

Interview with Sarah Williams

INTERVIEWER:

Interviewee(s): Sarah Williams

Year of Birth: 1939

Location of Interview: Panama

Language of Interview: English

Date of Interview: August 15, 2008

INTERVIEWER: Sarah Williams, August 15, 2008. Thank you so much for agreeing to participate in this project. This will surely benefit the community overall both here and in the US, we believe, and elsewhere hopefully. The goal of the questionnaire is to get a comprehensive, as comprehensive of your story as possible, so feel free to say as much or as little as you feel comfortable with. Now, we have given you the consent form that you have filled out for the audio but if at any time you change your mind about anything there feel perfectly free to contact us and I say I want to change something. That's fine. So what we are going to do with this material is that in addition to the generative materials we are hoping to make educational products so that books can also be used by teachers and students to kind of really add to the history that is out there that hasn't really been recorded. So I'll go ahead and start with this first question. The first section has to do with your background. Well first of all I am going to ask you to tell me about your place of birth and what was going on there while you were growing up. What do you remember about the place you were born?

WILLIAMS: Ok, well I was born in Bocas del Toro. I can remember back to when I was two years old, I was...then my father got quarters and that was basically where the penitentiary was located and these old school buildings and they turned them into family quarters, and I lived there until I was four years old. I can remember some vivid experiences, especially about that. Herschel Potts used to make the parch, you know... I used to provoke him, but this day, I was only between two or three years old. But why this thing was in me, I don't know. Because sometimes I think about other parts of my life and it was blank but his stays very vivid and when I turn around he tried to attack me but I jump out the way and I run him up into some bushes and that was the end of it. (laughs) My father asks me what become of the cat I told them I don't know, I'll never know how he made it out with his balls. But I always remember that story and I was between two, three years old. Another story I remember when I was little, at that time the homes was we I was living with my mother and father. True we living close to the rainforest they have a lot of animals in there and that day my mother say I was running from one building because I can't see what happening behind me and all these people in the other building were all shouting at me and I thought they was cheering me on to run fast, not knowing that a tiger cat was running behind me and I was just running. And made sure and when I got up and they grabbed me and closed the door that's when I realized what was happening to me and those were two adventures from when I was very small, you know. That's when I used to lived in old Black Bog, they used to call it. And after we moved to Gamboa. That time they didn't call it Santa Crist, yet because after they got the civil rights movement back in 1964, they didn't call it Gamboa anymore. The, the white people part is called Gamboa. Our part is called Santa Crist. I, you know,

and I don't care what anybody say, I know where I'm headed, because I grow up in a Jim Crow society because if I could not drink from a fountain because it says gold and the other side says silver. But I was one of these kind of, I don't know what you call, look in your face child and say so what?! And I would still drink from the fountain and run and the police could never catch me because I had a plan. I used to run up to white people stairs, run through the black people have part in the back where they sell kerosene oil, and I run and I try run up into the bachelor but that is what I call the process. We grew up in segregation because when we try to walk up the white people stairs, they used to stone us up and we would stone them back. Then along comes segregation, no not segregation, integration. So we are integrated now. I'll never forget this how we used to swim in the canal. And we had our swimming pool with different names, um, we had a beach, we had ah, ok, the other two names but we had about three different names. Ninety-one was where the buoy was. When they had what we could swim in the pool, and we had swum in it, the following day they would change the water and I never went back to swim in that pool anymore. That was not right. That was not right. The... was grew so plentiful in the tree that the police saw us picking it up, we got to put them back. The commissary that we had was one side for the whites and one side for the blacks. And we went to one part that was called the gold, where you saw the vegetables that was so beautiful, the shoes, they were a good assortment of shoes. Even the educational level, we didn't get the same level of education. The kids that were fortunate to go to college, when they go to college they notice that in the difference in the education level they had to struggle to keep up with the other kids in the classroom. So I grew up in a Jim Crow system. Nobody, I don't care what, they, people talk about the American government have done by give us jobs. But they took it back, because the money stayed into the same cycle. It goes right back into the commissary, went right back into the shoe store, it did not leave there. It stayed right, right there. People, the people that used to work for integration why I would talk about because they have other positions. And they had, those people were smart people because least the ones that have smarts as the ones that they have roots. A lot of them are still in the country, and when you reach retirement age, you gotta leave. Where I used to live all I can show you is, I don't have a building to say this is where I grew up. Even the school I went to is falling apart. The gymnasium is you know falling apart, all of my childhood, the memories are in my mind, but I don't have anything to show you. When we go back to the time of the invasion, my opinion about the invasion. America created a monster. He was good when he did what they wanted. But they, when he do what they didn't wanted, they have to... I don't care I get a check from Uncle Sam, but the truth is the truth. When you sit down and look at the way they were invaded, all the equipment that they wanted to use for the Persian Gulf was tested right here. I have a take, things that people have not seen, that really happen during that time. How the laser does melt people body on the floor, the mass grave that they dug up and drove people into. There was one person that you have to do that to? So those are the things that I sit down and I think. So America have done things for us, but we got from America what we worked for, they didn't give us anything. We worked for, just like you, you got educated. If you didn't study, if you went there and waste time, you wouldn't achieve anything. You got to study to get what you get. I used to work, where I work into a hospital, I got promotions very fast. Why? Because I do my job. The Americans used to say how we foreigners come and take away their jobs but they weren't interested in working.

So segregation, I grew up in segregation, people like Martin Luther King gave their life for what we have today. The good salaries that we are receiving today is because of people like him, like, the guy right now, Obama, probably, if he win he will make a big turnover for a lot of people. A lot of people are being wronged, but people have to sacrifice, sacrifice. Segregation is still a big problem and I grew up into that and it is something that, you know, when I sit down and I think about it, I wouldn't make it take the joy out of me but it always get me to think, to think.

INTERVIEWER: Wow. Thank you. Going back to your childhood, you already told me a little bit about what it was like in the days –those great memories, the big cat and everything. Who were your best friends and where were their parents from? Were they from the same neighborhood?

WILLIAMS: My best friends, both of them passed away. They were—one was from the same neighborhood, we born the same year, 1939. Her name was June Sobers. We went from kindergarten straight to high school together. She died of cancer of the breast. And the other one, I, we became friends when I met her in high school. Her name was Merla Peyton. She died of cancer of the breast too. So while both of them had this cancer problem I did sure had it too, because you know, the three of us used to call ourselves the gourmet cooks and we used to do a lot of cooking together but always the only one that used to take in cooking nutritious-wise. I never liked pig feet, nothing fatty and things like that. And I always believed I was supposed to have a lot of vegetables and I used to have broccoli and carrots because the green and the yellow used to make your plate so attractive and they would also say, “Oh, she broccoli again” but when they say “Oh boy, she knew what she was doing.” But when they started it was too late; so we could really cook. We were cooks. We really had some parties. I remember intimately June she got herself fixed up for this party. So when I look in she send me to look on the rice. So I look in the rice and I saw this black thing looking at me and I look at her face; she had one eyelash on, and one eyelash in a pot of rice. I said, cooks cannot get sexy and put their head over the pot because the heat take off you eyelash! But she was like, I am the type to cook like this. I have the recipe like, you know buttermilk is hard to get, so I use sour cream, with, you know water and thin and thin it out and it works perfectly. Now if she don't get her buttermilk she's not doing that recipe. She don't learn to substitute, oh not me! I would try anything, I say, boil corn if it tastes better than what the recipe call for. I say look the first thing, if it's not perfect so why can't we invent? So the first thing we do is she can't get what the recipe calls for she not doing it at all. I doing my own. But we really used to cook and I notice since they have passed away I don't have that zest about cooking. I guess it's because I miss them, because they used to come keep me. We had belong to an international recipe club that we used to exchange recipe all over the world. We have different people who send the recipe to us and we would try, and we would send recipes to them, and that's how we used to get the different recipes. That was really a challenge. Well. Like what they call on the food future channel started having showdown. They didn't know we were having showdown long time ago. Because as they say let me get through and I can get what I can get. Those were fun days, those were very fun days. And a lot of my cooking tips, I learned from my mom but my mom we never had things to cook. We always had what was basic and we used to take that and beans

