

A People's History of the I.E.

Relevancy & History Oral Histories Collection, 2019.009.003

Oral History Transcript

Item Number: 2019.009.003

File Name: Eunice Lisberg, Helen Armstrong and Thelma King Interview

Interviewees:

Eunice Lisberg, Helen Armstrong and Thelma King Interview

Interviewer:

Megan Suster

Frank Taylor

Interview Date:

3/25/2017

Interview Location:

Riverside, CA

Interview Summary completed by:

Catherine Gudis

Description:

Thelma King, Helen Armstrong, and Eunice Lisberg, three African American sisters (all with maiden name of Adams) born in Monrovia, California, who later settled in Riverside County's West Riverside, later incorporated as Jurupa Valley. They discuss their segregation in schools during the 1930s-1940s, including a lawsuit following an earthquake that damaged their Monrovia school. They talk about their family history, particularly their grandfather John B. Adams, a formerly enslaved horticulturist who used grafting techniques and contributed to citrus cultivation in California, working with Eliza Tibbets. They describe their move to West Riverside, where they lived in a two-room house without running water or an indoor toilet, while pursuing education and employment. They address racism, employment discrimination, and educational barriers they encountered. Thelma attended college and worked for the government at China Lake Naval Station. Helen became the first Black employee at the Superintendent office of the Riverside County Schools and worked there for 30 years. Eunice attended college, worked as a student worker, and became a welfare administrator and district director in Los Angeles County's Department of Public Social Services.

Subject Topic:

Great Depression
 Segregation
 Discrimination
 Education
 Citrus Industry

Spatial Coverage:

Site Name	Location/Address
Santa Fe Elementary School	Across the railroad tracks, several miles from Monrovia (mentioned as segregated school for Black students)
University Heights Junior High School	East side of town, Riverside (segregated school where Helen was bussed) 1155 Massachusetts Ave, Riverside, CA 92507
Poly High School	5450 Victoria Ave., Riverside, CA 92506
Rubidoux High School	4250 Opal St, Riverside, CA 92509
The Arboretum	301 Baldwin Avenue, Arcadia, CA 91007

Temporal Coverage:

1880s-2000s

Key Events:

School Segregation
 Citrus Industry

Key Organizations:**Interview Index:**

Time (hh:mm:ss)	Topic Discussed
00:00:00	Introduction - Interviewers and interviewees names and ages
00:02:30	Birthplace and early life in Monrovia, California
00:05:15	School segregation in Monrovia and Riverside
00:12:45	Long Beach earthquake of 1935 and school closure lawsuit
00:18:30	College preparatory courses and educational barriers

00:25:00	World War II era and loss of family member in Europe
00:35:20	Grandfather John B Adams - slave background and arrival in California
00:42:15	John B Adams' horticultural work and tree grafting innovations
00:50:30	Navel orange development and Eliza Tibbets credit controversy
00:58:45	John B Adams' picture at The Arboretum and its removal
01:08:00	Moving to Riverside and early farm life conditions
01:18:30	Father's inventions and house construction in Riverside
01:28:15	Education in Riverside - integrated schools and Rubidoux High School
01:42:00	Employment discrimination and first Black hire at County Schools
01:55:30	Progress in Riverside and ongoing challenges with racial equity

Full interview transcript can be found below.

Megan Suster [00:00:00] So this is Megan Suster of the University of California, Riverside, and Frank Taylor of F.K. Taylor Exhibits, LLC. Today is Saturday, March 25th, 2017, around 3 p.m., and we are interviewing you as part of the History and Relevancy Project in partnership with the California State Parks. And we're here with Eunice Lisberg, Helen Armstrong, and Thelma King. Did I get those right?

Eunice Lisberg [00:00:28] That's correct.

Megan Suster [00:00:28] Excellent. So before we begin, can I ask each of you to please state your names and ages? If that's okay?

Thelma King [00:00:37] Okay. Where do you want to start?

Megan Suster [00:00:38] Let's start with you.

Thelma King [00:00:41] Oh, Okay. I'm Thelma Adams King and I am 92, almost three, in October.

Helen Armstrong [00:00:52] And I'm Helen Adams Armstrong and I'm 88.

Eunice Lisberg [00:00:58] Eunice Lisberg, 74.

Megan Suster [00:01:02] Perfect. Thank you.

Frank Taylor [00:01:04] Right. So we are actually here in the Jurupa Valley, Riverside area. And do all three of you pretty much live in this area here?

Eunice Lisberg [00:01:12] We all live in the Riverside County.

Frank Taylor [00:01:15] Yes. Riverside County. Okay. And have you always lived in Riverside County?

Thelma King [00:01:21] No for me.

Eunice Lisberg [00:01:23] No, each of us, they, Thelma and Helen were born in Monrovia. In fact, all three of us were born in Monrovia, California.

Frank Taylor [00:01:31] Okay.

Eunice Lisberg [00:01:32] Family moved to Riverside in 1943. 1943-1944.

Frank Taylor [00:01:38] Okay.

Eunice Lisberg [00:01:39] Helen, want to give your Riverside history?

Helen Armstrong [00:01:43] I moved out here with my mother, and my dad built a little house up on the hill here in Rubidoux. [00:01:53] And at that time it was called Belltown. And I was 16 years old and I went to school. I caught the bus to go to school. It was called University Heights. It was on the east side of town. [16.1s]

Frank Taylor [00:02:10] Okay.

Helen Armstrong [00:02:11] [00:02:11] Because at that time we didn't go to- Well, it was segregated. The schools were segregated. [5.4s]

Frank Taylor [00:02:17] Here in Riverside.

Helen Armstrong [00:02:18] [00:02:18] In Riverside. So they bussed us across town to go to, to school, to junior high school. And from there I went to Poly, High School. [13.4s] After graduating out of junior high school.

Frank Taylor [00:02:38] So the school segregated back then. Here in Riverside?

Helen Armstrong [00:02:41] Yes.

Frank Taylor [00:02:41] And at that time, did you think much about it or was that just more, that's just the way things were? Or did you think it was wrong?

Helen Armstrong [00:02:49] Oh, I always thought it was wrong.

Frank Taylor [00:02:51] Okay.

Helen Armstrong [00:02:53] Because. When I was young in Monrovia, we couldn't go to- the schools were segregated there. So, even as a youngster, I couldn't understand why we had to go walk as far as we had to walk to go to grammar school. Because I went to- when I first became kindergarden they weren't quite through with the school that's right up the street from us.

Frank Taylor [00:03:22] Okay.

Helen Armstrong [00:03:23] So I did go to Santa Fe Elementary School, which was, across the railroad tracks a few miles from where we lived. [00:03:35] So when I came to Riverside, you know, I, they said that they were busing, you know, I had to catch the bus. Then I knew then that it was still going on and that I would be in school with Spanish and at that time, Negro children. So. [18.3s]

Frank Taylor [00:03:54] So not black but Negros.

Helen Armstrong [00:03:56] Negro. That's what we were called Negro.

Frank Taylor [00:03:59] All right.

Helen Armstrong [00:04:00] [00:04:00] And so. I- you know, that's. It's far as, my dealing with segregation was until I went to high school and still we didn't mingle with each other even in high school. We had our areas where we ate our lunches and they had their areas. But when we were in class, in gyms, especially. We got along and we did, you know, we were on the same teams and all this, but. When it came to different things outside of the classroom, they had one section that they all went to and we had our section. So no, I never thought it was right. But, you know, that's the way it was back then. [48.7s]

Frank Taylor [00:04:49] All right. Well, thank you so much. Ms. King, would you like to tell us your Riverside story?

Thelma King [00:04:55] I don't have a Riverside story, actually. I had spent all my formative years in Monrovia. I had graduated from high school by the time my parents moved here.

Frank Taylor [00:05:05] Okay.

Thelma King [00:05:05] And of course, I told my mother it was the worst thing she had ever decided to do is move us away from our friends. Because my idea was at that point in time that, when you're at school, you, you make friends that are many times that you know, in the rest of your lives and so forth. And I was, I must have been 18 by the time that they moved to Riverside

because I was born in 1924. And so there's a good span between us. And I'm five years older than her and 19 years old than this one over here.

[00:05:41] Okay.

Thelma King [00:05:41] So I didn't have any, any school experiences here in Riverside.

Frank Taylor [00:05:46] Alright.

Thelma King [00:05:47] At the beginning. After World War Two. It was different because I did move to Riverside. And after that I realized that this was one of the best moves my mother could have made, and here I was. [laughs]

Frank Taylor [00:06:01] So when you were in Monrovia, was your experience in the school system very similar as to what your sister was just stating with segregation and the whole bussing issue?

Thelma King [00:06:12] Yes. Well, I don't- there was an earthquake in Long Beach and it might have been 1935 or 1936 I'm not sure. And, it was strong enough that in Monrovia, several schools were damaged and they were sent inspectors out and they were told to find different places to work for school. All the Caucasian kids went, were easily and very quickly assimilated into other schools, and they were going to do nothing about the Huntington Drive school where we went. And they expected our parents to still send us to a school that had been damaged by an earthquake which caused a lawsuit against the parents. I think that lawsuit possibly might have lasted two years, I didn't look again just to get an exact area- timeframe. And so consequently, my mother had two sisters, older sisters that were raised in Birmingham, Alabama, going to school, no private schools and so forth. And they were schooled. They were teachers. And so after my mom came to California and then she met and my dad and they married. Then uh. They were... Made me lose my train of thought because I digress a little bit.

Frank Taylor [00:07:56] That's fine.

Eunice Lisberg [00:07:58] She invited her sisters to come to California and be with the family, with her dad.

Frank Taylor [00:08:04] Okay. So.

Thelma King [00:08:06] Okay, I'm back. I'm back on topic.

Frank Taylor [00:08:10] Could you not? That was my next point, too. By the way, what you were just talking about. [laughs]

Thelma King [00:08:15] Yeah, so the two sisters taught us. We would and to they, they educated, they taught us. We had school. We still had school because my mom's two teachers. Homeschool.

Frank Taylor [00:08:29] Homeschool. Okay.

Thelma King [00:08:29] Right. And because the, the trial. They hung on such a long time, many, many of the parents finally put their kids back into summer school.

Frank Taylor [00:08:41] Mm hmm.

