

Interview with **Amzie Moore**

March 22, 1980

Interviewer: Judy Richardson

Camera Rolls: 11-14

Sound Rolls: 1-2; 9-10

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Note: These transcripts contain material that did not appear in the final program. Only text appearing in ***bold italics*** was used in the final version of *Eyes on the Prize*.

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[camera roll 11]

[sound roll 1]

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: CAMERA ROLL TEN. SOUND ROLL EIGHT. MR. AMZIE MOORE. MRS. HIPPIE.

INTERVIEWER: —TRIAL AND WHAT THE COURTROOM WAS LIKE. SO—

[sync tone]

INTERVIEWER: ROLL. STUCK ON THERE. WHAT—DURING THE TILL TRIAL, WHAT WAS THE COURTROOM LIKE ON THAT FIRST DAY OF THE TILL TRIAL?

Amzie Moore: Well, I don't think I could give you an accurate and complete description of what the Courtroom was like because it was surrounded, inside and outside, by people—Tallahatchie County white. And we could not stand in the halls nor could we sit down in there because the Courtroom, with the exception of a very few people, were white. I would assume that white people from all over Tallahatchie County filled the Courtroom and they didn't left [sic]—didn't leave much room, rather, for blacks. So, WLW [sic]. That's New Orleans, television, I think, is WLW had their cameras and everything outside and there were quite a few people around the cameras. There in Sumner, Mississippi.

00:02:18:00

INTERVIEWER: DID YOU FEEL A LOT OF HOSTILITY AROUND THE COURTROOM FROM WHITE PEOPLE?

Moore: Well, let me see if I can tell you how I felt. Some days, in the summer time in Mississippi, the weather is so hot you can almost see it. If the wind doesn't blow every once in a while and just bring you a little cool air, you look like that you might be getting yourself ready to be burned to death. And—it, it was just hot and there were a lot of people there. And they were talking to each other, the blacks, and it was an experience that I'd never had before.

INTERVIEWER: DID, DID THE WHITE PEOPLE SAY ANYTHING TO THE BLACK PEOPLE OR DID THEY—

Moore: No. Unless, of course, they got in the way like in the halls or tried to find a seat. And they would always tell them, no seats available. Get out or don't crowd the hall. That type thing.

00:03:46:00

INTERVIEWER: WHAT WAS THE FEELING IN THE BLACK COMMUNITY DURING THE TRIAL?

Moore: Well, I think, the Till case its spreaded [sic] just about all over the southern part of this country. Everybody was concerned about what would happen or what had already happen, but they were determined to go to the trial and all those that could were there.

INTERVIEWER: WHY DO YOU THINK THEY WERE DETERMINED TO DO THAT? I MEAN THEY MUST'VE BEEN AFRAID. WERE THEY AFRAID?

Moore: Well, to stay at home could've meant, could've meant death and to leave could've meant death so they had a choice. Whether they go to the Courthouse or whether they stay home? Well there was one man here named T.R.M. Howard M.D. that came from Louisville, Kentucky, but who had set up in Mount Bayou at nine miles from Cleveland, who had arranged to bring the television set into that area. And people from Clarksdale, Mississippi, north Mississippi, from Cleveland, from all around had gotten together and now went together to Sumner. And there was so many people who went until it kinda [sic] cut the fear off, you know. People weren't afraid in large crowds as they would be if it was just two, three, four. There was an organization called the White Citizen Council had an office at Drew, Mississippi. And—it really surprised me at the number of people who went to Drew, black, to talk to the leaders of the White Citizen's Council. [pause] I think it may have given the whites the idea that these are not the same people we dealt with thirty, forty years ago. But, anyway.

00:06:57:00

INTERVIEWER: HAD YOU ORGANIZED? I MEAN WAS THERE SOME

ORGANIZING GOING ON BEFORE THE TRIAL OR DURING THE TRIAL TO GET BLACK FOLKS OUT?

Moore: No, I don't think so. Just—automatically they decided they were going to go. [pause] Pretty close to the county or in the county where they, they had the trouble. See we didn't really know how, at that time, we didn't know how Emmett Till was killed. [pause] Or we kinda was asking each other and different people were expressing their opinion as to how Emmett Till got killed.