because pork chops we never got, spare ribs we never got. Like cow foot, we didn't get and I didn't like it until today. Because my mother didn't have the money to go pick up those things, go to market and come home but the things she used to cook, like we eat a lot of beans, a lot of beans and rice, carrot and spinach, the basics and I think that's why, it's seven of us and one of us die, and that was a natural death; he committed suicide. In the six of us that are alive none of us has disease, you know, and I attribute that from the way we grew up, the things that we used to eat. You know when we would say, "Does George have chocolate, hot chocolate?" And they have coffee and we have bush tea. That's a whole lot better for you. No. They have kool aid and we have my mother used to say champagne from the bush and we took that but we were never sickly or any of those things because I remember before my father left, because my father left when I was 15, I missed him dearly. I used to cry because I didn't have a father but my father used to take the olives like the black and he would make it into wine. And they used to give us to drink, that was bitter, but when that thing start cut you, girl it send you to the bathroom. My mother used to give us the senna, that was worse! Oh, and once I said to her, "Ma, don't this make any sense? Seven kids and one bathroom and you purge all of us at the same time?" I got punishment, I was outgoing. "It's coming down, it's coming down!" I would knock on the door it's coming down, I could remember when they fed us. Another thing my mother used to do when she used to make us coconut, red peas and coconut rice, the trash from the coconut she save it, and then she take the evaporated milk and she make the best coconut drops. The best, but I have this young lady that we, we have a support group, because she is one of these abused mothers and, and I did it and I showed her how not to waste anything. I said to her you work with me and you will learn you can take nothing and make a meal out of it. I said I don't waste anything. I said, you see this bag at the grocery? I wash it out and when I bring sandwiches for you, I take that same bag. And I said I don't have any waste, not abuse here. We conserve everything. We use even in the basement, the boxes that the, the cakes come in, we take it and you know deliver cakes. So once a customer ask me if we have any boxes and I say do you realize how many trees we cut down to make a box. So we are researching these things, we are saving the environment. There's a lot of things we can do for the environment. But most people don't do anything. My car: two bottles of water, one to wash it, the other to rinse, and I never see my car look dirty. You got to conserve. And if every family was to do that, you'd be surprised you have a better world. We have a better world. There are a lot of things, and these are things nobody used to do when I was going up and we used to say "She's so stingy." But I had to grow, and you know, you have to become a mom to realize what mom was doing. You know, as a child you can't see. But you have to walk in that person's moccasins to realize all the wrong things we've been doing. So my mother she would stop off and brought it to the commissary and the white paper like this is to write letters. You know to send abroad or to the States, she take the brown paper bag and make a commissary list. I didn't even know it was the commissary list. I don't want you to see child so I will go in the bathroom to write everything. I had ten things, Lord, I have nine I missing something so I got to run back into the bathroom. My mother was quite funny, I tell you. But my mother was really a trooper for us, she taught us all to save 25 cents: 25 cents. I have the ladies here, when I first started I tell them I'm gonna take ten dollars every two weeks from them, they all upset with me. But in the first year when they got their \$240 they were very happy! Now they had Christmas savings, they have birthday

clubs, and they have sou-sou. I tell them in everything you've got to save. You've got to save. When you inviting you to a banquet and she ask me to talk, and my talk wasn't so much debate, my talk was about where I see a lot of black business fail, money management. She right now, I'm gonna discuss this with you because you have seen what is happening here. And if you don't have the reserve funds, you'll go under. Another thing we have to learn, instead of going and rent someplace. My shop is in a kitchen and it stay nearer. I'm not paying anymore for it. Take your own home and make a business. Don't pay your money out to somebody else. But they want to start big and then they pay. I don't know if how much you call, but they just buy them. Like I just saw, this was something they right up here in Casa Para? They sell hair product and they have a beauty shop upstairs. But my, my, my, my biggest question is how much they are paying for rent. You know she could start out small in her own place and then—and the right place just because they are licensed. And she took up a lot of people and this is years ago seeing that. I used to buy from a lady back in the continental. She took one room in her home and she made a business out of it. You keep out of it but most of us want to... You know if they was to every day, just read, you know every day just read one chapter, like today I read a chapter in Proverbs and that book open up the insight and wisdom about life itself. And the little things we are doing. I'm 69 but still and at the end of the day and I sit down and I criticize myself because suppose I spoke to you with a crude voice and so. Would you talk to who like that? It's not what I say, it's how I say it, makes a difference. I'm not too proud to pick up the phone. Some days, I would, you know make it under the weather and I'm sorry for that. But like how I did, I did those things before I was at... and I try to tell people I say hold on correctly. Don't think "I'm perfect," I say to them. I'm correcting you because I been down that road. You know, I did it. A lot of things I did wrong. They have two ladies in this, in this business that are terrible with the biggest things. When I say I got to put the holy spirit into them. You know, since I've been doing that I've noticed a difference. And then when I'm done I don't let anybody pass but there's so much pieces, I can't save everybody and where I can I help to. I am not like that. You give me a piece of cake, I am going to take one that one piece and I gwine share it with everyone. My mother brought me up like that.

INTERVIEWER: Thank you. Can you tell me a little bit about your parents' or grandparents' origins? Where was your father from? Where was your mother from? And where were your fraternal and maternal grandparents from?

WILLIAMS: Ok. Both parents are Panamanian, are coming from right here but the parents are, my mother's father was from Jamaica and my grandmother was from Antigua. Ok, my father's father was from Jamaica, two Jamaican. My grandmother was deceased before I was born. And I really don't remember. I will ask again. And my great grandmother on my mother's side, she was from St. Kitts. And my grandfather, great grandfather, he was from Jamaica also. A lot of Jamaicans. One time I went to Barbados, I used to swear my grandfather, my mother father was from Barbados because he was so different. He always give my grandfather that name. The guys had a basketball team, you know they made a stencil, and while trying out this stencil, they didn't put something underneath it, so blue wind came out from his workshop box. And every day my grandfather would come down and trouble about this blue ink, blue ink, blue ink, so the