Thelma King [00:08:42] [00:08:42] Like now, [0.3s] back in Monrovia with, with the damage that it had. And so the numbers dwindled down. And we- I, I should remember that year that we went back to school, but I'm almost sure, I know there was almost a two year time span. And but the, when they finally had the court, the court was held in Los Angeles, the school board lost. And so they closed the school. And then we were, told that we would go to Oh, we've had to maybe about two and a half miles to, walking.

Helen Armstrong [00:09:25] Santa Fe.

Thelma King [00:09:26] Uh huh. We went and we wound up at Santa Fe High- Grammar School, Elementary School. And my sister picked the comment. It was across the tracks. Yes, it was across. [laughs] Well, that was it. You know, I don't know.

Frank Taylor [00:09:40] It's a phrase we all know what that means, right? Across the tracks.

Thelma King [00:09:42] But I don't know whether you could close your eyes and kind of visualize a railroad tracks and railroads. But, it was before the trains were the, existence of people getting away from Monrovia and going and, if they would travel to people so forth, that was the only railroad track that would cross country and that was the railroad track that we crossed. And- but after the case was settled, by, and we went back, we were advised to go back to school, then. And they were rebuilding. Or did they rebuilt from the ground up?.

Helen Armstrong [00:10:22] Yeah.

Thelma King [00:10:23] Okay. I don't remember. The, I was, we were head of the youngsters that had been in school the whole time, even ahead of some of the youngsters that, you know, regular school kids. And so we were all of this, us that had stayed out the whole period. We were in advanced a grade. So then I didn't go back. I did not go back into the new building at Monrovia, I went to middle school.

Frank Taylor [00:10:50] Okay.

Thelma King [00:10:51] And.

Eunice Lisberg [00:10:51] Middle school was already integrated, right?

Thelma King [00:10:55] Yes. And that was when we.

Frank Taylor [00:10:58] Yeah.

Thelma King [00:10:59] So then, of course, I had, you know, I went straight on, you know, went to middle school and I went to high school. And then I graduated in 1944, 43, graduate from high school in 1943.

Frank Taylor [00:11:14] 1943.

Thelma King [00:11:15] Okay.

Eunice Lisberg [00:11:16] And you came to California and you went to UCR.

Helen Armstrong [00:11:21] Riverside, Sharon.

Eunice Lisberg [00:11:21] I mean, you came to Riverside and went to UCR.

Thelma King [00:11:24] No, I didn't, I didn't go to UCR until after the war.

Helen Armstrong [00:11:28] After the war.

Frank Taylor [00:11:29] Okay.

Thelma King [00:11:29] So I was, I was in the World War Two groupings of kids, youngsters in school.

Frank Taylor [00:11:34] Mm hmm.

Thelma King [00:11:35] Because, uh, Pearl Harbor, the first day of high school, was shortly after Pearl Harbor was bombed and so forth. And then we went, then we went to school. I forgot what month it also, so if, I might be wrong, what month it was with the earthquake. So. Aside from. But now my school- you don't want to hear about my school time in Monrovia or anything like that, do you?

Megan Suster [00:12:02] Yeah, I mean, if you're willing to.

Thelma King [00:12:04] Oh, well, I had told my mom that I was going to go to college and so forth, and so on and that I wanted to take college preparatory classes. So when I got to high school, they told me I couldn't have them because they just, it just didn't, for them to tell me. I just didn't know that there was nothing ahead of me, that I would never be able to have certain jobs and so forth and so on. So therefore, I didn't need to have college preparatory. So I went home to my mom. What they said, my mom says, What do you want to take then? You still want to take it? I said Oh yes, I said. So she went down to school and so I did wind up taking college preparatory courses, the first for, uh, graduated in 1943.

Frank Taylor [00:12:57] Okay.

Thelma King [00:12:58] And then after the war, no, after we moved, we moved to, I moved to Riverside. You know, you heard me say I told my mom it was a terrible idea to move us. So everybody left except another sister and myself. We stayed in our home, in Monrovia and work

at Lockheed, which was in Bellflower, some city out here. And so I worked. And then what, what happened, we lost a brother in Europe, and I had never, ever heard my mom suffer, the way she suffered. That was in 19 between 1943 and 1944. And so after they, he was on his way back, he had developed pneumonia. And he had, when they took him in the service, he already had always had asthma problems. So we never expected him, because for years, they hear me for years, for months and months on, he had always been considered that was an illness and they were going.

Helen Armstrong [00:14:02] For him, that time.

Thelma King [00:14:04] And the next thing I knew, I guess, you know, they started just taking everybody. And so he went in and they sent him to England, you know. And of course, at that point in time, it was dreary and the coal, just everything. And so when he got sick, then they tried to send him back home. They thought they could get him back to California, but he only got to Utah. They took him off the plane. And so he never got back to California alive. And so I digress. Then again.

Helen Armstrong [00:14:37] Okay, well, let me go back to high school in Monrovia. You went to high school in Monrovia and they told you that? Well, they should have learned their lesson when five years earlier that my mother made them give Thelma the courses she wanted, cause when I got out of junior high school, I went there for six weeks only. My mother was in the process of moving to Riverside. So I took my, my mother helped me fill out my form to tell, to take the classes I wanted to take and I wanted to take shorthand typing in, you know, the other courses that you have to take. So I took it into the counselor and she said, Oh, you can't take that. You're going to take sewing. Oh, you're not going to take typing. Say because you'll never be a typist or a secretary. Says you should take sewing and cooking and something else she gave me, because all you'll ever do is work in someone's home. So.

Frank Taylor [00:15:31] This is your mother.

Helen Armstrong [00:15:32] This is the woman, my counselor at school.

Frank Taylor [00:15:34] Okay, gotcha.

Helen Armstrong [00:15:35] I said they should have learned their lesson with Thelma, but they didn't. When I went there five years later, this is what they're telling me. So I go home and I tell you, I said, Mom, they're not going to let me take these courses, she said what? I said no, she told me I had to take cooking and sewing and some other courses that, uh, that I be, you know, I'm only going to ever work in somebody's kitchen and that why do I need this? So my mother and her sister got in their car and went down to the school. Needless to say, they gave me my courses [laughs] because they wanted to know, you know, why would you tell a youngster something like that? You know, just out of the blue, I'm not going to be anything, but a maid, in other words. So I took them for six weeks and then I moved here to Riverside, and that's when I went to University, junior high school.

Frank Taylor [00:16:32] And when you knew about busing.

Helen Armstrong [00:16:35] And busing I already knew about busing and that's when they bussed me from here across town.

Megan Suster [00:16:41] Did you run into the same challenges in Riverside?

Helen Armstrong [00:16:43] [00:16:43]No. When I came here to Riverside, I didn't run into the fact that they wouldn't let me take typing and shorthand. And even though the schools were segregated and when I went to high school, I, I took the courses I wanted, I took shorthand and typing and all the things for a business course, you know? [18.9s]

Frank Taylor [00:17:06] Well, Ms., Mrs. Lisberg, I was wondering if you could tell us a little bit about your grandparents.

Eunice Lisberg [00:17:13] Grandparents?

Frank Taylor [00:17:13] Your grandparents? Yes.

Eunice Lisberg [00:17:16] No. I'm not the one to speak about my grandparents.

Frank Taylor [00:17:20] Okay.

Eunice Lisberg [00:17:20] Cause I never knew them.

Frank Taylor [00:17:22] Okay.

Eunice Lisberg [00:17:23] Okay. Um, they both. Both my grandfathers on both sides were already dead by the time I came. And I really don't think none of these two, I don't think they even knew the grandmothers, because I think they were already dead. The two grandmothers died young. They both knew the two grandfathers. Um, just a little information and let them talk about them. Cause Helen and I are going to disagree. [laughs]

Frank Taylor [00:17:55] That's when it gets interesting.

Eunice Lisberg [00:17:57] That is because-. My grandfather on my father's side was born in slavery, and we're still trying to figure out exactly where he was born. We think he was born in South Carolina, but that, we're not sure. He was brought to, after the Civil War and the freedom of, not Civil War. And the Civil War and the freedom of the slaves. Lucky Baldwin brought groups of people to California, and my grandfather on my father's side was one of those persons that they brought. He was a, what we called a budder. He used to bud trees, replant trees and, bud them. So he had a skill when he came to California and he was, he worked at The Arboretum. In fact, a lot of the plants that were at The Arboretum that are still at The Arboretum were initially budded and planted by him when he came here. I'm not sure if he, I know that my dad's oldest sister was born in the South. My dad was born here in California and he was born in Monrovia. And my dad was born in 1897 in Monrovia. In... my grandfather on my mom's side was also born in the 1860s. In fact, he wrote a little bio about himself and he said that he was born, and I always get the time, we had to go pull out his little letter. He wrote a little bio about three pages of, give a little stuff about himself. He was a minister. He was raised, born

on a farm that were Presbyterians. And so he learned, he became a Presbyterian. He learned to read. He became a minister, a Presbyterian minister. After the freedom, we don't really know what happened. Okay. There was an age difference of maybe 12 years, 16 years between my mom's oldest sister and my mother. So, the oldest two sisters lived in the South. They lived, they had a lot of family in Chicago, Detroit area and that type of thing. So they were born free. But both the grandfathers were both born in slavery. When, my maternal grandfather came to California. He left his baby daughter, my mom, with some relatives in Chicago area. And so and in Alabama. But she was born in Alabama, so her mom was already dead. So all she had was her dad. One of the things she used to tell me, she always wanted to be with her dad. She wanted her family together. So when they moved to California, she found him. And when I say found. Because he was a minister, he traveled. She found him in San Francisco and he was able to bring her to California and, he had changed religions because when he came to California, they did not have any Negro Presbyterian ministers. So he changed to the AME Church and he became AME Zion minister, and then he was assigned to Monrovia. That's kind of how my parents got together, because my dad's father, because of his skills. In fact, ended up with a lot of property. Now, why the property? Because Baldwin didn't always pay his people, so he paid them with property. And so he had land. And he gave a large piece of property to his church, which was AME Zion. My grandfather, my mother, my mother's dad was assigned to be at the church, the AME Zion Church, where my dad's family attended. When she first came here, they were living in the parsonage. But my dad wasn't here. But she met his two sisters, the older sisters. And they just fell in love with Mary. They just loved my mother to death. They said, Oh, you've got to meet our baby brother and da da da. And I think they really arranged for them to meet. [laughs] And that's how we became Adams.

