



**Dr. Patricia Outlaw
Bethel AME Church
Rosedale, Alabama**

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Interviewer: Michelle Little
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Michelle Little: So today is November the 5th, 2019, and I'm Michelle Little. I'm interviewing Dr. Patricia Outlaw, and this is for the Southern Foodways Alliance Project at the University of Mississippi. We are here in Dr. Outlaw's home today here in Alabama.

So to start us out, if you'll introduce yourself and state your full name and your date of birth, if you don't mind, for the record. [Laughter]

[0:00:27.6]

Patricia Outlaw: Okay. For the record, my name is Dr. Patricia Anne Outlaw, and my middle name is spelled with A-n-n-e. Date of birth, May 16th, 1946.

[0:00:27.6]

Michelle Little: And you don't look it. [Laughter]

[0:00:49.1]

Patricia Outlaw: Praise the lord.

[0:00:50.5]

Michelle Little: Okay. And can you tell me about where you grew up?

[0:00:55.8]

Patricia Outlaw: Well, I grew up in Baltimore city, in a neighborhood called Sandtown.

[0:00:59.4]

Michelle Little: Sandtown?

[0:01:02.5]

Patricia Outlaw: S-a-n-d-t-o-w-n. Historically, it was a segregated neighborhood, low-income neighborhood, near the railroad tracks. I went to public school in Sandtown, which is Baltimore city, zone 21217. Uh-huh. And what do you want to know about? I went to elementary school, I went to Coppin Elementary School, which was a demonstration school for Coppin State College, so they were training their students to be teachers, and they used that particular school as the model school. So my mom lobbied for me to become able to go to that school a couple years before I was old enough to go to school, because they were selective about who they'd let go to Coppin Elementary School, even though I was in walking distance of the school. So my mom negotiated with them to let me come there. I guess she started the negotiations when I was like three. [Laughter] I could walk to school there. Because my cousins who lived a few blocks from me, they didn't go to that school. They had to go to the school that they were geographically assigned to, which was 107, and I went to 132.

[0:02:28.1]

Michelle Little: And how do you spell that? Carpen?

[0:02:30.5]

Patricia Outlaw: Coppin, C-o-p-p-i-n, Elementary School.

[0:02:35.0]

Michelle Little: And you said it was called a demonstration school?

[0:02:39.0]

Patricia Outlaw: Yes, it was a training school. Like at Towson State, where I graduated, they would train teachers, right? So Lida Lee Tall was an elementary school they used on campus to train teachers. Well, Coppin State college had a school right in Baltimore, in Sandtown, public school, Coppin Elementary School, which was used to train their teachers. So, for example, my sixth-grade teacher, Mr. William Pinderhughes, became superintendent of Baltimore city schools. Um-hm. So, the folk who taught at that school were being geared to be excellent teachers and also for leadership in the Board of Education.

I can tell you who my teachers were, kindergarten all the way pretty much through sixth grade. My second-grade teacher, Mrs. Rosalyn Lee, became my mother's, like, really close friend, because she would come to my house on the weekends to check up on me, and she took me to the movies to see—I think it was *The Ten Commandments* or something like that, when I was in second grade, because I was very precocious and she recognized that, and through conferencing with my mother, she decided that she would—my mother was single at the time—would invest in giving me some other alternatives to channel my energies. And I remember her taking me to the movies to see *The Ten Commandments* and things like that, Mrs. Rosalyn Lee. She taught second grade.

Then Mr. Pinderhughes, who was my sixth-grade teacher, tall, I can see him now, very stately guy. The teachers were very invested in us, and I started going to school early. I mean, I could walk to school from my house, and I had cousins who lived across the street, and they would call my mother—she was my great-aunt or something, Miss Annie, she called my mother up and said, “Do you know Patricia here before the school opens, before the building opens? Why she here so early?” The reason I got there early, because they had three tricycles in the kindergarten. If you got there before school, you could ride the tricycle. I didn’t have a tricycle, so I got to school early so I could ride the tricycle, and I tell people, even Beeson [Divinity School] students, that’s why I’m still in school. And one of my students gave me a tricycle.

[0:05:23.7]

Michelle Little: Oh, I see it right here in your entryway.

[0:05:26.2]

Patricia Outlaw: An antique tricycle, because I told her that story, and one day, she came to class with that tricycle she got at an antique shop.

So, I had excellent teachers in elementary school. It was all black. When I got to the sixth grade, I was very precocious, talkative. My mother would tell the teacher, “Give her something to do. Put her in charge. That’ll help the other students.” So, the teachers were very involved and invested in us not just academically but personally. They would make home visits, you know.

I can remember having some disciplinary issues [Laughter], and my mother would come up to the school. More than once. She believed in corporal punishment, and so she would take me in the coatroom, you know, and discipline me when it was necessary. I remember one time, Mr. Pinderhughes kept me after school with one of my classmates, Christine, because we kept laughing. I don't have a clue what we were laughing about, but whatever it was, he didn't think it was funny. He didn't think we should be laughing during his class. He kept us after school. We wouldn't stop laughing, and we were supposed to get out of school at 3:00. I think we were there until like 4:30, and we were still laughing, so he told us to go home. He said, "You girls are silly. You just silly." We couldn't stop laughing, so we went home. But anyway, it was that kind of thing. There was a lot of contact between the school, the teachers, and your parents.

[0:07:13.0]

Michelle Little: And it was just you and your mom. You were an only child.

[0:07:17.4]

Patricia Outlaw: I'm an only child, but I have a father, and I know who my father is, and I knew who he was then. My mother made sure that I knew who my father was, and I have my father's last name, which I take pride in, and my father's name is on my birth certificate, which was ahead of time for my mother, because typically in that era, when I was born, in 1946, if you were born out of wedlock, you rarely had got your mother's last name. My mother insisted that my father's last name be placed on my birth certificate,

which it was, and that came into play years later after my father died, in terms of inheritance rights.

But my mother made sure I knew who my father was. I had a relationship with my father. We'd hang out every weekend. He'd come and get me. I didn't know he had a wife, that's what I didn't know. I didn't know until I was eleven years old that he had a wife across town. My father was an entrepreneur, a longshoreman, worked on the waterfront, plus he owned a poolroom. Do you know what a poolroom is?

[0:08:24.3]

Michelle Little: I don't.

[0:08:25.3]

Patricia Outlaw: Billiards, where they shoot pool. So, my mother and I, we lived in the 1800 block of our street and his poolroom was like maybe 300 block, but it was like maybe twenty blocks away. I could walk to his poolroom on Laurens and Carey, and that's where men who worked on the waterfront as longshoremen—you know what a longshoreman is? He worked on unloading ships, and he drove a winch. You know what a winch is?

[0:08:57.1]

Michelle Little: I do, yes.

[0:08:58.2]

Patricia Outlaw: So, he used to wear plaid shirts and all. And I would go down to the poolroom. He was an entrepreneur. He had a full-time job, but he also owned a business. He owned a poolroom, three pool tables, big pool tables. The men would come in and shoot pool. In the basement, he had poker games. That wasn't legal. [Laughter]

But I learned how to shoot pool, and I would go down to the poolroom to see my father or my father would come pick me up. He drove Cadillacs. I can remember my mother sending me down there, or she thought she was sending me down there for punishment, that he was going to punish me, and I was crying all the way from my house to the poolroom, thinking my daddy's going to be displeased with whatever it was I did, I don't even remember. And I walk into the poolroom and he said, "Girl, sit up here on the stool." My mother had already called him to tell him to expect me, and I'm expecting that he's going to, like, be mad, and I'm crying before I even get in the door. He says, "Why you laughing?"

I said, "I'm not laughing, Daddy. I'm crying, I'm crying."

So he says, "Girl, sit up here on this counter and start counting this money." So, I had to be, like, in elementary school. So that's when I really started having an appreciation for counting money, because he let me count the money out the cash register.

So then I also learned how to shoot pool because I shot pool with my father. And the funny part about it, when I first came to work at Beeson and we had a faculty retreat, and I forgot where we went, but Tom Fuller, he would know to this day that we played—they had a pool table at the retreat place, so I acted like, at first, I couldn't play.

[Laughter] I don't broadcast this, but Dr. Fuller and I, we played pool. He don't play me anymore. [Laughter]

But I lived near the projects. We didn't live in the projects, my mother and I. My mother was the first homeowner on her side of the family. She was an entrepreneur too. My mother, she went in the Army before I was born. She was in the first unit of colored women in the Army, in 1942, so when she came out, she moved to New York. Then she moved back to Baltimore and she worked for my father. So that's how they got hooked up. And my mother was a poker player. She learned how to play poker. You never heard these kinds of stories, I know. This is not your traditional—but anyway, I'm going to tell it anyway.

[0:11:45.6]

Michelle Little: Yeah, it's amazing.

[0:11:47.1]

Patricia Outlaw: But my mother cut games from my father's poker games. My father had poker games in the basement of the poolroom. That's how my mother met him. I don't know all the details, but that's how they met. Now, my father was married. I didn't know anything about it, because at the time, I wasn't born. It wasn't until I was eleven years old that I put it all together, because when I went over to my father's house—see, I was able to catch the bus, public transportation. I was big for my age, tall. So I would say I was in sixth grade, eleven years of age, I could catch the bus, and I caught the bus and went to my father's house. He lived across town on Pressman Street with a big house. He

had several pieces of property because he was an entrepreneur. He worked on the waterfront and he used to wear these plaid shirts, and he was tall, handsome. We really had a really good relationship.

So I went to visit him. He knew I was coming, but I didn't know the circumstances of what I was going into, and when I got there, I remember it being cold in the house and I was being introduced to his sisters and brothers who had come up from North Carolina. I didn't know why they came up from North Carolina. I didn't even know why I was there, I just knew I was there. How it all started that I got there, obviously, I must have been invited, and I caught the bus and went over there, only to discover that my father's wife had died, but I didn't know he had a wife. I didn't even know she had died, and the only way I found out was that when I got there, it was cold, and I kept saying to my aunt that I just met, my Aunt Rosie Mae, I said, "It's cold in here."

And I remember her saying, "Girl, be quiet. Don't you know your father's wife just died?" I *didn't* know.

[0:13:34.8]

Michelle Little: Oh, my word.

[0:13:35.7]

Patricia Outlaw: I didn't even know he *had* a wife. That's how I found out.

[0:13:39.0]

Michelle Little: Wow.

[0:13:40.6]

Patricia Outlaw: Long story short, that's when the family began to embrace me on the Outlaw side, and once I was embraced—and my father had always acknowledged me. They knew of me, but they had never met me, and once they met me and I met all my cousins and everything, like, the rest is history. It was like I was Uncle Bud's daughter. I'm his only child that he ever claimed and I'm my mother's only child. Well, I had a sister, but I didn't know her. She died before I was born, so I'm her surviving child. So between my mother and father, they only had me.

So my father was the oldest of his siblings. I can remember having, like, Uncle Henry, Uncle Thedrow, Aunt Rosie Mae, you know, and they came from Kinston, North Carolina. Well, my father was the oldest of the group, and he had a big house. He had several pieces of property, and whenever somebody came up from North Carolina, they always went—my father's nickname was—his name was Arthur Outlaw, but they called him Uncle Bud. They all would go to Uncle Bud's house, because Uncle Bud would help everybody get situated. So everybody had to come through Uncle Bud's house, and they knew that I was Uncle Bud's daughter. That's how they met me.

And because my father was the oldest, he was like the godfather of the family, and I have, like, inherited that. Like, even as recently as a few months ago, one of my younger cousins died and I had to go to Baltimore. Her brother said—he was introducing me to everybody, “She's the only one with the Outlaw name, and her Uncle Bud was the godfather and she's Uncle Bud's daughter, so that makes her the godmother.” [Laughter]

So I have a certain status, and I had to promise this year that I'm going to Atlanta to be with my younger cousins, who are, like, in their—Craig just turned sixty. I used to babysit them for Thanksgiving dinner. “We need you to come back and be with us.”

