? 'Cause he looks like that 'cause he doesn't really smile at you and be, like, hey, how you doin'?

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We had to peel back layers from him. He was like a onion. And this other customer is Ms. Becky and Frank Trammell. I absolutely love them. I mean, they'd bring me breakfast every morning when I was here. I love pancakes from McDonald's. [Laughter] And they would come in and we would talk, and I would hug. And they called me their daughter. And I'd say, "Yeah, I just was in the oven too long." And we would laugh 'cause people would be lookin' at us, like, why is she huggin' her like that? And we would just be talkin'. Her grandkids, I've seen them grow up from babies, from the stomach to babies. Now they're teenagers. It's so many people that come through here that--

Jaime Cantrell: And then their kids and their kids?

Shavana James: Yes. Yes. And I'm, like, dang, I'm that old? And I'm, like, no, I'm not old! But it's been generations of people that's come through.

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People have come through here with cancer. I've prayed with them in the middle of this shop. And they'll come back and say, "It's gone! I'm in remission." And it's just been awesome. I feel like God has me here for a reason.

Jaime Cantrell: Yeah.

Shavana James: Because I feel like I have a very discerning soul and I can tell what type of person you are just by meeting you. And I get this feelin'. I've never been wrong about-- yeah, I get this gut feeling about if you are a evil person, a good person, sad, happy. I don't know. And it's another lady-- I can't remember her name but she comes in-- she's a real small lady. She had twins just like I do. I have twins. But she had twin boys.

Jaime Cantrell: You have twin girls?

Shavana James: Uh-huh, I have twin girls.

Jaime Cantrell: What are their names?

Shavana James: Their name is Jamiyah and Janiyah.

Jaime Cantrell: Jamiyah . . .

Shavana James: Um-hm.

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J-a-n-i-y-a-h, J-a-m-i-y-a-h.

Jaime Cantrell: Got it.

Shavana James: I have two older girls also. I have four girls. And I remember when she was pregnant, and we'd talk all the time. Matter of fact, she came in last Sunday and we were talkin' and I just kind of waved at her this time 'cause I was stuck in the drive-through, but I didn't get a chance to talk to her. But her mother and my mama died around the same time, like a month apart, so that's another somethin' that we have in--

Jaime Cantrell: Brought you closer.

Shavana James: Yeah. She's so sweet. It's just some customers I just love 'em and I think they just genuinely-- they look for me when they come in and "Where's Shavana?" or "Where's she at?" And for a long time I was the only black girl. So when people would be, like, "Where's the black girl?" [Whispering] And I'm, like, "It's okay. You can say it. I am black." [Laughter] They'll just be looking for me and they want to tell me somethin'.

0:26:59

They always had to tell me somethin'. This one girl, she came in one time with her mom. Her mom was battling cancer. And her mom and I were talkin' and she was being so disobedient and rude to her mom.

Jaime Cantrell: Publicly?

Shavana James: Yes! It was me and another girl used to work here, we was standin' up there and we just looked at each other. We was, like, "Is she really talkin' to her mama like that?" And so I had had enough because with me bein' a parent and me lovin' my mama the way I did or do still, you don't talk to your parents like that. And her mama asked her I think what kind of donut she wanted or was that all she wanted. "I don't want that! I told you this . . ." I mean, she just went off on her and her mama started crying.

0:28:00

She was, like, "You see how she do me? You see how she talks to me?" I looked at that girl, I said, "Listen, let me tell you somethin'," I said, "Don't you ever, as long as you live and come in this shop again talkin' to your mama like that." And I said, "You can say what you say, but you're gonna need your mama." I said, "Your mama loves you." "Well, she always . . ." I said, "That's your mama. She just asked you what kind of donut you wanted. Don't do that!" And she dropped her head or whatever and she didn't say anything else to me, but I could tell that she wanted to.

Jaime Cantrell: Did they come back in?

Shavana James: Yeah, she come back in and she just kinda stood to the back again. She didn't say anything. And I told her, I said, "If it's that bad stay in the car because I'm not gonna

allow you to talk to your mama like that in front of me. It's not fixin' to happen. Not today."