guys got to call him Blue! Even the grandchildren called him bluey. Some of them were so mean. I can't, the only grandchild I can remember getting anything from him was Ida. That is my sister born seven years after me. Then once he had intestinal problems and the doctor told him that he not supposed to take transportation. "I want to." I said. Ok, I used to call my grandmother, we had two grandmothers, so we does call her big granny—that that was the great grandmother—and little granny—little granny was my grandmother. I said, "Little granny, you know I see like Bluey." She says "Who you calling Bluey—that 's your grandfather!" I said "Grandfather is riding my motorcycle." She said "You got to be crazy. How he be riding motorcycle?" I said you don't know why because you ain't got to pay bus fare. She said you children better than me. I said no, no granny I still riding my motorcycle. When my grandfather got sick, he had like about four thousand dollars on him and whoever found him, because he did not believe in banks and when they went to the home, every oats pan that you pick up had money saved in it. That's how, he was one of those old people. He really was a trip. Once he and I were playing the organ. But you know those days we were small so one had to pop and the other one play. So this day was my day to play while he other pop. All of a sudden my grandfather that time they used to use these handkerchief. Instead I draw on the note. I said but boy you going get kill tonight. He say, "You live here?" "I don't live here." I think that was one of the most monstrous things grandfather can do to grandchildren. But he was a meanie. He was a meanie, you know what he told us? Never forget 1950. This was December 31st 1949. The clock striking 12 and, and I—my brother—we used to cry. I say Lord, I sorry that I used to beat you up all the time and I, I, I sorry that we didn't love each other the way we do cause we hug each other, cause I think we going die, cause he say that night as soon as the clock strike 12 for 1950, the world coming to a end and we were petrified when we see the clock strike 12. But the world won't coming to no end. Just a mean old grandfather but he really had us upset. Upset. Grandparents don't do that to children! He always used to say that my grandfather on my father's side, that was a darling. And you know what make him more darling? He read the Bible, the Proverbs. So he used to play ketch with me and say I gwine ketch you. But you have to give me half that money. So after that half is mine and half is yours. So you know that ten dollars I get seven fifty and you get two fifty. Then my father said that my grandfather couldn't read and write, so some thing wrong in the Bible, although he could not read the man memorize the bible. My grandfather. From Genesis right back to Revelation he knew every word in the bible. Believe that? That is what you call a brilliant man. And when, when you served the food each course had to be in a separate place. And all his meals were served on time. Breakfast, lunch, and dinner. He died of age at 101. He looked very good. The only thing, he lost his sight. And when I check it out, my glaucoma is genetic. He had it, my father had it, and my father pass it on to the first three of us. It's genetic. But, it's when I got it I start to do research, that's when I found out, no, you know they never talk about it, they just figure oh they get blind and he never say anything. My father, these glasses these days can tell you that it's a 175, my father used to go around the market.

INTERVIEWER: Well, tell me a little bit about the professions. What was your father's profession, what was your mother's profession? As well as your grandparents.

WILLIAMS: My father was an accountant and a tailor. My mother was a homemaker. An excellent one. My great grandmother was a teacher.

INTERVIEWER: Paternal or maternal?

WILLIAMS: Maternal. My grandfather used to make—I don't know what was his profession or what particular. Ok, my father. I don't know what was his profession. My grandfather, grandmother. Back on my mother's side, my great grandfather he was a principal and a minister. HER husband was as far as I know a... I used to like to brush her hair; she had long plaits. I can never remember my grandmothers hair black. It was white. All I can remember is plaits. They were long and white and pretty.

INTERVIEWER: What were your parents' or your grandparents' friends, I mean who were your grandparents' friends and do you have memories of visiting them and what sort of things do you remember them doing or eating or drinking, talking about?

WILLIAMS: I used to visit my great grandparents a lot. I remember, in those days, children were seen and not heard. When they call we to get together, like family gatherings, when they have grown up friends. They I don't know if you ever heard anybody ever did an interview like that?

INTERVIEWER: Yeah I've heard exactly that quite a few times

WILLIAMS: Ok, my father was not very sociable, so we could not visit people's homes, so I live in Gamboa and... I used to visit my grandmother, I used to visit my girlfriend, oh Ruth and I were good friends when I was there. Ruth Stephenson. I used to visit Ruth.

INTERVIEWER: Ok. What, tell me a little bit about school, what was school like? How and who were your teachers, any favorite teachers?

WILLIAMS: One of my favorite teachers was Mr. F— coach I guess one of the reasons he was my favorite teachers was that he always involve me in a lot of sports. I used to run. I jump, basketball, baseball, tennis. I did all the sports I could because it was the only excuse I can get to get out of the house. Didn't have a good way to leave the house. Kids used to call us house-birds. You know, my father was very strict when he was home. And after he left my mother was about the same. I guess she was adopting his way. Just the other day I was talking about that. I said I've lived in Gamboa so many years I don't, ok, one home I used to visit a lot was my girlfriend Jean, Jean Krogers, saying, that's one home I can tell you I visit and if I do go by anybody else's is my mother send me to let a message but I wasn't a child who could. Worse, I never get to stay over by anybody. Anyone.

INTERVIEWER: And what was the cultural background of your classmates and your teachers? Were they West Indian? Were they Spanish, Latin-American?

WILLIAMS: They mix. Well, they were Spanish, many of my classmates, some of them came from Colombia, Aruba, you know all those different islands, some of them came from there.

INTERVIEWER: Which school was this?

WILLIAMS: That was when we were in elementary school, elementary and junior high in Gamboa. Well they never call it Gamboa because at that time it still was yet. I remember Rolanda Garcia she came from Colombia. Just the other day I was talking I haven't seen her since we graduate from high school. We just celebrated our fiftieth class reunion.

INTERVIEWER: So what about your teachers, were your teachers West Indian or—?

WILLIAMS: Ok, all of our teachers they had like, when I went to high school she came from Jamaica. Mr. Phillips, oh, our principal then, Mr. Morgan he came from Jamaica also. But the rest I can't remember, Miss... My grandmother was my kindergarten teacher, how sad! I was put in the corner all the time. That was sad. She just used me at the front all the time. Then my first grade teacher was, my second grade teacher was... My first grade teacher was Mrs. Morrison, the other day I was trying to remember her name and just forgot... was my third grade teacher. My sisters stayed back. My fourth grade teacher was Mr. Osborne. And Mr. Phillips was my teacher. Then we went to junior high and Mr. Griffins was the maths teacher, Mr. Moses the history teacher that was strict on me all the time. Then we have Mrs. Pine she was the home economics teacher. Mr. Arturo. He was handsome!

INTERVIEWER: You said Mr. Phillips was bad. Teacher Phillips I hear people talk about from time to time. Did he have a school, a specific school?

WILLIAMS: ...because I remember—always remember this because what a tangled web we weave when we practice to deceive. And that is so true. So true.

INTERVIEWER: Mmm. Actually, I'm gonna write that down, that's one of the questions I usually ask a little later. But that's a nice saying.

WILLIAMS: When you reach that you can ask, I'll remember.

INTERVIEWER: Because a lot of times we get to that question and people forget.

WILLIAMS: Many times, I always remember teacher Phillips talking and that's so true... liars. So true, anytime I, I remember teacher Phillips and I remember what a tangled web we weave when we practice to deceive. Last Monday. I was very late for class, but what happen I got surgery on this other hand that put in my implant and I'm not used to taking medication, so it look like the antibiotics just knock my system down. But I got up that day just moping around. But I had to go to the back, I had to do several things because I know when I finished with class I wasn't going to make it. So I said I

was going to. So I call and I tell him I was going to be there but when I went in I just told him exactly what happened; two of the students there I had class with two of the students students... The Lord said when two or three are gathered in his name, in his presence, and I said let's go for it and that's when I stop... that mice just run in the class. Tell the truth. Because you got to remember that lie, and then another lie on top of that lie, and then they compile.

INTERVIEWER: What types of music did you grow up hearing, and what were your favorite singers, and your favorite songs?

WILLIAMS: Ok, in that time from... was a hit then and the Jackson 5, Aretha Franklin. Oh, so many of them. Diana Ross' Supremes, Dionne Warwick, I like her. I like That's What Friends Are For. That's one of my favorite songs, through good times and bad times. I like that one. I like a mixture of music. I like symphony. When I tell those people that, they look at me like a freak! But what I like about symphony is it's a very peaceful music and it can really bring your thoughts together and bring you that inner peace. I, it's a very relaxing and a in-depth music. If people only take the time to listen to music and enjoy it. So anyway... I love Pavarotti. I guess you find that amusing right?

INTERVIEWER: No, no. I like the same, a little bit of everything.

WILLIAMS: I like a variety, you know. But like for instance when I'm driving, I like to find that kind of music because it keeps your mind on your driving. It don't distract you. It give you that inner peace that you need to keep away the road rage.