I said, “Okay, I'll be there.”

So my adopted people, family over here, they're not happy about it because I won't be in Alabama for Thanksgiving. I'm going to Atlanta. But I've been here for a couple years, but I'm going to be with my cousins.

But, yeah, so my dad and I, we had a really tight relationship. No, I was twenty-nine when he died. He would come and get me every weekend, take me shopping, take me to the Enchanted Forest, take me to the Patapsco State Park, take me to get ice cream. I have a thing for ice cream. He would take me to get the Softee ice cream cones, take me shopping, take me to Druid Hill Park, and I always rode around in nice cars because he drove a Cadillac. Every couple years, he and his brothers would get new Cadillacs.

[0:16:29.4]

Michelle Little: Nice.

[0:16:31.3]

Patricia Outlaw: They were working on the waterfront. In those days, they were making pretty good money for black people during that time. And, like I said, he had his own business, too, so he was making extra money and he was buying property. On Sundays, they would have these meetings at my father's house after church. Everybody'd come to

Uncle Bud's house on Sunday. They called him Bud. They all had to kind of check in and say what they were doing, and the men would sit in the living room.

Well, I'm jumping ahead, because I went into the convent after high school. I'm kind of skipping, so—

[0:17:06.4]

Michelle Little: That's okay.

[0:17:08.2]

Patricia Outlaw: So what I remember is that my father was always very much present in my life, even though he didn't live in the same house with my mother. He never lived in the same house, although he might have spent a night there or so. Well, he obviously spent some time. [Laughter] I'm here.

During my elementary school years, I do remember my mother getting married to Mr. James Carroll Rich, so she was married for a couple years and he was my stepfather, but I don't remember having really a close relationship, even though I went to Virginia with my mother to his home where his family was, etcetera etcetera, but not really close relationship.

Always had a close relationship with my dad, because my dad, you know, the whole issue of the tricycle, he got me my first bicycle, my first two-wheel bicycle, and I can remember being on Laurens Street—that's where I grew up—and him with the training wheels and pulling the training wheels off, you know. So, I mean, whatever I

wanted, he would get it for me. Or he would take me to Druid Hill Park. I remember he was always available to me when I'd go down to the poolroom.

They had a clubhouse too. It was basically a couple of rooms up the street from the poolroom where the men met. They called themselves—it was the 858 Club. They were longshoremen, men who worked on the waterfront. This was their lounge area. If you needed a taxicab, you could get somebody from the 858 Club, because back in those days, you couldn't get a taxicab like you can or call Uber. You had to get what we call a hack. So black men made extra money by becoming hacks, hackers. So they were licensed drivers, but unlicensed taxicab for the black community.

[0:19:08.9]

Michelle Little: Okay.

[0:19:10.9]

Patricia Outlaw: Yeah, so you're getting an education.

[0:19:13.1]

Michelle Little: Yeah, yeah.

[0:19:13.1]

Patricia Outlaw: So they would be hanging out at the 858 Club and somebody would call, say, "I need a hack on Mount Street." They'd call down to the club and somebody would come over to Mount Street, 1700 block, and you would know who it was, and that

would be your driver, and they'd take you wherever you needed to go, and boom, boom, boom. So I met a lot of men at the 858 Club and at the poolroom because they all knew I was Bud Outlaw's daughter, so whenever I wanted to see my father, I would go down to the 858 Club or I'd go to the poolroom or I'd call him up, you know. So that's the kind of—and everybody knew I was Bud Outlaw's daughter. Everybody on Laurens Street knew who I was. I was Bud Outlaw's daughter.

Now, where do you want me to go from here?

[0:20:06.7]

Michelle Little: [Laughter] It's such a fascinating world that you're telling me about. I mean, like, I've never heard of the hack.

[0:20:15.9]

Patricia Outlaw: Yeah. It's like right now you have people who, like, work, drive cars for Uber and—what's the other company?

[0:20:25.3]

Michelle Little: Lyft.

[0:20:26.1]

Patricia Outlaw: Lyft, Lyft, because when I went to Baltimore recently, I caught a light rail, and then I got one of them apps on my phone. I don't know whether it's Lyft or Uber. I can't remember. I think it's Uber. Well, back in the day, you didn't have that, and

a white cab driver wouldn't come to our community, not to Sandtown, nuh-uh, no. So we were much more relying on each other. In some ways, the black community was more prosperous because we bought black, we ate black, we slept black.

We rented property from the Jewish community, or we bought—like, we bought our house from a Jewish man, Mr. Fisher. When I was in elementary school, I used to go downtown on the bus to pay the mortgage. I was maybe sixth grade, maybe seventh grade, junior high. Junior high was integrated. I went to a special junior high school, accelerated junior high school, because they determined through testing that I needed to be challenged more. I had a certain skill set that I could go to the accelerated school and do three years in two years, so I basically skipped a year. What you call middle school now we called junior high. Normally, junior high would have been three years. I did it in two years. I went to Robert E. Lee Junior High School in Baltimore, Maryland.

So what was I saying? There was a point I was trying to make.

[0:22:09.8]

Michelle Little: We were talking about the black community.

[0:22:11.9]

Patricia Outlaw: The black community, that the grocery stores were owned by Jewish people, Morris' Grocery Store. The cut-rate store, liquor store on the corner across the street, Fox's Cut-Rate, owned by Jewish people. High's Ice Cream Store down the street on Laurens Street had black people working, scooping up the ice cream, but it was owned by white people, probably Jewish people.

Lorman House, which was a bar on the corner two blocks from where I lived, where my Cousin Murdie—she’s older than me, may she rest in peace—she was a bartender. And, see, Murdie is half—her mother was Puerto Rican, Miss Sinta. So she was, like, my mother’s first cousin, and Murdie was half Puerto Rican and half Negro, because back in those days, we were “Negroes.” So I used to go around—I was telling Debra, my cousin, her daughter, I said, yeah, I used to go around to the bar and sit at the barstool and talk to Murdie when I had a problem with my mother or something, and Murdie was like my therapist. I’d sit there. She was so pretty, and I would sit at the barstool, and Murdie was a good listener because she was used to listening to everybody. Bartenders do that. You know, they develop these people skills and they learn how to listen. And my mother knew where I was. I was around the corner sitting there drinking a Coca-Cola, sitting at the bar talking to Murdie, talking about the problems I was having in my life [Laughter], which I was having problems in my life in elementary school, elementary school problems, some serious problems too. So that’s a whole ‘nother story.

But, yeah, so that was the community. I lived right across the street from the railroad tracks, and we were homeowners. My mother bought her house from Mr. James Fisher. She had been in the military, remember. Well, you don’t remember [Laughter], but she had been. She was in the first unit of colored women in the Army, in 1942, and she went to New York when she came out. Then she came back to Baltimore, and she was a hustler. She made money having poker games. She started having poker games in the basement of our house on Laurens Street. And the streets were cobblestone. I remember, you know. And the police would come through the neighborhood, and the

reason why she could do what she did for such a long time, because they were paying the police off.

[0:24:43.9]

Michelle Little: Oh. [Laughter]

[0:24:46.0]

Patricia Outlaw: Baltimore city police would pull up to the front of the house. Plus, her and her girlfriends would cook dinners, and the men would come there on Friday nights, and their wives and girlfriends would bring the food there and they would play poker through the wee hours of the night, to the next day, you know.

I had my own room. See, I was an only child. All my other cousins, they didn't have their own room. They had to share their space with other people, so they saw me as, like, having more than they had, you know. And they would come to my house on the weekends because they knew that my mother would go shopping, grocery shopping, and she would buy—we would always have banana splits on the weekend. The kids from the projects would come to my house on the weekends because they knew that they were going to be able to have some special kind of desserts, like fruit cocktail, stuff I take for granted. We had fresh fruit, we would make banana splits, and my mother welcomed the neighborhood kids. They would come. And even I have some cousins, one in particular, she used to tell me she used to babysit me, and I didn't realize she had babysat me till she told me. She said, "I used to love to come to Aunt Cissy's house."

I said, "Why?"

She said, “Because she had fruit cocktail.”

I said, “Fruit cocktail? Thelma, really?” But for her, it was a delicacy, but for me, I ate well all the time. I never was without food. My mother’s sister, on the other hand, was on welfare. She had five children to take care of, whereas my mother just had me, and my mother, she did day’s work. You know what that is? No, you don’t know.

[0:26:30.7]

Michelle Little: Would she work at people’s houses during the day?

[0:26:33.1]

Patricia Outlaw: You don’t have a clue. You don’t have a clue. [laughter]

[0:26:37.0]

Michelle Little: Tell me what day’s work is.

[0:26:37.4]

Patricia Outlaw: Yeah, I’m telling this white woman here—she’s interviewing me. For the people who are listening to this tape, I’m being interviewed by this young thirty-something-year-old white woman who went to Beeson Divinity School, and I’m trying to inform her, enlighten her to the black experience. So I’m well educated, but I’m speaking in the vernacular, and so I’m saying my mother did day’s work. That meant she would clean houses for white people. And what’s so significant about this, Michelle, is that you’re sitting in this house right now, and when I moved here and brought my mother

with me, because Dean [Timothy] George had enough savvy to say—because I wasn't coming. I said, "I've got to take care of my mother." Because that's what we do in the African American community, we take care of our family members if they get sick. My mother had dementia and Alzheimer's.

He said, "Bring your mother with you." That was the thing that closed the deal for me.

So we were staying at a hotel up here on Lakeshore [Drive] for about five days until all my furniture got here. So I came here and I walked through every room and I blessed my house, then I went back to the hotel. They called me and said, "Your furniture is here. Your car—" They had my car on one truck, my furniture on another.

I went back and told my mother, I said, "Ma, come on. Let's go to our new house."

So we had been in the hotel for five days, and when I walked in here with my mom, I said, "Mom, this is our house."

She said, "I ain't sign no papers."

I said, "You didn't, but I did."

And she said—these are her exact words—she said, "The only way I could live in a house like this, I'll be working for white people."

And I said to her that day, "You ain't working for them anymore. This is *our* house." That's how significant—so I was grateful that I brought my mother with me. She had an opportunity to live in a really nice house as she was aging and leaving this planet, to see that all the seeds that she had planted years ago, that all the education and all the

sacrifices she made to make sure I got a good—because she believed in education. She believed that education was the door for me to get out of Sandtown.

And the house that she had, when she sold it, she didn't even tell me she was selling. She was sixty-five years of age when she sold that house. She didn't tell me she was going to sell it, and I said to her—because I remember it was a Good Friday. I was at St. John AME Church in Baltimore for Good Friday services, and she came over there and she handed me an envelope. I said, “Ma, what is this?”

She say, “This is half of what I sold the house for.”

I said, “Well, you should have told me you were selling the house. I could have bought it.”

She said she didn't want me to buy it because she didn't want me to get stuck in Sandtown. So she freed me up to fly and go and be and do. And, see, I can appreciate that, because some people feel like their children have to stay where they are, but she knew that there was a different call on my life. My destiny was not in Sandtown. My destiny was *out* of Sandtown. That was just where I was birthed, but I'm supposed to fly, so she freed me so I could fly. And I was able to—when I came here to Alabama, that wasn't in my plan. That was God's plan, you know. But for her to say only way she could live here is if she was working for white people was prophetic. I said, “Well, you ain't working for them anymore. They working for *me*.”