[Laughter] I just don't, because my children, I've never been through the rolling the eyes and the talkin' back and the stompin' the foot and rollin' the neck and the ugh, and then the arm folds.

0:29:06

I've never been through that because I'm a disciplinarian. I ain't never beat 'em, I ain't never hit 'em, but they know I'm the parent, you're the child. All four of us have great relationships. I talk to 'em. I leave the floor open for them to be able to come talk to me. That's just the type of mama I am. They love me to death. I mean, they worship me. When I come in, they're, "Mama, you need this?" My oldest is 22. She acts like a baby around me. Then I have a 18-year-old and then, of course, my twins are 16, all four girls. And that's it. I'm a parent and I love it, and I've been married fixin' to be eighteen years.

Jaime Cantrell: Tell me about your marriage.

Shavana James: It's been a marriage.

Jaime Cantrell: Eighteen years!

0:30:01

Shavana James: [Laughter] Honestly, he walked into my living room. He walked in my door. And people, they ask me, "How did y'all meet?" He walked in my living room.

Jaime Cantrell: And stayed? [Laughter]

Shavana James: He came over there to bring his cousin to see a little girl that was staying with me at the time. And I had my own place. I've had my own place since I was 19. He brung him over there to see her and I was like, "Yeah, y'all can sit in the living room. That's fine,

whatever." So I'm sittin' on the couch, he brings him, they're sittin' on the couch. He come through the door, he had his little food, and he sat on my couch. And I was, like, "Uh, hey. So you're gonna walk in my living room and don't say nothin' and you didn't even offer me no food?" I was just playin'. But I thought he was so ugly. I did. At first, I was, like, this little ugly dude gonna come in my house, don't say nothin' to me . . .

Jaime Cantrell: And eighteen years later . . . [Laughter]

0:31:03

Shavana James: Yeah! Now eighteen years later we're still married. And he's a awesome dude. He's so lovin'. He's caring. He don't talk much but he would do anything for me. Anything. And his kids. Anything.

Jaime Cantrell: So tell me his name.

Shavana James: His name is Darius, D-a-r-i-u-s, Darius Stephens with a p-h.

Jaime Cantrell: P-h. Got it.

Shavana James: Yeah. And he's awesome. Of course, every marriage has their ups and downs, but we've never been separated. Nobody ain't never moved out and said we'd start later. We worked through it.

Jaime Cantrell: Um-hm.

Shavana James: You have to keep God first in anything that you do if you're a Christian. I keep saying God because that's what I believe.

Jaime Cantrell: Yeah.

Shavana James: That's what I believe.

Jaime Cantrell: So since we've been here, he came in and dropped you off lunch. Is that something that he does for you?

Shavana James: He do it all the time.

Jaime Cantrell: Aw!

Shavana James: Anything I tell him I want, anything I need, if he got it, I got it.

0:32:04

And I feel like that's how most people should be. 'Cause any relationship is give and take. You have to make sacrifices, trust, communication. Of course, we've both grown together because we got married when we were 24. Both of us were 24, in 2004, so there you go. [Laughter]

Jaime Cantrell: That's easy to remember, 24, 2004.

Shavana James: Yeah. But my oldest daughter is not his. That's his stepdaughter.

Jaime Cantrell: You said she was 20?

Shavana James: She's 22.

Jaime Cantrell: Twenty-two. What's her name?

Shavana James: Jakazia, J-a-k-a-z-i-a.

Jaime Cantrell: Okay. And then, the 18-year-old?

Shavana James: And then Jakaria, J-a-k-a-r-i-a. [Laughter] I did it on purpose.

Jaime Cantrell: I hear that. I hear it. Yeah. So this location opened in [19]99.

0:33:01

Shavana James: Um-hm.

Jaime Cantrell: You started when you were 19.

Shavana James: Um-hm.

Jaime Cantrell: We've talked about some of the regulars that you've had over the years. I'm interested in the regulars in terms of employees. So somebody maybe you hired, and they've stayed.

Shavana James: That guy back there, Varick, V-a-r-i-c-k, Varick Williams, he's right behind me. He came I want to say three years later, I think, and he's been here ever since through three different owners just like I have.

Jaime Cantrell: How do you account for that kind of commitment to the place?

