Interview with Emelinda Mitchell

Interviewer: Nyasha Warren

Interviewee(s): Emelinda Michell

Year of Birth: 1910

Location of Interview: Isla Colon, Bocas del Toro, Panama

Language of Interview: English

INTERVIEWER: Well thank you again Mrs. Mitchell for letting us meet with you.

MITCHELL: Oh that's nothing. Thank you, yourself. Thank you man.

INTERVIEWER: Well, my first question would be, tell me a little bit about your place of birth and what was going on when you were growing up. What are your memories of your place of birth?

MITCHELL: Oh well, I have to tell you that when I was growing up everything was ok. I go to school Spanish-English school. Back in my days, hardly any Spanish so my children know Spanish. I don't know very few words ...But sometime I speak it so bad them children say Mama speak English don't speak no Spanish, so I just don't worry. So, well, everything is alright with me....because I have my husband then he die. But I in my church. The Methodist church is my church. Everything is alright, because nothing I believe a lot in God and once you believe in God he gives everything is always good with you. God he says without him you cannot die and without him you cannot really live. And I just goes on like that and everything is alright. I have seven children, three in the States, and I thank God for every [inaudible] and I thank God for you all too.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh. Uh-huh. Ok. Let me see you mentioned church, which church do you-

MITCHELL: Methodist.

INTERVIEWER: The Methodist church? Is that with Reverend Mary Warren, possibly?

MITCHELL: Oh yes, yes.

INTERVIEWER: I've heard about her, haven't met her yet. I need to meet her, I need to meet her.

MITCHELL: Oh she's a really nice lady...

INTERVIEWER: Excellent, excellent. And what would you say was your fondest memory of childhood? What would be, if you picked one memory from your childhood, what would that be?

MITCHELL: Well I tell you the truth; my head is so bad and I forget everything, more than what I remember. That I in my church. I have seven children and I thank God for everything.

INTERVIEWER: You said three of your children were in the States. Are the other four here?

MITCHELL: Yes, two girls and a boy, they are in New York. I went over there time. Thank God for it and I return but I can't go nowhere now. Cause I can hardly even go in the kitchen myself now. [Laughs]

INTERVIEWER: Who, do you remember your best friends and what it was like for them and their families?

MITCHELL: My best friend I have got is my niece and she live right over there and that was my best friend. And everything is alright.

INTERVIEWER: Great, so your best friend has lived next to you for most of your life.

MITCHELL: Yes that is my niece. And the Minister in Methodist church...we have a, I don't think you know him, him don't in that church now him preach at over at the Jones church that's my nephew, he a Minister [background noise]. You all is young people that take up Jesus and the cross and you all the lives that you all live... I see you all are decent people. I congratulate you all and I wish you all... to keep you all, how you all is growing rich in Christ. Thank you so much for your [inaudible] and I would like, and next time I bid you come back but I know you cannot do it... because it, it is by terms, right?

INTERVIEWER: I still have a few more questions to do so we're not done yet. We're gonna be here for a little bit [Laughs] Let's go on to...ok...You said your best friend still lives right near here.

MITCHELL: that's... my niece

INTERVIEWER: Tell me what do you do with your best friend, what do you guys do for fun when you get together?

MITCHELL: Well, when my best friend and I get together, we speak about life, sometimes things rough with she, sometimes things rough with me and we sit down and discuss about life.

INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm. Do you ever talk about back in the days?

MITCHELL: Oh yes, I and she talk in the days.

INTERVIEWER: Did you go to school together?

MITCHELL: No I was older than she was. My friends what I and them go to school together, them did die. But my teachers then was from Jamaica. They were from Jamaica. That Teacher Russell and Mrs. Taylor. They are from Jamaica and I used to go to school

with them. But those days wasn't so much Spanish as now, you understand. 'Cause they didn't know Spanish. So that's, I don't know Spanish because when the Spanish come in now, that time I big and I don't going school already. But I thank God for everything that is take place.

INTERVIEWER: Let's see, tell me about your parents and grandparents, what little you remember about them.

MITCHELL: Oh. Well, I remember sometimes my mother and my father but they all were same Methodist, all of them all join same Methodist, because where I live first that was one church there and that was the only church was the Methodist church. So from I'm a child I know my faith. I am a Methodist simple and I ask God that I will die a Methodist.

INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm, mm-hm. Wow. So both your parents and grandparents—

MITCHELL: My parents and grandparents they are Methodists.

INTERVIEWER: What other memories do you have of your parents in addition to life at the Methodist church and going to church together. What other things could you tell us about them - what did they do, their professions, what did they dedicate themselves to?

MITCHELL: Oh they, not so my father but my mother was dedicate herself to the Methodist church. So from the day I born and know myself I see my mother serve in the Methodist and I did the same. And I thank God for it.

INTERVIEWER: Ok. Ahm-do you have memories of visiting your parents' or grandparents' friends. How about them?

MITCHELL: Where them from?

INTERVIEWER: Uh huh.

MITCHELL: They, my mother and father they all is the same belongs to Panama. But we used to live a next place but is the same Panamanian, same, so I from the day I grow up I find my mother serving the Methodist church and I did the same. And they some, one of my daughter, two of my daughters they are not Methodist, one are Baptist and one are Catholic. The Catholic one she live in Panama.

INTERVIEWER: Now, talk to me a little bit about school. You mention teacher Russell a lot. A lot of people have mentioned Teacher Russell.

MITCHELL: Oh Teacher Russell was, I mention the name a while ago – Teacher Russell was one of my teacher. He was from Jamaica. But he was a real good teacher. Play organ, everything. All I know that about him because I go to his school, go to his church, and everything, everything was teacher Russell and Mrs. Taylor. But they all from Jamaica.

INTERVIEWER: So Teacher Russell taught a little bit of everything.

MITCHELL: Oh yes, he was very educated. He's from Jamaica.

INTERVIEWER: What were the subjects he taught? You said a little bit of organ, a little bit of what else? What else did he teach?

MITCHELL: Now well, he play the organ, he preach, you understand and she do all that for Christ. Everything what she was doing for Christ. And I glad for everything.

INTERVIEWER: What would you say were your fondest memories of school, just going to school, that you were to think of? The most... fondest memory of going to school for kids or older, primary school, or secondary level? Earlier, teacher experience?