And I had worked as a maid, a chambermaid, when I was in high school. I worked for the Hooper family, a wealthy white family in Ruxton, Maryland. They lived on 1730 Ruxton Road. They had a *big* white house. My mother and her girlfriends got me a summer job. I was— a junior year of high school? The eleventh grade, high school,

summer job, a live-in job making \$25 a week. I had an attic apartment. It was a *big* white house, working for white people. Miss Hooper, her brother lived there and her husband. Her grown children would come, and the grandkids. She had a butler, cook, and me. I was the chambermaid. She had some kind of issue with zipping her dress, so I had to help her get dressed in the morning. But I had a two-bedroom attic apartment at the top of their house, big, like an estate. I was about sixteen, and I could cook fried chicken, but that wasn't my job.

But Miss Hooper kind of took me under her wing, and the cook and the butler wanted to figure out, well, how is it that at least once a week I get to sit down with the family and eat dinner. Plus I was going to Mass. They would take me to the Mass with them on Saturday, on the weekend.

Well, I told Miss Hooper, I said, "Look, Miss Hooper. I'm not going to be a chambermaid for the rest of my life," because she was exposing me to a different option.

The Episcopal bishop would come there for dinner and she would, as they say, lay out a spread, and I remember the dessert would be that vanilla ice cream wrapped in a chocolate cake, sponge cake, and she'd pour this chocolate syrup all over top of it, like a rum syrup. And I would fix fried chicken. She loved my fried chicken, so that was the only time I would cook. So I learned how to set the table, all of this, from being with Miss Hooper.

And she would take me to Mass with her, over to the cathedral, Mary Our Queen on Charles Street, on Saturday, because you'd go to worship service on Saturday evenings around 5:00 o'clock, because they were Catholic.

Again, the cook and the butler were older. They were working because they *had* work. If I didn't work, I still was gonna eat. I knew my mother was going to take care of me. [Laughter] But I was making \$25 a week and I really wasn't doing a whole lot, you know, but I see it as my mother getting me off the streets of Baltimore. Here I was, a beautiful young sixteen-year-old girl, and she already knew that I had some cousins that had gotten pregnant. I didn't know they had gotten pregnant. They got pregnant, so their high school education was disrupted, and they decided—her girlfriends decided that wasn't happening with me.

So they were doing day's work and they found out who needed help, and so they got me out of Sandtown for the summer. Here I am out there with these white people. I was lonely at times. Yeah, I was lonely. And my mother would come on the weekends. She'd go down to Lexington Market and get me some donuts, her and her boyfriend. She had a live-in boyfriend by that time, Mr. Banks, so they'd come out and they'd try to pacify me with the donuts and stuff. [Laughter] I know what they were doing, looking back now, you know, but at the time, you know, it was like—so it was a life of solitude.

The year before that, in the tenth grade, she got me a job working at Brook Hill Pharmacy as a short-order cook, and I made \$25 a week flipping hamburgers and hotdogs for the Jewish kids, because it was a Jewish neighborhood. Okay, so when the pharmacist went on vacation—he went on a two-week vacation—his son now is in charge. So business was slow on this particular day—I'm jumping around—on this particular day, and he said, well, since I didn't have any hotdogs to flip or hamburgers to cook, I should dust the shelves back there where the medications were and the stock and all. I said, "But

that's not in my job description. I came here to be the short-order cook, to flip hamburgers and hotdogs, and that's what your father hired me to do." See, I'm smart.

And he said, "Oh, no. You've got to be occupied. You've got to be doing *something* while you're here. Might as well clean these shelves off."

I looked at him like he was crazy. I said, "You don't know who you talking to," because I already had attitude. [Little laughs.] I had attitude since elementary school, because my mother always told me the blacker the berry, the sweeter the juice.

I had to deal with racism since the day I was born, and in elementary school, even though I went to a black school, you had discrimination based on if you were dark skin, light skin, high yellow. All of that stuff was going on. People were crazy back in those days about race issues, about color, even in our own community. So the girls who were light skinned had hair like your hair. You know, they was favored over those of us who were, quote, unquote, "dark-skin." Even in our community, there was discrimination, which I never bought into, because my mother always said the blacker the berry, the sweeter the juice.

So when this pharmacist's son, who was *not* my boss, who *didn't* hire me, was just the son, wanted to tell me to dust the furniture, I looked at him like, "Hey, I ain't got to do this." And I said, "Before I dust this, I'm leaving." Well, so I left.

I went home and told my mother what happened, and my mother, she told me later, she said she got down on her knees and prayed, she said, because she realized that she was going to have to do something unorthodox because she did not want me to grow up to be a quitter. She saw herself as having been a quitter. Other words, there's some opportunities that must have come her way and she didn't follow through with it, because

she never finished high school. She had eighth-grade education. So she always regretted the fact that she never finished high school. She did become a beautician, a licensed beautician, a master beautician, owned two beauty shops, but she always regretted the fact that she didn't, you know—that's a whole 'nother story.

So she says—well, the next day, she went with me back out to Brook Hill Pharmacy and made me request my job back, because she said if she let me quit now, she knew I would be quitting anytime I felt like quitting. Well, she was absolutely right, because twenty-five years after I got out of undergrad school, I was able to retire from the State of Maryland at the age of fifty because I had persevered. I did something that very few people in my family did: I retired. I worked for the same—I had different jobs, but I worked for the same—I worked for the State of Maryland, so I was consistent. In other words, I learned how to—I can't have everything my way, you know. I learned how to work the system, put it that way.

So in her own way, she was right to make me go back and get that job, not that I needed it, because as soon as I got my first paycheck, she comes out there from—I never forget, she's coming from the racetrack, from Pimlico, because she loved to go to the horses. She'd go to Pimlico Racetrack. She'd go to Charles Town, West Virginia, and, of course, those were the night horses, where the horses ride at night. My mother was addicted to going to the track. That's what they call it now. And I would go with her. She would take me with her to the track, to Timonium, and while she's at the track playing the horses, I'd be at the fair riding—but anyway, so she came out there that week, the first week I got paid and she took me across the street to Reisterstown Plaza Shopping Center. It was right before school was getting ready to start. And I had \$25. I had my

paycheck, and I was proud. I got my first money, right? I mean, I'm in eleventh grade and I got \$25, and my mother takes me shopping. She's spending money to buy me clothes. I'm like, I got a attitude. Why is she spending her money and I done worked all week? I got my own money. [Laughter] I told her, I said, "Ma, you don't never let me want for anything."

And she said she have to buy me clothes and socks when she got the money. She got the money, so instead of buying me one pair of socks, she would buy me like a dozen, or she'd buy me five dresses. So I never had the chance to spend my money. Her point was, it was her responsibility to provide for me and she was doing what she was supposed to do, and what I did with my money, you know, I could save it, I could do whatever.

So what I would do, even as a young person—there was a family up the street where they had twenty kids. My mother gave me an allowance when I was in elementary school, a few dollars, maybe three, three to four dollars. So I would hire some of the kids from the Degross family to do my chores. Then I would go around the neighborhood—this is serious. I would go around the neighborhood—we had these white marble steps. You have to go look at some pictures of Sandtown back in those days. I lived in a small row house with white marble steps. We scrubbed those steps. You used Ajax and they became white again. I would go around and I would scrub steps for twenty-five cents, so if you wanted your steps cleaned, I had my crew, and I would make extra money. And I'm getting an allowance. Now, in the family up the street, they got twenty kids living in the same house that I got, the Degross family. They didn't have allowances. I had my

allowance plus I was making extra money. So I learned early in life how to make some money. [Laughter]

And we had a junkyard. It was down there near my father's poolroom. You could collect junk, like cans, old cans of soda, empty cans. You could take the aluminum, put it—and I had a little red wagon. You could take it and I would pile it up in my little red wagon—this is true [Laughter]—and go down to the junkyard, take these empty cans, and you'd get a penny for the empty cans. I guess it was a form of recycling. I don't know what it was. But that's how we got money.

I remember one Mother's Day, one of my girlfriends who lived in the projects—because in the projects back in those days, low-income housing, they had a swimming pool, a wading pool, they had a Recreation Center. All of this was in walking distance of my house, because I lived in inner city. So I would go up there every day during the summertime, get in the wading pool or learn how to swim, play Ping Pong. I was in a competition, citywide competition. They had more activities back in those days for kids than they do now in the inner city. So Paula and I, we were buddies and we'd hang out. I would shoot pool. They had these little wooden pool—not the regular billiards, but little wooden things you shoot, and since my father had already taught me how to shoot, I was good. And I could play Ping Pong.

So I was getting ready to make a point. Okay, I forgot the point. [Laughter] But I was like a little gang leader in elementary school. And I had cousins who lived across the street, they didn't go to school, young boys, Arthur, Larry, they were my cousins. And I would get in fights in elementary school, and I would tell them, "Y'all keep messing with me, my cousins gonna come up here and see about you." [Laughter] I'd give them full

warning. And Arthur would come up there. Arthur was something, may he rest in peace. Ah, he was a little gangster.

I'm just showing you the grace of God, because some of my cousins were doing heroin back in those days, and I was in the projects and I was up there playing every day in the wading pool. We were supervised. I was competing with—we had a track team through the city of Baltimore. We had intramurals. Between, like, East Baltimore, West Baltimore, we had competition, so I played Ping Pong and swam and I ran track.

We had a coach, Mr. Lampkin, at the Recreation Center. He was our coach and he taught us how to run, and I've used that analogy in my sermon. It's not enough just to get to the finish line; you got to cross the finish line. Mr. Lampkin always said, "Keep your eye across the finish line and cross the finish line. Don't stop." You know that text about "I press to the mark of a higher calling." I often go back and talk about what Mr. Lampkin taught us.

And I can remember running around Carver High School, which is a vocational school near me, where they had the track, running track after school. So my mother kept me engaged in all kinds of activities, Girl Scouts, Brownies. I was in the Brownies. I went to Girl Scout Camp, you know. I was in the ghetto, but I was living like middle-class compared to some other folk that I grew up with.

But back to the Degross family, yeah, I made extra money. Then when I was like thirteen, I had a job working at the beach, Car's Beach. Because I converted to Catholicism when I was eleven. I was raised Baptist and I converted to Catholicism when I was eleven, because I was in junior high school, and at the junior high school, I took this course on world religions. And keep in mind that the junior high, Robert E. Lee was

integrated, not that much integrated. I mean, I was like one of the first to be accepted into this accelerated junior high school. So that's a whole—I had to catch a couple of buses to get there from my neighborhood. All my cousins and everybody, they went to Booker T. Washington Junior High School, which was in the neighborhood. I'm catching a bus to go out of the neighborhood to Robert E. Lee Junior High School, which is predominantly white school. And Robert E. Lee is a southern general, isn't he?

[0:45:30.7]

Michelle Little: Mm-hmm.

[0:45:31.7]

Patricia Outlaw: Yeah. You know your history. [Little laughs.] Which I had no knowledge of at the time. But I took this course in world religion and part of the requirements of the course—we were, like, in the seventh grade—we had to do a project and we had to go visit churches that were not our own, five churches. So I went to a Catholic church, I went to a Jewish synagogue, might have went to Episcopal church, a couple others.

Well, one of my girlfriends from the projects was Catholic, so she invited me to come to Mass with her at St. Peter Claver Roman Catholic Church, and everything was in Latin and all the incense was going up in the air. I was like [demonstrates], “Oh, that smells pretty good. Interesting.” And all the formality. But I was impressed with the whole worship thing, worship experience. I didn't know what they were talking about because it was in Latin. [Little laughs.] I knew what he saying when he got up there to

give his homily, but that wasn't what impressed me. What impressed me was she invited me to come to CYO, the Catholic Youth Organization, which met on Friday nights. Because I'm early teenager now. On Friday nights, they'd have their little meetings, Social Club, Athletic Club, whatever. Then after the business meeting, you danced.

[0:46:52.1]

Michelle Little: Oh!