Shavana James: You have to love what you do, I'll say. 'Cause I look to cook anyway so getting' my hands dirty and flour all over me is nothing. You can't be a beauty queen workin' here because you're gonna get dirty.

0:33:58

You just have to have a work ethic. You can't be, like, oh, I'm comin' to work later because everything here is on a time schedule. If you're late that throws everything off because certain things are supposed to be made at 3:00, certain things are supposed to be made at 4:20, 5:00, and so forth and so forth.

Jaime Cantrell: Tell me, what gets made at 3:00?

Shavana James: Varick comes at 3:00, honey. I don't come up here at 3:00.

Jaime Cantrell: [Laughter]

Shavana James: Varick do the 3:00 stuff. He has to make the first dough, he has to start cutting out the rounds, everything, the twists. Everything that's supposed to be made. He has to start making the cinnamon rolls, the apple fritters. So he has to get everything ready for that morning shift 'cause at nighttime we get rid of everything. Unless we'll have a donation, we'll donate it to people, but if not, it has to be discarded and then we start over every day.

Jaime Cantrell: The next day.

Shavana James: Um-hm.

Jaime Cantrell: Where do the donations go? Like community organizations, schools?

Shavana James: Yeah. Community-- yeah, schools. Whoever wants 'em they can come get 'em. They can pick 'em up.

0:35:01

It can be schools. If you're organizing a run or a breakfast or anything that you have going on. Churches, anything, they're more than welcome to 'em. I pack 'em up and they bring me a flyer saying what they need it for, and I give 'em big boxes of donuts that we had that day, and that's that.

Jaime Cantrell: So you mentioned the boxes, and this is the supply chain shortage that this store is experiencing.

Shavana James: Um-hm.

Jaime Cantrell: So what's . . . ?

Shavana James: We have only the one dozen boxes and we have to use so many little boxes, we call 'em, for-- say people want two dozen glazed, three dozen glazed, four dozen glazed, five dozen glazed, that's five boxes. And if they want a dozen of mixed donuts that's multiple boxes. Because we could use the big two dozen boxes.

Jaime Cantrell: And that's what you don't have?

Shavana James: Yeah. We don't have any. [Laughter]

Jaime Cantrell: How long have y'all been out?

0:35:59

Shavana James: We've been out of two-dozen boxes for I want to say three months, four months or so. It's been a while. And we didn't have these a few months ago. They didn't even have these. We had some little white boxes, looked like little cake boxes. And people were, like, "What is this?" [Laughter]

Jaime Cantrell: Where's the logo? Where's the . . . ?

Shavana James: Right. Right. This young lady was, like, "I don't think my son's gonna even eat . . . " 'cause he's autistic.

Jaime Cantrell: He can't see [inaudible 0:36:22].

Shavana James: Yeah. And he can't see it so he's not relating the donut with the box. And I was, like, "I'm sorry. That's all we have." And she was, like, "Well, I'll try to just give him a piece of the donut so he'll know it's the same taste."

Jaime Cantrell: Sure.

Shavana James: But yeah, people go crazy when we don't have this dog on this box.

Jaime Cantrell: Like they don't trust it anymore?

Shavana James: [Laughter] I guess, yeah. I'm, like, "It's the same stuff. I promise you we made it. I promise." But also when we got some boxes-- I'm just glad to have a Southern Maid box again instead of the little white box.

Jaime Cantrell: You said it looked like a bakery box, and I've heard you mention before that you like cooking anyway.

0:37:02

Shavana James: Um-hm.

Jaime Cantrell: So do you do a lot of baking at home?

Shavana James: Well, I don't bake at home a lot.

Jaime Cantrell: You cook at home.

Shavana James: I cook.

Jaime Cantrell: Okay.

Shavana James: Yes, honey, I cook.

Jaime Cantrell: What do you cook?

Shavana James: Whatever. I cook things from scratch, from dressing to macaroni and cheese, all the Thanksgiving stuff. My family loves for me to make lasagna, chicken tetrazzini.

Jaime Cantrell: Do you use-- like a meat lasagna?