00:07:57:00

INTERVIEWER: DID YOU BELIEVE THAT THEY WOULD CONVICT BRYANT AND MILAM?

Moore: Pardon?

INTERVIEWER: DID YOU BELIEVE THAT THEY WOULD CONVICT BRYANT AND MILAM, THE TWO WHITE MEN WHOM THEY SAID DID IT?

Moore: Did I believe they would have?

INTERVIEWER: YEAH.

Moore: No that was against the policies of, of, of a southern state to convict a man because he killed a Negro. That was out of the question. I don't know. The only thing that really surprised me is they had a trial [laughs]. I think that was more of a surprise. That was an improvement over what it was been [sic], you see. I, I—the only thing that really surprised me was that they had the nerve to challenge them, but they went in large numbers. And that—

00:08:53:00

INTERVIEWER: CAN, CAN YOU TELL ME ANYTHING ABOUT THE WITNESSES? MANDY [sic] BRADLEY AND WILLIE REED AND, AND MOSE WRIGHT, THE, THE GRANDFATHER. WHAT GAVE THEM—WHAT, WHAT GAVE THEM THE COURAGE TO DO THAT?

Moore: When we got to the trial at Sumner, Mississippi the Courthouse was full and we did not hear a single witness testify. I think that was deliberately planned that way, because there weren't any seats for blacks in the Courthouse and the white people, more or less, occupied the whole building. So, we could not say, truthfully, that we heard a testimony from a black person in the sitting of the Court nor a white person in the sitting of the Court. I—we, we never did, yeah, we were there, but we couldn't even go upstairs because we couldn't stand and there were no seats to sit in.

INTERVIEWER: NOW DID, DID YOU KNOW THE PEOPLE WHO TESTIFIED

THOUGH? MANDY [sic] BRADLEY AND WILLIE REED AND MOSE WRIGHT?

Moore: Well, I, I didn't know prior to that time. I can't truthfully say I heard anybody testify because I just couldn't get inside. And I, I didn't.

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: IT'S RUN OUT.

INTERVIEWER: OK LET'S—

00:10:42:00

[cut]

[wild audio]

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: BLACKSIDE, BLACKSIDE EYE ON THE PRIZE. SOUND ROLL NINE. CAMERA ROLL TWELVE.

Moore: He says, nigger, he says, I've been knowing you for X number of years and I want to know whether or not—

00:11:09:00

[cut]

[slate]

[change to camera roll 12]

Moore: —that you invited that woman here. Well, see I didn't—

[sync tone]

Moore: —know anything about that. I hadn't read it so, of course, I didn't—I know I hadn't invited Emmett Till's mother because didn't even know her, had never seen her. And that news was fresh to us. And so, the Postmaster told him that I was employed there. That I was leading black people. That the leaders of the black people thought I was qualified to lead 'em and that you don't lead me, she's telling this white man, you don't lead me. You don't, you don't tell me how to run this Post Office. And said, first, you, you gonna get yourself in a lot of trouble. Then his lawyer, he went to see his lawyer, when he got to see his lawyer, his lawyer tried to get me to come over to his law office and I informed him that I had no problem with him and, and—unless he had one with me I wasn't coming. And he, he, [pause] he decided there that he'd drop it cause he didn't know how far he was going cause the white woman didn't decide with him against me. And so, he decided that he would go talk to his lawyer and see what could he do. And, now, I, I'm normally scared of white people when they got guns and there's nobody but me. Used to be that way, I'm not now, I've lived a lot

of my life already. But I was working the Post Office—anywhere I go ‘cept, [sic] for instance, I had to go right by—if I was going to the laundry I had to pass right by his door. If I went to the drug store, up the street from the Post Office, his daughter was running the drug store. And here I am, knowing that this man killed three or four people and we kinda felt like, you know, that he would seek the opportunity to probably bump me off. But, even against my will, I had to find him if he’s in that drug store not because I really wanted to, but I was forced to do it. And walked right—as close to him as I could and out the door on up the street. And I had to pass right by his little office shop going to the laundry. I did it every day and one man said, don’t you—that man might shoot you. He’s killed X number of people. But there was no respond [sic] to that I just had to go, response rather, on by. I had no weapons. And—I did that—

00:14:50:00

INTERVIEWER: WHAT MADE, WHAT MADE YOU DO THAT?