[0:46:54.2]

Patricia Outlaw: That's what got me hooked [Little laughs], because I could go there on Friday nights, go to the meetings. They accepted me into the CYO. They had Catholic priests, deacons and priests, who supervised us. So they would say things like—you had your business meeting, but they let you dance. And they would say—if it was a fast dance, they didn't have a problem, but if you slow dancing, I can remember this priest, Father Fremgen, saying—he would put his hands between the two partners. He'd say, "Make sure the Holy Ghost will get between there." He didn't want you standing too close to each other. [Laughter] So my mother let me go because she knew we were supervised.

Well, after about six months or so, they elected me vice president of the CYO, and I wasn't Catholic and they knew it. Maurice was Catholic, so they elected him president. So I became very active in Catholic Youth Organization. They had a dance component, and my mother created this modern dance thing for us off of the *Exodus* theme, I never forget, and we competed against other CYOs. Laverne and I—was the

other girl—we would have won first place for the dance we did off of *Exodus*, the theme song [Demonstrates], whatever, but when we got to the end, my mother was mad with me. [Laughter] We were supposed to have a serious face as part of our ending. We were at the edge of the stage, you know, looking out at the people, and I think I bust out laughing or something. So I blew that, and my mother was so disappointed. [Laughter] I just couldn't keep it together. But, nevertheless, we came in second.

So all of those activities, that's when I met the seminarians from St. Mary's. They taught our Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, which was like high school religious class on Sunday. It was Sunday School. And they would supervise us at CYO and all these activities.

And I told my mother, after I started going to some classes, I said, "Ma, I want to go to the catechism classes." Now, I wrote up my paper for my class, but now I got a new group I'm hanging out with. These are my friends.

Walter Malloy was at my school, Robert E. Lee Junior High, and he was this cute guy who looked like he was white. I wasn't sure whether he was black or white, to be quite honest. So I followed him home on the bus. Instead of getting off at my stop, I followed him and I followed another guy, "Chick," and turns out that they both lived in black neighborhoods and they both went to St. Peter Claver Roman Catholic Church. Walter wouldn't tell me whether he was black or white, because I asked him, I said, "What are you?" Well, he was biracial or something, but he wouldn't tell me, so I had to investigate myself [Little laughs] to find out, oh, this dude live in a black neighborhood. He live off North Avenue. And I found out who he was. So anyway, long story short, when I found out where these cute guys were [Laughter], they were over at St. Peter

Claver, and then I had to do this project, that's when I got hooked up with the CYO and met some people.

I decided—my mother let me go. Well, we were going to the Baptist church up the street from where we lived, and she stopped going and I never knew why, but I knew why later when I got older. Then it just seemed to me they were just hollering and carrying on in the Baptist Church. [Laughter] And I was precocious, because even in Sunday School, this evangelist came through and she said, “You're gonna be a preacher one day,” because I was exegeting the text [Little laughs] on Nicodemus, how can a man be born again.

And in the Sunday School class, I was debating with the teacher, and I was in elementary school. I said, “Can't no man enter a woman's womb. My mother told me birds, babies aren't born that way. My mother told me how babies were born. Y'all think they born through the storch (sic) or whatever. That's not true.” I'm elementary school telling the Sunday School class how babies are really born, and it's impossible for a man to go back up into his mother's womb like that. [Laughter]

This evangelist was listening to me argue my case and she told me later, she said, “You're gonna be a preacher one day.” I didn't know what she was talking about.

I said, “Okay. Whatever you say.” [Laughter]

So I'm looking at how God's hand is in all this, because later, after I'd accepted my call—I was an adult—that lady was at a revival at Bethel AME Church. Her name was Amanda Williams. By that time, I had been preaching, and I was sitting in the audience and they introduced her from the pulpit. They said, “This is evangelist Amanda Williams.”

I said, “That’s the same lady who prophesied I was gonna be a preacher.”

And I went up afterwards, I say, “I’m the little girl that you told many, many years ago that I was gonna be a preacher.” And it was six months later that she died.

But the story is, yeah, I became a preacher, but before that, I became a nun, because I became Catholic and asked my mother if I could go to the classes, catechism classes, because after going to different—to the synagogue and blah, blah, blah, I wanted to know more about the ritual of the Catholic Mass and all of that. I said, well, they the only ones I know can trace their heritage back to Jesus Christ. These other people, they can’t go all the way back to Jesus Christ. [Little laughs.]

So she said, “Well, I’ll let you go under one circumstance, that the priest got to come to the house and pick you up and take you to the class and bring you back home,” because it was quite a distance and the class was at night. Guess what. Father Fremgen came every week, picked me up in the church car and brought me back home. And after I went to those classes, I was persuaded that, yep, the only church that could make their origins case back was the Catholic Church. Then I also had my core group of my adolescents, my friends were Catholics I was hanging with, and we were having a good time. We were safe, we were being supervised, and I was learning, you know. So that’s how I became Catholic.

So I was baptized for the second time, and the priest said, “In the event that your first baptism wasn’t—.” [Laughter] Because I didn’t have any paperwork and I couldn’t validate my first—I knew I had been baptized. I had been immersed. My mother and I were baptized together at a Baptist church, but I had no paperwork. So they baptized me

again and I also got a confirmation name. My confirmation name was Claire [phonetic]. So I was, like, in it.

So then I went to a all-girls high school. Again, I'm integrating. I'm the only black female in my homeroom class, and I was in special college preparatory. When I left junior high, I did three years in two—and my counselor was saying, “Well, I don't think you should try to go to Eastern High School because that's for—.” I guess she was saying it was for girls who gonna go to college and dah, dah, dah, dah, you know, light-skin girls. That was going on too.

And I said to myself, “Watch me.”

Once I got accepted, it was no stopping me, you know. Now, she may have had some—she knew something I didn't knew. She knew I was going to be challenged, and I was, but I wasn't as focused as I might have been, because once I got there, I started playing sports and stuff, basketball. I played basketball, I played varsity basketball, I played softball. They had archery. It was like going to a girls' prep school, but it was public school, all-girls public school. I had to catch like three buses. It was Eastern High School and Western High School, and City College is the high school right next to all-boys.

So with me playing sports, I didn't spend as much time studying [Laughter] as I should have, but I had fun, because I competed. Like, my cousins were—I remember my cousin Rae Rae [phonetic], she was at Douglass High School. When we played them basketball, Eastern High School, oh, I showed off, you know. [Little laughs.] I remember one of the last games I played at Eastern High School, I made a hook shot that went down in history, and everybody, the guys from City were there, City College, the high school,

and everybody heard about it, how I made this hook. I don't know how I did it, but I did it. [Little laughs.] And I told my geography teacher, because I was having a hard time with geography.

In the meantime, I'm still a practicing Catholic. I was helping this nun who's an Oblate Sister of Providence, Sister Celeste, with her second-graders. I'd go down there after school and help her out with getting her kids ready for Holy Communion and trying to figure out what I'm going to do with the rest of my life. I thought about, oh, maybe I'll be a medical missionary or something. My mother never said anything to me about going to college, although she told me later she had planned for me to go to college and she was putting money aside, but she never had that discussion with me.

So in the meantime, Father Fremgen said—evidently, I must have expressed some interest in medicine or something. He said, “Well, maybe you should be a medical missionary.”

And I said, “Well, maybe you should go jump in the lake.” [Little laughs.] That was the farthest thing from my mind.

But he said, “Well, I'm going to give you this book.” He gave me a book. He let me look at this book. It was a book that was a directory of all the religious orders in the United States. And I showed it to a couple of my girlfriends, Laverne, and then we decided, “Oh, we gonna investigate this. We gonna check this out.”

And somewhere along the line in my eleventh-grade year, twelfth grade, something like that, it occurred to me that maybe God was calling me into the convent, because I was dating a guy, but I said if I got married, that's for life. Can't get divorced. The guy I was dating at the time, he had been in the brotherhood, the Josephite Brothers,

but he had come out. He was a young guy. He was a little bit older than me. So the group that I was hanging with as a Catholic, we would hook school to go to Mass and our parents knew about it. They would say, “Patricia wasn’t on that bus.”

One time, I hooked school to go the archbishop’s funeral. I was on my way to school. Well, the Catholics, those who went to Catholic school, they were off. They had a holiday. They were all going out to Charles Street, to Cathedral of Mary Our Queen. I knew where it was. We were on the Number 3 bus. My friends who were Catholic, I said, “Where y’all going?”

They said, “We going to the archbishop’s funeral.”

I said, “I’m going with y’all.” [Little laughs.] Just like that. I didn’t go to school that day. I went to the archbishop’s funeral. I went to public school; they went to private. They went to Catholic school. I didn’t have a problem with it. [laughter] You know, I could think of worse things I could do. [Little laughs.]

So we had our little meeting place on Pennsylvania Avenue where we would go sometimes and meet for breakfast before we’d go to school and we’d decide “Are we going to school today or are we going to go down to St. Pius and go to Mass?”

Well, the priest caught wind of what we were doing, that we were hooking school [Laughter] and using going to Mass for justification, because in our mind, we already had decided we were going to be nuns and priests, my little clique. Every little teenage group got their little clique. Now, in elementary school, I had a different kind of clique. I had a clique that, in the projects, you had to fight, so that was a different kind of clique.

But when I got to high school, I was meeting some different kind of people. We had different kind of—our thing was playing church. Maurice would be the priest. We

would go to his house. He would be the priest. Somebody else would be the nun. We would set up like we having real—so we had our own little clique, and we were in Sunday School, what you call Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, and the seminarians from St. Mary's came—they were our teachers. In ninth, tenth, and eleventh grade, we had seminarians. Like you were a seminarian, well, these were all guys. They would come and teach our high school classes on Sunday. So our classes were packed on Sundays because you had these young men, for the most part who were white males, who were teaching us, our particular group, and in our particular group, it might've been ten of us, five of us who were more closer than each other. But of that group, Maurice became a priest, I became a nun, Helen Nunly became a nun, Walter, he became a physician, the one I told you he looked like he was white, and we were—I can tell you all my business. [Laughter]

But, anyway, later in life, we reconnected. I remember one time I was walking down Fremont Avenue and I heard somebody call me, "Patricia! Patricia!" I looked around and it was Walter. He come running across the street with his son. They own a big funeral—the woman he married, her family owned a big funeral home. He said, "This is my son. I wanted him to meet you. I'm so proud of you." He became a doctor, and his son had just finished law school, and he told his son, "*This* is the woman I've been telling you—." [Laughter]

[1:01:08.7]

Michelle Little: Oh, wow.

[1:01:09.1]

Patricia Outlaw: I have this effect on people. [Little laughs.] These men be telling they children about me. One guy, Bobby—his picture up in my hallway—when I met his son years later, he said, “You the one my father always loved.” Yeah, that’s what he—but it’s like that.

So we had a really good connection, that group of kids. Walter got as far as the bus station and decided he didn’t want to be a priest, so he went back home and he became a physician. That’s what I’m saying, was that something transformative was taking place with those of us who went to St. Peter Claver at the time we were there and in that era.

The Franciscan nuns, so I had that influence as well, because I became, in my mind, a Franciscan, following the life of Francis of Assisi. I had a different appreciation for the dollar than I did earlier, and for the spirit of poverty, chastity, and obedience, primarily for the spirit of poverty, what that meant, not that you live like a poor person, but you didn’t buy into this capitalistic, materialistic stuff, at least back in those days.

I ended up I did go to Assisi, you know, and I did go to the Franciscan monastery in Washington, D.C. I went to the Franciscan monastery in Assisi, where St. Francis is buried. I’ve been to where St. Clare of Assisi—this the little girl from Sandtown. I mean, I been all over the world, and so I met folk who were studying for the priesthood in Rome at the North American College. Mallory [Thompson] was a good friend of mine who was one of the first blacks, American, to go study over there, and I went over there, and he could speak five languages.

I could tell you a whole lot of stories, but I did become Catholic when I was eleven years of age. That was a choice I made and my mother gave consent. I mean, I went through all the classes. I said, “I done done all these classes, I might as well become Catholic.”