Shavana James: Yeah, uh-huh. The meat lasagna. Chicken tetrazzini, it has the chicken with the spaghetti. It's not chicken spaghetti because it doesn't have the RO-TEL and all that stuff in there. But that's one of my grandmother's recipes. From rolls to rice and gravy-- and I make gravy from scratch. I don't use package gravy. One of my teachers called it the po' folk gravy with the water and flour. [Laughter] And you brown the flour in the skillet. That's how we make it. But I like cookin'. I like to hear people say, "Oh, Stuff, this is good! You made this, for real?"

0:38:02

Jaime Cantrell: Um-hm.

Shavana James: 'Cause some of the girls that work up here, they like my sweet potato pie. They came to my house on Christmas and got a pie.

Jaime Cantrell: Wow.

Shavana James: And this other girl named Christa, she works here, she's been here I want to say eight years, maybe nine. I'm not sure. She's been here a long time also. But we're the only three that's been here for a long time.

Jaime Cantrell: So your sweet potato pie, do you use pecans?

Shavana James: No, I don't put pecans. We get the sweet potatoes, and you have to use the fat potatoes, not the long ones, 'cause the long ones are stringy.

Jaime Cantrell: Um-hm. Like the hair?

Shavana James: Yeah. Yeah. And boil 'em, mash 'em up, add all my stuff. I can't give you my secrets.

Jaime Cantrell: Don't tell me.

Shavana James: And they're just good. And that's one of my grandmother's recipes. That's my mama's mama's recipe.

0:39:03

So I have different recipes from different sides. Yeah, from different sides I have different recipes, but my dad's mama taught me mostly how to cook. And I was always in the kitchen with her, in the garden when I was little getting stung by okra and mustard greens. Walking in the garden. Oh, my God! That is the worst sting on your legs.

Jaime Cantrell: And also the soil, it gets so dry that it cracks sometimes.

Shavana James: Yes. Yes. And she would have to get the hoe and turn the ground over they would call it. But I remember all those times, when the chicken attacked me when I was out there with my granddad.

Jaime Cantrell: How old were you?

Shavana James: I don't know what was wrong with that chicken!

Jaime Cantrell: I think a lot of roosters and ducks can be very aggressive.

Shavana James: I had to have been 7 or 8 years old. And my granddaddy he was, like, "Don't come back here," 'cause he had had him in the coop. But what do I do?

0:40:00

I go back there anyway. And he was back there doing something with 'em, and the chicken walked up to me, and it was looking at me all crazy. And it just flew up my face and started

pecking me and whatnot. And my granddad caught it in midair and wrung his neck and we ate it that night. And that was the best chicken! Oh, my God, that was the best chicken. It was so fresh and good. I watched my grandmother gut it and everything. It was crazy.

Jaime Cantrell: So do you cook for Sunday lunch after church?

Shavana James: Yeah. I cook Sunday--

Jaime Cantrell: It's lunch? Do we call it lunch or . . . ?

Shavana James: Sunday dinner.

Jaime Cantrell: Dinner. Okay.

Shavana James: That's what we call it. We'll call it Sunday dinner. And most Sundays I cook a big-- and they like me to make the roast, rice and gravy, greens, cornbread, macaroni and cheese. I try to do it every Sunday but some Sundays I'll be, like, "Listen, y'all have to-- I'm not fixin' to cook today." But I do, I get tired.

Jaime Cantrell: Um-hm.

0:41:00

Shavana James: But mostly every Sunday I cook something. And sometimes my kids invite friends and I cook and fix my husband a plate and take it to him. And we all eat together. Sometimes we'll eat at the table and sometime me and him just eat in our room, whatever.

Jaime Cantrell: So do your daughters, are they learning how to cook from you?

Shavana James: Oh, yeah. They can cook.

Jaime Cantrell: Okay.

Shavana James: All four of 'em can cook. Yeah, they can cook. They made me a cake last night.

Jaime Cantrell: For your birthday?

Shavana James: Um-hm.

Jaime Cantrell: What kind of cake?

Shavana James: Just a regular yellow cake with chocolate frosting. And they sang happy birthday to me. But yeah, they can cook. All four of 'em.

Jaime Cantrell: So you mentioned frosting, the glazed is the most popular.

Shavana James: Yep, we make the glaze, chocolate.

Jaime Cantrell: But everything else is in-house.