MITCHELL: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Mmmm...Maybe you like music?

MITCHELL: Huh?

INTERVIEWER: Do you like music?

MITCHELL: Ah, don't mention! And dance? [She and interviewer giggle]

INTERVIEWER: Tell us a Little bit about that...yeah...

MITCHELL: Well, I told him, I ask Reverend, I say Rev, I want you tell me the truth. Dancing is sin? He say no. He say anything that you did it the right way is not sin, the dancing not sin. I went, they had, the church had a [inaudible] I said to him, Rev dancing is sin? He say no. When you dance [Inaudible] I play them for you dance. So he say in anything you overdo it is sin. Alright.

INTERVIEWER: Yes, everything in excess, right.

MITCHELL: You know God bless you all now walking around and looking about because what you are doing you are doing is God works. And I thank God for it. And thank God for you all visit. And where you all go, may you all go safe and go with God.

INTERVIEWER: Thank you. I still have a few more questions to ask you. What would you say are your favorite songs back when you were growing up?

MITCHELL: Oh, I have a favorite song but my head is so bad that I can't, my head is so bad but I always sing, *thank you Jesus, thank you Lord.*

INTERVIEWER: Ah. Thank you, beautiful! That's beautiful. Wow, is that, that is something you still sing today, definitely, right?

MITCHELL: Yes, and a next one again say, Walk right in and take a see, walk right in and take a see, Walk right in I say, Walk right in I say, walk right in and take a see [inaudible] Jesus Christ is the engineer, Jesus Christ is the engineer, Jesus Christ I say, Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ is the engineer.

INTERVIEWER: Very nice. Thank you so much. That's beautiful, oh that's beautiful! Thank you so much, thank you so much. Wow, you definitely enjoy singing- I can tell. Is there any chance we could get you dancing a little bit? [Laughs]

MITCHELL: Well, the Minister told me that anything you overdo is sin.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh, but a little bit is always fine, definitely. What songs do you like to dance to? When you dance, what songs do you like to dance to?

MITCHELL: Well, I can't remember the song them because we play the record and I don't remember the song them.

INTERVIEWER: Ok, well if you feel like dancing, we would love to take a little picture of you dancing...

MITCHELL: Ay, no, 'cause the song them are played on the ahm, CD, so I don't remember them. But all I say I thank you all to come and give me the visit. You all come in Jesus name. And make you all that I had to say, because true the head is so bad I tell you what I remember, but ninety-odd is a good age, but I say I wish you all that doing this work may get you reward not on earth here but in heaven. And I have to say I wish you all luck and go good where you are going, and going in the name of the Master.

INTERVIEWER: Wow. Another interesting question. What food do you like to eat? Food is another really hot topic when we interview like this...

MITCHELL: Food?

INTERVIEWER: Yes food. What food do you like to eat?

MITCHELL: The food I love. I love pear. And I love mango. Them is the fruit I love.

INTERVIEWER: And growing up were there any foods that you used to eat growing up that maybe you don't eat now that you can remember, or you still eat the same foods?

MITCHELL: I eat some of the same food. Mango, orange, pear. All those I eat. American pear and apple those also I eat.

INTERVIEWER: Ok. How about cooked food? Cooked food that you eat, like ackee and saltfish, food that you eat for breakfast, that you cook up...

MITCHELL: Sometimes, fresh fish we always get here, sometimes the man pass I get fish, which I like fry it, mi bread and my tea [inaudible] sometimes green tea, nuh? Because I don't so love cocoa, so green tea.

INTERVIEWER: Yes. Any other dishes you like to eat?

MITCHELL: No, well I like the chicken.

INTERVIEWER: How do you prepare the chicken?

MITCHELL: Sometime I bake it and sometimes I fry it.

INTERVIEWER: We just interviewed a man by the name of *De Seus* a chef and he said like a whole lot of different foods we need to try before we leave. What are your favorite sayings? Sayings you might have heard as a child or sayings that you say to your grandchildren or children?

MITCHELL: What I say to the grandchildren? Well, what I say anytime I always tell them about Christ and that's it. I think that's my favorite thing to tell them, right. Yes, I tell them about Christ. How, you know how children stay, well, I don't have any here now only me and my son. But when was growing up I learn them and teach tem about the love of Christ. And sometimes they stray and all them things but never mind, you cannot say I didn't teach them about the love of Christ.

INTERVIEWER: What might be your favorite religious saying you might tell your kids?

MITCHELL: For the children them? The same Methodist church.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember any phrase in particular that may have been repeated a lot in church that you made sure to instill in your kids?

MITCHELL: No, no I don't remember.

INTERVIEWER: Ok. Just the general teachings of the Lord.

MITCHELL: Well ne thing I like to say is when they go out anywhere out the way I speak to them about it and say, well you're not to do so, so and so because Christ don't like that. And I can't, I sit down and I give them that advice. I take them to church. I think that's the best part. I take them whenever I go to church [inaudible] I don't go to church in the morning, I send them to Sunday school. But the only church I go is the Methodist church. Sometimes I invite out, because day before yesterday time by the Pocomania them have some harvest. I go to them other churches when them invite me but my main church, my main children them is in the Methodist.

INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm. What was Sunday school like at the Methodist church?

MITCHELL: Well, the Sunday school, the Methodist, the Sunday school, in the morning is Sunday school, they told them about the bible and them sing and they say a little poem and all them thing, the children them, that is the Methodist church.

INTERVIEWER: What are the ages of the kids that go to the Sunday school approximately?

MITCHELL: Well, some, some are big. The parents them not here and I going tell you the truth. Plenty of the children them stray, you understand, them stray. So, that not nice. Because, don't care how you have God in you, Satan try to make you ruin your life, right? You have to have a stern, firm belief in Christ to keep Satan held behind. Sometimes something happen to me and I swear, I say 'Satan get away from here, you know I don't like it. Leave me alone!' Sometimes I speak to it like I speaking to you all here now. But the head bad now, and I tell you that from the day I know myself I am a Methodist and I tell the children them I am Methodist till I die. The day I die, carry me in a Methodist church.