INTERVIEWER: Hmm, good point, good point. So like mostly American music you think? You were—

WILLIAMS: It might have been true. Okay, they had this radio conk out. So after the radio conk out, this is what we listened to for music. We took turns singing on the radio, so that was our music!! And we had learned, we used to get a lot of country music. The Charlie Pride, and you know, those guys, so we knew country music than we did know about our Latin music. Okay, maybe 20, I've been living down this side for 20 years. Then I have said many times, if I had to do it all over again, I would start anew, because there's so much about my own culture that I did not know but when you're in the dark you don't know what you're missing until the light shines upon it. So what I have been doing, a lot of the things I don't know about, I have been with my grandchildren, with them. So they can learn about their culture. So one year my granddaughter, I got one of these dress made for her, and she got the history behind it. That day she talk about it, she say oh mom I was the star of the class because nobody had anything like that. And when you know when the original came from Africa, not really the Indians, the Africans taught the Indians about it. But there was so much about my culture you know and I still would like to learn to dance. That's the problem. I had a uncle—I still have him, I still have him. His name is Gladstone Grant. He used to teach in the Panamanian school but he was one of them that help in the system of, because he was saying if we are Panamanians why are we in the American system. But when the sister was introduce us two years before we

went to school but we just learn the Spanish we don't really pay any attention to it. I had a collera that Mrs. brought when I was fourteen, and I have a picture of the collera. Beautiful. Beautiful. But there was so much about the collera that now I know about that, I didn't try to learn about the collera. It was long after, there's so much about the collera. But because of the system is working, we were cheating on what belongs to us.

INTERVIEWER: We were talking about music before. I was wondering if I could get you to sing part, you know part of one of your favorite lyrics. Do you sing at all?

WILLIAMS: Not good, but I can keep a tune.

INTERVIEWER: Ok.

WILLIAMS: Ok. The one I think that I like is, "In good times and bad times" Oh God how can I forget that? You know most of the times. The song will come back to you, you when you start, you know, but sometimes and then you know when a song will come back to me? When I'm walking in the morning, and I'll be how comes I don't remember that song now? (sings) "In good times, in bad times, you'll be on my side for ever more "That's what friends are for."

INTERVIEWER: That's a classic.

WILLIAMS: I can sing in a treble. Don't put me out there to sing by myself. I said I don't think that I guess what's my problem about singing is that I lost my tonsils.

INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm.

WILLIAMS: And both of my parents are excellent singers. Excellent singers. Excellent. My father used to take my mother every night and he would just sing her to bed. I think that was so beautiful. I said God, I know when daddy left he did some beautiful things with you. He would just, he sang all the time, he sang all the time, Nat King Cole and he sung like Nat King Cole. That's how good his voice was. You know, to most children know their father and they are angry at their father, but I know my dad was selfish, I realized that when I got older. But I still love him. I love him—you know why? He never whupped me. That's the truth. My father was non-violent. You know my mother used to tell me: Dad would put you to sit. Cause we know Dad get up at four o'clock. And still. Especially I was the kind of person, a child that would look you in the face and do it anyway. I don't know! And the same thing in school I would look, you know, look the teacher in the face and do it. But I was always a type to apologize. I would apologize, you know and I would say I'm sorry. Then my sister, all she say is she sorry, she sorry. All she know how to say, she is sorry. I feel like—she sorry, she sorry. I said, you don't know how to say you sorry. I can say I'm sorry. I'm the one that's humble, and you are not, and she would be upset with you, and she would hold malice to you for years and I used to tell her the Lord will punish you. I would tell you what I think about you but I am still your friend. I don't hold anything in me but I got to say it. It can't keep. And don't come and tell me anything that you shouldn't tell me because I gonna get—don't tell me

anything—I can't keep secret, I will always tell it, I can't keep secret. I admit it that I can't keep secret, so!

INTERVIEWER: We talked about a little bit of music you sang for me one of your favorite. What kind of music do you listen to now and what are those favorite songs? What do you like about them?

WILLIAMS: The music I listen to now... Serene moments you find the space in life that you need. Do what you want to do. Some of those music out there, I don't know what they're saying. They confuse me. You know? But if I hear like an old time music, then I appreciate that. I don't want to hear what that guy saying obscenity so I said to that guy, I don't know if I'm hearing right, but is that obscenity? He is saying "el ritmo" (speaks Spanish) Eh? I don't know what they are saying. Now if you tell me how great is your faithfulness, I know what that song is saying. So I just say Lord give thanks. You know when you go, most of the time the places I go I usually hear gospel music. Oh well you know when you go to concerts, music.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. Next we're going to talk a little but about food. Do you like to eat, what are your favorite foods, I know baking is definitely your thing, but it sounds like with your friends you used to do a lot of cooking too, so?

WILLIAMS: Yes. Cooking, before I started this place, actually this baking was not my idea. When It started out I used to do packed lunches for two of my sister office because I love to cook. I always bake but I always love to cook. So I started baking but I love to cook. So I started off cooking. Ok, when it come to food, I used a lot of stuff. You mostly find me in the aisle of turkey, chicken, and fish. I don't eat pork. They call me seven days because I don't eat pork. They say assemblies. And then I know I don't like pigs feet, I don't like cow foot, I don't like tripe, you know. This is fry everything. I don't like fatty foods. But I would cook chicken a thousand ways and you would not get tired of it.

INTERVIEWER: Ok.

WILLIAMS: Those three things, the chicken, the turkey, the fish. I like that, lamb, but you know lamb you don't get that all the time.

INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm.

WILLIAMS: Cow, goat, if you get that, you know, goat cause you know, that is finger lickin' good!! Ooh!! You make some curry goat and some curry rice, and you get some, I like to make my vegetables from scratch, because I like it crunchy, and you wouldn't know. Broccoli, carrots, peas, cabbage. These are foods that I like. I eat the rice for longevity and age defiance. I know we are all going to age, but we should go about it gracefully. And you eat that things that, that is good for your system that don't make you sick. Because all of us it's what you eat that you get back. You know you have a lot of water, a lot of fruits, a lot of vegetables. You eat within the permit. Well, the red meat depends on their age, should be some of the young better because I believe I stopped

when I got forty years old so I is only my daughter when I go, she call mommy, the other day she gave me a steak. I could eat that steak two days to three to go through me. I've read about it but I've experienced it too. So I don't eat much red meat. Ah, I like bacon so occasionally when I do have turkey bacon low sodium. I was never a fan because always had by the time I start to I was never when I was raisin' a family, I was not mean to my family, I cooked the things that they like that I didn't eat. The day that I made pigs feet stew I would call all my friends over and tell them what I'm cooking and invite them over to eat it. I all I want is that bean because the flavor into that lima bean oh it's good. And I would take that beans with my white rice and my plantain and my salad. And I said I try at least twice to be vegetarian because the less meat you eat your kidneys work the best. The more you eat the harder your kidneys work. And these are the little things people don't "I have to have a big plate of meat." Don't need no more than three ounces and that's enough for you! So I try to eat in moderation and I'm living in temptation, believe it or not—it's hard. Very hard. I look I look on those cakes and I say let me just take some chocolate and go inside, the devil's getting into me and Lord it's hard. Very hard. In the week I haven't had any empanadas and I haven't had any cake. It's hard. People look at me and I say you all don't know it's hard livin' with the devil.

INTERVIEWER: For you, would you be willing to share on of your favorite recipes with us?