Then when I got ready to graduate from high school, I wasn’t doing too well in geography, but since Celeste was telling me, “You better get your act together, because if you don’t pass geography, you’re not gonna be able to go in the convent.” In the meantime, I had researched which convent I wanted to go to, either the Medical Missionaries, Franciscans, or the Oblate Sisters of Providence. Well, prejudice was going on even in the religious life, yeah, mm-hmm. The church, the Holy Mother church, has been prejudiced since day one. I mean, you know.

The Franciscans—well, the Medical Missionaries, I went to Philadelphia to check them out. By that time, I had been Catholic maybe a couple years. They said, “You haven’t been Catholic long enough.”

I said, “Okay.”

But the other reality was they didn’t have any black nuns. You don’t have to be a rocket scientist to figure that out. I think the Franciscans said—or somebody cited canon law. Canon law says, “Well, your parents aren’t legally married,” so that made me illegitimate, right? Well, later, as I became a scholar, even the Anglican Church, Gerald Bray showed me a book where they have it in their canon law, too, that if you’re illegitimate, certain things that you can’t do, but they overlook it. But some of this stuff they was citing canon law on, it wasn’t canon law. It was racism. I would have been the first.

So the Oblate Sisters is the oldest order of black religious nuns in the history of the United States of America, founded by Elizabeth Lange and Father Joubert, and she was from Haiti. They founded an educational society in Baltimore to teach the immigrants who were coming in from Haiti. That's the order I became a part of, Oblate Sisters of Providence. At the time I joined, there was one woman, Sister Mary Grace, she was white, but everybody else was black or from Costa Rica or Cuba or someplace, so it was a bilingual community. They were speaking Spanish and English. And, again, being the adventurous person that I was, myself and two girls, Pauly and Lavergne, we walked from inner-city Baltimore—it was like two hours—all the way out to Catonsville, Maryland, to go see the Oblates ourselves.

[1:05:54.8]

Michelle Little: Wow!

[1:05:56.3]

Patricia Outlaw: Nobody drove us out there. Then when we got out there, the nuns found out why we were there, they fed us and everything and they talked to us, gave us a tour and all. But by the time we got ready to go home, it was dark. We couldn't walk back home because it was dark, it was getting dark. We never figured that part out, how we were gonna get home. [Little laughs.] So we called up St. Peter Claver Roman Catholic Church [Laughter] and told them what we had done and we were stranded. They were always rescuing us, because I remember when I got my driver's license and I was bragging I had got my driver's license and I borrowed the car and didn't tell my mother I

had passed my test, took her car, one of the cars, went to school, and she came home and her car wasn't there, she came out to the school, embarrassed me, and said over the loudspeaker, "Your mother looking for you," you know.

And she came and said, "Give me the car keys." I had to catch the bus home. It took me five times to pass that test.

But getting back to the nuns, so we called up and they sent Father Begue [phonetic] out there to get us and bring us back in town. But the nuns were so good to us while we were there. And, see, Pauly had already been in there before. She was a little older than us. She had been in and left, so she knew. And, I don't know, something clicked that here was a door being opened for us. So the three of us went in at the same time; was ten in my class. I stayed longer than they did. I stayed five years. They left before I did. But it's a teaching order, the Oblate—you have to check them out, Oblate Sisters of Providence. Mother Lange now is being considered for canonization to be considered a saint. They're located at 701 Gun Road. That's the Mother House, in Baltimore, Maryland, 21227. Phone number's 242-8500. [Laughter]

[1:07:54.3]

Michelle Little: Your memory! [Laughter]

[1:07:56.1]

Patricia Outlaw: 410-242-8500. See, once you a member of the community, you always a member. So from high school, for the five years, that's where I was, I was in the convent, and I was a postulant, novice, junior professed, the whole nine yards. I just

didn't make final vows. Two more years, I would have made final vows. So—oh, girl, I been talking.

[1:08:23.6]

Michelle Little: You've had a fascinating life. [Laughter]

[1:08:26.7]

Patricia Outlaw: 11:25. So ask me some questions, because I can go on and on and on.

[1:08:31.1]

Michelle Little: So how did you get from being in the convent to—

[1:08:34.7]

Patricia Outlaw: Back on the street?

[1:08:36.1]

Michelle Little: Well, to back on the street. Yeah, well, how did you leave the convent?

[1:08:40.2]

Patricia Outlaw: Good question. Okay. So I went into the convent with the idea that I was gonna serve the Lord in some kind of way. I wasn't really sure how, but I felt a good fit, because I had visited the convent before, not that one in particular, but different convents. I went to Pennsylvania to check out the Medical Missionaries. I would catch

the bus and arrange these meetings and meet with the nuns. As I say, going to college didn't faze me, but once I got in the convent, they had a junior college right on campus at the motherhouse, a private junior college, and they tested me and determined, "Oh, this girl has some skills, some competencies."

And in that environment, classes were small. It was only ten of us in our group, and as you enter, whoever was the first person to cross the threshold—and it was Ann Gourier [phonetic], she was number one. I was number four, Elizabeth was number five. I can remember walking up the steps to the convent, this big, beautiful place. I'd been there before, you know. It's like a college, you know. Smoking my last Winston cigarette. I was smoking back in those—I started smoking in high school. "Winston taste good like a cigarette should." [Laughter] I'm walking up the steps smoking my last cigarette, because I know I can't smoke anymore once I cross that threshold. Never smoked for five years.

So I go into the convent, I'm indoctrinated, I become a postulant. I had to give up all my worldly goods, had to pay a dowry. I think I paid about \$100. And in that time, I didn't have a whole lot to give up because I was living at home, but whatever I had, had to give it up, I gave it up. Went in the convent and I put on my postulant outfit and all that, and they start—it was like going into the military, but we had a prayer life.

The second year, as novices, all we could study was spirituality, anything related to how the convent functioned. I took logic, epistemology, and the Sulpician priest taught us in those first two years. So I learned how to—all of us had assignments, work to do, practice silence, prayer, chapel services, more prayer, you know. Sometimes I'd break dishes and I had to do penance for that. [Laughter] I remember one time I was breaking dishes in the dishwasher. I said, "Mother—"

She say, “Little sister, what I’m gonna do with you?” Because she had me kneeling before the crucifix in the cafeteria. I was breaking dishes left and right.

[Laughter]

I said, “Take me out the dishwasher.”

So she took me out the dishwasher and had me setting up table, you know, for the nuns, and I guess I had attitude, because I’d be slingin’ them dishes. [Laughter] I was breaking dishes. She said, “What I’m gonna do with you? I don’t know.”

But anyway, she found something constructive for me to do, like I worked in the sacristy or either I’d be washing, mopping floors. But the first time I had to mop floors in a college classroom, I never knew how to mop them right, because I didn’t know you weren’t supposed to put water in wax. We would run out of wax and I was stretching it, so I said, “Let’s put some water in the wax. That’ll stretch it.” No, it smeared the floors.

So Sister Reparata woke us up. She was my postulant mistress. She woke us up like midnight. “Who had that assignment?”

So we had to go back. We had to get up and go redo it [Laughter], and I explained to her what happened, that I put water in the wax. She said, “Girl, you don’t do that. You just ask for more wax.” [Laughter]

Well, I never had to do that at home because I hired people to work for me at home. [Laughter] It’s true. Even my mother, even though she worked for other people, she had a housekeeper. Miss Bill was our housekeeper. He was a gay guy that lived in our community, and she would hire him to do—you know. So that’s where I got some of my ideas from about how to live. He’d clean our house. She didn’t clean. She cooked, but

she didn't clean the house. I might have had one or two chores, but then I'd try to hire somebody else to do my chores. [Laughter]

So I never had the mindset to be—I mean, I could clean, and I learned every aspect of everything I was supposed to do when I was in the convent, even counting the hosts, preparing for other people to ship it out for them for Communion. Everything they had me do, I did it. I had one month that I would have to cook in the kitchen, and everybody loved my fried chicken. So my Sunday, you know, I did the fried chicken thing.

As a novice, you learn about spirituality, you learn about the vows, poverty, chastity, obedience, you learn the history of the community, what it means to be a nun and what would that look like, you know, and then you got other responsibilities as you grew and became a professed nun. Of course, I was always questioning things, like when we started going swimming, I said, “Well, I can't swim in no religious habit. We gonna have to have some bathing suits.” You know, I was practical. And I began to question, well, I don't know if I can agree with this or that, because I'm making a commitment to obey, and sometimes some of the things they were asking us to do didn't make sense to me, so I would question it. So my issue for me was not obedience and it wasn't poverty, because it's really you're practicing the spirit of poverty, because we didn't live like poor people in the convent. We had three meals a day, all of everything was taken care of. That ain't poverty, nuh-uh, not at all. We had a car to drive.

Even when I went—my junior and senior year, they picked the college that we went to junior and senior—they determined based on a set of tests that I should be a psych major. I wanted to be a psych major anyway because my first course in

psychology, I fell in love with psychology. Sister Mary Alice was teaching it, and I did research—I can't remember, something to do with the nuns or something.

And Elizabeth wanted to be a psych major, too, but they only needed one, so she got picked to do early elementary education. She was upset about it, but she got over it. She left the convent, too, but she became a professor, guess what, teaching early childhood education at some university in—so they were on point when they figured out through tests what we were—you know.

And I did become a psychologist, mm-hmm, and they did hire me back to come and counsel. They opened the junior college up to laypeople, lay girls, so they had a program at night. They hired me to come out there two nights a week to counsel the girls who were in junior college. So I was there for five years, and then junior and senior years, they sent me—I saw Robert Kennedy. He kissed me on my cheek. He did a—what do you call that?—convocation speech one day, and I remember being on an elevator with him, and he greeted me. I was a junior professed nun, and I remember he kissed me on my cheek and I didn't wash my cheek for a whole week. [Laughter]

So I went to—they picked Towson State College. Towson State College was predominantly white, but during that time, they were recruiting minorities. They had what they call “other race” grant money, so whereas some of my peers went to Morgan State University, traditional black college, I went to Towson. The nuns, we went to Towson. It was about five of us. We drove out there together. They were in my class, and we took turns, and I told them when it was my week to drive, I'm gonna listen to the kind of music *I* want to listen to. Elizabeth would be listening to this classical stuff because it

was her week. I said, “No, I’m listening to hip-hop, bebop.” It wasn’t hip-hop then; it was rock and roll. So they had to put up with my listening to rock and roll music.

So I went to secular college in my religious garb, had a different name, religious name, different name, and I was a psych major. So I’m on campus with all these white folk in a big institution, coming from a small private little college where I’m like number one in my class. Now I’m competing with all these other folk. It’s like, oh, my gosh. And, unlike black people, who are a little bit more private with their expressions of love and all of that, white people, young white people are very much, in the secular society—I ain’t trying to overgeneralize, but they were always smoochin’ on campus. [Little laughs.] You see these couples, white couples, smoochin’ with each other, and I’m in a religious garb. I’m like, I didn’t see this for three, four years. Now I’m being exposed to what young people my age are doing, not that I didn’t know, but it’s in my face. I’m like, “I don’t know if I can make a vow of chastity for the rest of my life.” So that was [demonstrates]. And then I’m seeing some cute guys, too, black guys, too, and white guys. I’m like, “Oh, my.” [Little laughs.] You know, I’m having this awakening. So that was a challenge for me.

Then in 1968, the year I graduated from Towson with a bachelor’s degree, Martin Luther King [Jr.] was assassinated. He was, like, my hero. And the priest that gave convocation for Towson State, who was the president of Loyola College at the time, his subject was “go into the city.” I’m sitting in the audience, a nun, and Martin Luther King has been assassinated. I was on retreat when he was assassinated, so I couldn’t leave the convent at that time because I was under vow and we were on retreat, so we had to act like, okay, everything’s—keep on being on retreat. The city’s in flames. But then a

couple months later, the priest is saying—president of Loyola, speaking to the Towson crowd, the secular crowd, “Go into the city.”