Frank Taylor [00:23:13] Adams.

Eunice Lisberg [00:23:14] Now, John Adams, his.

Frank Taylor [00:23:17] That's your grandfather.

Eunice Lisberg [00:23:18] That's my paternal grandfather. His slave name was Hicks Bundy. Now we've been trying to figure out when he changed it over the many years. I thought he changed his name to John Adams when he came to California. But we do know he changed it after he was freed. We're, one of my nieces is looking into some history and I run into a John Adams in South Carolina. So we're not really sure when he changed his name, but from Hicks Bundy he moved when he was here, he calls himself John B Adams, the B standing for Bundy. The reason he said he changed his name, he wanted a strong name, which is interesting because when I've talked to different people about that, one of my pastors says, you know, I heard of people changing their names. I've never met anyone who, during the slavery time, changed their names. Because we went through that same thing-

Frank Taylor [00:24:24] Yes.

Eunice Lisberg [00:24:26] -In the sixties when blacks changed their names. By now, we're Black, from Negroes to Black [laughs], they changed their name because that was a slave name. Which is very interesting how history repeats itself. But anyway, John B Adams is the one who donated the property in Monrovia, gave the property to the church, helped build the church.

And he was also the one who was a horticulturist who did a lot of planning and things in Monrovia. I want to tell one story, then I'ma give it to them because they got better stories because they knew him.[laughs] I just know the stories behind him. Years ago, there was a, in front of the property where we lived. We lived on 232 East Maple and they had old oak tree and this tree was, now, this tree lived until the eighties, 1980s. But early in the 1900s, apparently the tree was dying. And my grandfather dug out all the gunk. And what was killing it, filled it with concrete. And the tree continued to grow and thrive. Well, in the eighties, 1980s, that tree was starting to die again. And the city was very concerned that this tree is going to fall into the street because it was right on the sidewalk. So the city people came out and the evaluator said it has to be cut down. So they started cutting it. Well, their saws, everything that they were trying to cut this tree kept breaking and tearing up. They could, what is wrong? Why is this tree tear? So my uncle was there. And now this uncle was born in 1897, so he was in late years. He's oh, my dad did that when that tree he's out about 10 or 11 years old. This tree was dying. And my dad did da da da da da da da da da. They said, he did what?. Because he put this concrete. They said that was, so that would have been if he was like 11, he was born in 1897. That tree would have been, let's see. It had to have been 1910, 19, you know, when this happened. And they're saying but that wasn't discovered, that you could save trees this way until the thirties or forties.

Frank Taylor [00:27:06] Wow.

Eunice Lisberg [00:27:07] So he was ahead of his time. So when you talk about someone being brilliant and understanding plants and trees, John B Adams was ahead of his time.

Frank Taylor [00:27:17] I mean, cement and saving trees.

Eunice Lisberg [00:27:20] And saved it.

Frank Taylor [00:27:21] This is absolutely fascinating. So if he did that in 1910, you said that this was not a known technology until 20, 30 years later.

Eunice Lisberg [00:27:29] The 30s or 40s.

Frank Taylor [00:27:30] Yeah.

Eunice Lisberg [00:27:29] Yeah. And man, at the, you know, the, the man that came out to evaluate this tree because they couldn't figure out, it had to go.

Frank Taylor [00:27:36] Yes.

Eunice Lisberg [00:27:37] They had it, but they couldn't figure out why this was happening. And they realized, yes, there was concrete.

Frank Taylor [00:27:42] Right.

Eunice Lisberg [00:27:42] In the middle of this tree.

Frank Taylor [00:27:43] So Lucky Baldwin did not pay people necessarily with money, he did it with the land.

Eunice Lisberg [00:27:49] We know for sure he did that with our father.

Frank Taylor [00:27:51] Okay.

Eunice Lisberg [00:27:52] We kind of think that he may have done the same thing with others, but we know for sure because our father ended up. if you've ever been to Monrovia? He had a whole block. It was from, like this corner to this corner. From this way to this way. He had this whole block. And it's very interesting because there's another group of people in Monrovia that are talking to us about some other things. They're also trying to get a history of Monrovia. And so, of course, my grandfather's name comes up because of all the things that he was involved with. They were asking. One lady that interviewed says, your grandfather couldn't have done that tree because oranges were discovered in such and such. I said okay, fine. Just like I said to you at the meeting.

Frank Taylor [00:28:43] Yes.

Eunice Lisberg [00:28:44] The thing that people were not hearing, the navel orange tree. We know oranges were here in California years before my grandfather came here. But it was from the navel orange tree was developed, and that's the tree that my grandfather, through our oral history.

Frank Taylor [00:29:05] Mm hmm.

Eunice Lisberg [00:29:06] Did budding on.

Frank Taylor [00:29:08] Are you saying he developed the navel orange tree or he was a part of that process?

Eunice Lisberg [00:29:13] He was, Imma say he developed it because he did the actual budding of it.

Frank Taylor [00:29:18] Okay.

Eunice Lisberg [00:29:19] Just [00:29:19][inaudible]. [0.0s] And that's when I said they can talk because they knew about the other trees and things that our grandfather did on his own property in Monrovia.

Frank Taylor [00:29:27] Okay.

Eunice Lisberg [00:29:28] You going to talk now?

Thelma King [00:29:30] Yeah. Well, in our yard where we lived. We had a tree in our yard that gave us lemons and grapefruit. And I kind of remember going out and picking fruit off those

trees and they were actually, what I'm saying they were, we actually had grapefruit and lemons coming off the same tree. That is one thing that I really remember.

Helen Armstrong [00:29:58] I remember that too.

Thelma King [00:30:00] You remember it also.

Frank Taylor [00:30:01] I'm sorry we got to pause at that point. [laughs] So let me just make sure I understand you're saying lemon and grapefruit off of the same tree.

Thelma King [00:30:10] I could reach up there in this place and I could get a lemon and I could reach over here and I could get a grapefruit. Yes.

Helen Armstrong [00:30:16] Yes. On all sides.

Thelma King [00:30:17] That's right.

Helen Armstrong [00:30:17] And he budded that tree. And that's why we call him a budder because all of our young life, [laughs] that's all we knew that he would take a part of another tree and graft, cause that's what he was. He knew how to graft. That's why we said he was way before his time and he would cut it open. And I knew the process because he taught one of his sons to do that, just one of them. And he worked for a, on a-

Thelma King [00:30:46] Ranch.

Helen Armstrong [00:30:47] Ranch in Duarte. And he taught him how to do that. And I had seen him graft trees on this woman's property. And so when, when Grandpa did this and grafted it, he'd cut it open, a spot open in the tree, and he'd take the other tree and put it in there and wrap something around it, just like you would a sword, closed it up. So when it grew, the lemons grew on that side and the grapefruit grew on that side, and they actually tasted like they were supposed to. This was a lemon tree. And that was a grapefruit tree. So it's, I, that's why when we were telling you all about the tree down here on Arlington and in Market, this is something that's been told to us since we were kids that your grandfather, Lucky Baldwin, brought your grandfather down here because they wanted this tree.

Frank Taylor [00:31:49] John Adams Yes.

Helen Armstrong [00:31:50] John B Adams to have to, bud, bud this tree grafted this tree so it could grow, they would have navel oranges in, in Riverside.

Frank Taylor [00:32:03] Now, here's here's the thing, because I'm familiar and I'm sure you are, too, with the Eliza Tibbets. And I know that a lot of credit is given to her about the navel orange in Riverside. Your grandfather, John B Adams, you know, obviously, more people are talking about him today. Do you think that they would have known each other or do you think- why is it that she's given so much more of the credit?

Eunice Lisberg [00:32:30] There was a statement and this is the reason I have, I know in my soul that our oral history is right. Years ago, you know how your parents would sit and talk. You ask questions and they tell you all this stuff. I was told not to say, what I was to say, not gonna say it. But I'm gonna say it. [laughs] Someone said be nice about it. As of now, Imma tell the truth. My mom statement. and old lady Tibbetts did this, this, this, and old- now this is you, I was young. Never heard that name. And that name was gone. I mean, when I say gone, it was nothing I retained. When I went down to the Mission Inn, now I've lived here for years, I knew about the tree, knew the his- our oral history about that tree at Mission Inn and they're talking about Tibbetts Eliza Tibbetts Tibbetts? Tibbetts?! All of a sudden, that name just jumped out. Now, why would my mom know about old Lady Tibbetts? Where did that come from? There's a reason my mom told me that story. There's a reason she said something about a Tibbets.

Helen Armstrong [00:33:46] Old Lady Tibbets did such and such. So she took the credit. That's the way I see it.

Frank Taylor [00:33:54] That's a headline right there. [laughs]

Eunice Lisberg [00:33:57] Well.

Thelma King [00:33:57] Another thing happened over the years, over years by, is when Santa Anita went in. Then they have a, over at the property where the racetrack is. What's the name of that? Do you remember the name of it? I'm trying to come up with the name.

Eunice Lisberg [00:34:22] Of The Arboretum?

Thelma King [00:34:23] The Arboretum.

Eunice Lisberg [00:34:24] Yeah.

Thelma King [00:34:25] Okay. Our grandfather's picture was on the wall there. And this is way of now in, you know, in the 1900s or 1980 something. And I- well no this after that time. But, you know, I'm just going to get to a time. And my, I have a cousin, first cousin who finished after World War Two. This was after World War Two. He was graduated from college and became a schoolteacher in Pasadena. He took his class to The Arboretum, and as he was walking with his class, he looked up there and saw our grandfather's picture and he said, That man is my grandfather. And the next time he went there, that picture had been removed. So I never saw the picture there.

Helen Armstrong [00:35:18] We never saw it.

Thelma King [00:35:19] I never saw the picture at the arena because they removed the picture. But anyhow, but that's you know, that is.

Helen Armstrong [00:35:27] And it was a year, a few months. He wasn't even a year younger than Thelma. So he was another one that would have known his grandfather.

Frank Taylor [00:35:36] Recognize-.