WILLIAMS: Sure, I give classes. I've been sharing my recipes for ten years! I don't have—this is what I tell people. Same way they pop out cookbooks and read, use your recipe. What makes ours so special is the I don't have to... The first class I did back in 1998, and they had two ladies in the class sit down that made the trip with me. So, I said to her you know this probably easy on both us. She said "What you talking bout?" I say, "I will whisper it." I had a great grandmother that was deaf so she used read lips and I learned to read lips through her because I was so to the point that she used to say I was the little devil. So I know exactly what you said about me so tomorrow you can take classes. Say no, no, no If you don't know what to say keep your mouth shut and this gave me a break to give a class. I did not ask anyone to take the class so Profesora Joyce came and said will you do this class. I didn't even question her. At the end of the class that same lady said, you know on graduation day, she say you know I have a confession to make. When I heard that there would be this class, my remarks to other people was, "She doesn't teach properly. What she doing she don't know one thing about business. But she taught us more and gave us all her little tips." So people don't give you a break, they don't give you a break. And I feel that sometimes when I lie on the couch I give back. That's why you mustn't be scared of the recipes, and I tell you again, these little things and although I make it simple, but from the time they want to make sure I cut, sometimes they say they want more and they don't you know the flour but they don't put enough codfish so what's gonna happen, you're not going to taste enough codfish. Listen when you buy a codfish empanada from me you get codfish. And as I tell my customers I have quality not quantity. I been doing it for twenty-six years. Until the day this business operate, if I cannot give quality I will close.

INTERVIEWER: Ok, I think I want to take your class. Figure how to do it. Ok, here's a priority you have given me a saying from Teacher Phillips.

WILLIAMS: Ok. What a tangled web we weave when we practice to deceive.

INTERVIEWER: What a timely?

WILLIAMS: Tangled. You know like how the spider tangle the web?

INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm.

WILLIAMS: What a tangled web WE weave.

INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm.

WILLIAMS: When we practice to deceive. I have another one too.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.

WILLIAMS: I am too blessed to be stressed and too anointed to be disappointed. And that's true. When you are blessed you don't have to be stressed.

INTERVIEWER: That's true

WILLIAMS: You know, I'm a old...I'm a what you call, for instance, if I can find... I always have a backup plan. Cause I gonna get all the time. Not even waste my time with him the other day I took off my clothes and I had a scratch on my head and I look and say we must have a ghost in this house. Where the scarf gone? I had on a dress that I had, you know with the shell inside, in the back of the neck was start hooking together you know I can't at the back. So when I went to the kitchen Andrea start laugh. I say, good thing I never bother about it because I would have never found it until I took off my clothes. And so I just chuh, you now, don't bother me, because one part of it I go to the the car that I had before. You know I usually plan my driving because parking is a problem. So I had to go and pick up some chicken. So I says I am going to park go all the way around and park by the Kentucky Fried Chicken. So I just going to walk. So I went up and I parked in the back of the 99. So I look on my left, everything clear, forgetting when I come in everything close, so later. No look at my this side, this side now have a post, so I come in and I turn and I hear (honk sound) So I just hit straight in a post. I not even get hurt, everything got damage. Then I come home and when I talk and I got to call the guy and everybody and tell them. I didn't even see what he look like, I say look, just 76, 76. But she never get me to park there again. I said you see, you must stick your first plans. All you had to do was drive around but you think you safe and look how much it cost you. Look. So when your first mind tell you to do something, listen to it. That day from my mind. I put off a...and they tell me not to go, I not to go. And most of the time, it's best to listen to it. That day of course.

INTERVIEWER: Ok, have you have you ever heard of Louise Bennett?

WILLIAMS: Louise Bennett?

INTERVIEWER: Bennett.

WILLIAMS: I know of a Anna Bennett.

INTERVIEWER: No. Ok. And have you heard of the Mighty Sparrow?

WILLIAMS: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: What song?

WILLIAMS: I have so many songs. The last one there he sing about Willie. You hear about Willie? Something about Willie, something so. Who good at calypso is my brother Bertram. He can, he just hear a calypso just and hmmm. The concert there was one of the latest concerts.

INTERVIEWER: Did you get to go to a concert, he's had a few concerts in the last years though?

WILLIAMS: Sparrow and I playing games. The last concert I saw with Sparrow was back in '96 in Tampa. When I had a Panamanian reunion. That was the last time I saw him. And then I saw, I have a view on one of the last concerts.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember what Willie was about?

WILLIAMS: Willie was bout something about Willie dying. Or something about that.

INTERVIEWER: And who was Willie?

WILLIAMS: Willie was some man.

INTERVIEWER: Ok, just now for us a different focus.

WILLIAMS: Who is Louise Bennett?

INTERVIEWER: Louise Bennett? She is a Jamaican poet. I didn't know her either before the project. She used to do poetry on the radio, and she used to speak in Creole form. So it was kind of like poetry for the people so she would talk about real life issues that people are deadline with. I think it was before, way before Sparrow's time.

WILLIAMS: I have a book written by Carlos... Carlos what was his last name?

INTERVIEWER: Russell?

WILLIAMS: Russell,

INTERVIEWER: Which one? I have Miss Anna's Son Remembers. There's another one—

WILLIAMS: I have the one that talk about falling down and when he when, when ahm they sent the message back home. And said lawd when I hear the mountain cry and I bawl, I bawl. I like to read it like I talking in a Bajan twang and I remember now when one of them send for the wife and, no, Lord they send for me. And you know normally when they find a woman. When I walk my friend I gwine make you laugh and I used to take her that book and read and talk like a Bajan. 41 times and Carlos I've done a lot, and it have a little history about it, because you remember the one about the Chinese? When the Colombians, ahm the Colombians took away their opium, and they got so depressed they started to kill themselves and all the so it have a little bit of history behind it.

INTERVIEWER: That's the part. Now, religion. What religion are you and when—

WILLIAMS: My great grandfather was Episcopalian but all of we, I would say all, my great grandfather maternal he was Episcopalian because my grandfather, maternal he was Salvation. The other grandfather, Jehovah witness. Jehovah Witness!! I had a girlfriend reunion she came there and she stayed with me. I had to tell her you are not a nice witness. You are a terrible witness. You had, you are a terrible witness. Take it from me, you are not a nice witness. Anybody I said don't care about. I said this is not about religion this is about being one of God's children. You do nice things all the time regardless of who the person is. I don't care how much sickness you have. You don't holler and scream at people for services! I says you are my family's guest and you are not even my original guest. You came to stay as somebody else's guest. She had a cold so she couldn't. True we grow up together I told her she could stay here. And when I go home she would have Chela running her ragged. I have these ladies work for me in my kitchen. And I because I go in the kitchen and I find that's not fair. Now I have to I go to the back so often. How you make me kitchen for me. Not because you know you work for me I abuse you. And that's what she was doing, she's not a nice witness.

INTERVIEWER: What would you say is the role of religion in your life and can you describe the favorite part of the worship service of the church?