INTERVIEWER: Thank you. Now, [noise of someone shouting in the background] I think you have someone coming. Have you ever heard of Louise Bannett?

MITCHELL: No.

INTERVIEWER: Have you ever heard of the Mighty Sparrow?

MITCHELL: Oh yes, I heard bout Sparrow, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, tell me what you've heard about him, do you like him, do you like his music? What are your memories of the Mighty Sparrow?

MITCHELL: Well, sometimes I listen to it but some parts I like but some parts I don't like.

INTERVIEWER: What would you say are, do you remember any song in particular that you did like?

MITCHELL: No, me don't remember. [inaudible]

INTERVIEWER: How would you categorize the Might Sparrow being? I know you said there's some things you liked about his songs and some things you didn't like. What would you categorize-

MITCHELL: I like some of his songs, mm-hmm.

INTERVIEWER: Yes, ok. Do you know Reggaeton music?

MITCHELL: Reggae? I hear it but I don't know, I don't remember it.

INTERVIEWER: Ok, well Reggaeton music is the stuff you hear a lot, the young kids listening to. It has its roots in reggae, you know Jamaican reggae but it's a little different. How do you like it, what do you think about it?

MITCHELL: Well what I say that those people, those children and girl and thing. Big young lady and thing, say they come here sometime and I used to, when I used to have girl for him come and play it, and enjoy it and say them like it and thing but my head is so bad I just listen to it and I just don't worry with it [inaudible]

INTERVIEWER: Ok, ok.

MITCHELL: You don't dance then?

INTERVIEWER: Yeah a Little [Laughs].

MITCHELL: The Sparrow song them.

INTERVIEWER: No, I know Sparrow but I only know him a little bit. I've seen him in concert in New York. Not here. He's been in Panama a lot but I haven't seen him here.

MITCHELL: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: How would you classify yourself in terms of identity? How do you like identify yourself? How do you tell someone what identity you have?

MITCHELL: Well, that one [inaudible] that one. Yeah...[inaudible] saying this and saying that. I say well I should think you have to believe in God, if you don't believe in God you don't, you don't [inaudible] nowhere. So I tell the person that you have to trust, there is many times things happen to you because we are not a saint and many times things happen to you it happen for a wide purpose and you all must try never forget Christ, always in anything you going do, always have him in the midst.

INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm. And.. sorry, finish... you were going to say something more?

MITCHELL: No.

INTERVIEWER: I was thinking in terms of racial or cultural identity. How do you define yourself racially or culturally?

MITCHELL: Well, sometimes, sometimes these things from history. But any time anything go against I always remember God.

INTERVIEWER: God is a very important part of your identity.

MITCHELL: God is a very important person in everybody, I should think, in everybody's life.

INTERVIEWER: Exactly.

MITCHELL: Cause he is important in my life, and he should be important in everybody's life. Cause you hear what him say. Without God you cannot live and without God you cannot die.

INTERVIEWER: How do you feel, ahm, how do you think the West Indian community in Bocas del Torro relates to the religions that are present here? How would you talk about that?

MITCHELL: Well, sometime I think one thing pass and a next thing come up.

INTERVIEWER: You think there's a difference in the different generations as far as their connection – can you tell me more about that?

MITCHELL: No, no. no I tell you about the generation them now, from in olden days. Now I am going to tell you the truth now, what I say, tell me if I wrong. I say, in our days, and in your grandparents days, was better an now because when our days and your grandparents days we didn't know about no drugs and that's what is now, got the whole world up stir right around, as that's what I have to tell you. Have the whole world up stir this drugs. Whoever see that before? Every say you hear say dem kill some [inaudible]. I don't think the man going live. When I put on the television, all I have to tell you all now because you all is children to me. Our days is a better days than now. Right? Our days you ever hear so much killing, so much stealing, so much this, so much everything, right?

[inaudible] my husband tell me one time something about this. He said Satan is running through and through the world with his red jacket on, right? You a sweet girl you is a child to me, a grandchild. When in days you ever hear your mother talk or father this, that [inaudible] Now, you even frighten to go nowhere, nuh true? You can't get taximan, they kill the taximan. That's what we looking after now. Looking, the Minister talking about, say this is ridiculous. Right man. It's ridiculous. Every night you hear they kill this one, they kill that one, they kill... When our days, no-one again in our days you used to hear them kill someone. But all I have to say my dear child we is you is a baby to me, we have to pray and don't let Satan get in your life neither my life nor nobody life because Satan has nothing good to tell nor do nothing. Right? That's the advice I have and that's the story that I have to say to you and I say thank you all for your visit and may the Lord make you all keep this up, what you are doing. [inaudible] Thank you.

INTERVIEWER: Thank you. Tell me about your view of West Indian ancestry, our ancestors and my grandparents came from Jamaica, yes my grandfather and my great grandmother came from Jamaica. How about your-

MITCHELL: My grandfather the Dixon dem from Jamaica. My grandfather from Jamaica the Dixon dem. The Dixon dem belong to Jamaica my father title is [inaudible] Dixon. And we's come from Jamaica.

INTERVIEWER: Hmm. Any relation to the Dixons in Panama City?

MITCHELL: I don't know if any is there, I don't know. Because a lot die out.

INTERVIEWER: What part of Jamaica did they come from?

MITCHELL: I don't remember what part of Jamaica them come from, I don't remember. Cause the old lady head so bad now [Laughs]. Yeah. But my grandparent dem is from Jamaica. My mother side is from Providence. My father, Jamaica.

INTERVIEWER: Ok. Your family came from Providence to Panama on your mother's side.

MITCHELL: Ah yes. [inaudible] then come and marry this side.

INTERVIEWER: And when someone says the word West Indian, what histories, or qualities or cultural behaviors-

MITCHELL: Well, the same West Indian is the same Jamaican, don't? Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: What cultural values come to mind, what cultural behaviors and values come to mind when-

MITCHELL: Well, I, they told me that dictionary didn't [inaudible] rebellious, they was not rebellious. And I know with my father, my father would stay right here and I beat him and he wouldn't even do his hand so. But my mother would fight you down. Yeah, so we have to put everything in God hand, I tell you over again. Thank you all for you visit. And I'm, what I remember I tell you because my head is going round.

INTERVIEWER: Thank you.