Helen Armstrong [00:35:36] Right. Grandpa. There you go. Yeah, he was the one that threw the rocks.

Thelma King [00:35:40] So. [laughs] Oh, well, you know.

Helen Armstrong [00:35:45] I tell my baby sister over there that my grandfather was mean. [laughs] And she don't want to believe but he was.

Frank Taylor [00:35:54] Okay.

Helen Armstrong [00:35:55] We used to play. We had a in our yard, we had a garage door and we used to play handball. I don't know if you know the game and if a ball went over in his yard, we weren't allowed in his yard. He told us that. Don't come over here. We go over and steal walnuts off of his tree. [laughs] He didn't eat them. They just drop on the ground. So when he was in the house, we'd run over there and get our bag and fill it with black walnuts. Okay. Well, when we played ball out there, if our ball went over in his yard and he saw it and saw it he'd come out there real quick, pick it up and cut our tennis balls up.

Frank Taylor [00:36:32] Oh, wow.

Helen Armstrong [00:36:33] He wouldn't give it back to us. Okay. So he would be sleeping out on his porch. You know, back in those days, we had a front porch that were big enough to put a rocking chair or whatever. So he'd be out there sleeping some days, so we'd be mad at him. So we go get, we-. You know, we used to make little, out of bamboo. If you clean it out real good, you could take pepper tree a [00:36:59][inaudible]. [0.0s] And we used to have fights with that, you know as kids playing. He'd be sitting out there going to sleep and we'd be on our porch next door because we lived next door to each other. And we would take it because we could really make it go that far. [laughs] And he slapped himself because he thought it was a fly. Now Sharon said [laughs] that we shouldn't have done that. But he cut up our ball [laughs] and he won't share their walnuts. [laughs]

Eunice Lisberg [00:37:31] That's our little argument we always have this argument. [laughs] She says he was mean. I says, well, he should because you guys would steal his walnuts. You guys were throwing spitballs at him. [laughs]

Frank Taylor [00:37:42] So. Okay. So we know that obviously your grandfather, John B Adams, was quite successful in citrus. He got all of this land.

Thelma King [00:37:49] Yes.

Frank Taylor [00:37:50] from Lucky Baldwin.

Helen Armstrong [00:37:52] Right.

Frank Taylor [00:37:52] Now, I want to talk about your parents, directly your parents. Did your father and mother stay in citrus in Monrovia?

Helen Armstrong [00:38:01] No, I was just, a minute ago, I told you that my grandfather only taught one son.

Frank Taylor [00:38:07] One son.

Helen Armstrong [00:38:07] To do what he could do. And so my father, he had all these children. And, of course, during the Depression, you know, in fact.

Thelma King [00:38:19] 1929.

Helen Armstrong [00:38:20] Yeah, I was born in 1929, so I didn't live as long in the Depression as Thelma did. But I do remember, as I got older, that things that we didn't have and we didn't have a lot of toys or fruit and the fire department every year would open up the fire department and have bags, and we'd go up to the fire department and they'd give us bags of candy and fruit, and sometimes they'd give us some kind of toy. So even though this was going on, as a young age, I didn't realize it was of course, we was poor and didn't have anything. It was years later that I realized that because we didn't have nothing and uh, but that's, you know, during the Depression, that's the part of the Depression that I, I remember.

Eunice Lisberg [00:39:14] Let me give you the negative. First, you have to realize. My grandfather was raised as a slave and what they did with slaves is that they mated them in order to grow healthy kids. If you had a young man who was strong, Buck, that's what they called him. Then they mated him with a female that was strong. So, now, why am I going that far back? That's what my grandfather grew up in. Okay. When he came to, we know that he was, had children by, Imma give you some names in a minute. Adeline was his, his first mate, and they had children. And those kids came with him. Except for my father, who was actually born in Monrovia. Okay. But, but that female. That wife he had x number of kids. When I talk about the uncle, I told you my dad was born in 19. I mean, 1897. Then I said a few minutes ago, the uncle who was born in 1897. Okay. That was not my dad. [laughs] So his second mate?

Frank Taylor [00:40:46] Yes.

Eunice Lisberg [00:40:48] The uncle that was, the other uncle was born in April 1897. My dad, who was the last of Adeline's kids, was born in July 1897. From his second group, it was mostly men. That's the only names that I had. There were four men as far as I can, I remember. In the second, he married a lady named Hattie. And, of that second group. That's one of the ones he trained on how to bud. Now, what he saw in, on my Uncle Milt, that was different. I don't know. We know that he sent my father, my father back to Mississippi at some point when my father was 16, 17, 18, 19. And that age range, because that's where my father was when my mom moved here, moved to Mon-to, to Monrovia. When we talk, when I used to talk about it because she said, well, Frank wasn't here when I first got here. Okay. So. We have deduced because we never really knew why he sent Dad back to Mississippi.

Frank Taylor [00:42:12] Yeah, just him.

Eunice Lisberg [00:42:15] Now basically. And I use the word blessed because our family has been blessed. I can't ever remember from my dad, to any of his kids. Never not having a car. Now we're talking. We had Depression.

Frank Taylor [00:42:33] Hmm.

Eunice Lisberg [00:42:35] But they had a car. They used to take, my dad used to take his kids and the neighborhood kids because they were all cousins [laughs] you know? Well, he had these had all these, he had children and then his sisters had children. So they would get in a car at Christmas time and go and look at the lights in Pasadena.

Frank Taylor [00:42:57] Wow.

Eunice Lisberg [00:42:58] Okay. They've always had a car. Now, yeah, there was a Depression. Yeah. They didn't have money. Yeah, they, they worked, my mom worked in other woman's houses, and then she finally became, started working at the Mary Knowles Sanatorium, which was located in the Monrovia area.

Frank Taylor [00:43:17] Mhm.

Eunice Lisberg [00:43:19] They've always had jobs.

Thelma King [00:43:22] Well, somebody in the household had a job.

Eunice Lisberg [00:43:24] Yeah.

Thelma King [00:43:24] Okay.

Eunice Lisberg [00:43:25] Okay.

Thelma King [00:43:25] Alright.

Eunice Lisberg [00:43:26] Okay. When I say they-. So there was something always coming in, even though some of the money. You know, when you're talking, poor.

Frank Taylor [00:43:37] Yes.

Eunice Lisberg [00:43:37] But everybody was poor.

Thelma King [00:43:38] There you go.

Eunice Lisberg [00:43:39] No one had anything. I mean, it was a rough time. I mean, when you look at movies now, you see how everyone across the nation was struggling. And we're talking during World War Two when, you know, before World War Two and leading into World War Two, all that, that, that we went through in the United States. And of course, I was born in '43. I don't know none of that stuff. We've always been rich [laughs], but when I say that is because we've never, ever not had an automobile. We have never not had food, we've never not had a roof

over our head. Now, the property that John B accumulated, he gave a portion of it to the church. One portion I've never understood I've asked, but none of these folks know, so I waited too late to find out. I knew it went to Wilson. But one of my aunts married a Wilson. So did my dad give, granddad give it to them? I never did understand, but that property got lost.

Frank Taylor [00:44:40] Hmm.

Eunice Lisberg [00:44:40] Okay. He had another son who was, worked for the city of Monrovia. He had a beautiful house. Okay. That property was given to him. He only gave property to his first batch.

Frank Taylor [00:45:00] Wow.

Eunice Lisberg [00:45:01] The second group. They did not get property. Now part of the story on why we've kept property, the land our grandfather lived on because he kept a piece of the piece, stayed with him, a piece stayed with my dad. And then he had another son that kept us a piece of property.

Thelma King [00:45:26] The first marriage, of the first marriage.

Frank Taylor [00:45:28] Yes.

Eunice Lisberg [00:45:32] The story that we've been told and here I go again, is another one of the words I'm not supposed to say.

Thelma King [00:45:37] Say it nicely.

[00:45:38] Well, Imma say it like you said it to me.

Thelma King [00:45:40] Okay.

Eunice Lisberg [00:45:43] But it's going to be on tape and I can't say that you guys lied. Okay. [laughs] No, but anyway. There was, a lot of my grandfather could not write his name, so he wrote X. But there was a period that he had to borrow money. So there was a Jewish man that used to rent, you know, give people money. And so he, our loan, not get no money.

Frank Taylor [00:46:09] So it was charity.

Eunice Lisberg [00:46:11] He's gonna pay this back. And, but when he'd come to you, he'd say, you. You need, today's a payday. You need to pay me this. And so, you give him this, whatever, you know, that he asked for. And, a lot of people lost their homes because they gave no receipts and then they never had proof. That they borrowed. Or that they paid it back. Now, my mom, every time he came, he said, give me a receipt. And he'd just tear off a little piece of paper and write it on there. Just tear off. So she had, so when he went to, amass his property. And he did, he amassed a lot of property. I do not know his name. The statement that my mom said, that old Jew man, when he would come around. [laughs] Okay. But she made him give her a receipt

every time he took her to court cause he wanted that property. That was private property. She had all these little.

Thelma King [00:47:12] Slips of paper.

Eunice Lisberg [00:47:13] That she kept the properties that our grandfather would have lost.

Frank Taylor [00:47:17] Because she always demanded that receipt.

Eunice Lisberg [00:47:18] That's right

Frank Taylor [00:47:20] But other folks in the neighborhood.

Eunice Lisberg [00:47:22] They didn't. They just paid him. And then they'd say he said they didn't pay him. So what are they going to say? They don't have nothing to prove.

Frank Taylor [00:47:27] And then he could just basically-.

Eunice Lisberg [00:47:29] So he took out their- no, I have no idea who, what the man's name is. I'm sure it's in records in Monrovia. [laughs] Because I'm sure that at some point in time.

Helen Armstrong [00:47:37] Yeah.

Eunice Lisberg [00:47:37] There's a record that shows-.

Helen Armstrong [00:47:39] The accumulated.

Eunice Lisberg [00:47:40] Of property accumulated by somebody.

Frank Taylor [00:47:42] Yes.

Eunice Lisberg [00:47:43] I have no idea who he was.

Frank Taylor [00:47:44] Oh, okay.