Moore: I don’t know. I have not been able until this day to explain why I had to go against my will by this man. Now, I, I certainly was aware of the fact that he killed quite a number of colored people. And I wasn’t, I wasn’t doing it because I said, well I’ll let him kill me, that, that wasn’t, that wasn’t in my mind. Or—I think, maybe it was God letting me know that, in spite of all that man had done, that He was able to control him. You know, that’s the only way I can think. Cause I certainly wasn’t that brave [laughs], you know. And he came down with cancer [pause]. And I don’t see him like I used to. I don’t know what he’s sick or what has happened. I know he did have cancer. But that lady hadn’t—she didn’t, she’d never been to Cleveland not Cleveland, Mississippi. But she was scheduled to speak in Cleveland, Tennessee. That’s north Tennessee going to, to Virginia, I guess, up to that area. And I was—I never—I didn’t see her until—let me see. When did I see her? It must’ve been the time, a little bit before the time they got ready to hold the trial.

00:16:56:00

INTERVIEWER: LET ME ASK YOU SOMETHING ABOUT THE TRIAL AGAIN. WHAT, WHAT DID, WHAT DID YOU THINK? WHAT DID BLACK FOLKS HERE THINK WOULD COME FROM THE TRIAL?

Moore: Well, a lynching—they had a new way of lynching people. Shoot ‘em. At one time their method and procedure for lynching was to get as many black people to see a lynching. So it would create a lot of fear in them. But they didn’t have no blacks to watch this lynching. They, they had their way of lynching. And they had to have some form of trial. And that, that county’s got two county seats. One in Sumners and one in Charleston. But they didn’t have ‘em, didn’t have a north county seat. They had in the southwest corners county seat and that’s where we went to southwest, you know, the county. And there were so many black people at that trial it kinda surprised ‘em, I suppose, because, you know, they lynched him and there was no trial used to be. And very few people were around. Janitors and thing like that.

00:18:47:00

INTERVIEWER: ABOUT HOW MANY PEOPLE, HOW MANY BLACK PEOPLE CAME OUT TO THE TRIAL EACH DAY?

Moore: Well, everywhere I looked [laughs] there were black people—it, it, it was like a convention, you know. Just a whirl of people. The Courthouse was filled with whites. I think they made it a—they, they managed to get there, get in and get seating because it wasn't gonna be, be advantageous to them to have blacks sitting in the Courtroom and they having a trial over a white man who lynched a Negro. It, it just didn't fit in. As I look back, [pause] I—they had WLW from New Orleans television. They had planes bringing mail. It was just a busy day at Sumners.

00:20:12:00

INTERVIEWER: WHY DO YOU THINK THERE WAS SO MUCH ATTENTION ON THIS LYNCHING AS OPPOSED TO ALL THE OTHER LYNCHINGS?

Moore: Well, I think, one thing is happened—it was a woman's son from Chicago. And then all of our cities were notified and all—they couldn't do anything with, with her, Mrs. Till. But she was getting the news out everywhere. And this was something very unusual cause white people, you know, they lynched people when they want. When they got ready, but they had telegraph offices and they had all kind of communication. They had papers from India. Calcutta, India. And they had English newspapers, papers from Canada. I think, maybe, we were just time [sic]. The time had come to expose this thing. The day and the hour. And when I saw it—[pause] this kind—it was frightening because, you know, everything else had been just—and the years go by they kill people and shut up everything and people whispering around and nothing much was ever done about it. But it was just like you had opened up—

00:22:08:00

[cut]

[wild audio]

Moore: —the world to, to this lynching.

INTERVIEWER: CAN YOU HOLD JUST A SECOND?

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: RUN OUT.

INTERVIEWER: YES.

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: THIRTEEN NEXT.

Moore: He was really and truly surprised. And I got two hundred fifty houses one place—skinny fellas, they worked for SN—SNCC. They wore blue jeans.

INTERVIEWER: YEAH.