I’m sitting there thinking, “Oh, he talking to me. It’s time for me to get up outta here and go into the city.” I just felt like that was my exit moment.

So that was in June. I talked to Mother Superior and said, “I don’t think I can do this anymore.” I was scheduled to renew my vows in August and I would have renewed them for two more years and then I would have made final vows.

So she said, “Well, little sister, you can take a leave of absence.”

I said, “Well, if I take a leave of absence, can I date while I’m on a leave of absence?”

She said, “No, because you’re still under vows. Your vows don’t expire until August.”

Now, this is June of 1968, and my mentor had already left in April. She had been stationed down in New Orleans, Sister Celeste. She was an Oblate. Her mother got sick, so she left to take care of her mother, and the priest that she was falling in love with, Joe, he left shortly thereafter and went to D.C. They got married.

So it’s a lot going on, and it was during the era that John, Pope John XXIII, I think it was, had opened the windows of the church, so nuns and priests weren’t dressing in their traditional garb anymore. They were dressing like secular people, the people in the world. See, sometimes you couldn’t tell who was a nun and who wasn’t in some communities, and one of the things that drew us was the fact that we were being a little different. Now we’re not different. Now there are different opportunities. People were going to the Peace Corps, you know. And, like, I had friends who were in seminary who

now were leaving and getting married. It's like, okay, here I am, bachelor's degree, a nun, struggling with can I do this for the rest of my life, maintain, and the answer was no. So I told her, "Well, if I can't date, then there's no need in me taking a leave of absence. I might as well leave."

And she said, "Well, you can always come back," because I was in good standing.

So I left in June—no, July. Well, I went and interviewed for a job as a social worker, Baltimore City Department of Public Welfare, because I had a bachelor's degree. Took the test, city test. I knew I wanted to be a psychologist, but the social work assistant job, number one, I was working in foster care, children's division, paid more than the psych assistant at that level, so I took the social work, not because I'd had any classes in social work but because I scored high on the test. Went and interviewed in my religious garb as a nun with my alias, my religious name.

They hired me to start work in July. My vows expired in August, so for one month, I was still a nun, but I was working for Department of Public Welfare, and I went to live with my father. I didn't go back to my mother's house. So I left my mother's house when I was seventeen, and five years later, after being in the convent, I came and lived with my father. That was a choice I made. Now, you're supposed to say, "Well, why did you go live with your father?"

[1:23:03.1]

Michelle Little: That's what I was about to—why did you make that choice? [Laughter]

[1:23:04.4]

Patricia Outlaw: Because at this point, now I'm like twenty-one—yeah, five years. Yeah, I went in at seventeen, so I'm probably twenty-one going on twenty-two or twenty-two, and I never lived with my father. I also knew that my father had resources that my mother didn't have. So I'm starting with nothing. I'm going back into the world, no money in my pocket other than maybe that hundred dollars. I think they gave me back the hundred-dollar dowry that I gave them originally, with no interest. But I had a job waiting for me. I needed someplace to live.

I knew my father had a big house on Lanvale Street. He was faithful the whole time that I was in the convent. We had visitors every—you could have a visitation every month. *Every* month for five years, my father came to see me. He was the one who took me to the convent, drove me there, and my mother didn't want to go, because she didn't want me to go in the first place. He had a big party for me the night before I left where he cooked—somebody barbecued two pigs. It's like the prodigal, right? We had a big party, and my mother came over to his house and she was crying and carrying on. He told her pull herself together. She wouldn't go with us to the convent. She said, "I'll meet y'all out there." She came out later that evening. So it's me and my dad.

So when I got ready to leave, I was already connected to my father because we never broke our connection, because he was always coming to see me *every* month. And the nuns loved my father because he was always faithful. He always came to see me and he would bring some of my cousins out there. My mother, unbeknownst to me, my mother, after the first two years, she rent her house out and she moved to New York, back to New York. I didn't even know it.

[1:24:58.6]

Michelle Little: Oh, wow.

[1:24:59.6]

Patricia Outlaw: You know, her and her boyfriend must have split up or something, because I remember I went to visit her one time before I left the convent and she was so sad, you know. She was living up on some street, I forget, up near North Avenue, near Coppin. She was living at that man's house. That's when I kind of found out that she had been having a real hard time with my being gone and gone back to New York, because, you know, she had left, went to New York after the military. I don't know what she did up in New York.

But anyway, so I decided of my own free will that, you know, I would go live with my father, because I never lived with him and he could help me get on my feet. And he did. So I had a job. I moved in with my father. He gave me the front bedroom on the second floor. He took the middle room. He had a tenant lived in the back. There were three bedrooms. So he took me, shopped me, bought me a brand-new bedroom set, and then he gave me the down payment for my first car, a Volkswagen Beetle. He took me out to the Volkswagen place and put \$400 down on a brand-new Volkswagen Beetle, 1968, beige. And I started working immediately. Then he set it up that I had to start paying him rent. I had to pay rent, I had to pay the telephone bill. I had to—what else I had to buy? I had to contribute to the food. It was no free ride. He was grooming me to be independent.

Then I started dating, mm-hmm, and after two years, I realized it's time for me to get my own place. What triggered it was because—well, let me see which came first. Yeah, well, Bobby went to Vietnam, and that was a heartbreaker. But anyway, that was my first real, you know—but then I had some white classmates from Towson that we were getting together. We were going to the beach or something, and Joe Esposito [phonetic], was an Italian guy, he got to my house first. My dad thought I was dating him. I wasn't dating him. I was dating Timothy, who was a black guy. And that's when I began to realize that my father, who was from a different era, still had residuals of that racism stuff, because he was upset because he thought I was dating this white guy, and he said, "What will the neighbors say?"

I'm like, "What you mean, what will the neighbors say? I don't care what the neighbors say. I ain't datin' him. I'm datin' this one," you know.

But the point was my friends now, I had a mixture of friends, black friends and white friends, and when we started going to North Carolina, we couldn't stay in hotels, we couldn't eat in certain places. We had to pack our lunches, me and my dad. But now I was in a different group, and I realized I had white friends and black friends, and I needed to be in a space where I could entertain who I wanted to. And now that I was old enough and I had the resources, I had started—I had a trunk, the same trunk I took with me to the convent, I had it in my house. I was buying sheets. I was getting ready to get my own apartment.

After two years, I had everything I needed to get my own apartment, and my mother went with me apartment shopping and decided that I couldn't be on the first floor. She was scared for my safety. I picked a place, Blue Fountain Apartments, second level.

So I was growing. I was becoming individuated as an adult, and so I said goodbye to my father. He was happy about it because I was set. They all liked my apartment, had a one-bedroom apartment.

Then I decided when Bobby went off to Vietnam, in order to deal with my grief, to go back to school, because I was walking the streets of Baltimore crying just like that [Snaps fingers]. I was heartbroken because he—I worked at Fort Holabird. I did a year as a social worker for Baltimore City and I had an opportunity to work for the Department of Defense, for the federal government. One of my friends, Marty Morris, got a Coretta Scott King’s Fellowship to go to Syracuse University to get her Ph.D. She had a job, she was a GS-9. She said, “Outlaw, you want my job?”

I said, “Marty, you know I don’t qualify for that job.”

She said, “You can get it. You can get it if you want it. All you gotta do is tell me you want it.”

See, it was not a permanent job; it was a one-year contract. She had one more year. She was a job counselor working for the Department of Defense. But it was gonna pay \$3,000 more than I was making for Baltimore City, plus it was gonna put me in the federal system and it was gonna give me a GS-9, with a bachelor’s degree. I had gone up to Syracuse with her to see where she was gonna be, what she was doing, her apartment and everything, and her bookcase. She had these cinder blocks that she made a bookcase. She was a Coretta Scott King Fellowship, and she kept telling me, “If you want the job, you got it. Just fill out the paperwork.”

I filled out the paperwork. Lo and behold, they hired me. It was a really good job too. [Little laughs.] I had a lot of fun. I was a job counselor. It was a training program

through a cooperation between Opportunities Industrialization Center and the Neighborhood Youth Corps. I represented the Department of Defense. I was the counselor, so when these young high school dropouts came to Fort Holabird, I'm sitting up in the employment office as the representative for the Department of Defense.

So I would go from Fort Holabird to Fort Meade hanging with these young kids, making sure that they understood, "You're getting this job, but this is what you're gonna have to do to keep the job." So I was the liaison person between the Neighborhood Youth Corps, the director of the Neighborhood Youth Corps, Leon Sullivan [phonetic], and Opportunities Industrialization. This was part of a program I think was—I don't know whether Johnson started the program or Kennedy, one of 'em, to help inner-city folk get some jobs. So I loved it, because I would travel between—some days, I'd be at Fort Holabird, other days I'd be at Fort Meade. I got to eat at the Officers' Club. Only cost me a dollar for lunch. I was meeting all these soldiers. That's where I met Bobby, at Fort Holabird. He was a military police. He stopped me as I was coming through the gate.

I mean, I was having fun. But it was only for one year. I knew it was only for one year. And while I was there, I got accepted into the graduate program at Towson, my alma mater, to be a school psychologist, so I started going to school at night. When Bobby went off, I went to school at night and I decided, "Okay, I can either grieve myself to death or I can channel this and go to school." But I was also working part-time too. I had a full-time job and a part-time job.

As my first job, I worked as a social worker, and at night, I would work two days a week for the archdiocese making home visits. I was a truant officer. [Little laughs.] That was my first year out the convent. They hired me as a truant officer. I would go

knock on doors and find out why your kid wasn't in school. And that money I made those first two years part-time, I talked to my parents, I took all that money and paid the sisters back for my tuition. The nuns told me I didn't have to do it, but my parents said, "Well, you can do it out of charity." So I made a charitable donation of two years of my work as a truant officer at night.

Then they turned around and hired me to work part-time for them at the college, to counsel these young girls who were coming to junior college for the first time, two nights a week. So then I got in the habit of working full-time and part-time, and then I started shifting between part-time work and going to school at night, getting my master's. So I have a master's degree in school psychology. Then after I left Fort Holabird, I got a job as a school psychologist, and Dr. Crew [phonetic], who was the superintendent of school, was the psychologist, and he was telling me what I needed to do to get license, that I needed to get a Ph.D., had to be under somebody's supervision, blah, blah, blah.

Then a job opened up at my alma mater, at Towson, Director of Study Skills Center, again another big jump in salary, because I was going from a nine-month contract working for the school system to a twelve-month contract. I used to joke with my colleagues, I said, "I'm gonna be making more money than this when I'm working in the school system." And, sure enough, they hired me to be the Director of the Study Skills Center at Towson, which was a program designed for students who were coming in with lower SAT scores, and I set up this whole remedial program.

I did my Ph.D. on "The Impact of Remediation on the Academic Achievement of Marginal Students." My supervisor, who was the social dean at the time, Dr. Segal [phonetic], happened to be a licensed psychologist. Can't get any better than that. So I

needed to have one year predoctoral and one year postdoctoral to qualify for the licensing exam, so she served a dual purpose. She was grandfathered in under the grandfather law—she’s older than me—because she didn’t have a doctorate, but she was a licensed psychologist. She supervised me from the academic perspective, and I would meet with her for the clinical stuff. So then I got promoted to Associate Dean of Students at Towson, which was my alma mater.

So in the meantime, I’m going to University of Maryland, College Park, at night to get a Ph.D. while everybody else partying, you know. I remember one time I was supposed to fix dinner for some folk in my apartment building. I said, “I can’t do that. Best I can do is give y’all a shake. I’ll catch y’all on the weekend.” [Laughter] I had a healthy shake when they came over. They let me slide, and, to their credit, they gave me credit. They said they wished they had the whatever it was that I had, because, I mean, drugs and everything was being sold up in that area back in those days, and I just didn’t have time for it, not that I didn’t experiment every now and then, but still it just wasn’t for me. But school was the thing, I give it to that tricycle, and it was also a constructive way for me to utilize my energies, because I could have did some negative stuff.