Eunice Lisberg [00:47:45] But, when we're talking about do they live? They lived right next door to. Cause my mom saved those two parcels of property. Okay. So our grandfather was on one side. My dad was on the next side. Okay. So that's why the kids grew up right next to him. And after he passed away, there was a lot of issues about that piece of property. There's always issues.

Thelma King [00:48:13] When someone dies.

Eunice Lisberg [00:48:13] Okay. And what ended up happening? My mom and dad paid all his brothers and sisters some money because that property was theirs. They were upset. They wanted to sell it. They didn't, they didn't want compliance. Frank, get this, okay? Because there's other men, what our grandfathers saw in Uncle Milt, which was in the second group, I

have no idea. But he also taught what Thelma was talking about a sister, the older one, that she was a year older than Thelma. Marion knew how to, that's why we said Helen was wrong about dad-granddad being mean because Marion loved him. So if you sit and talk with Marion, now, Marion passed away two years ago. You'd sit and talk to Marion. She loved um.

Helen Armstrong [00:49:04] Grandpa.

Eunice Lisberg [00:49:05] Uh huh. But she, she learned how to do some budding and different things. She, she had stuff in her yard. Okay. So I don't know what, what the difference was. Why did he only teach this one?

Frank Taylor [00:49:20] Mm hmm.

Eunice Lisberg [00:49:21] But how did Marion. Why was Marion able? Why couldn't Helen? Was Helen too busy stealing walnuts? [laughs]

Helen Armstrong [00:49:29] I should say that I, he didn't teach me, but we watched. I just automatically watched and saw what happened and I have a green thumb and anything I put in the ground, it grows.

Frank Taylor [00:49:42] Yes.

Helen Armstrong [00:49:42] And my yard is full and I'm trying to get rid of stuff now [laughs] can't even get back there. But you know, you can watch people and then some, you know, it's my genes and I do. And like, when I used to give plants to people and they would be almost dead, they tell me that Helen that plant you got, I said bring it here, they bring it back to me and I'd, mess with it and get it growing again. for them. And it's just something that has come to me.

Thelma King [00:50:09] All she did was pat it on the side. [laughs]

Helen Armstrong [00:50:12] And talked to it.

Frank Taylor [00:50:15] So you talked a little bit about the AME Zion Church and the dedication of the land for the church out there. Do you know if your parents or your grandparents were part of any other organizations, like any citrus organizations for your grandfather?

Thelma King [00:50:31] You're joking, honey. [laughs]

Frank Taylor [00:50:33] I'm sorry?

Thelma King [00:50:34] You're joking. Come on, let's go, go, go go back. Oh, get some history books. Huh?

Helen Armstrong [00:50:39] I'm telling you, it's segregated.

Frank Taylor [00:50:41] Okay, I'm listening.

Thelma King [00:50:43] You know, they did that type of thing was not available.

Helen Armstrong [00:50:47] It didn't exist.

Thelma King [00:50:48] It did not exist during those periods.

Frank Taylor [00:50:49] But the church only.

Helen Armstrong [00:50:51] And most of it, I think that the church was their coming together.

Frank Taylor [00:50:56] Okay.

Eunice Lisberg [00:50:59] And. As far as joining different things. I just think, I feel now- and this is nothing that I know for a fact that our grandfather worked in all these different areas. Like I said at The Arboretum, we know for sure, because now they, now, I've heard the story that, I didn't see it, but his name used to be on some of the plants. That's before, [inaudible]. And so you could go out and his name, because they used to have all these little labels- that's the reason when they're talking about the trees here, we're talking about them putting some labels out there so you can read them. Well, they did have at The Arboretum at some point in time, and his name was on some of them as, as the.

Helen Armstrong [00:51:47] Some of the exotic plants.

Eunice Lisberg [00:51:48] Yeah.

Frank Taylor [00:51:48] Wow.

Helen Armstrong [00:51:49] Cause my cousin saw them.

Eunice Lisberg [00:51:50] Okay. But that cousin is also dead now. And it's still our oral history that we know, but we know for a fact that he worked there.

Frank Taylor [00:52:03] Mm hmm.

Eunice Lisberg [00:52:03] He was a part of the ground crew. And I must say that now, whether he led the ground crew or what he did, I have no idea. But we know that plants that he budded or grafted are still there. We just know it as a fact.

Megan Suster [00:52:22] Do you know the years when he would have been active there? Like, you know, when he retired or when he stopped working there?

Eunice Lisberg [00:52:29] Okay. He seemed. Go ahead.

Thelma King [00:52:34] No, no, no.

Eunice Lisberg [00:52:34] He died in the. He died in the thirties.

Thelma King [00:52:37] Yeah. It had to have been thirties. Cause, I possibly was like about nine or ten years old. And I remember, you know, going to those funerals and so forth. Both of them died very close together, I think. But I don't, I don't.

Helen Armstrong [00:52:48] Remember him passing.

Thelma King [00:52:52] You're talking about, we had also, we have a niece we know. Yeah, she's a, no, she's a cousin. Cathy [00:53:02][??], to [0.0s] Cathy.

Eunice Lisberg [00:53:03] Yes.

Helen Armstrong [00:53:03] Yeah.

Thelma King [00:53:04] She. Let's see. I had a brother who, because of his health, he could not. He had asthma very bad. And he would have asthma when he was here in Riverside. So he moved back to Monrovia. He married and he had, two girls, three girls?

Eunice Lisberg [00:53:22] Two and one adopted.

Thelma King [00:53:24] Two-okay two and one adopted. So, his youngest daughter wrote a school paper.

Eunice Lisberg [00:53:34] The youngest daughter was attending a school in Arcadia.

Thelma King [00:53:38] I was Arcadia. It was Arcadia. I forgot.

Eunice Lisberg [00:53:40] They moved to Arcadia and they were doing book reports. So, now his brother was a trick, a trickster kind of guy. I mean, he was horrible. He'd just talk about everybody. And make you cry. [laughs] He was horrible

Thelma King [00:53:56] If you didn't have any sense.

Eunice Lisberg [00:53:58] A comedian, he could have been a good comedian.

Helen Armstrong [00:54:01] Yes.

Eunice Lisberg [00:54:01] But he so his daughter was in, was in junior high school. And she came home one day. She said, you know what? Someone did a story on a man named John B Adams. So they asked me, Is that your old granddad?

Thelma King [00:54:18] She wrote it.

Eunice Lisberg [00:54:20] She did not write it.

Helen Armstrong [00:54:22] Jean's daughter is the one that did the history.

Eunice Lisberg [00:54:24] She didn't write it.

Helen Armstrong [00:54:25] No, she didn't write one.

Eunice Lisberg [00:54:26] What happened this girl in the school gave the report. We'll call Cathy and I'll get it proved.

Thelma King [00:54:32] Yes. Okay.

Eunice Lisberg [00:54:34] Because and, if Cathy had written the book report we would've been able to find the book. We went to the library because we called. Okay, the cousin that saw his grandfather's picture at The Arboretum, his wife was a researcher. I mean, she did a lot of stuff. And when we heard about this story, okay, she comes home, she's telling her dad, that someone did a book report on this, this Black man named John B Adams. And he did this. He did that. So her last name is Adams. And he says, Yeah, that's my granddad. So when she tells her dad the story, he said, Yes, that is your granddad.

Frank Taylor [00:55:15] That's fascinating.

Eunice Lisberg [00:55:15] So they try to go back and find out what book and where the girl got the name of the book, whatever. We could never find it. My sister-in-law. My cousin-in-law, whose husband was a teacher that saw the picture at The Arboretum, she got on it. She went down to the library in Pasadena. She- we have no idea. No idea where that, but the girl gave this history of a Black man who budded da da da da da da. And we have no idea.

Megan Suster [00:55:47] So the girl is just a random student.

Eunice Lisberg [00:55:49] A random student in in that classroom.

Megan Suster [00:55:52] That's bizarre.

Eunice Lisberg [00:55:53] Isn't that something?

Megan Suster [00:55:53] Huh.

Eunice Lisberg [00:55:54] But Cathy, just like her dad. Yeah, that's my granddad. Because she came home and was telling them the story about this person, they said, that is your granddad. But we could never- it really wasn't her great. It's a great granddad.

Frank Taylor [00:56:07] Okay.

Eunice Lisberg [00:56:07] Okay. Because it was my granddad. But, but she said that's my granddad, you know, because she just kidding it off. We could not, we have no idea. I have researched it. I tried to research it. Helen, chris, tried to research it. We've we have no idea where-.

Helen Armstrong [00:56:22] She got that from.

Eunice Lisberg [00:56:23] And we try to get Cathy to go back. I don't know why-.

Helen Armstrong [00:56:26] She didn't go and ask the girl.

Eunice Lisberg [00:56:27] I don't know why we couldn't, you know, but they were young kids.

Helen Armstrong [00:56:30] Yeah.

Frank Taylor [00:56:30] Yeah.

Eunice Lisberg [00:56:31] You know, and young kids. It's not that important to them. But yeah, that was, you know, things- so much has happened. Just little tidbits of this over here, over there. And there has to be some kind of truth to something.

Frank Taylor [00:56:49] Yes.

Eunice Lisberg [00:56:50] It's just. How do you find it?

Frank Taylor [00:56:51] Exactly. Because like you said, it's all oral history, as you know. And it just. But the thing is, that's why I love this here, because you guys are providing oral history. [laughs] I'm learning a lot, I'm telling you. So now I kind of want to jump forward a little bit and talk about your time in Riverside, whether it was, like going to the schools here, or just growing up here or even like your college years here. What were some of your fondest memories in Riverside?

Helen Armstrong [00:57:19] Well, my fondest memories. At first, I hated the fact that we moved to Riverside. [00:57:28] Then I started going to school and I met a lot of people here in the area, which was very small at the time that lived in Belltown, which is, that's what it was called when we moved here. And so I got used to being with these kids, and then I was bussed to the Eastside. So then I had those friends over there and I really enjoyed my school at University Heights because, even though it was all Blacks and, and Spanish or Mexicans, we all got along, you know. [38.3s] And, I enjoyed farm life, even though I'd never had a farm life before. We began to farm, my dad cleared the area out there and he farmed and we used to sell our produce to the produce market down on 14th Street. And on, 13th Street it was on 13th Street. And I used to get up 5, 6:00 in the morning with him to go out there to irrigate. And that was. I guess, that is a part of me because like I said, I have a green thumb and I can do all these things. And so that's why I guess I enjoyed it even then before I knew I had a green thumb and I enjoyed doing that type of thing. Working out in the yard, working with the plants in the, and growing our vegetables and we never went hungry and we moved out of a nice house in Monrovia that had running water, toilet and all this stuff. When we moved here, we didn't have running water. We didn't have, have a bathroom. It was a two house.