MITCHELL: Ok. Thank you for your visit.

INTERVIEWER: Are you currently married with your husband?

MITCHELL: Yeah, I'm married.

INTERVIEWER: And how did you meet your husband?

MITCHELL: Oh, well, I going tell you. I, when I meet my husband. You know what men did, have about four women beside me. [Giggles] Tell you, tell you the truth, and afterwards he just pick and he went in my church, he aint in no church. He wasn't into, was ooman church [inaudible] and so I, when im tek me I was in the Methodist church and he went to the church. Thank God he die in this church. When he die, he was still, he die in this church. So thank God for everything that's all I say.

INTERVIEWER: Hmmm. What was the cultural background of your husband? Was he also born in Panama and Bocas? Umm... Does his family come from the West--

MITCHELL: No his family come from San Andres. He, only thing he don't born there he born in Bocas. But his mother and his father Colombian. San Andres. Colombia. Colombia.

INTERVIEWER: What was his name?

MITCHELL: His name was Antonio Mitchell, Antonio. Well, you know my name. My name is Emelinda. Emelinda Luisa Mitchell.

INTERVIEWER: Ok. Hmm. So you told me you had children. Seven children yes, three in the US.

MITCHELL: I have five girls and two boys.

INTERVIEWER: What was their childhood like? How were their friends growing up?

MITCHELL: Oh well, children some of them was very nice, they was nice but some of them fight and all them things, you know children already. But none, nothing extra bad, nothing extra bad.

INTERVIEWER: Where did they go to school?

MITCHELL: Yes, every one of them go to school. The seven of them speak Spanish, bar unto them mother. After I tell you seh three in the States.

INTERVIEWER: How do your children define themselves? Do they define themselves as Panamanians, as West Indians, black, Caribbean? How would they define themselves?

MITCHELL: Well, I couldn't complain about them – them define themselves alright although some of them, them all not the same, some of the...

INTERVIEWER: And do they speak English?

MITCHELL: Yeah them speak English and Spanish.

INTERVIEWER: They are fully bilingual.

MITCHELL: Mmm hmm only soul don't speak Spanish is me. This lady here she works here, she don't know a word of English. She don't know English. She, she's from Chiriqui, David.

INTERVIEWER: How do you communicate with her?

MITCHELL: Oh, she used to live here, and then as I couldn't do nothing to myself my daughter get her to work with me. So she's work here and she cook, she tidy here and everything.

INTERVIEWER: Do your grandchildren speak English and Spanish?

MITCHELL: English and Spanish.

INTERVIEWER: All of the grandchildren?

MITCHELL: But most of the children here in Bocas they speak pure Spanish.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah... Ah but yours speak English.

MITCHELL: Can speak English and Spanish. Cause my daughter she work by the school outside here.

INTERVIEWER: Mm Hmm, Mmm hmm. She works with Lilian?

MITCHELL: She works with Lilian yes. Lilian is a nice, nice lady.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.

MITCHELL: Cause she's a quadrille dancer.

INTERVIEWER: Yes, we're hoping to catch one of her presentations.

MITCHELL: Oh Lord, she dance good quadrille.

INTERVIEWER: Have you danced with her?

MITCHELL: No, I can't dance quadrille I dance everything else but barring to quadrille.

INTERVIEWER: Ok, ok.

MITCHELL: But Lilian she's a very nice lady.

INTERVIEWER: How would you define your community? Who would you say is your community, your closest group of, network of people?

MITCHELL: Well I had about two persons that close to me but they die.

INTERVIEWER: They lived right here on Isla Colon?

MITCHELL: Ah-hah. They live right here in Bocas del Torro.

INTERVIEWER: So I guess other than that it would just be the Methodist Church.

MITCHELL: Yeah, the Methodist Church. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Now, is there any message you would like to give to the younger people? You've shared with us a lot. If you could give them one message, for us to give to the young people.

MITCHELL: Well, I say what I say. The honest message I have [inaudible] meet them here sometimes is you all need to behave yourself. Please, when your parents speak to you, listen to your parents. That's the word I told them, more than one day I told a boy, cause sometime them come under the store here and play games too, and them talk bad words, I call to them. If them cannot stop that them have to dismiss, cause I don't want that cause [inaudible]. So that's what I do, anytime them talking I call them down. For they, pray that none of them never insult me never.

INTERVIEWER: Ok. Could you tell me your year of birth?

MITCHELL: When I born? 1910. May, 1910 May the 20. Mayo veinte.

INTERVIEWER: What was the last grade of school that you completed?

MITCHELL: It was English school. Fifth grade. In English. My teacher they were from Jamaica. Teacher Russell and Mrs. Taylor. They were from Jamaica.

INTERVIEWER: Ok you said Teacher Russell and Mrs?

MITCHELL: Taylor. T-A-Y-L-O-R.

INTERVIEWER: What is your profession? What did you work at?

MITCHELL: I didn't work out anywhere. No more than I work home here keep the children them, you understand. I didn't have no work.

INTERVIEWER: Well, keeping the children is quite a bit of work, huh?

MITCHELL: Oh yes, but they didn't so bad as these what is here now.

INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm. What city and province do you live in Panama. Has it always been here? That would be Isla Colon/ Bocas del Torro? All your life.

MITCHELL: Uh-huh.

INTERVIEWER: What does the name of this particular neighborhood.

MITCHELL: Sixth Street. And if you want you can put in front the airport because the airport is right here. When time I get up I look right over the airport.

INTERVIEWER: Mm hmm. Is there any other information that you would like us to include that we have not yet mentioned?

MITCHELL: No, no.

INTERVIEWER: No? All right. Well thank you again once again for helping us. We are very grateful to you.

MITCHELL: Thank you so much.

INTERVIEWER: Feel free to send us any information whether it's through Lilian or directly to us, if there's anything else you want to add.

MITCHELL: I will, I know, I know. All I have to say I thank the both of you to visit me and everything is alright.

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INTERVIEWER: Well thank you again, Mrs. Mitchell, for letting us meet with you.

MITCHELL: Oh, that's nothing. Thank you, yourself. Thank you, man.

INTERVIEWER: Well, my first question would be, tell me a little bit about your place of birth and what was going on when you were growing up. What are your memories of your place of birth?