Moore: Things like that and they never act like they were afraid of anything [laughs]. Just quiet, but they went about their work. And a little town out there from Greenwood called Carlton where those people—very mean. I think them fellas ran about twenty-three hundred people through this city, through the county Courthouse trying to get them registered. And after that, I don't think anybody scared anymore. But SNCC, SNCC is the, is the, the SNCC folk were the people who changed thing.

INTERVIEWER: BUT NOW YOU WERE THERE TOO, RIGHT?

Moore: I was right there. Right there with 'em. What—and, and, and, and if this crowd went downtown to get registered some people, at two o' clock, and they get put in jail, the next group at two-thirty go. They get put in jail. The next group go—it didn't make any different about them putting 'em in jail they just kept going. That was the first time, in my life, that I saw power for civil rights. People who went and who quietly went. We had to figure out ways to get him out of jail. Greenville and Greenwood. Where we'd broke down all of this, this stuff. At one time, they have—you had to interpret the Constitution and that of Mississippi [pause]. Now, the trouble is our young people don't, don't care about registering too much and that's pretty rough. But it's that way. But I'll tell you one thing: the only thing in the twentieth century that gave courage and determination to the blacks in the South, SNCC.

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[cut]

[slate]

[change to camera roll 13]

Moore: I, I don't care about what to say. I was there. I know.

[sync tone]

Moore: —wasn't, wasn't local professional Negroes. [pause] And it got so bad until if—they saw, if, if, if, if a professional guy was coming down Sharp Avenue and saw you, if he could turn off before he get to you, he'd do it, quickly as possible.

00:25:46:00

INTERVIEWER: WHY DO YOU THINK THE SNCC FOLKS WERE ABLE TO DO THAT IN THE COMMUNITY?

Moore: Say why do I think—

INTERVIEWER: YEAH, WHY DO YOU THINK THE SNCC FOLKS WERE ABLE TO, TO MAKE THEM NOT AFRAID?

Moore: Well, they hadn't been conditioned by people who blew their mind about, you can't do this and you can't do that and you, you haven't had enough time, you're inexperienced, you know. All that kind of stuff didn't roll out. It's—I, I don't know. They weren't brought up in an atmosphere of fear. They didn't think they were under slavery. It probably—it had more freedom. That's the way I feel. And then when you look at youngsters with them blue jeans on [laughs] you'd go to a Courthouse and, and, and here is one little boy—fellow, about look like he about seventeen, eighteen, leading fifteen or twenty people and those people followed him, following him in spite of the fact that they were afraid. Well, something very unusual, just didn't see it. After—

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INTERVIEWER: AND YOU SAY IT WASN'T IT THE TEACHERS THAT WERE FOLLOWING THEM, IT WAS JUST REGULAR PEOPLE?

Moore: Yeah, reg—regular people. They was—they, they weren't—I, I—what I found out that, you know, what I really found out, it was just like leadership. Cause you'd take the eighteen year or twenty year old youngster, got on a pair of tight legged blue jeans and a blue shirt, that was something boy. And, and, and, and he's walking out there in front and putting him in jail wasn't nothing, because they still went [laughs]. So I think this, this was an outstanding example of determined leadership in young people. I had never seen it before I know that. And that not—Bob wasn't afraid. [pause] He, they put him in jail and around different places.

00:28:33:00

INTERVIEWER: TELL ME, WHEN YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT NOT BEING AFRAID, DURING THE TILL TRIAL, CAN YOU TELL ME HOW THAT HAPPENED, WHEN, WHEN THE GRANDFATHER FIRST CALLED YOU TO TELL YOU ABOUT THE FACT THAT TILL WAS MISSING?

Moore: He called me on Wednesday and told me that Emmett was missing. [pause] Then I thought to myself, well, he's just probably around Greenwood there somewhere. I never thought nobody was gonna lynch him. On Thursday, I got another call. Well, then I decided I'd go to Greenwood and run around and see—you'd better not go. They, they watching out for you. They gonna kill you. But I went over there. And when I got to Sumner—Money nobody would tell me where Mr. Wright lived. He lived out from Money, but nobody would—claim they didn't know where he was. So I left and come back. And then 'bout Monday they'd done lynched him I believe. If I recall. And—I told that they had passed through Cleveland and went to Rosedale to the Mississippi River and that they had to put him

in there, but they didn't. And they carried him back over there, Sunflower County Farm.