WILLIAMS: Ok. The role of religion in my life is doing things to help other people regardless of color creed or race, regardless of who they are. Many times you will hear, "Oh, she..." because I will sit them and coach them, I will fix them I give it to them. Like lately I see this gentleman there, out there, I forgot all Sunday school I know once they had this guy, you knew he came from good family, but he was on drugs, but he had braces on his teeth and the quality clothes that he had, you knew that he came from good family. So I take him and I used to bring him inside and give him a bath but you know my ex-husband clothes, and I start a problem they start to tell me look at the kind of

element I am bring in. I said what are you all saying. As long as I pay taxes here nobody can tell me what to do. These young children don't tell me what to do! I said, "Christians? You all are not good Christians!!" I said he don't do nobody anything. Yeah. So we had a problem with the neighbors here. They say, "Oh she ain't got no good" but I can't leave them there anyhow, so. Ok when I go to church I work as a usher. And as a usher you try to make everybody comfortable. The part of the service I like is when we are doing, not so much the sermon, depends on what he give. Because our priest he is a historian at times even his tone, his tone is contradictory. So I remember one day he was talking about when Jesus rose from he was sleeping. When Elijah, Samuel was calling and he keep, God was calling Samuel, and he keep saying Elijah, and he keep going you Elijah how we can't know if God calling him. So we say something wrong with him. So I say what kind of priest that is, you know? And when you look for you think to yourself Jesus was sleeping in the boat and the wave came, ahh!, why they wake him up. There are little things I think our minister is supposed to fill the service up, you know? Even if you're a historian, wait until you and the other historians, you all meet together and have your conflict. But don't come here and confuse us in the service. And I went and I... You know, I know there is controversy but in a sermon I don't think you're going about it in the right way. Me and one of the parishioners had a problem, and another one say so why you won't just hug him and kiss him and forgive. And he said, me, I would never do that and I said as my spiritual leader I am very disappointed in you. And everybody looking one me. I say why you looking on me is my fault... I say you all going wait until he leave and talk behind his back. Huh? I said but let me tell him, I said you think twice before you say certain things. That's the type of person I am. And I don't think I did anything wrong because you know, we are in a group where he come in and speak to us, you know about four of us. In front of the church I would never say something like that. But he knows and he, you know. I preaching you can't take the way of the Lord, it's like that movie, Jesus Christ Superstar. You not going to find mw watching that. First thing you taking the name of the Lord and blaspheming it. Why? You not going to find me looking at that. A lot of movies like Exorcist, you not going find me look at that. Not that I'm scared but that's dealing with the devil and I'm things happen to certain people in life because they associate with the wrong thing. You do not associate with the devil. You stay far from the devil. If you want to have a peaceful life, be with—I am not saying you are not going to have trouble in life. You are going to have trials and tribulations but when we go to Exorcist. That is to say you take yourself and you put yourself there. So those things you do not go to. They have a lot of books, that when I start to read I say, oh, no, that's not my type of book. Stephen King write some thing, make me, I have a friend I say you keep your Stephen King right on your side of the room and don't bring it to my side of the room. You keep over there. Oh, Bradford Taylor, Nora Roberts, what else? Danielle Steele but those were like mystery, "Murder She Wrote," although "Murder She Wrote" you never see nobody get killed. You only see the dead body. And those were different times, things that I liked and I—what I read and what I look at. I don't look at everything because I say, oh nothing good and I like family movies, I love comedy. I love anything that makes you laugh. I love to laugh. Yes, those are the things I like but I don't like those drug moves, you know, the, the, the violence or I don't like those things. And not today, I remember when I was small I cried when I hear those things. My father gave me the... and it was a war movie and I sat up in the movie whole night like this. I so when

I couldn't take it anymore I went home. My father said so I come back in there and cork up my ears and cover my face. Because you know you have to obey your parents. But even now you know I up to now you know the thing happening with Russia and Georgia and I just want to certain people but I don't want to be into it into it into it. War is so... I think of all the people that be losing their life. And that be Georgia war with Iraq and all those different war. All these different war. Harmless kids, all for what? Just for enabling them to get war. For what? Now the Vietnamese this again.

INTERVIEWER: Now, you've told me that you played sports as a child. You have a list of the sports. Do you still play any sports at all now, do you, I know you say you walk?

WILLIAMS: I walk, because nobody around here to play with me. I think the last time I play sports was I remember I was 53 years old. But we had a what you call a Gamboa day, and I claimed that I wasn't going to play anything and I took my tennis shoes and I played baseball. I think I played it's in my blood. It's in my blood. So I remember one day I got knocked out and I asked this young lady to get the ball. That was before... and was I say I was a high jumper. I say I guess my bones still flexible.

INTERVIEWER: Good. Great.

WILLIAMS: I usually like do exercise, weight-bearing exercise, because if you don't do weight-bearing exercise most women get osteoporosis. I have the hand weight and the ankle weight so I do that, and I exercise in the morning before I come off the bed to get my rolling. This age is the aches and pains age. You know I never used to have any, anything wrong with me. Up to 69 I was fine. I told my Trevor I said exercise I been doing it for I said keep my joints lubricated you know, like a old car. I say you're a bull. I start tell her say you have to take your calcium. Walk. You need to get at least 15 minutes of the natural sunlight and right now they tell you don't use no sub block because it you put it on you not getting that. Try and get sun you get block. And have a good back. And same time so I decided that when I sent to the States I was going to pay three percent so don't feel the pain anymore have to stay on it. Dr. Halls have another tonic the green drink and you make it with spinach, parsley, comfer and you add ginger, lime and a lemon. That is good. And that makes you feel good. I going wait until I come back and do my performance. I will tell you something about me. I will live long and I will tell you why. If you tell me this is good for me I will try it. I will try it. It might take a while you know for me to like it but I will try it. Most of the time when I make the green juice nobody will try it, but I said ok.

INTERVIEWER: Alright ok. The next question as, do you have any contact with the United States culture as youth. I know you talked a little bit about music and things like that. What other aspects of American culture did you experience as a child?

WILLIAMS: Well, I remember flag in the maypole.

INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm.

WILLIAMS: We use these—they have a lot of field days, fourth of July, and in those days we would do the different sport, you know we would associate with, track and field and do even although I didn't excel I would participate in throwing javelin, shot-put, archery. I jus remembered I used to do archery. I even do so we used to sweat all in soccer because we were mostly socking it to her rather than socking the ball. I played tennis, what tennis we is slippery. So you know what I used to do? Anytime a ball come to me I hit it hard and get it off of the court. So I liked to walk off to cool off my feet you know all tennis courts never have any shade or cover; it's just the pure sun beating down. I played a lot of different moves and plays and in those days we used to get sponsors like Alan Man , Bazaar, Balisio, Pepsi Cola, Coca-Cola for the different meets that we played in, between basketball and baseball. You can see that this thing going on for a long time, that we used to get anything in sports we get sponsors. I was, one season there, I was the best high jumper of the year, 1960, that Panama had, I was selected to go to Rome, let's say to get a room to talk but my coach tricked me into alternating and took his girlfriend, so I never go, and after that I was discouraged because it was a big sacrifice for me in making coming from Gamboa to practice in the stadium there and to see that I didn't. Well, my brother teased me and said that the only way I would reach to Rome is I would have to swim it. So back in 1994, I was a—I made it to Rome, but I didn't swim, and then unfortunate again because I went to Rome, but that thing really hurt me because I used to practice every day, every day, every day, every day. A Chinaman grab me and told me...She stay the same way—slim, trim.

INTERVIEWER: So you run during that—

WILLIAMS: Yes, because she was two years ahead and still going do sports together, you know? We used to see each other. One of my schoolmates who was very good at sports, her name was Theresa Malcolm. She work as a physical education teacher back in Detroit. Hmm-mm. The pay she said at was steady pay.

INTERVIEWER: Ok, now we're going to do some identity questions. Tell me about your view of West Indian ancestry.

WILLIAMS: My view? Ok. To me my West Indian ancestry was in the dark until it got exposed because they claim my birth was here just sitting down and talking and I talk with them a lot on the maternal side. And I thought that I would have learned more from my great grandfather the educator but here come the problem. My great grandmother, she was the pastor's wife. She was kind of upset with my grandmother because she said that my grandmother married a poor broke man so there was like... and anytime they go around it wouldn't be like talking about history, it would be when arguments like start I would just disappear because I would never like discussions. So she just concentrate. And I often the other day I was talking about it with some cousins I can see us in the same room but she never let us play with each other. Can you believe that? She thought that they were better than us. So we grew up as cousins separated. The other day I saw one of them and I said you're a Osborne? He says yes. I said you're a...But you know I talk I sit and I talk because we'd get together, so I said they thought they were better than us so leave them alone. That's life. That's life.