Shavana James: Um-hm. Everything is in-house.

Jaime Cantrell: So tell me about the glazing process.

Shavana James: It's actually easy.

Jaime Cantrell: Is it a drip, is it a dunk, is it a . . . ?

Shavana James: You're talking about how we glaze the donuts?

0:42:01

We have a machine. After the donuts finish cooking, we take 'em over to the glaze machine. It's a screen that covers this big ol' machine of glaze and the donuts lay on the machine. It's like a basket you pick up and you go over the top of it.

Jaime Cantrell: Okay.

Shavana James: When I first started, we had a machine where you would put the donuts on the machine, but you would kick this foot pedal and the donuts dropped down into the machine and then you went over the top, so the top and the bottom were glazed. But this newer stuff, they only glaze the top of it. But I like the old machine better where everything was glazed.

Jaime Cantrell: Very [0:42:44 inaudible].

Shavana James: Yeah.

Jaime Cantrell: So tops only now?

Shavana James: Yes, tops only now.

Jaime Cantrell: [Laughter] I suppose that means they don't stick in the box.

Shavana James: They still do because the glaze runs.

Jaime Cantrell: [Laughter] It doesn't work.

Shavana James: They still do. The sugar runs off of it. And we have those customers, "I don't want all that glaze in the bottom of the box." But they want 'em hot.

0:43:03

So I'm, like, okay. So I let 'em drip more so all of it don't rush to the bottom. But some people like all that in the bottom 'cause they dip the donut in it. So it just depends on the person.

Jaime Cantrell: So does this store observe the "hot at 4:00"?

Shavana James: Of course.

Jaime Cantrell: Okay. [Laughter]

Shavana James: Yeah. We do the hot at 4:00, but ours are also hot in the mornings, 5:30 to 10:00 they're hot in the mornings, and then 4:00 p.m. till 8:00 p.m. they're hot.

Jaime Cantrell: And then after 8:00 . . . ?

Shavana James: After 8:00 we're gone, honey. I'm at home. [Laughter]

Jaime Cantrell: And then 4:00 to 8:00. Wow. So do you think you get more people coming in to have donuts for breakfast and work or do you have more people coming in to pick up donuts to take home to eat for dinner or eat after dinner?

Shavana James: I would say it's more-- it depends on the weather.

Jaime Cantrell: Really? [Laughter]

Shavana James: Isn't that crazy? But honestly, in the mornings we're always busier because people going to work, school.

0:44:02

But when it's like this outside and cold or rainy they'll be lined up at 4:00.

Jaime Cantrell: I guess it's the comfort food.

Shavana James: I guess.

Jaime Cantrell: You wanna feel better.

Shavana James: I guess. When it was snowing a few weeks ago, oh, honey, we were so busy.

Jaime Cantrell: Really?

Shavana James: What!?

Jaime Cantrell: Wait, the snowstorm last year?

Shavana James: No. When it snowed--

Jaime Cantrell: In February of last year.

Shavana James: Yeah. That and it just snowed down here.

Jaime Cantrell: Oh, you're right. It did, now that you mention it.

Shavana James: Yeah. We were busy as I don't know what.

Jaime Cantrell: I was so upset by the snow of last year that I blocked the snow that happened two or three weeks ago.

Shavana James: I know. I was, like, I don't want the snow. Unh-uh. [Laughter]

Jaime Cantrell: Absolutely not. So y'all stayed open?

Shavana James: Yeah, we were open. And we were busy.

Jaime Cantrell: Wow.

Shavana James: And then people, when their electricity goes out, they come down here and get donuts. Well, we don't have no electric, so we'll get donuts.

Jaime Cantrell: Yeah.

Shavana James: I know it's strange, but yeah.

0:45:01

Jaime Cantrell: So what kind of adjustments have y'all made during COVID? [inaudible 0:45:05]

Shavana James: Of course, yeah, the dining room was closed. He doesn't want customers sitting in and don't want risking getting us sick. And he tells me-- the owner now-- he tells me all the time, "I don't want you to get sick, Shavana. I need you. I love you. Are you okay?" I'm, like, "Yeah." [Laughter]

Jaime Cantrell: What's his name?

Shavana James: His name is Tommy.