MITCHELL: Oh well, I have to tell you that when I was growing up everything was ok. I go to school, Spanish-English school. Back in my days, hardly any Spanish, so my children know Spanish. I don't know very few words, but sometime I speak it so bad them children say "Mama, speak English. Don't speak no Spanish," so I just don't worry. So, well, everything is alright with me, because I have my husband then he die. But I in my church. The Methodist church is my church. Everything is alright, because nothing, I believe a lot in God and once you believe in God, he gives everything is always good with you. God, he says without him you cannot die and without him you cannot really live. And I just goes on like that and everything is alright. I have seven children, three in the States, and I thank God for every[inaudible] and I thank God for you all too.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh. Uh-huh. Ok. Let me see you mentioned church, which church do you-

MITCHELL: Methodist.

INTERVIEWER: The Methodist church? Is that with Reverend Mary Warren, possibly?

MITCHELL: Oh yes, yes.

INTERVIEWER: I've heard about her, haven't met her yet. I need to meet her, I need to meet her.

MITCHELL: Oh she's a really nice lady. Really nice.

INTERVIEWER: Excellent, excellent. And what would you say was your fondest memory of childhood? What would be, if you picked one memory from your childhood, what would that be?

MITCHELL: Well I tell you the truth; my head is so bad and I forget everything, more than what I remember. That I in my church. I have seven children and I thank God for everything.

INTERVIEWER: You said three of your children were in the States. Are the other four here?

MITCHELL: Yes, two girls and a boy, they are in New York. I, I went over there three time. Thank God for it and I return but I can't go nowhere now. Cause I can hardly even go in the kitchen myself now. [Laughs]

INTERVIEWER: Who, do you remember your best friends and what it was like for them and their families?

MITCHELL: Oh, my best friend I have got is my niece and she live right over there and that was my best friend. And everything is alright.

INTERVIEWER: Great, so your best friend has lived next to you for most of your life.

MITCHELL: Yes that is my niece. And the minister in Methodist church...we have a, I don't think you know him, him don't in that church now him preach at over at the Jones church, that's my nephew, he a minister [background noise]. You all is young people that take up Jesus and the cross and you all the lives that you all live.I see you all are decent people. I congratulate you all and I wish you all to keep you all, how you all is growing rich in Christ. Thank you so much for your [inaudible] and I would like, and next time I bid you come back but I know you cannot do it because it, it is by terms, right?

INTERVIEWER: I still have a few more questions to do so we're not done yet. We're gonna be here for a little bit [Laughs] Let's go on to, ok. You said your best friend still lives right near here.

MITCHELL: That's my my neice.

INTERVIEWER: Tell me what do you do with your best friend, what do you guys do for fun when you get together?

MITCHELL: Well, when my best friend and I get together, we speak about life, sometimes things rough with she, sometimes things rough with me and we sit down and discuss about life.

INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm. Do you ever talk about back in the days?

MITCHELL: Oh yes, I and she talk in the days.

INTERVIEWER: Did you go to school together?

MITCHELL: No, no, no. I was older than she was. My friends what I and them go to school together, them did die. But my teachers then was from Jamaica. They were from Jamaica. That teacher Russell and Mrs. Taylor. They are from Jamaica and I used to go to

school with them. But those days wasn't so much Spanish as now, you understand. 'Cause they didn't know Spanish. So that's, I don't know Spanish because when the Spanish come in now, that time I big and I don't going school already. But I thank God for everything that is take place.

INTERVIEWER: Let's see, tell me about your parents and grandparents, what little you remember about them.

MITCHELL: Oh. Well, I remember sometimes my mother and my father but they all were same Methodist, all of them all join same Methodist, because where I live first that was one church there and that was the only church was the Methodist church. So I from I'm a child I know my faith. I am a Methodist simple and I ask God that I will die a Methodist.

INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm, mm-hm. Wow. So both your parents and grandparents come from a long line —

MITCHELL: My parents and grandparents they are Methodists.

INTERVIEWER: What other memories do you have of your parents in addition to life at the Methodist church and going to church together. What other things could you tell us about them - what did they do, their professions, what did they dedicate themselves to?

MITCHELL: Oh they, not so my father, but my mother was dedicate herself to the Methodist church. So from the day I born and know myself I see my mother serve in the Methodist and I did the same. And I thank God for it.

INTERVIEWER: Ok. Ahm-do you have memories of visiting your parents' or grandparents' friends? How about them?

MITCHELL: Where them from?

INTERVIEWER: Yes. Uh huh.

MITCHELL: They, my mother and father they all is the same, belongs to Panama. But we used to live a next place but is the same Panamanian, same, so I from the day I grow up I find my mother serving the Methodist church and I did the same. And they some, one of my daughter, two of my daughters they are not Methodist, one are Baptist and one are Catholic. The Catholic one she live in Panama.

INTERVIEWER: Now, talk to me a little bit about school. You mention teacher Russell a lot. A lot of people have mentioned teacher Russell.

MITCHELL: Oh teacher Russell was, I mention the name a while ago – teacher Russell was one of my teacher. He was from Jamaica. But he was a real good teacher. Play organ, everything. All I know that about him because is that I go to his school, go to his church, and everything, everything was teacher Russell and Mrs. Taylor. But they all from Jamaica.

INTERVIEWER: So teacher Russell taught a little bit of everything.

MITCHELL: Everything. Oh yes, he was very educated. He's from Jamaica.

INTERVIEWER: What were the subjects he taught? You said a little bit of organ, a little bit of what else? What else did he teach?

MITCHELL: Now well, he play the organ, he preach, you understand, and she do all that for Christ. Everything what she was doing for Christ. And I glad for everything.

INTERVIEWER: What would you say were your fondest memories of school, just going to school, that you were to think of? The most fondest memory of going to school for kids, ya know, or older, primary school, or secondary level? Earlier, teacher experience?

MITCHELL: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Mmmm...Maybe you like music?

MITCHELL: Huh?

INTERVIEWER: Music. Do you like music?

MITCHELL: Ah, don't mention! And dance? [She and interviewer giggle]

INTERVIEWER: Tell us a little bit about that. Yeah.