Dorothy’s husband was the chair of the psych department at the time, Herb Segal, and he was killed in a boating accident that particular summer, I remember. It was on Father’s Day. He had gotten both of his kids to safety and gotten to the dock and then he collapsed. And we were supposed to have him for a class that summer, right before he died. So a number of psychologists in Maryland volunteered to supervise us one-on-one for that course. I forget what it was.

But, long story short, I did get my master's in school psych and I did go to University of Maryland at night, which was a long drive from Towson. I told them—you know, they had a residency requirement—I said, “Well, if you can pay me the same salary that Towson's paying me, I'll do the residency, but if you can't pay me the same salary, I'm not coming down here to do a residency. For what? I'm not gonna do that.” And I said, “Besides which—,” I wrote in my application, “y'all need me in your program. I'm integrating your program.”

So Herb Segal told me to apply. He was the one that planted the seed for me to get a Ph.D. It wasn't on my radar. What I liked about Herb Segal, he was Jewish, he had kinky hair, and he was a judo expert.

[1:37:49.9]

Michelle Little: Wow. [Laughter]

[1:37:52.4]

Patricia Outlaw: Because I did martial arts. I was starting to do it in college and stuff, self-defense and all, because I had stuff happen when I was a youngster, and I was saying, “Ain't nobody gonna hurt me no more.” That's a whole 'nother story.

So I liked Herb Segal because he really looked like a black man, chunky, but he was a judo master. He had a black belt in judo. So when he died, we were all brokenhearted, you know. He collapsed, but he saved his children. Dorothy was his widow by this time.

But anyway, so I wrote a convincing argument why University of Maryland should accept me into the doctoral program and that I was not giving up my job to do a residency, so they waived the residency requirement, let me in. I did it part-time. I did it in—I think I did it in four years, part-time, or five years. One year I didn't go because my father died when I was twenty-nine, so I just quit, and after about a year, they said, "If you don't come back, you're gonna have to start over," or something. Well, I came back. [Laughter] They said, "You can't stay out but so long."

I said, "Okay." But I didn't go to my graduation.

[1:39:10.2]

Michelle Little: Why's that?

[1:39:11.7]

Patricia Outlaw: Because my father wasn't there. He had died. What's the point? I was hurting. I was mad at God. So I told them mail my diploma to me. Now, I went to every other graduation, but I didn't go to that one because he wasn't gonna be there. Everybody knew I was hurting. They knew I was devastated. But, nevertheless, you know, healing comes.

So I got my Ph.D., and then I turned around and got a master's in theology from St. Mary's Seminary, which was the same Sulpician priests who had taught me when I was—not necessarily the same people, but the same order of priests who run St. Mary's Seminary were the ones who taught me in junior college. Father Timothy Holland

[phonetic] taught me logic, epistemology. He said, “A man convinced against his will is of the same opinion.” I can see him right now.

How ironic, God was ordering my steps, because when I got ready to graduate from St. Mary’s, they already had my credentials. They knew I was a psychologist. They needed somebody to teach pastoral counseling part-time, because they had a program in the evening, Ecumenical Institute, for people who were not studying for priesthood, but all these other religious denominations were sending their folk there to get seminary training at night. Baptist, Methodist, Episcopalian were all at St. Mary’s. And St. Mary’s wasn’t far from where I was living. I wasn’t going to Howard University in D.C. when I can go right around the corner to St. Mary’s and get my master’s degree.

They decided to hire me, asked me if I would consider teaching and developing a course, “Pastoral Leadership in a Small Church,” stuff like that. So I was like, “Can’t get away from these Catholic people, look.” [Little laughs.] They hired me. So I got my teaching background, and then I also taught part-time at Morgan State. I taught in the psych department at Towson part-time, but I always had a full-time, and all my jobs were with the State of Maryland.

So in nineteen—I guess it was [19]79 or something like that, the State of Maryland had this incentive, Maryland State Incentive Bill Number Two, that if you had a certain number of years of service, you could retire with full benefits about five years ahead of time. I did my research and I kept saying—I used to joke with the people in Personnel, because at this time, I was working with the seriously persistently mentally ill and I thought, “I’m not gonna last long.” [Laughter] I worked in that for five years. I said,

“If y’all have anything on retirement, call me. If somebody miss the class and you need a filler, let me come, even though I know I’m not eligible.”

Well, what I did not know was the time that I worked for Baltimore City Schools—I worked like seven years as school psychologist—that’s a nine-month contract, but I’m in the state system retirement-wise. So when I moved to Towson—that’s the same state system—that’s twelve months. So they gave me my correct salary, but they were not giving me credit for the fact that now I had moved from working nine months to twelve months, so they were owing me—and I worked at Towson like seven years—they owed me three months for seven years. For every year—so you multiply those three months plus sick leave, guess what. It came up to—I think what I needed was twenty-five years, and guess what. It came up to the exact number I needed. They owed me. They had done the research. They had gone through microfiche. They did that with everybody that was writing to say, “I’m looking to see if I qualify for this retirement thing,” where you could retire and you get a retirement check for the rest of your life every month plus health benefits.

[1:43:21.9]

Michelle Little: Wow.

[1:43:23.5]

Patricia Outlaw: I said to myself, “Oh, this sound like a plan. I can do private practice and make the difference up.” You know, because you’re basically gonna get half your salary. “I can do private practice.” This is what I’m thinking.

When they came back with the paperwork and said, oh, they discovered they owed me some time and it added up—and I had one month to make a decision, I said, “Hallelujah! I’m outta here.” [Little laughs.] I was fifty years old.

[1:43:49.6]

Michelle Little: Wow.

[1:43:52.8]

Patricia Outlaw: Then when I got out, the very next month, the check was coming in. I been getting the check from the State of Maryland since, every month.

But after I got out, I said, “Now what?” All my friends are working. I’m retired. I’m walking around Baltimore city, walking around Lake Montebello for a year, doing a little private practice, but who am I—even if I wanna go somewhere, my friends are working.

Then I went to Bahamas with my pastor’s wife and a group of women, went to Kingdom Women’s something or other, and I met a sister from Alabama at the airport in Miami. We were changing planes, and she was going to the same conference I was going to. Long story short—and she was a Beesonite. She’s a dentist. She’s in ministry. We met and we connected, kind of awkwardly so, because I really wasn’t trying to connect. My cousins were meeting me. We were on our way to the beach. I go to these conferences—I don’t go to all the stuff they go to. I go to play, to be honest. If I’m paying my way, I can go to whatever I want, do whatever, but if it’s going to the islands, I’m going to the beach.

So she wanted me to delay my flight and give it up to somebody. I said, “Oh, no, I’m meeting my cousins and we’re going to the beach.” [Little laughs.] And I said, “If so-and-so wanted me to take her daughter, she would have told me,” you know, or supervise. I’m not taking that on. That’s when she decided, oh, she gonna be my friend. I didn’t even know who she was and didn’t care. Long story short, this is the sister from Alabama. We connected and then she kept communicating with me, and eventually she invited me to come to Alabama. Then she invited me to come to pastors’ school. She was a student, and she’s a dentist who’s coming into ministry. At this time, I’m already in ministry. I got down here and I sat in on a lecture that Frank Thielman did. It was like—blew me away. I said, “Wow!” Plus it was a cheap vacation, because, see, I’m retired, remember?

[1:45:56.0]

Michelle Little: Mm-hmm. [Laughter]

[1:45:56.9]

Patricia Outlaw: It was \$125 for the week, stayed on campus, going to pastors’ school, heard Frank, heard Ken Mathews, and it was like, oh, my, I’m in heaven here. [Little laughs.] And I don’t have to take exams, meet new people. [Laughter]

Next thing I know—oh, the associate dean, what was his name? I can’t remember his name right now, older guy. You wouldn’t know him. He was sitting at the table next to where we were sitting for lunch, and we were just—you know how girls do, “My

school better than your school, and you went to that liberal St. Mary's school. You should come down here and get another master's degree."

I said, "Girl, I don't need another master's degree."

He overheard the conversation, because I was giving them the outline of my—telling Tish, and he said, "I don't think she need another master's degree either. She should come down here and get in our D.Min. program."

I was like, "Eh, who are you? I don't need another doctorate either." [Laughter]

I said, "Tell you what. Send me the application." Because, now, keep in mind it's only been a year at that point since I filled out the paperwork and found out that I could retire, and I learned a lesson from that. Fill out the paperwork anyway, whether you think you can or not, because you never know. So I said, "Send me the paperwork," because I already got a precedent for the advantages of filling—what do I have to lose? I don't even know what stamps cost.

But Tish was at the table, so she wasn't gonna let him forget to send me that—because her daughter adopted me while we were at the conference—she was twelve at the time—to be her godmother. We had these, like, protégés that were young girls that they pick somebody to be their mentor, and Geneva said she wanted me because her real godmother didn't have time for her. "Okay, fine, I'll have time for you. I'll make time."

So I filled out the paperwork. It came in the mail, I filled it out. Guess what. I got accepted into the D.Min. program. The neat thing about it, I could fly in and out—

[1:48:04.1]

Michelle Little: Oh, nice.

[1:48:06.3]

Patricia Outlaw: —from Baltimore. I'd fly down here for classes—because it was that kind of program. Two weeks in January, two weeks in July, two weeks in September. I think it's about three to four years. So I was having fun. I didn't *have* to have that degree, but I decided, okay, in my practice as a psychologist, we have to take Continued Ed. I'm in ministry, I need to be retooling. I might as well sit under these scholars and hear what they have to say [Little laughs], and in the meantime, I'll get to spend time with my goddaughter, and it was just a fun thing.

Well, I did quite well, and I really wasn't trying. I actually aced the whole program, and I wasn't trying, and, of course, she was mad because I got all As, but that's her problem. [Laughter] But I had a great time. I was the first female to be accepted into the program, first African American, and it was all males. It was ten of us and I was the only female, and I made some great relationships.

When I was getting ready to graduate, get ready to finish that program, somebody came to me and said, “Well, what you gonna—?” Oh, it was Robert. He said, “What you gonna do when you graduate?”

I said, “I'm going back home. That's what I'm doing, going back to Baltimore.” [Little laughs.]

That's when I found out the dean had a slot open and they were interested in having me come teach, because it was in my area. They already had my records. They already knew what I had done. They already knew that I could teach pastoral counseling. I'd already taught it part-time at St. Mary's Seminary.

Then I had to go back and forth. I had to pray. [Little laughs.] “Lord, I am not trying to go to Alabama. Birmingham, Alabama?” And I said, “Oh, no. Let me go back and talk to my advisor, my spiritual guide. No, I can’t do this, nuh-uh.”

A woman gave me some words of wisdom. She said, “Go where you’re welcome.”

I said, “No, I can’t do it.” Then I told her, I said, “I ain’t coming down here because I gotta take care of my mother.”

She said, “Bring her with you.”

The rest is history, because I told my mother, I said, “Ma, I got this job opportunity.”

And she said, “I’m used to traveling. I’m a World War II veteran.”

And, see, she had moved with me a year before I got this offer, into my house. She called me up one day and she said, “You know where I can get a room?”

I said, “Yeah, Ma, I know where you can get a room.”

My cousins had told me she was declining, and in five days, I went over to her house, packed her up, and moved her into my house. That was a whole year before I even knew about Beeson. I’m just showing you how God works things out.

So here we are, and it’s 12:15, so we should take a break.

[1:50:51.7]

Michelle Little: Okay, yeah. And then I just have a couple more questions, then I can— yeah, we can take a break.