Eunice Lisberg [00:59:17] Two room.

Helen Armstrong [00:59:19] -Room house that he built for us to move into. And we had a woodstove.

Frank Taylor [00:59:24] Cool, okay

Helen Armstrong [00:59:26] We had a gas stove in the Monrovia. And kids used to come out here, they said Helen where you live, when I'd tell them they'd say why would you? And then they finally found out I came from Monrovia and they got a chance to go to Monrovia and see the house I lived in.

Frank Taylor [00:59:38] Yes.

Helen Armstrong [00:59:38] They say, Why would you leave that house to come out here and live in this house? This, more or less like a shack. You know, I didn't look at it as that. Even though we had to burn, go out and cut our own wood. We had to go down in the little forests down there where, where the go kart track is to use a toilet because we didn't have toilet.

Helen Armstrong [01:00:00] So. It was an adventure, I guess, to me. And I, and I loved it. I didn't hate it. Only thing I hated was the, the animal that I had to run after every day. We, we, [laughs] we raised chickens while we were out here. We, my mother went to the auction, and she bought a cow and so we had cows. And then she'd buy a calf that we're going to kill some day. And I was the one that had to take care of these things. Right. So.

Thelma King [01:00:31] You were the right age.

Helen Armstrong [01:00:33] She says I was the right age [laughs]. She was in Monrovia still. So she didn't have to even see about feeding them and trying to get water. We didn't have running water. We irrigated [laughs] we irrigated our, our, gardens out here because there was a irrigation ditch that runs down in front of our house. And there's a cement area that we could see down and see the water running through. So we get a bucket and we reach down there and get that water. And that was our drinking water.

Megan Suster [01:01:09] I wonder if that was the Gage Canal.

Helen Armstrong [01:01:10] Pardon?

Megan Suster [01:01:11] Was it the Gage Canal?

Helen Armstrong [01:01:13] It's. It wasn't called a canal, but there is a name for it, and it still runs.

Eunice Lisberg [01:01:19] It's still here?

Thelma King [01:01:20] Yeah, it's still here.

Helen Armstrong [01:01:21] Uh huh. It still, it's still between this property and that property. And they still run.

Thelma King [01:01:26] They still run down there.

Eunice Lisberg [01:01:26] And one of the boxes is up as you go into the track and that. And the way Riverside did their property, there's still that one area.

Helen Armstrong [01:01:36] That can't be sold.

Eunice Lisberg [01:01:37] It's a strip. Not the strip strip. Not the other strip.

Thelma King [01:01:42] Yeah.

Eunice Lisberg [01:01:42] But the irrigational area because.

Thelma King [01:01:45] That's right.

Eunice Lisberg [01:01:46] They irrigated all the way, this thing went all the way before this, before the 60 freeway now, we're going way back. Okay. This went all the way towards just Santa Ana River.

Helen Armstrong [01:01:57] Yeah.

Eunice Lisberg [01:01:57] And we're way back there. Okay. And yeah.

Helen Armstrong [01:02:02] But that's where we got our water. Our drinking water from was from the irrigation tool that we'd have to reach down in there in there with our bucket, and, and take it to the house.

Frank Taylor [01:02:13] Did you have to, like, boil it or something or-

Helen Armstrong [01:02:15] That was the best water you'd ever-

Eunice Lisberg [01:02:17] Best water ever!

Helen Armstrong [01:02:19] The cleanest, best water you'd ever want to drink. Yes. Yes. And of course, I had to help milk the cow [laughs], Thelma don't know that she didn't [inaudible]

Thelma King [01:02:31] I said you were the right age. [laughs]

Frank Taylor [01:02:33] You try to imagine, If you were living in modern Monrovia still visitng your family in Belltown.

Thelma King [01:02:39] We'd come down on the weekend. [laughs]

Frank Taylor [01:02:43] [01:02:43][inaudible]. [0.0s]

Eunice Lisberg [01:02:44] [laughs] Okay let me just share a story with you. All mine are stories. Because I was six months old.

Frank Taylor [01:02:51] Okay.

Eunice Lisberg [01:02:52] Okay, I was just a baby. Um, my brothers tell the story about the day that my dad brought them here. My mom was a true pioneer. Cause she loved it. I mean, my mother loved, it out here. You see how the weeds are grown out over there on that side?

Frank Taylor [01:03:14] Mm hmm.

Eunice Lisberg [01:03:15] Okay. Now, that's not my side of [01:03:17][??] [0.0s] it's on the other side. [laughs] My weeds don't, my weeds don't look like that. You saw how tall they are. [laughs] They brought a cow. And mom's story was that cow never lifted his head, just because there was, that's what all of that property looked like. It was just tall grass. Separate little area that dad and them had cleared to put the two room house. The house that we lived in was an add-on. They add it, they add it, and.

Helen Armstrong [01:03:51] They'd add in a room.

[01:03:51] My mom wanted a little closet. Dad built it. My dad could build anything. My dad was fabulous.

Frank Taylor [01:04:00] And you could just build back in those days?

Eunice Lisberg [01:04:02] Yes.

Frank Taylor [01:04:03] Don't have to do approvals.

Eunice Lisberg [01:04:03] No, no, no.

Thelma King [01:04:06] I'm going to jump way ahead. But you know, one thing my dad did? he made an electric ice cream.

Helen Armstrong [01:04:12] Ice cream freezer.

Frank Taylor [01:04:13] Oh, wow.

Thelma King [01:04:14] And however, [laughs] he had these older kids, you understand? Me being one of them. We teased him and tease him about the ice cream. You know, it took a long time, but it was electric. And 15 years later, someone came out with the ice cream maker.

Eunice Lisberg [01:04:35] The problem with this ice cream machine is that then the brothers later said that his gearing was bad and because it churned.

Helen Armstrong [01:04:42] Churn churn churn churn.

Eunice Lisberg [01:04:43] Yeah, but it got faster and faster. [laughs] And that's why we teased him about it. But it actually made ice cream.

Helen Armstrong [01:04:53] Oh, yeah.

Thelma King [01:04:54] But, you know, thinking about, our dad was, no, they were very young when my dad had help, have his sisters sign for him to marry my mother. So he was not 21.

Eunice Lisberg [01:05:06] He was 18.

Thelma King [01:05:08] Okay. So.

Helen Armstrong [01:05:10] Or 19.

Thelma King [01:05:10] He was, we teased him, things that, and I guess another man would never accept from his kids. We teased him about almost everything he tried to do, too. [laughs] He was something else.

Helen Armstrong [01:05:21] We called him a Lorenzo Jones. You all don't remember that. there was a-

Thelma King [01:05:25] I forgot that. [laughs]

Helen Armstrong [01:05:27] There was a television show called Lorenzo Jones. And he was that type of person. He was inventing everything. His wife was always on him about that. And so when my dad was doing all these things, we started calling him Lorenzo Jones, because he, whatever he came to his mind, he could build and it worked. And it's just that we didn't have the education or the knowhow for him to be able to develop.

Eunice Lisberg [01:05:53] Both my mom and dad only went through the eighth, seventh grade. That was their highest education, the seventh grade. But my father. If you, if, if it could be done, he could do it.

Thelma King [01:06:08] That's right.

Eunice Lisberg [01:06:09] So as I said, the house was an add-on. That house ended up, it started off as two rooms. I think we ended up with 18 rooms at that house? When you start counting all the different rooms.

Helen Armstrong [01:06:20] All the different little rooms.

Eunice Lisberg [01:06:22] All mom needed, I want also, Frank I need. Frank did it.

Frank Taylor [01:06:25] You did it. And that was just the-.

Helen Armstrong [01:06:27] He built it. And stood at the times. You know, the change in times. Rain, it didn't rain in there.

Eunice Lisberg [01:06:32] Now, he [01:06:33][inaudible] [0.0s]

Helen Armstrong [01:06:34] When he first built it, we had those two rooms. Let me tell you this story here. [laughs] We all sat in the kitchen area which was, he had made it quite big. My mother loved to cook, so she made, she said, make sure you make it big, okay? The next time he built a room, it was to the other side of the kitchen area that we used to keep warm with our woodstove. And he built that and we used- that was our icebox. I mean, it used to get so cold in Riverside .we didn't have an icebox, so we didn't have electricity. He built that room. We keep our milk in there and it would freeze.

Frank Taylor [01:07:10] Wow.

Thelma King [01:07:12] Well, that's alright.

Helen Armstrong [01:07:13] So go ahead. You wanna say something?

Thelma King [01:07:18] About milk and cows and stuff. I told my mom, I said, you know what? I said, you're not going to be sanitary with this mess. [laughs]

Helen Armstrong [01:07:27] Oh she sure did.

Thelma King [01:07:27] And I- as I think back on some of the things that I said to my mother and my father. And I wasn't, actually being nosy.

Eunice Lisberg [01:07:36] No chance.

Helen Armstrong [01:07:37] Nasty.

Thelma King [01:07:38] But I said them and I think back sometimes and I said boy, I don't know how come she didn't-

Helen Armstrong [01:07:44] Knock your head off. [laughs]

Thelma King [01:07:48] But I finally told her though. Well, after we moved and I finally moved to Riverside, I said Okay, I made a mistake. This was a good move. And I told her.

Eunice Lisberg [01:07:58] Yeah. [01:07:59][inaudible][0.0s]

Thelma King [01:07:59] You know. This was a good move because, see, after after the war, I made, you know, I had made up my mind. I took college preparatory, you know, and I didn't go to college because I would work in the war effort. And then when I got, when the war was over, our job stopped. But I had saved my money. And I said, okay, what am I going to do? Because I am not- one thing I'm not going to do. I'm not going to work in anyone's house. So then I talked to two ladies here in Riverside. Were you born in Riverside?

Frank Taylor [01:08:36] I was born in L.A..