Jaime Cantrell: Tommy.

Shavana James: And he's a trip. He's awesome. I hate to say it but he's the best owner that we've had.

Jaime Cantrell: Of the three.

Shavana James: Now, Ginger, she and I, we still talk. We're still friends.

Jaime Cantrell: Still close.

Shavana James: Yeah, we were close. But he cares more about us as people and not just employees.

Jaime Cantrell: People working to--

Shavana James: Right.

Jaime Cantrell: Right.

Shavana James: And he cares if our bills get paid. Because I know it's a business and I know it's not his responsibility to make sure our bills get paid, but he do.

0:46:01

The other two owners-- like I said, I love Ginger. She was awesome also. Me and her had a-- we used to go back and forth 'cause I was still in that growing up stage and she was trying to teach me. And I was, like, "You can't tell me nothin'," kind of stage.

Jaime Cantrell: I mean, 19, 20 . . .

Shavana James: Yeah. I was young.

Jaime Cantrell: Yeah.

Shavana James: And then I found out I was pregnant working here at 19. I had my first baby. And I didn't know I was pregnant when she hired me. So she threw me a baby shower. She was awesome!

Jaime Cantrell: So how long did you work into . . . ?

Shavana James: I worked until it was time to deliver her.

Jaime Cantrell: Really?

Shavana James: I worked up until-- I think I had her a week later when I stopped working.

Jaime Cantrell: Wow.

Shavana James: Yeah. I was here the whole time. I fell a few times and I had to go to the emergency room, and I was, like, oh, my God! But yeah, actually all my kids I worked until it

was time-- except twins. I thought I was doing something by-- I was, like, okay, I'm gonna go sit down and wait four weeks.

0:47:04

Yeah, right. They came at thirty-two weeks. So yeah, I had them early. But I was here.

Jaime Cantrell: What is your favorite memory of all of the years that you've been here?

Would you say it's an interaction between someone you worked with or someone who's on the other side of the counter, a customer?

Shavana James: My favorite memory is this lady-- like I said, I don't know her name--

Jaime Cantrell: The one with the twins?

Shavana James: No, not her but it's another lady. She had had cancer.

Jaime Cantrell: Okay.

Shavana James: And her daughter-- or was it her daughter had cancer? Somebody had cancer. But that's one of my favorite memories. I remember I was, like, "Well, can I pray with you?"

0:48:02

And we prayed and I cried, and she cried. And I remember her coming back a few months later saying that the cancer had went into remission. So that was just awesome. It was awesome. I've had people come up here and pray for me because we moved in this house, but the owner of the house wanted-- it was a rent house-- she wanted her house back. And we had less than a month to get out and find somewhere to stay. And so I was up here all worried, like, okay, what are we fixin' to do now? And this lady, her name was Ms. Reeves, she stopped by. And I didn't know

her from the man in the moon. And she was, like, "Are you okay?" And I was, like, "Well, no." And I told her or whatever, 'cause she seemed like she cared. And she said, "Well, let me pray with you."

0:48:59

And we stood right over there by the counter, her, me, and her son, and we stood in a circle. And she prayed and I felt it. And I got a house the next week.

Jaime Cantrell: What does it feel like, that sort of closeness with someone you don't know from the moon?

Shavana James: Right, right. I'm not going to say it's strange, but it's a feeling that you know that this person is genuine.

Jaime Cantrell: Um-hm.

Shavana James: I can't explain it. It's a feeling that you have that-- if you and I hold hands and we're praying you can feel it. It's a connection that you have like all of us have with God. So we're praying and you feel it. I can't explain it. I don't know.

0:50:01

The Holy Spirit is always in the midst so it's awesome.

Jaime Cantrell: And so that happened more than once with other customers?

Shavana James: Oh, yeah. Yeah. More than once.

Jaime Cantrell: And I imagine-- and tell me if I'm wrong-- but I imagine not only do you recognize your regulars, they also recognize you to the extent that they can tell when something is wrong?

Shavana James: Right. Right.

Jaime Cantrell: And I have found, honestly-- I've been teaching with a mask on, it almost seems impossible that you can be able to still read someone's face, but you can because of their eyes.

Shavana James: You can. You can. The eyes tell a lot.