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INTERVIEWER: WHAT DID YOU DO AFTER THEY FOUND THE BODY?

Moore: Well, they found the body, the re—the report was they had carried the body through Cleveland to Rosedale and at, at one point they decided to put it in the Mississippi River but changed their mind. They came back. And went back a few miles from Sumner or Money, rather, and—that he was found in the Tallahatchie River.

00:31:06:00

INTERVIEWER: NOW WHAT DID YOU DO AFTER THEY FOUND HIM?

Moore: Well, the first thing I did [pause] I got together with som—some friends of mine and we went over to Ruleville, because the place where they took him wasn't no, wasn't five miles from Ruleville. [pause] And we got—had a little meeting, talked, tried to figure out where to go. We didn't know where to go, but we knew he—claimed that he'd been found. And then word got out. They picked him up over there by Money [pause] and then we called meetings, start to call the meetings around the county, state, the Delta, all that. We got ready to bury him. Then we got television stations and everybody. We just called everybody we could and they, they, they—and like somebody must have picked him up. [pause] And that's when I told you the man said he gonna kill me cause they said that the woman was coming to Cleveland and gonna have a speech and well they, they knew he's dead then.

INTERVIEWER: WHAT DO YOU THINK THE TRIAL—

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: CUT. I'M CHANGING

INTERVIEWER: OKAY.

00:33:05:00

[cut]

[wild audio]

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: SOUND ROLL TEN. CAMERA ROLL THIRTEEN.

INTERVIEWER: —ABOUT THE FACT THAT HE HAD TALKED TO YOU AND YOU HAD SAID THAT THERE WAS A WHOLE NETWORK OF BLACK—

Moore: Let me say, I never had a complex. I knew Bob was a graduate from Harvard and had taught in a Jewish school in New York and I was aware of the fact that I, I didn't know what I thought I should have known. But, I think, Bob's approach to me was entirely different from

what I thought his approach would have been, coming from Harvard, you know. And then I wasn't sure that I was able to explain what I thought I knew. But then it appeared that Bob believed me and was willing to work with me and then I found out, for the first time, what education really is, I didn't know [laughs]. I, I felt like that if, if a man was educated there wasn't very much you could tell him. Oh, I didn't think you could give him any advice, you know. This had been the case in the South, you know, but—you know, to be honest with you, he was altogether different. And when I found out he was honestly seeking to help, then in any way I could, I was willing to help. But I think that was the, the relationship between Bob Moses and Amzie Moore. Al—always made things comfortable for him, you know. We had what it—we had to eat and, then, when I found out Bob had been to Africa, you know, then I knew he's sincere. See, I automatically knew he was sincere if he'd been to Africa [laughs], because, you know, it, it was just a thing in me that made me know that Africans had been exploited and you know—

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[cut]

[sync tone]

Moore: —a lot of things that they had not received they should have received. And I'd been around the world. I had looked at India, Africa, and found out that what I thought I was looking at over there was a dying civilization which was probably the first of its kind in the world. And what I saw—what I really saw Bob—was that he had received an education to help people, rather than have people help him [laughs]. I, I just got that, that idea. And [pause] he'd been to Africa. He'd worked with the Jewish, Jewish people. He, he wasn't a jiver [laughs]. He was just a straightforward man. Well, I did what I could. It wasn't much. I had—my education was limited and I figured—well, I couldn't tell anybody anything they'd already know. But I, then, I later learned that there were experiences that a lot of people hadn't had that I'd had and I would share those experiences with those people, if it would be helpful. And I learned to, to respect Bob, you know. And I felt like if I could do anything to help then it should be my time to do it now if I was going to do it at all, period.

00:38:07:00

INTERVIEWER: LET ME ASK YOU, DID YOU HAVE ANYTHING BEFORE, ANY NETWORK OF PEOPLE BEFORE BOB CAME DOWN? IN, IN MISSISSIPPI, ANY ORGANIZATION?

Moore: I was vice president of the state conference of NAACP branches. I had worked with Aaron Henry. I was—I, I did everything I knew how. I, I—I'll put it that way. I was always min—mindful of the fact that I might think too highly of myself because I was in that position. And I tried to make it appear that whatever I reported, it was a known fact. That's, that about, that's about the size of it.