INTERVIEWER: So what would be the first thing that would come to mind when you hear West Indian?

WILLIAMS: First thing that come to mind? Coucou and codfish!! That's sounds strange to you? Because my grandmother I know when I wanted some good coucou, I would see my grandmother. But she knows to make, not so much codfish, she make goat fish and when she make the coucou, she put a hole in the center and she put in the sauce they all swimming all over, and she's—there are things I ate from my grandmother that we have no...so I was always at my grandmother, I spent more time at my grandmother's than at my home. Yes, I was always did a lot of things with my grandmother, but I used to call her and she had this pocketbook open, because anything you ask my grandmother for, she was like this, I already get this, I already get this, I get his baseball bat. Everything would come out of that bag! You have black thread with a needle? She have red thread. She have everything in that bag. A girl scout. Be prepared. Be prepared.

INTERVIEWER: What cultures, qualities, behaviors or other things do you associate with West Indians?

WILLIAMS: Well, West Indian them cultural behavior I like because they had time like a guide by time, by 6 o'clock we'd better be upstairs before light turn off. Or else you're in trouble. If you had a girlfriend and it was 8 o'clock they had to leave the home. If you went anywhere with your girlfriend, your mother would have to go. Those are all West Indian things, ways. You don't see those things anymore. And, if when the boy come then your mother have to go and check out the family. And if they don't meet with her approval, that's the end of the boyfriend.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, do you believe people in Panama treat you differently based on your race and being West Indian?

WILLIAMS: That questions goes person to person. I, my opinion because of me is that I get a lot of respect because of my business. A lot of people know me because of my business. Half of them talking to me I don't know them but they know me. And then playing and then telling me about the cakes I go to the back, I been at the back for 20 years. I get that kind of respect but let us go in now to the system like when you have to do things across. When I wanted to put my daughter into the school because I wanted to do programs with their I think they call it...I had put my business in La Sociedad. So twice José and I went to the office and nobody pay us any mind. I say, we need a pass, give me a pass...suggested that we take some merchandise in the briefcase. We took it, and my dear, in two days we get everything fix up. Panama same thing, grease them palm and they grease your palm.

INTERVIEWER: Well, have you lived outside Panama?

WILLIAMS: Well I lived in the States for a while. I lived in New York, Georgia, Missouri, Florida.

INTERVIEWER: How many years?

WILLIAMS: Oh, but I went, well I went overseas, I went to Europe. So I went to Germany, because of that it caused problem anytime she got sick compassionately I would come home. So I used to bouncing back and forth. Because the climate here agrees with her, but the climate that was excellent for her in the States was Florida. So I had stayed here. I think I had stayed in Florida three years. But being military you don't stay anywhere too long. They give you assignments, some times ten months, sometimes they pull you up and they move you and I didn't stay in Germany that long because I told my husband, my then husband that and the cold used to sick we so much. He claimed that anywhere we have to go his family have to go. Then the she got sick and then we went to Munich, community took her to the hospital at -burg, then from -burg we took her to the general hospital She was there for while until he got transferred to Walter Reid medical facility. And then we came back home and why she was in there, while we were there and my chest she had an excruciating pain and while she were there I had to ask them to give her an x-ray. Transfusion and you know the kidney they will accept it or reject it, then you find then when they got to Walter Reid like everything in her body went out of control She had a surgery two doctors practically but beat the odds for a child that had sickle cell . She had the doctors said that she wouldn't have lived past ten years old and when she died she was 47. But I have a lot of ups and downs with them. But as I tell her we got a lickin' but we kept on ticking.

INTERVIEWER: Hmm. Wow. When you lived in all these different people did you have the same pressure I asked about before. Do you think people treated you differently based on race, being West Indian or even Panamanian?

WILLIAMS: No because I am a "people people." You know? I mix. You know? I get myself involved. But once you get yourself involved, you blend in with the environment you don't have a problem. I remember when I was living in Florida they wanted a bowling secretary. I didn't know anything about sport, but when I heard \$800, I took the job child. And after two days of struggling I learned how to score. But I am a people. I will go, I will sit beside you, and by the time we reach the destination, you and I are friends. I remember once I look at this white guy he was, I said, boring, boring so I took my book and decided to read. So we started to talk, so he said he went on a cruise so I said "Wow." At times I can remember I said no I'm going to be a lecturer on the ship. I said what kind of lecture, bird-watching. I think about every bird I learn about I ask him about, and we talked about al the way from Miami. And he was so impressed that I knew so much birds; the birds that I learned about school I asked him about them. He said, how you know about all those bird. I said, well, I come from the rainforest in Gamboa and we have all those birds in the rainforest. Every bird I heard about, and he say, wow, you do remember a lot of bird. Once I had this teacher he was teaching zoology so he had all these different birds, and he wanted, they were supposed to study and name all these birds, so when I went to take the exam, I just the birds, how do you expect us to identify the birds by the legs. So this guy got upset. He showed me the length of his legs. So he called and he said why...

INTERVIEWER: Hilarious! What do people you encounter in these other countries you've encountered both in the US and Europe, so do they see you as Panamanians or Panamanians of West Indian descent?

WILLIAMS: Well you'd be surprised. We they don't know anything about us, they want to know what is Panamanian and about the Panama Canal. Then like I remember I told my neighbor from Georgia I came from...fortunately we have all modern facilities I said even better than you because we never picked coffee.

INTERVIEWER: Has going abroad affected your views of your Panamanianness and how has it effected the view of Panamanians of themselves, in you, and ultimately how does it affect the relationships with Europe, and African Americans?

WILLIAMS: Well, I, I don't think that living abroad has affected me, what I usually do when I go anywhere, I explain about my culture like for instance this is a wig, when I had my hair, my hair this day I washed it. So my neighbor said, "oh you have hair like mine!" I said I am like you, I am black too. I am born in Panama, you are American, but we are all sisters. So that we are black sisters we just have different nationality. So she was so surprised because she thought you know this was my regular hair. So when you start to show them that we are all the same but we all have different nationalities, we all come from different places but in all we are all God's children and when I used to, I think it's German I used to have, I used to ask you be laughing with me or at me? Because when I tried to speak my little German they would just be rolling over and I tell them, y'all two are my sisters, and not because when God created this world he created all of us equal. So when you, when you know how to come across and the person is ready to listen, because some people can get very hostile but when you see that finally you are to get us I'm only trying to explain something, I don't mean to put anything down your throat, you can reject it, stuff and stuff. So when you find a fight you just move on. But a whole lot of people have always said to me, I can talk. I can talk and I can make people, I have a way to bring people to my, because I'm not too proud to humble myself, and wherever I go I try to fit into that environment and another thing I do usually when I go into the world I try to find Panamanians. And I remember when I was living in Missouri, I found some Panamanians. We had some hard times that year so I took, and everybody pool up their money. I was always the one that, the coordinator. I says we write down in the space things we need and then we did divide it, and everybody would have something until payday. You know then I start to show them how to budget their money to make sure that that family got paid back some of it. Every day we watch she cook, buy all of what she make, and even if she don't have money for anything we have food to eat, so I would you know string my little book together and teach them how to budget money, and you know that way you make friends lasting friends. And another thing I used to do when I was working in this hospital in New York, I used to cook I bring food and I used to sell and I would bring extra income for me. Because ...was selling their food at that time for 85 cents and I was selling my food for 50 cents. So you know everywhere I go I would always have friends because I would do things to, to win people friendship. You know, do things and I was always you know I used to work as a medical secretary. I had to do

my work fast. So after that I become a nurse's aide because they used to get tips. So if I said I have too many things to do they used to ask us, boy I come home with forty or fifty dollars extra from moonlighting on my job. And I could make it to my work. Some night when I go in a lot of admission. I say god they leave more work for me tonight, extra work. I looked like, I was always that extra one, always picking an extra one. Right there I used to pick an extra one. Then there was this Canadian, he used to like Canadian whisky. He was only entitled to one shot a day. He's take it in like one minute flat, you know? But they were nice people. People are nice when you are nice to them, but they are horrible when you are not nice. A lot of hospitals... always remember the case of a husband and wife. The husband, the wife had cancer in her mouth and the husband had it in his penis so you know what the conversation was. And probably it came about some other way but you know what people were going to say.