MITCHELL: Well, I told him, I ask Reverend, I say Rev, I want you tell me the truth. Dancing is sin? He say no. He say anything that you did it the right way is not sin, the dancing not sin. I went, they had, the church had a [inaudible] I said to him, Rev dancing is sin? He say no. When you dance I say to him, I play them for you dance. So he say in anything you overdo it is sin. Alright.

INTERVIEWER: Yes, everything in excess, right.

MITCHELL: You know God bless you all now walking around and looking about because what you are doing you are doing is God works. And I thank God for it. And thank God for you all visit. And where you all go, may you all go safe and go with God.

INTERVIEWER: Thank you. Thank you. I still have a few more questions to ask you. What would you say are your favorite songs back when you were growing up?

MITCHELL: Oh, I have a favorite song but I can't, my head is so bad that I can't, my head is so bad but I always sing, *thank you Jesus, thank you Jesus, thank you Jesus, thank you Jesus, thank you Lord, thank you Jesus, thank you Lord.*

INTERVIEWER: Ah. Thank you, beautiful! That's beautiful. Wow, is that, that is something you still sing today, definitely, right?

MITCHELL: Yes, and a next one again say, Walk right in and take a see, walk right in and take a see, Walk right in I say, Walk right in I say, walk right in and take a see [inaudible] Jesus Christ is the engineer, Jesus Christ is the engineer, Jesus Christ I say, Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ is the engineer.

INTERVIEWER: Very nice. Thank you so, so much. That's beautiful, oh that's beautiful! Thank you so much, thank you so much. Wow, you definitely enjoy singing- I can tell. Is there any chance we could get you dancing a little bit? [Laughs]

MITCHELL: Well, the minister told me that anything you overdo is sin.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh, but a little bit is always fine, definitely. What songs do you like to dance to? When you dance, what songs do you like to dance to?

MITCHELL: Well, I can't remember the song them because I, we play the record and I don't remember the song them.

INTERVIEWER: Mmhmm. Ok, well if you feel like dancing, we would love to take a little picture of you dancing.

MITCHELL: Ay, no, 'cause the song them are played on the ahm, CD.

INTERVIEWER: Oh. Okay.

MITCHELL: So I don't remember them. But all I say I thank you all to come and give me the visit. You all come in Jesus name. And make you all that I had to say, because true the head is so bad I tell you what I remember, but ninety-odd is a good age, but I say I wish you all that doing this work may get you reward not on earth here but in heaven. And I have to say I wish you all luck and go good where you are going, and going in the name of the Master.

INTERVIEWER: Wow. Another interesting question. What food do you like to eat? Food is another really hot topic when we interview like this.

MITCHELL: Food?

INTERVIEWER: Yes food. What food do you like to eat?

MITCHELL: The food I love. I love pear. And I love mango. Them is the fruit I love.

INTERVIEWER: Mmhmm. And growing up were there any foods that you used to eat growing up that maybe you don't eat now that you can remember, or you still eat some of the same foods?

MITCHELL: I eat some of the same food. Mango, orange, pear. All those I eat. American pear and apple those also I eat.

INTERVIEWER: Ok. How about cooked food? Cooked food that you eat, like ackee and saltfish, food that you eat for breakfast, that you cook up.

MITCHELL: Ah, yeah. Sometimes, fresh fish we always get here, sometimes the man pass I get fish, which I like fry it, my bread and my tea, sometimes green tea, nuh? Because I don't so love cocoa, so green tea.

INTERVIEWER: Yes. Any other dishes you like to eat?

MITCHELL: No, well I like the chicken.

INTERVIEWER: How do you prepare the chicken?

MITCHELL: Sometime I bake it and sometime I fry it.

INTERVIEWER: We just interviewed a man by the name of *De Seus* a chef and he was telling us about a whole lot of different foods we need to try before we leave. What are your favorite sayings? Sayings you might have heard as a child or sayings that you say to your grandchildren or your, your children?

MITCHELL: What I say to the grandchildren?

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

MITCHELL: Well, what I say anytime I always tell them about Christ and that's it. I think that's my favorite thing to tell them, right? Right. Yes, I tell them about Christ. How, you know how children stay, well, I don't have any here now only me and my son. But when was growing up I learn them and teach tem about the love of Christ. And then, sometimes they stray and all them things but never mind, you cannot say I didn't teach them about the love of Christ.

INTERVIEWER: What might be your favorite religious saying that you might tell your kids?

MITCHELL: For the children them? The same Methodist church. Uh huh.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember any phrase in particular that may have been repeated a lot in church that you made sure to instill in your kids?

MITCHELL: No, no I don't remember.

INTERVIEWER: Ok. Just the general teachings of the Lord. Ok

MITCHELL: Well, I always. Well one thing I like to say is when they go out anywhere out the way I speak to them about it and say, well you're not to do so, so and so because Christ don't like that. And I can't, I sit down and I give them that advice. I take them to church. I think that's the best part. I take them whenever I go to church and I don't go to church in the morning, I send them to Sunday school. But the only church I go is the Methodist church. Sometimes when I invite out, because day before yesterday time by the Pocomania them have some harvest. I go to them other churches when them invite me but my main church, my main children them is in the Methodist.

INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm. What was Sunday school like at the Methodist church?

MITCHELL: Well, the Sunday school, the Methodist, the Sunday school, in the morning is Sunday school, they told them about the bible and them sing and they say a little poem and all them thing, the children them, that is the Methodist church.

INTERVIEWER: What are the ages of the kids that go to the Sunday school approximately?

MITCHELL: Well, some, some are big. The parents them not here and I going tell you the truth. Plenty of the children them stray. You understand? Them stray. So, that not nice. Because, don't care how you have God in you, Satan try to make you ruin your life, right? You have to have a stern, firm belief in Christ to keep Satan held behind. Sometimes something happen to me and I swear, I say "Satan get away from here, you know I don't like it. Leave me alone!" Sometimes I speak to it like I speaking to you all here now. But the head bad now, and now I tell you that from the day I know myself I am a Methodist and I tell the children them I am Methodist till I die. The day I die, carry me in a Methodist church.

INTERVIEWER: Thank you. Now, [noise of someone shouting in the background] I think you have someone coming. Have you ever heard of Louise Bennett?