00:39:13:00

[cut]

[wild audio]

Moore: And now—I, I, I, [pause] I think we could have moved a little faster, see—I tell you what SNCC ta—taught us. Now every time every, I guess it might have been, every time we moved we had to move according to law. This is how SNCC operated and, I guess, they were afraid they might get into trouble if they didn't. And they kept us in, in that channel. Unless we were advised to do certain things we didn't do it. But when SNCC came it didn't seem to matter [laughs] what these white people thought. When SNCC moved, SNCC moved in SNCC's way. And I seen these little fellows with the very tight blue jeans and walking out front, leading people. Sometimes they put all nine or ten leaders of SNCC in jail. It didn't seem to bother. [pause] I, I think that's the only reason why we got any, any form of freedom. That's the way I feel.

INTERVIEWER: JUST ONE SECOND, WE'RE GOING TO CHANGE.

00:40:55:00

[cut]

[slate]

[change to camera roll 14]

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: CAMERA ROLL FOURTEEN.

[sync tone]

INTERVIEWER: OK, CAN YOU TALK A LITTLE BIT, MR. MOORE, ABOUT WHAT IT WAS LIKE COMING HOME FROM THE WAR? DID YOU EXPECT THINGS WOULD BE CHANGED A LITTLE BIT?

Moore: [coughs] No. [coughs] Let me, [coughs] let me tell you about why I was sent where I was sent. And—everybody that had anything to do with me, with me going to the Army [coughs] had in mind I should go to Burma. Well, I didn't know what Burma—well, we had pictures of the jungles and, and it was my idea—

00:41:47:00

[cut]

[wild audio]

Moore: —that I shouldn't go to Burma that was one place I didn't want to go. [coughs] I was

[coughs] sent from South Carolina to Detroit, Michigan. I was with the 332nd fighter group in Detroit. It was a black group of fighters. They flew planes. I taught [coughs] aircraft recognition in Detroit. The boys that were trained were trained at Tuskegee Institute and then sent [coughs] for ninety days Detroit. The 553rd fighter group. [coughs] Well, they, they called themselves—sending all the troublemakers to one place and then [coughs] when they get training in Detroit they send ‘em down to Walterburg, South Carolina. And from Walterburg, South Carolina they send you to Salt Lake City, Utah [coughs] and from Salt Lake City, Utah, the Pacific Ocean [coughs]—by the—

INTERVIEWER: —KIND OF SEGREGATION AND THE RACISM AND STUFF THAT YOU MET WHEN YOU CAME BACK.

Moore: Oh.

INTERVIEWER: ROLLING?

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: ROLLING. ROLLING.

00:43:57:00

[cut]

[sync tone]

INTERVIEWER: NOW WHAT WAS IT LIKE COMING BACK HOME?

Moore: Well, I guess I'd better connect this up if I'm going to do so. I was sick in 1945, I believe it was. Was in the 24th Field General Hospital in Michinaw [sic], Burma. They had planned to send me to China, but I complained. I told ‘em I was sick and I didn't want to go to China, cause I'd probably be over there another year. And I got ready to leave. I got out of the 24th Field General Hospital in Michinaw and was put aboard the ship 13th day of December, 1945 and sailed through the Bay of Bengal, through the Gulf of Eden into the Red Sea. And from the Red Sea—

00:45:42:00

[cut]

[wild audio]

Moore: —to the Gulf of—to the Gulf of Eden. Not Eden, Egypt. Came up by Mt. Sinai where the law was given and then sailed out of Mt. Sinai into the Gulf of Port Said, Egypt and was in Port Said, Egypt for a while.

INTERVIEWER: NOW LET ME ASK YOU—WHEN, WHEN YOU CAME, ACTUALLY GOT HOME, YOU KNOW, ACTUALLY LANDED HERE AND WERE BACK IN YOUR

COMMUNITY—

Moore: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: HAD, HAD THINGS CHANGED AT ALL?