INTERVIEWER: How has knowing English affected you? In a positive way or a negative way?

WILLIAMS: Knowing English? How you mean affect me?

INTERVIEWER: Either positively or negatively.

WILLIAMS: I think positively. I, I don't speak Spanish fluently but I speak enough you know to get it across. I tell if I want to get my point across I know enough to explain myself. I don't let anyone. (speaks Spanish)

INTERVIEWER: Excellent, excellent

WILLIAMS: I'm not a person with lots of umm, what you call it. I have a lot of self-confidence in me. I feel I am the best. You know what I mean. But when you go there and you have a, a, a low self esteem about yourself then that's where problem comes in. I remember when my father pass away. My father didn't have anybody's name on his mind. And they were talking about it at the lawyers so when Alberto Morales had just come out from law school, like practice anything yet. I said look, all I need is to go to that judge and tell him the truth, I don't need anything else. He say you don't speak Spanish. I said when I get my dictionary good tonight and I practice up, I going good tomorrow. And I went to that Fifth Circuit Court in... I took my money I explain to him, my father left this money it had my brother name on it. Yes, my mother had seven children and each of us had our problems. I said I came back, the Red Cross paid my way which pay after. None of us have a way to pay this money, my mother is all we had. And he listened and I said, he said ok. He said we'll charge you \$45. I said, ah. That's great. I said that I'd need another favor. So this is what I told him. My mother has slight problem. Whenever she comes up these flights of stars it takes her wind away. Is it possible that when she takes this flight, she could fly them all today and then time to come back, I will come back. He said sure. So when I said I would practice up my Spanish I was read and I was very good. When I tell you \$70...always coming in the car. Just prepare yourself just like you going to give a speech and I didn't go as if there was any fear or intimidation in me. I just talk the truth. When you talk the truth, the truth takes you a long way.

INTERVIEWER: Ok. Good. That's good. Ok the next few are gonna be family questions. You mentioned you are divorced. Are you remarried?

WILLIAMS: No.

INTERVIEWER: Divorced? Ok. Do you have any children? You mentioned the daughter with sickle cell.

WILLIAMS: Well, Darla passed, I had three girls, but now I have two.

INTERVIEWER: Alright, well tell me about your three daughters. What do they do?

WILLIAMS: I have two substitute daughters. My daughters are my daughters and my best friends. I think I bother them more than they bother me. Anything bother me I say, Marissa you know what happen child and she can tell me anything. And it's good when daughter are your best friends you can tell them anything. You don't have to worry about anything but I have a great relationship with my daughters. Great. Great. And I'm so happy to have that kind of relationship. Because I didn't have that kind of relationship with my mom. So the things that, that, that lacking in my life I try to give them in this generation and I hope that in this generation it can be better.

INTERVIEWER: Ok, Ok. Now do your daughters both consider themselves Panamanian, West Indian, both or something else? Do they both live in Panama?

WILLIAMS: They live, they live abroad. I think my granddaughter comes here. She's more Panamanian than my daughters because every time she hears anything Panamanian, she's like mom, can I go? Can I go?! And when you look on her car she have a Panamanian flag on it too.

INTERVIEWER: Ok, do your children speak English?

WILLIAMS: Both language.

INTERVIEWER: Any grandchildren?

WILLIAMS: Mm-hmm. Two.

INTERVIEWER: Bilingual then?

WILLIAMS: My grandson speaks four languages. He even speaks Korean. He's into music, he plays the cello.

INTERVIEWER: Now, why do you think that your children and grandchildren are bilingual and have been able to maintain all these languages?

WILLIAMS: Because it's something that I insist they do, they might have like for instance the nationality of American but your mother is a Panamanian and that's where their origin come from. I say remember the blood of the mother is stronger than the father.

INTERVIEWER: You have obviously family that's living overseas, your daughters. Where are they?

WILLIAMS: One is in Duluth, Georgia.

INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm.

WILLIAMS: And the other one is in Florida.

INTERVIEWER: Ok. Any other family members who live anywhere else in the U.S. or elsewhere?

WILLIAMS: My brother and a sister, brother and two sisters in the States.

INTERVIEWER: Ok. And, now when they come to Panama to visit do other Panamanians greet them as Panamanians or as Americans or—?

WILLIAMS: My kids do not, you see like how kids come home for carnival and turn November. True they grew up in an American system they don't, they don't associate with that.

INTERVIEWER: So when they come they're just viewed as American.

WILLIAMS: Umm they, they used to mostly come and visit, and they used to say Mama I come to look Panama not for you I see you all the time. So I don't know if I passed away they would come that often. But I usually make three trips a year in between the both of them.

INTERVIEWER: Now you told me already that you lived outside before, just make me sure I have all the places. In the U.S. you were in New York, Georgia, Missouri and Florida, and in the Europe you were in Germany. This was because of the military?

WILLIAMS: Yes. Then we went back to Germany, Africa, Egypt, Italy and all those countries when I was in the military.

INTERVIEWER: Ok. What would you say was your experience was in these countries was overall. And in terms of what they knew about Panamanians and West Indians in particular. You already told a little bit about some of the places in particular. Maybe Rome and Africa what do you think?

WILLIAMS: First of all when we went to Rome and Africa those were like excursions so you don't see much, you don't umm, you aren't going to learn about their country and we are in large groups of people clusters.

INTERVIEWER: Ok. Ok. Now. What specific message would you like to communicate to the younger people of the community?

WILLIAMS: What specific message... Well my message would be on values, the value of the young generation, the values to be more self-supportive for yourself and instead of depending on others to help them. Finding projects that they can do to help yourself and also help your family, because they have a lot of families now that are doing to help, instead of like depending on other people so that they can get out and do car wash and they can you know sell hamburgers and hot dogs. Do a little thing to help themselves, and you know and build up values that he can pass on to their brothers and their sisters. And staying wise educational-wise so they can even stay wise in all of these thing because I tell you even business that does take...helped put my daughter through college and she was going Florida state and college and she baked her way through those two colleges.

INTERVIEWER: Are you involved with any community groups or organizations and if so what role do you play?

WILLIAMS: Punto, for the girl's home, Fundacion then I did donations to Comidas ...also to the... home. And they have this home in... that is run by Hermana Luisa, that is for problem teenage girls. And our outreach program with baking and decorating in the community which is a free program that anybody can come and learn for a small fee just that they use for supplies for the course.

INTERVIEWER: Excellent. And last question, is there any other information you would like to include that we have not touched upon yet?

WILLIAMS: Hmm. Well in my church I work a membership.

INTERVIEWER: I think I have that.

WILLIAMS: You have that? I don't know if I had mentioned that.

INTERVIEWER: Which church? Which Episcopal church?

WILLIAMS: St. Christopher's. I was originally from St. ... in Gamboa. ...was my Sunday school teacher. We had a project on kidney beans and mine was the best one, grow the biggest. As you can see I have green thumb. I like plants, I like gardening.

INTERVIEWER: Well, thanks again for participating. You are free to contact us if you have any questions or things you'd like to share with us. We really appreciate your time and we'll be in touch about anything that's going on.