MITCHELL: No.

INTERVIEWER: Have you ever heard of the Mighty Sparrow?

MITCHELL: Oh yes, I heard about Sparrow, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, tell me what you've heard about him, do you like him, do you like his music? What are your memories of the Mighty Sparrow?

MITCHELL: Well, sometimes I listen to it but some parts I like but some parts I don't like.

INTERVIEWER: What would you say are, do you remember any song in particular that you did like?

MITCHELL: No, me don't remember. [inaudible] I don't.

INTERVIEWER: How would you categorize the Might Sparrow being? I know you said there's some things you liked about his songs and some things you didn't like. What would you categorize-

MITCHELL: I like some of his songs, mm-hmm.

INTERVIEWER: Yes, ok. Do you know Reggaeton music?

MITCHELL: Reggae? I hear it but I don't know, I don't remember it.

INTERVIEWER: Ok, well Reggaeton music is the stuff you hear a lot, the young kids listening to.

MITCHELL: Oh yeah.

INTERVIEWER: It has its roots in reggae, you know Jamaican reggae but it's a little different. How do you like it, what do you think about it?

MITCHELL: Well, what I say that those people, them, those children and girl and thing. Big young lady and thing, say they come here sometime and I used to, when I used to have

a girl for him come and play it, and enjoy it and say them like it and thing but my head is so bad I just listen to it and I just don't worry with it.

INTERVIEWER: Ok, ok.

MITCHELL: You don't dance then?

INTERVIEWER: Yeah a little bit of [Laughs].

MITCHELL: The Sparrow song them.

INTERVIEWER: Mmhmm. No, I know Sparrow but I only know him a little bit. I've seen him in concert in New York. Not here. He's been in Panama a lot but I haven't seen him here

MITCHELL: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: How would you classify yourself in terms of identity? How do you like identify? How do you tell someone what identity you have?

MITCHELL: Well, that one I try to get to that one. Yeah. I say, saying this and saying that. I say well I should think you have to believe in God, if you don't believe in God you don't, you don't anyway. So I tell the person that you have to trust, there is many times things happen to you because we are not a saint and many times things happen to you it happen for a wise purpose and you all must try never forget Christ, always in anything you going do, always have him in the midst.

INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm. And.. in terms... sorry, finish... you were going to say something more?

MITCHELL: No.

INTERVIEWER: I was thinking in terms of racial or cultural identity. How do you define yourself racially or culturally?

MITCHELL: Well, sometimes, sometimes these things from history. But any time anything go against I always remember God.

INTERVIEWER: God is a very important part of your identity.

MITCHELL: God is a very important person in everybody, I should think, in everybody's life

INTERVIEWER: Mmhmm. Exactly.

MITCHELL: Cause he is important in my life, and he should be important in everybody's life. Cause you hear what him say. Without God you cannot live and without God you cannot die.

INTERVIEWER: How do you feel, ahm, how do you think the West Indian community in Bocas del Torro relates to the religions that are present here? How would you talk about that?

MITCHELL: Well, sometime I think one thing pass and a next thing come up.

INTERVIEWER: You think there's a difference in the different generations as far as their connection? Yeah? Can you tell me more about that?

MITCHELL: No, no. no I tell you about the generation them now, from in olden days. Now I am going to tell you the truth now, what I say, tell me if I wrong. I say, in our days, and in your grandparents' days, was better than now because when our days and your grandparents days we didn't know about no drugs and that's what is now, got the whole world up stir right around, as that's what I have to tell you. Have the whole world up stir this drugs. Whoever see that before? Everyday say you hear say them kill someone. I don't think the man going live. When I put on the television, all I have to tell you all now because you all is children to me. Our days is a better days than now. Right? Our days you ever hear so much killing, so much stealing, so much this, so much everything, right? All I have to say, my husband tell me one time something about this. He said Satan is running through and through the world with his red jacket on, right? You a sweet girl you is a child to me, a grandchild. When in days you ever hear your mother talk or father this, that about it. Now, vou even frighten to go nowhere, nuh true? You can't get taximan, they kill the taximan. That's what we looking after now. Looking, the minister talking about, say this is ridiculous. Right, man? It's ridiculous. Every night you hear they kill this one, they kill that one, they kill the men. When our days, no-one again in our days you used to hear them kill someone. But all I have to say my dear child we is you is a baby to me, we have to pray and don't let Satan get in your life neither my life nor nobody life because Satan has nothing good to tell nor do nothing. Right? That's the advice I have and that's the story that I have to say to you and I say thank you all for your visit and may the Lord make you all keep this up, what you are doing. I alright. Thank you.

INTERVIEWER: Thank you. Tell me about your view of West Indian ancestry, our ancestors and my grandparents came from Jamaica, yes my grandparents, my grandfather and my great grandmother came from Jamaica. How about your-

MITCHELL: My grandfather the Dixon them from Jamaica. My grandfather from Jamaica the Dixon them. The Dixon them belong to Jamaica my father title is Dixon. And we's come from Jamaica.

INTERVIEWER: Hmm. Any relation to the Dixons in Panama City?

MITCHELL: I don't know if any is there, I don't know. I don't. Because a lot die out.

INTERVIEWER: What part of Jamaica did they come from?

MITCHELL: I don't remember what part of Jamaica them come from, I don't remember. Cause the old lady head so bad now [Laughs]. Yeah. But my grandparent them is from Jamaica. My mother side is from Providence. My father, Jamaica.

INTERVIEWER: Ok. Your family came from Providence to Panama on your mother's side.

MITCHELL: Ah yes. Them come and marry this side.

INTERVIEWER: And when someone says the word West Indian, what histories, or qualities or cultural behaviors-

MITCHELL: Well, the same West Indian is the same Jamaican, don't? Yeah. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: What cultural values come to mind, what cultural behaviors and values come to mind when-

MITCHELL: Well, I, they, they told me that dictionary didn't someone said rebellious, they was not rebellious. And I know with my father, my father would stay right here and I beat him and he wouldn't even do his hand so. But my mother would fight you down. Yeah, so we have to put everything in God hand, I tell you over again. Thank you all for your visit. And I'm, what I remember I tell you because my head is going round.

INTERVIEWER: Thank you.