00:46:31:00

[cut]

[sync tone]

Moore: Well, it took me a while to actually get there. I think I was pretty much excited over the world as, as it was. I was gonna come on up to that. And I found out that, that what I'd seen around the world was a dying civilization. I saw women give birth to children in the streets. I saw people wander about from one place to another. Sad, but you sob, no mamma, no papa, no sister, no brother—give me something to eat. And that was oh, a part of the continent of Africa. You know, Egypt is in Africa. You wouldn't know it was in there if you didn't find it out yourself cause they don't want to believe—

00:47:39:00

[cut]

[wild audio]

Moore: —that Egypt is part of Africa, but, but it is. And [pause] so, we left India and came on through the Port, Port Said, Egypt and hit the Suez Canal. Come into the Med—into the Mediterranean Sea and then sailed on through the Straights of Gibraltar. Hit the North Atlantic and came on to Camden, New Jersey, I believe it was, I recall. Left there and came on through Kentucky, around Hattiesburg, and then finally got home at twelve o'clock one night, I don't know. Then when I got there, home—

00:49:13:00

[cut]

[sync tone]

Moore: —the place looked strange, but I stayed there a while and I didn't go right back to the Post Office where I was working. I stayed out a while looking around to see what I could find. And, I think, the biggest surprise was that I'd got back [laughs] with my enemies. They really didn't think I was gonna make it back, and well, I got back and everything. [coughs] And I—

INTERVIEWER: DID, DID YOU MEET SEGREGATION RIGHT AWAY, RIGHT

AFTER GETTING BACK?

Moore: To be honest, I don't remember. Now the truth of the matter is when I got home, I got a cab and went home, but I hadn't—I didn't even try to go into a café or anything like that. I think I was more concerned about see—seeing my family than anything else. But I—the only thing I recall as it relates to my association with people outside of my color was—how did I see—how—what did you see over there? You know, this kind of thing. And I, in, in the three and a half years that I had been away, I didn't have anything to tell them I saw, you know. And—

00:51:10:00

INTERVIEWER: SO YOU DIDN'T REALLY HAVE ANY PROBLEMS WHEN YOU FIRST CAME BACK, THEN?

Moore: Pardon?

INTERVIEWER: YOU DIDN'T REALLY HAVE ANY PROBLEMS WHEN YOU FIRST CAME BACK IN TERMS OF DEALING WITH WHITE FOLKS?

Moore: No, unless they gonna start it. Now if they had started it, we would have had it [laughs]. But they didn't say much to me. I had never been affiliated with their churches and their clubs. Had never been associated with—when I was in the Army, I was in tents dealing with Negroes. So I, I hadn't thought much about it. They were really the ones who were always questioning about what we saw while—

INTERVIEWER: LET, LET ME ASK YOU, WHEN YOU CAME BACK, WERE YOU ABLE TO EAT AT ANY OF THE LUNCH COUNTERS OR TO VOTE?

Moore: Yeah, let me see. Yeah, let me see. I could eat at the Holiday Inn.

INTERVIEWER: COULD YOU EAT AT ANY OF THE OTHER DOWNTOWN LUNCH COUNTERS?

Moore: Blacks were eating at some of the downtown lunch counters. But I wasn't too particular. You know my wife's a good cook and personally I, I, I didn't think in terms of testing them out there.

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[cut]

[wild audio]

Moore: If I recall we were—there weren't any jobs much and there weren't many houses. They said, brother we glad you back maybe you can get something going for—or something

like that. But I never did. I, I guess that never has followed me too much like eating at cafés. I do it now. I go to the Holiday Inn. I go, sometime, I go to another café north where they, they, they'll seat you in a minute [laughs]. You can't pick where you want to go. Say I'm going, you know, I, I didn't have any special reason except I was just going and now, now I can go anywhere I want to go. They don't remember to look funny. I think it's—the message has been gotten over to them that if they sit—discriminate against anybody they gonna pay for it. And they would rather not lose that money, see. But I never thought much about it after I stayed three and a half years in the Armed Forces. And, and, and kind of seen how people were treated by people all over the world, black folks. Well, I was—never, never thought much about it. And I didn't make it a habit of, of eating from Indians' café. I guess that might have helped the segregation all—but I'd—[laughs] cause they is hungry, and they, and I, I was just never satisfied with the way they were treated.