Thelma King [01:08:38] Oh. Okay. So you, and you're young enough to know the Streeter. Do you know the Streeter family?

Frank Taylor [01:08:43] Yes, yes, we've met, yes.

Thelma King [01:08:46] Okay, okay. Peggy Streeter was a fantastic woman. I talked with her and I talked with her friend, which was Myrtle. I've forgotten Myrtle's last name might have been Taylor, but I can't really.

Helen Armstrong [01:08:56] It was Myrtle Taylor.

Thelma King [01:08:57] Okay, I talked to both of them. So they say. Well, why don't you go to business, why don't you go to school and take business so that you can find some kind of work that you want, that you think you can do. So I went to business school over at, but I didn't go to high school. I mean, I didn't go to high school because they-

Helen Armstrong [01:09:17] You were already out of high school.

Thelma King [01:09:18] They're too slow.

Helen Armstrong [01:09:18] You were out of high school.

Thelma King [01:09:20] I had finished high school and well, this is, I'm working up this.

Helen Armstrong [01:09:24] Okay.

Thelma King [01:09:25] So I went to this business school. The woman had it in her home, in her own home. And she kept, started talking to me about going back to school. And I said, no, I can't go to school. I can't do it. I can't afford it, I can't work. And I said, So, she's, got on me so hard about going back to school. I told her, you know, what. I said, I'll tell you one. I will go to high, I will go to college if, if I can work on campus and, and have a job that I can, okay. So she said, she got a little cell phone call, the president of RCC, and he said to, tell her, tell her, I want her, to meet, I want to meet her. And she went with me. And he told me when we got through talking, he said the afternoon or day that you sign and get your classes here. Don't go home, come to my office and you will have a job. And I worked in the library the two years that I went to school there. And then I worked two years, full time as an employee. And then I, the pay was so cut on the low side, I decided I could do better by working for the government. So I took a government job and I finally wound up at China Lake, California, which was a naval station. And I worked there for five years. So, uh, they did, you know, moving here did impact my life. But I had told my mom, you know, Pasadena was only nine miles from Monrovia. Anyone that went to school after high school that stayed there, they, I don't know how, what kind of transportation they used, but most of we didn't. Most of them did not have cars. And we had a car. But, you know, I couldn't use it drive back and forth for school. Plus I didn't know how to drive anyhow. [laughs] So Riverside, because they had a college here, that was when I finally told my mom, okay, that I thought that, you know, your move was, was a good deal. Even though we were- During the Depression and so forth, this family, everybody was without. I mean, that Depression hit everybody. So we did not really feel that we were, we were poor. We didn't have this and we didn't have that. And that's just a difference in our society today. We got people who, you know, making real good money. You know, [01:12:01][the hotel] [0.0s] the guy's name in San Francisco

that, can't call his name now. Millionaire. I don't know. I can't call his name. But anyhow, there's a difference when everybody is doing without then when just the people on two blocks are poor. There's a big difference. And so, you know, you, you live your life the best you can and go on from there.

Eunice Lisberg [01:12:27] I was raised in Riverside. I went from elementary school all the way through high school here. [01:12:35] I graduated from Rubidoux High School, so I went through the West Riverside. But West Riverside had some issues. When my family first moved here, I had two brothers that were in elementary school here. [14.0s] And because we've already been through the court case in Monrovia, [01:12:57] right up the street here was a little two room. [3.4s]

Helen Armstrong [01:13:02] Elementary school.

Eunice Lisberg [01:13:03] [01:13:03] Elementary school. And it was just for the, for the, Negroes and the Mexicans. [5.6s]

Helen Armstrong [01:13:09] The Mexicans. That's right.

Eunice Lisberg [01:13:10] [01:13:10] And they were bussing kids from Bloomington to West Riverside. But the kids in this area. [8.0s]

Thelma King [01:13:18] Couldn't go in.

Eunice Lisberg [01:13:19] [01:13:19] Couldn't go to that school. The West Riverside School, Elementary School. One of my aunts and my mom helped close down the school and got them to the other school. Now, there's a long story behind that. It didn't go to court or anything, but there were issues that they can [inaudible]. Bus in Bloomington to West Riverside. But could not pick up the kids. [25.5s]

Helen Armstrong [01:13:45] [01:13:45] But Belltown wouldn't pick them up and take them. [1.5s]

Frank Taylor [01:13:47] Wow.

Eunice Lisberg [01:13:48] So two of my brothers, in fact, a young, not young man he's old now, but a man stopped here one day.

Helen Armstrong [01:13:57] Because of the track.

Eunice Lisberg [01:13:58] Well, they they knew me and they knew Jerry and they knew Tim. And he stopped here. He says, you know, I have a picture. And there's a picture of the kids that they took here at this school and [01:14:12][both] [0.0s] Jerry and Tim are on the picture, but it was like from first grade to sixth grade or something. And that school was here. But that school got closed down and they started bussing in. Well, really, they didn't bus them at first. They had to walk because then they came up with them. How many miles from the school you have to live and all that kind of stuff. So Riverside had the issues.

Helen Armstrong [01:14:35] Oh, yeah.

Eunice Lisberg [01:14:36] [01:14:36] Now, I did not have any of the issues by the time I came around and started school. But all of my schools are integrated. I never had any segregated education at all. [11.3s] I went to West Riverside Elementary School. I went from, from there to Jurupa. Jurupa was pretty much a new school. It had only been six years or something like that by the time I went to Jurupa Junior High. But, that was the only junior high out in this whole area. Okay. And then from there, I went to Poly for one year and they built Rubidoux High School and I graduated. And that was the only high school in this area. [laughs] So my, you know, all of my years was integrated and no issues, no issues with Riverside.

Helen Armstrong [01:15:32] So she was a first class to graduate from Rubidoux.

Eunice Lisberg [01:15:35] Right. I was a first person to receive a diploma.

Helen Armstrong [01:15:38] Yeah. Because she was Adams.

Eunice Lisberg [01:15:40] My last name was Adams. [laughs]

Helen Armstrong [01:15:40] And they, once they had something they, they asked her to come to because she was the first one to graduate from.

Frank Taylor [01:15:48] First person.

Eunice Lisberg [01:15:48] First person to graduate from Rubidoux High School, get a diploma.

Frank Taylor [01:15:51] It's the first class and you're an Adams.

Helen Armstrong [01:15:53] That's right. Yeah. [laughs]

Eunice Lisberg [01:15:54] That's right. Yeah.

Frank Taylor [01:15:56] That's another headline too. [laughs]

Eunice Lisberg [01:16:00] But. So the school system, the only issue I ever had cause you asked positive things. I came back to Riverside. After 40 years. I left in 1961 when I graduated from high school and moved away, and I came back in 2001. But this was home. This is where I always wanted to be. ([phone ringing] Is that you?) I did not feel any issues here. Everything was always very, very easy you know what I talk about. Kids doing different things. Imma use a phrase that bothers me and the phrase is, "you know your place." But that's a part of our life anyway. You know, even when you're with your own friends, you know your place because you know who you are, you know. And rather than be uncomfortable it's easier just to be comfortable. And so you can almost live anywhere because everyone knows their place. I mean, and that's not inhibited just to the Blacks. It's everybody. If a Caucasian goes into an area that they're not, they know their place. They know, okay, this was not the place for me. I mean,

so everyone knows their place in our society and it's just a matter when everyone is just treated decently.

Helen Armstrong [01:17:34] Respect.

Eunice Lisberg [01:17:34] I think- yeah. I think the only time I had a problem that, and it still bothers me to this day, but you know when I say we were blessed, what tends to happen if something wrong happens, you know in your heart it's going to be taken care of. So when you're wrong, something's going to happen. Um, I was a straight, I was a straight A student.

Thelma King [01:18:02] [inaudible] Oh, okay.

Eunice Lisberg [01:18:02] And I was on the honor roll. But that was a year, I guess you get a silver or gold something something. In our, and I had to have straight A's. I had a class, which was just a shorthand class, an elective. An elective. And I had A's. And I even took Spanish 3. Can I speak Spanish? No. But [laughs] I did good in that class, just like I got an A in swimming. Can I swim? No. But they didn't know I couldn't breathe when I swim, I just swim [laughs] turn my head, swim the whole pool. Got my air, went back the other way. [laughs] Never knew I never breathed.

Thelma King [01:18:45] Never took a breath.

Eunice Lisberg [01:18:47] Okay? Got an A.

Frank Taylor [01:18:48] Oh my goodness.

Eunice Lisberg [01:18:49] This lady. The criteria and see, the criteria needs to be the same for everyone. And I think that's what life is supposed to be about. When you set up criteria, you stick to it, especially with kids. So this teacher, this is my senior year and it was half se- no, it was my junior year. I was going to my senior year and, to get an A in shorthand, you had to pass the brief form tests. And there's two things you had to do. Oh, and you had to do 100, two 100 speeds. So I, I couldn't do two. I did one. I couldn't get that second. I could get the 98 words a minute but I could not get 100 words. I just couldn't get there. But I did my brief forms I got 100 on my brief forms and I only got one of the other. [01:19:41] She gave me a B+ rather than A-. The two other girls, there in that class, they couldn't, they didn't get 100 on a brief form, but they did 2 to 100s. They got A's. When I got my tests. And that was, the classroom, let's say it's 20 people. You have to have 20 to qualify. The whole class had agreed we were going to take shorthand 2. When I got my B+ and they got A's. I went up and I told her, I'm not taking this class next year. Five of my friends went up and said, we're not taking this class next year. The class was canceled. [47.1s]

Helen Armstrong [01:20:30] Because they know she, they cheated her out of her being able to get one of those.

Eunice Lisberg [01:20:34] I think that was, [01:20:36] for all of the time I was in Riverside. I think that's the only time I ever felt that my race played an issue in my life. In all my, my classes, I, you know, I was good, you know, and I got along with everyone. People knew me. That was the

only time that I ever felt that I was different. [25.6s] But that didn't keep me from wanting to come back to Riverside.

[01:21:07] [inaudible]

Eunice Lisberg [01:21:08] The track was here. Family was here. And our track has done a lot of things in the community and some of our kids, based on the fact that the track was here and and the things that were going on. Some of them were profited.