MITCHELL: Ok. Thank you for your visit.

INTERVIEWER: Are you currently married with your husband?

MITCHELL: Yeah, I'm married.

INTERVIEWER: And how did you meet your husband?

MITCHELL: Oh, well, I going tell you. I, when I meet my husband. You know what men did, have about four women beside me. [Giggles] Tell you, tell you the truth, and afterwards he just pick and he went in my church, he ain't in no church. He wasn't into, was woman church, and so I, when im take me I was in the Methodist church and he went to the church. Thank God he die in this church. When he die, he was still, he die in this church. So thank God for everything that's all I say.

INTERVIEWER: Hmmm. What was the cultural background of your husband? Was he also born in Panama and Bocas? Umm... Does his family come from the West Indies?

MITCHELL: No his family come from San Andres. He, only thing he don't born there he born in Bocas. But his mother and his father Colombian. San Andres. Colombia. Colombia.

INTERVIEWER: What was his name?

MITCHELL: Antonio Mitchell, Antonio. Well, you know my name. My name is Emelinda. Emelinda Luisa Mitchell.

INTERVIEWER: Ok. Hmm. So you told me you had children.

MITCHELL: Seven.

INTERVIEWER: Seven children yes, three in the US.

MITCHELL: I have five girls and two boys.

INTERVIEWER: What was their childhood like? How were their friends growing up?

MITCHELL: Oh well, children some of them was very nice, they had nice but some of them fight and all them things, you know children already. But none, nothing extra bad, nothing extra bad.

INTERVIEWER: Where did they go to school?

MITCHELL: Yes, every one of them go to school. And the seven of them speak Spanish, better than their mother. After I tell you the three in the States.

INTERVIEWER: How do your children define themselves? Do they define themselves as Panamanians, as West Indians, black, Caribbean? How would they define themselves?

MITCHELL: Well, I couldn't complain about them – them define themselves alright although some of them, them all not the same, some of them.

INTERVIEWER: And do they speak English?

MITCHELL: Yeah, them speak English and Spanish.

INTERVIEWER: They are fully bilingual.

MITCHELL: Mmm hmm English and Spanish. Only soul don't speak Spanish is me. This lady here she works here, she don't know a word of English. She don't know English. She, she's from Chiriqui, David.

INTERVIEWER: How do you communicate with her?

MITCHELL: Oh, she used to live here, and then as I couldn't do nothing to myself my daughter get her to work with me. So she's work here and she cook, she tidy here and everything.

INTERVIEWER: Do your grandchildren speak English and Spanish?

MITCHELL: English and Spanish.

INTERVIEWER: All of the grandchildren?

MITCHELL: But most of the children here in Bocas they speak pure Spanish.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah... Ah but yours speak English.

MITCHELL: Can speak English and Spanish. Cause my daughter she work by the school outside here.

INTERVIEWER: Mm Hmm, Mmm hmm. She works with Lilian?

MITCHELL: She works with Lilian yes. Lilian is a nice, nice lady.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh. She is.

MITCHELL: Cause she's a quadrille dancer.

INTERVIEWER: Yes, we're hoping to catch one of her presentations.

MITCHELL: Oh Lord, she dance good quadrille.

INTERVIEWER: Have you danced with her?

MITCHELL: No, I can't dance quadrille, I dance everything else, but barring to quadrille.

INTERVIEWER: Ok, ok.

MITCHELL: But Lilian, she's a very nice lady.

INTERVIEWER: How do you define your community? Who would you say is your community, your closest group of, network of people?

MITCHELL: Well, I had about two persons that close to me but they die.

INTERVIEWER: They lived right here on Isla Colon?

MITCHELL: Uh huh. They live right here in Bocas del Torro.

INTERVIEWER: So I guess other than that it would just be the Methodist Church.

MITCHELL: Yeah, the Methodist Church. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Now, is there any message you would like to give to the younger people? You've shared with us a lot. If you could give them one message, for us to give to the young people.

MITCHELL: Well, I say what I say. The honest message I have to give to them, meet them all the time here sometimes is you all need to behave yourself. Please, when your parents speak to you, listen to your parents. That's the word I told them, more than one day I told a boy, cause sometime them come under the store here and play games too, and them talk bad words, I call to them. If them cannot stop that them have to dismiss, cause I don't want that cause [inaudible]. So that's what I do, anytime them talking I call them down. For they, pray that none of them never insult me never.

INTERVIEWER: Ok. Could you tell me your year of birth?

MITCHELL: When I born? 1910. May, 1910 May the 20. Mayo veinte.

INTERVIEWER: What was the last grade of school that you completed?

MITCHELL: It was English school. Fifth grade.

INTERVIEWER: Fifth grade.

MITCHELL: In English. My teacher they were from Jamaica. Teacher Russell and Mrs. Taylor. They were from Jamaica.

INTERVIEWER: Ok you said Teacher Russell and Mrs?

MITCHELL: Taylor. T-A-Y-L-O-R.

INTERVIEWER: What is your profession? What did you work at?

MITCHELL: I didn't work out anywhere. No more than I work home here keep the children them, you understand. I didn't have no work.

INTERVIEWER: Well, keeping the children is quite a bit of work, huh?

MITCHELL: Oh yes, but they didn't so bad as these what is here now.

INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm. What city and province do you live in Panama? Has it always been here? That would be Isla Colon/ Bocas del Torro? All your life?

MITCHELL: Uh-huh.

INTERVIEWER: What is the name of this particular neighborhood? Is there a name for this particular neighborhood?

MITCHELL: The street here. Sixth street.

INTERVIEWER: Just sixth street?

MITCHELL: Sixth street. And if you want you can put in front the airport because the airport is right here. When time I get up I look right over the airport.

INTERVIEWER: Mm hmm. Is there any other information that you would like us to include that we have not yet mentioned?

MITCHELL: No, no.

INTERVIEWER: No? All right. Well thank you again once again for helping us with everything. We are very grateful to you.

MITCHELL: Thank you so much. I thank you.

INTERVIEWER: Feel free to send us any information whether it's through Lilian or directly to us, if there's anything else you want to add.

MITCHELL: I will, I know, I know. All I have to say I thank the both of you to visit me and everything is alright.