Jaime Cantrell: Yeah. Yeah.

Shavana James: Yeah. The eyes can see straight through your soul. Especially when my mama passed away. I was here and they would come in, they'd go, "Are you okay? What's wrong?" I just wasn't myself because I'm trying to process this, and my mama's gone. And then you have those ones that come and that's rude.

0:51:02

And I've told a few of 'em, "Not today. I'm not in the mood."

Jaime Cantrell: Um-hm. Boundaries.

Shavana James: "Not today." And they, "Well, you're being rude." "Oh, well, if you think so call the owner. I don't care." I was just at that point I just didn't care.

Jaime Cantrell: Um-hm.

Shavana James: Not saying that I didn't respect the customers, but the customers also have to understand that we're human also. Things happen in our lives also.

Jaime Cantrell: Grief, loss.

Shavana James: Yeah, everything. We're human also. Just 'cause we work here don't mean that we have to always bow down because you're the customer. Yeah, you are and you're the reason why the shop goes 'round, but we're human.

Jaime Cantrell: But you are too. You open the door, turn on the lights.

Shavana James: Exactly. Exactly.

Jaime Cantrell: Yeah. Yeah. It's incredible, I have noticed, even doing some of these interviews, where I realize that people are just peopling.

Shavana James: Um-hm.

Jaime Cantrell: And a lot of folks don't get that.

0:52:01

A lot of folks see other people and don't just recognize them for all of the things that make them a human being too.

Shavana James: Um-hm.

Jaime Cantrell: And so I have had so many chances to be surprised and delighted, and things I didn't know, things that I've learned. And this has been so fun for me because I actually moved to Shreveport at the beginning of the pandemic.

Shavana James: Okay.

Jaime Cantrell: And when I moved everyone told me, "You have to go to Southern Maid. You have to go to Southern Maid."

Shavana James: Yeah. Yeah.

Jaime Cantrell: Yeah. So do you still eat donuts here or you're over them?

Shavana James: Um . . .

Jaime Cantrell: [Laughter]

Shavana James: I mean, I make 'em so I'll taste 'em every now and again.

Jaime Cantrell: Um-hm.

Shavana James: But as far as throwing 'em back every day, no.

Jaime Cantrell: Enjoying 'em? No.

Shavana James: No. No. I don't even taste 'em. Honestly, I don't taste them. I will have to take it home to taste what it tastes like, if that makes sense.

Jaime Cantrell: Um-hm.

0:52:59

Shavana James: Up here I can't eat 'em and be, like, oh, okay, yeah, that's good. I can't taste 'em because I'm so immune to how they smell and everything.

Jaime Cantrell: So immersed, yeah.

Shavana James: And I couldn't tell you what they taste like. [Laughter]

Jaime Cantrell: Yeah. And also, we walked in, and I said, "Oh, it smells so good!"

Shavana James: Yeah. And I don't smell that. [Laughter]

Jaime Cantrell: Right. Right.

Shavana James: It just smells like work to me.

Jaime Cantrell: [Laughter] Just work, yeah. Well, is there anything that you wanted to share that we didn't get a chance to talk about?

Shavana James: No. I've enjoyed working here. I know one day of another I'll probably move on when God say, but I feel like I'm here for a reason. I've been here for many people, and that's why I feel like I'm here. He put me here for a reason. And I feel like God has somethin' for everybody. I've encountered so many different people and wonderful people, bad people. It's a circus up here sometimes. It's crazy.

0:54:01

But yeah, I can't say anything bad about it. Southern Maid's been paying my bills for twenty-three years.

Jaime Cantrell: Um-hm.

Shavana James: And I chose to work here, and I enjoy working here.

Jaime Cantrell: What you said about the people, that's what led me to you and this interview.

Shavana James: And I told my husband, I was, like, "She said the people said come talk to me." He was, like, "Well, I mean . . . "

Jaime Cantrell: They did. You've been here . . .

Shavana James: I just could not believe that! Like, huh? Really? Me?

Jaime Cantrell: Yes. You've got a story, yeah.

Shavana James: Yeah.

Jaime Cantrell: Okay. Well, thank you, Shavana. I'm going to go ahead and stop the recording now.

0:54:51

[End]