INTERVIEWER: WELL, HERE, I THINK THAT WE'VE—

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[cut]

[sync tone]

INTERVIEWER: SAY YOU, YOU LEARNED WHAT?

Moore: *Listen, for a long time, I had the idea that a man with white skin was superior, because it appeared to me that he had everything. And I figured if God would justify the white man having everything that God had put him in a position to be the best.* Now this is what I thought now. This before I went overseas. I sailed to the Atlantic, through the Atlantic Ocean to the Rock of Gibraltar and went from the Atlantic to the Mediterranean. Got to the Suez Canal and took a right turn and went the, the Suez a hundred and four miles to the Gulf of Eden. And got to Alexandria, Egypt. From, from—elly [sic]—from, from, from the Mediterranean of the Great Sea to the Suez Canal to Alexandria, Egypt to Port Said, we saw the old civilization. If you'd follow the Mediterranean Sea up a piece and turn left, you would come to the boot, Italy. And that's where the great Roman Empire had its foundation, however, it spreaded [sic] out in other areas.

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INTERVIEWER: NOW HOW DID THAT SHOW YOU THAT, THAT THE WHITE MAN WASN'T SUPERIOR?

Moore: I'm coming to that [laughs]. [coughs] Because when I got over there [coughs] they had lived in the islands of the North Atlantic. The white man in a colder climate. And when civilization was flourishing in Egypt that's where he was still asleep. The Roman Empire took over Egypt, but they took from Egypt what Egypt had and claimed it as their civilization. [coughs] What, what I really found out [coughs] that the only black people in Egypt were people where the Roman soldiers took women and those women were—children

were born and they were part white and part black. And the further west I went [coughs] the more of black civilization I saw. And, and, and I found out that the Roman Empire fought and took over countries and took over the civilization that the Roman Empire didn't bring about, see. So then I was thoroughly convinced beyond a reasonable doubt that the civilization that existed four thousand years ago was a civilization built by Egypt, Africa. I went over to India, a subcontinent—

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[cut]

[wild audio]

Moore: —of five hundred and some million people. All of the symmetrical settings, all the quilts, and all of the different stuff that was braided in those times was made by black people cause all the people in India are black. There's about sixty five thousand that's not black. And [coughs] I went on, come on down to the Bay of Bengal and hit the Red Sea and came on around the coast of Australia and on up to Cal—to Hawaii. Eighty million square miles of water there wasn't nothing but black people. All the civilization was black. Everything was black. And I was so surprised. And since then, I have not had a complex. You know, really, [coughs] this civilization is dying but it's always been, the only way in the world that they could get anything, the great Roman, Roman Empire was to get an army and go take it. Oh, it's just nuts. So, that God has made the white man superior to any people in the Middle East, the Great Sea like the Mediterranean. The further something was—everything was more or less brought, even to the, the, the things that they made, Egypt, [coughs] was really originally Egypt. And the only thing that the West got, the Roman Empire, that—I, I, I call it the league, was something they took from people. The Roman Empire had an army, you know, like they go down to Egypt and pick up the library. Take all the books out of the library and burn it and carry the books back to Rome all that kind of stuff. All of it just really surprised me. So I haven't had no complex since. You know. Prior to that time, I had a complex. I, I just thought that these people were smarter than we were. But that's not so. No, no, no. That's not so—and the British, you know, sent all of those people that they isolated from the, from the motherland. They wouldn't send 'em to prison. They, they put them off over there on that island. [coughs] And they didn't see too many black folks. They'd ask us, you know, questions like, why some of you white and some of you black. I said, well, a lot of the black ones were—white ones weren't satisfied being in white countries that came where we were mixed, but really that wasn't the fact—slaves were brought over. [coughs] And well, I'm satisfied with the way—with what—how God has made me, perfectly satisfied. I don't feel nobody's inferior or superior. I really don't. I used to—didn't feel that way. But now, shoot. It really—that were—and I— you, now you can leave Calcutta—no, you can leave Egypt. You go down the Red Sea through the Suez Canal, you can hit the Red, the Red Sea. You can hit the Indian Ocean, you can go up the, the Gulf of Sinai—when, when you get out of there you going to find black people. All the way over. Just—you go for miles and miles and that's what you're gonna see.

[cut]

[end of interview]

01:03:37:00

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