[recorder turned off]

[1:50:59.1]

Michelle Little: Okay. So you finished your degree at Beeson and then you started teaching there.

[1:51:04.3]

Patricia Outlaw: Right. I started teaching January 2001. We relocated here, mm-hmm. My mom came with me.

[1:51:14.4]

Michelle Little: Right. So while you're teaching at Beeson, you were also pastoring—

[1:51:19.2]

Patricia Outlaw: I didn't pastor right away. I had pastored in Baltimore, in Monkton, Maryland, my first church, 1988. I was ordained an itinerant elder and got my first appointment. I did it for five years and then I stepped away from it for a while and served at a major church in Baltimore and did all these other things. Then when I got here, I was offered a church, but I was taking care of my mom, and the church they offered me was in Montgomery. I said, "No, I'm not gonna be doing that. My first allegiance is with Beeson because that's who my contract is with." So the bishop understood that.

But after three years, another bishop came. I went to a planning meeting, which I'm getting ready to go to now, end of this week, Thursday, down in Mobile, but it was in

Montgomery, Alabama. Bishop Kirkland—I never forget, I went down to give the Women in Ministry Report, because I was the president at that time. I didn't have a clue that I was gonna be asked to take a church, and he asked me—he was conducting a business meeting, called me up. I was sitting on the front row. "Outlaw, come up here." He whispered in my ear, "If I give you an appointment, would you take it?"

I said, "Well, where is it?"

He said, "Adamsville."

I said, "Adamsville? Where is Adamsville?" You know, I'm geographically challenged. [Little laughs.]

He said, "It's near the Episcopal office."

Well, I knew that, so I said, okay, that's not far. That's about twenty miles from here, you know. I said, "Okay. Yes, I'll do it."

So he said, "Don't go home. Don't leave yet." And I got an appointment right at—he was giving out appointments.

So that was three years after I got here. Then I had to go back and negotiate with Dean George, because they don't like you to be pastors. But, see, if you Baptist, they call it different. They take these one-year assignments. I said, "Well, my appointments are one year at a time too." [Little laughs.] So I had to write up every year, you know, where I was being sent, what church, and remind him it was one year at a time, blah, blah, blah. So I been pastoring ever since.

So my first church I pastored down here, which was my second church, was St. Paul, Adamsville. I was there for eight years, and I was determined I was gonna stay at least seven or eight because nobody had stayed that long, and I was the first female to

pastor that church and the first female in Adamsville to pastor a church, so I was making history and I knew it.

[1:53:43.4]

Michelle Little: Wow.

[1:53:44.9]

Patricia Outlaw: So I stayed eight years, and Bishop David said, “Well, come back for General Conference. I’m gonna move you.”

And I said, “All right. I’ll be ready by that time.”

Then from there, I went to Bethel Homewood. I was at Bethel Homewood for three years. From Bethel Homewood, I went to Bethel Rising. I was there for three years, and now I’m at Oak Grove in Florence. This is starting my third year. So which Bethel are you inquiring about?

[1:54:18.1]

Michelle Little: The Bethel that’s in Rosedale that’s right—

[1:54:21.7]

Patricia Outlaw: In Homewood.

[1:54:22.5]

Michelle Little: In Homewood, right. I had actually not heard of Bethel Rising. Where is that one?

[1:54:27.8]

Patricia Outlaw: That's over by Princeton Hospital.

[1:54:29.6]

Michelle Little: Okay, gotcha, gotcha.

[1:54:32.1]

Patricia Outlaw: Over by that Rickwood Field.

[1:54:35.6]

Michelle Little: Okay. I gotcha.

[1:54:37.2]

Patricia Outlaw: Is that the name of that field? Yeah.

[1:54:38.3]

Michelle Little: It is, it is.

[1:54:39.5]

Patricia Outlaw: Yeah, it's over in that—I was there for three years, yeah. I mean the itinerancy.

[1:54:44.0]

Michelle Little: So what do you remember about your time at Bethel Homewood? What do you remember about your time there?

[1:54:48.1]

Patricia Outlaw: Can you cut this off?

[1:54:49.0]

Michelle Little: Oh, sure.

[recorder turned off]

[1:54:53.6]

Michelle Little: Okay. So we paused for a minute there. So to wrap up our interview, I'd like to talk about some of your memories of food in church. And you've been a part of three different Bethel—

[1:55:05.0]

Patricia Outlaw: Congregations, yes.

[1:55:06.9]

Michelle Little: Congregations, and a couple of them here in Alabama, one in Baltimore. But what are some of your memories of the ways that people come together over food in church?

[1:55:17.4]

Patricia Outlaw: I mean, I can even talk in terms of my Baptist experiences, too, in North Carolina. So I'll start with in Bethel Baltimore. You know, we had two services, and we always had breakfast after the 8:00 o'clock service. Many times on the weekends, like on Saturdays, the homeless would be fed on Saturday. They could come off the streets and would get a meal, so having a meal was not uncommon.

I also was a deacon at St. John AME Church in Baltimore, and my cousin, my older cousin Murdie, who used to be the bartender, who came back to church and joined St. John AME Church under Reverend Foust, she would have breakfast. She would cook breakfast every Sunday morning at the church before Sunday School, and so a lot of seniors who lived in the neighborhood of St. John AME Church would come there for breakfast. It was a fellowship. It was an awesome breakfast, you know, biscuits, eggs, bacon, grits. And a lot of people knew Murdie. They knew her from the Lorman House, and she just took those skills and transferred it and gifted the church. She had a little committee. You know, they'd buy the food and they would cook it, and people would pay for the breakfast.

What I observed was there were a lot of people who lived alone, seniors and what have you. That was a great fellowship for them, not only for them, but for the young folk

too. And people would stay all day, you know, because you got a full stomach. [Little laughs.] You come for breakfast and you come to worship, and then you fellowship afterwards. For some people, they didn't have that connection with anybody.

Bethel always had—Bethel Baltimore, food was always, you know—there were times, however, when we fasted for Thanksgiving. We fasted from Thanksgiving all the way to Saturday morning, and it ended with breakfast. I remember one Thanksgiving, Dr. John Bryant, who's now a retired bishop, he called for a fast, and we spent the night in church from Wednesday to Saturday. He had people at the altar. We were praying. We didn't eat, but we did eat on Saturday morning, because we wanted to demonstrate solidarity with people who didn't have food to celebrate on Thanksgiving Day, so we did the opposite. That was at Bethel Baltimore.

Now, Bethel Rising is a small church over here by Princeton Hospital. Those folk, they have some really good chefs. It's one of my smaller churches, Loving Hearts, and when they cook, they have one person, her part-time gig is a professional caterer. They set the table with elegance. They go out of their way to extend hospitality to any and everybody. They use it as fundraisers to raise money for the church. You know, you go there on Sunday mornings, you can smell coffee. They use Maxwell House coffee. That used to be my mother's favorite coffee when we were growing up. And I suspect that there may be some people who probably go to AA or support groups, so that's where they get the whole notion of having coffee on Sunday morning. But the notion of hospitality, whenever you have an afternoon service, you try to have food, because if people are gonna be there in the morning, then they need someplace to eat, mm-hmm. Okay, that's Bethel Rising.

Some places, the folk are territorial about their kitchen, some churches. Everybody can't—you just can't walk in the church and start cooking. You need to find out who's in charge of the kitchen [Little laughs], what are the rules of engagement [Little laughs], because there's some people feel like that's *their* kitchen because they donated x number of dollars. I try to debunk all of that, dispel that, but I've seen that, that attitude, permeate in certain churches, where you had to kind of bow down to whoever thought that that was their kitchen. Most of the times when we have social functions involving food, we put it on our calendar, at Oak Grove, you know, and then it's clear and we know who's responsible for what.

So I think that the food is therapeutic, because basically we're creating—I'm a psychologist—we're creating a therapeutic community. And people have to eat. I can remember the times when I was in North Carolina, you at church all day on Sunday, but you knew you were gonna eat and eat well, because you'd have a nice hot breakfast that you had at home, but if you were gonna be at church all day, there was always gonna be dinner available at church and it was always good food. It's the typical fare at church. The gospel bird, fried chicken, collard greens, macaroni and cheese, those are the favorite staples, mm-hmm. And it was a way for people to come together and fellowship.

Many times, there were not restaurants. Like today, we have restaurants and people are going to restaurants, you know, whatever their favorite restaurant is, or they may go to early morning service and go to a breakfast, but in years back, we didn't have those options, and as black people, we didn't have those options to go restaurants. We had to cook our own food, bring our own food, pack a lunch, and bring it with us, and so that's where that tradition came. We made meals available at church. And we also do it in

terms of helping people in the community. So there's certain days—some churches who have more resources have lunches once a week, some twice a week, some daily. Bethel Baltimore, especially on the weekends, they catered to—they even installed an extra shower in the men's and women's room for street people to come and take a shower, in terms of extending hospitality, because they had resources.

Now people have to get on the schedule, you know, even at Oak Grove. Now that we've renovated our social hall, as I told them when I got there, we want to give Starbucks a run for their money. We want our place to be consumer-friendly, bright lights. We have theme colors, the shades of gray. Now people want to come, you know, they want to use—"Can we use the social hall?"

I said, "Gotta check the calendar. And don't ask me anything on Sundays. Call me on Monday, talk to me on Monday, but don't hold me responsible for anything like that on Sundays after I preach, because I'm still in the glory realm." And they got the message. "I have to check it with the secretary and check and see what's on the calendar, but don't ask me this on the run, because I am not gonna remember that you wanted to use the social hall on *x* day. It could be already something scheduled." And we're also in the process of doing some renovations, so I have to check with my contractor to see—I said, "Things don't happen as fast as you think they gonna happen," you know. They tell you, "We'll be finished in a week." May be a month.

[2:03:08.8]

Michelle Little: Right.

[2:03:10.6]

Patricia Outlaw: So food is essential in the ministry, I think, that people look to have fellowship, and for some people, that's the only time they have fellowship is when they come to church. It may be the only time they get a decent meal, particularly if you look at the socioeconomic demographics of the church. Even here, when I came to Birmingham and I would go to Bible Study at one of those big Baptist churches, William Hull was doing a Bible Study on Wednesday nights. He's the former provost. I forget the name of the church, but that church had an awesome dinner on Wednesday nights before he served up *the Word*. They served the Word up in that meal. [Little laughs.] They had excellent cooks in that kitchen, and people paid top dollar, what I call top dollar, for that meal.

Even at the Church of the Advent, at noontime you could go down there and have an awesome meal, and then it was either before worship or after worship, but it was tied, so people put a lot into what that meal looks like, you know. If it's not like that, you know, if people don't, then people aren't gonna come back, and sometimes people just come for the meal, but they'll stay for the Word. So there's a connection between faith and food, because Jesus compels us to feed the hungry and he knows that in order for us to survive, we gotta eat, and it's what you eat that makes the difference, so if you can couple the Word with the food, then you can, you know, capture—because when we're hungry, if you feed us first, then we can hear you, but if you talking about pie in the sky and I'm hungry, I can't hear you because my stomach's growling. So there's a definite connection.

[2:05:25.6]

Michelle Little: All right. Well, thank you.

[2:05:28.0]

Patricia Outlaw: Anything else you wanna ask?

[2:05:29.8]

Michelle Little: You've answered all my questions. Is there anything I did not ask you that you wanted to talk about? Or are you ready to eat right now?

[2:05:42.6]

Patricia Outlaw: No, no, I'm just thinking. I was just looking at my calendar. I said, I'm just thinking, I've been talking a mile a minute.

[2:05:48.0]

Michelle Little: It's been wonderful.

[2:05:49.8]

Patricia Outlaw: What are you gonna do with this?

[2:05:50.9]

Michelle Little: So I'll go ahead and stop recording.

[End of interview]