Helen Armstrong [01:21:21] [inaudible]

Eunice Lisberg [01:21:22] They have profited from it and Riverside was a good place to be, for me. Later Riverside has opened up and there's, there's everywhere, everywhere. And we're involved. And it takes getting involved with your community to help it grow. I was too young at 19. And 1 to be of that assistance. I had to go away and grow up to come back and make changes. But, through all that growth. When I came back to Riverside, my sister calls me a joiner. [laughs] She says she joins everything! Well, I have. Since coming back, I've joined different organizations. I get involved. I-. But that's what it takes to live in your community.

Thelma King [01:22:18] And to help it grow, sometimes.

Eunice Lisberg [01:22:19] My mom got involved in a lot of things. A lot of things were political.

Helen Armstrong [01:22:26] My mother was an Eastern Star. But, you know, when I got out of high school, I didn't just go right in and to doing shorthand and so forth and so on. I moved back to Monrovia because a brother was living there and I did. My aunt said, Well, what are you going to do? And I said, Well, I'm going to look for a job. She well, until you find one, why don't you work for these- she was doing a day's work. Why don't you work for this family? They have some kids and they need somebody. So I said, Well, I'll do it, but it's not my thing, okay? But I did. I went and I worked for these people in San Marino, right out of. In between Pasadena, and Arcadia. And those people really liked me. I used to take their car and go any place I wanted to go. Didn't have to buy no gas. And [laughs] I bring their kids, they're two little white boys down here to Riverside spend in the night because they trusted me, you know? And so then I have a girlfriend that was working for a doctor in Monrovia, and she told me that she had to quit. So I went and interviewed with him and that's when I left that family and went and work as his receptionist. And then from there I moved back to Riverside and I, I got married, went through all the marriage things. And, so then, while I was married, I said, you know, I was getting sick, I was having headaches and so forth. So the doctor said, Well, what do you do? And I said, Nothing, I just take care of my kids. He says you doing too much for your family. You need to get a job. [laughs] I said, okay. So I went down to the unemployment office here in Riverside, put my name in for a job, and then put all my references down. So they'd call me and tell me to come down there to be interviewed. And I'd go down there and she says, [01:24:25] Well, we called you in because there's a job here, there, there and there. And so she called them up, but they didn't want me. Okay, cause I'm Black. I knew that's what the reason was since they said no, it's filled. [9.3s] So I said, well, why can't I [01:24:38][??] [0.0s] these different places are hiring, why can't you let me go to work there? No, you were supposed to work in an office, and we're not going to send you out on this job. Oh, I was just heartsick. So I did that for about three months,

going back and forth, trying to get a job here in Riverside. One day they called me up and they said, okay, we got the job for you. Sure enough, they told me to go be interviewed for the Superintendent of County Schools down here in Riverside. So I walked in there to see Ray Johnson, talked to him and everything, and he said, Well, you know, I like you and you know, you hear from me. So I said okay. So I came home and before I could get in the house. Good. The phone rang. They asked me, could I start the following Monday.

Frank Taylor [01:25:29] Wow.

Helen Armstrong [01:25:30] [01:25:30] Ray Johnson hired me that day. I'm the first black that they ever ever hired for the Superintendent of County Schools here in Riverside. [7.3s]

Frank Taylor [01:25:38] Wow.

Helen Armstrong [01:25:39] [01:25:39] And. I got, I went to work there. I got along with a lot of the women. They were, there's a couple of women that were from the south, and they weren't used to working with a Black, so they let it be known. So eventually they were fired, not me. I worked for the county for 30 years and that's where I retired from, The Superintendent of the County schools. But, up until they got me that job, there was other jobs that they wanted to send me on. But because they found out I was Black, they weren't going to interview me. [33.9s]

Frank Taylor [01:26:13] It was filled already.

Helen Armstrong [01:26:14] Yes.

Frank Taylor [01:26:14] As you said.

Helen Armstrong [01:26:16] So, you know, this stuff has gone on all my life. And like Sharon said, you know your place. I didn't get mad at those people. I went on on, you know. I said, well I'll get a job somewhere. I even took a test out at Norton Air Force Base because they was hiring out there.

Frank Taylor [01:26:33] Mm hmm.

Helen Armstrong [01:26:33] And. The day that Ray called me to, and say that I had the job. And I could start Monday, Monday, I got a letter from them, from Norton, telling me that they, to come out for an interview. And both of the jobs was where I took shorthand and typing. They had me do that. And they wanted me to be a secretary. But, you know, I don't know what happened in my head [laughs] because it was in my heart because I really thought I was going to be a secretary. But when, when they had me doing this shorthand test, I said, I don't want to do this. [laughs] I don't want to sit up here and have somebody talking to me and I'm writing this down. So when I started on Monday, the lady that was going to be quitting, pretty soon it was a secretary, she was still there, but they had this opening for the media center. And so he told me, he said, Well Helen we gon' put you over here in this area and say when she leave, you know, you will be a secretary. And I said, okay, I like that job so much. When he decided that I could move [01:27:43] there, [0.0s] I asked him, I say, Can I continue here? I said I really don't want to be a secretary. [laughs] And I told him why. I said, I just, when I was sitting up there and this

man's talking to me and I'm doing this shorthand for him and I- at that time I was good. Can I do shorthand now? No [laughs], but I was good then. [01:28:04] And so therefore, there was, you know, prejudice when I was hired, but not through the higher, you know, the superintendent and them. And most of the ladies in there accepted me. It was just these two girls that didn't like me because I was Black and I was the only one in there, which I didn't care. And so eventually they fired those two girls because of the way they was acting. [22.5s]

Eunice Lisberg [01:28:28] Just let them go. They didn't fire them, they just let them go.

Helen Armstrong [01:28:29] No, they fired them. [laughs]

Frank Taylor [01:28:31] There was a difference. Well, I have just one more question, though, because based off of what you have described about Riverside, it's clear things have changed quite a bit. Certainly from the two, house or two room house.

Helen Armstrong [01:28:46] Yeah.

Frank Taylor [01:28:46] Water and all of that stuff. Are you happy with the level of progress that you have seen over the years in Riverside, or do you think that there is a long, a long way to go in any area racial, economic, religious, whatever?

Thelma King [01:29:02] I feel that every place has changed. And that it's a matter of the way you act. When you go in, you know, when you go in for an interview, etc., etc., there's a certain way that you should be dressed and there's a certain way that you should answer questions. And if prior to that, if you have not talked to somebody to kinda explain to you, you know, maybe you know, well, don't go- if you're going to go for an interview, make sure that you are clean and have your act together and any question and make sure you tell the truth and so forth. I think that there has been so many changes. So many changes over the year and a lot of times it is the person who is, sometimes it's the person that isn't the usually[?]. Because some times, of course, that when you step in there, they are ready to tell you what, no, you know, I don't think you're qualified for this and you haven't even had a- they haven't even asked you any questions, then and the only thing that you can do is thank them and, and get on without acting a nut [laughs] I think that. It's just your manner and your way of acting that makes a big difference, which as you talk, as I talk to some of the youngsters today, they don't realize it. And they don't know how to talk to people and don't think that they need to know how to talk to people. Because I had a niece who was oh, she's graduated from college now, but she was told by a school teacher, a school teacher, that what she was striving for in this day and age. What she was striving from was what was above her. When she went to college, they would ask, you know, what classes you want to take? And so forth as she wanted to be into, uh, well, like those movies and, and.

Helen Armstrong [01:31:16] In the media.

Frank Taylor [01:31:17] And the intermediate and so forth and so on. And she said, Oh, you'll never be able to get a job like that. And, or a news, a news commentator and so forth and so on. Look at television today.

Frank Taylor [01:31:29] Yeah.

Helen Armstrong [01:31:30] Yeah. They're going to change here in Riverside , too.

Thelma King [01:31:32] But let me tell you, finally, I asked her what nationality was this person you were talking to and she was Black. [laughs] Okay.

Frank Taylor [01:31:45] Right.

Thelma King [01:31:46] So it's just, you know, you just.

Frank Taylor [01:31:49] Yeah, understand.

Thelma King [01:31:50] You just, you talk to them and so forth, and then you take a step. If you have to take a step back, take a step back and check with somebody else. And that's, that's the way we need to act.

Helen Armstrong [01:32:01] Well, I feel there's been, there has been a lot of changes in Riverside. Of course, we all know that prejudices still exist, and it's going a little worse to me right now. [laughs] But with what's happening in politics. But as far as Riverside, I have seen a lot of changes since I moved here. And I can say that the changes that I've seen as far as, job wise and like [01:32:36]cause [0.0s] you have to do what Thelma said as far as, go in there presentable and present yourself as a person that really wants this job and that, you know, you're willing to do whatever. But there's so many different jobs nowadays that are present that Blacks can get that we couldn't get before. So, yes, I have seen changes, but I know that prejudice still exists. So what do you do about it? You try. You do the best you can. You go in there when you want a job and you go in there and present, and presenting yourself as a truthful, you know, well-dressed person. And maybe you get the job.

Thelma King [01:33:21] Yeah.

Eunice Lisberg [01:33:23] And for me, for Riverside, when I said I came back because this is home, I don't think I could have accomplished what I accomplished in my career here in Riverside. I worked for Los Angeles County, and I started off, I started off as a student worker when I was in college, and I ended up a welfare administrator, a district director in one of the largest districts in Department of Public Social Services in Los Angeles. What I accomplished there kind of was, I will say a miracle. It was being at the right place at the right time with the right person.

Helen Armstrong [01:34:10] Being blessed.

Eunice Lisberg [01:34:12] The right person, the right time. And each time, I was ready for the challenge. I don't think I would have accomplished what I did in Los Angeles.

Helen Armstrong [01:34:28] Here in Riverside. I don't either.

Eunice Lisberg [01:34:31] Had I stayed in Riverside.

Frank Taylor [01:34:32] Hmm.

Eunice Lisberg [01:34:34] One of the concerns in L.A. County where I was working was that, they did not have any dark women directors. And I was the first. But no one knew me. Then my name threw them. [laughs] Mhm Lisberg. Yeah, my name kind -.

Frank Taylor [01:35:00] [01:35:00][threw it off a little bit][0.0s]

Eunice Lisberg [01:35:01] Yeah. Huh. And, um. One guy called me. His wife and I had been, roommates in college. And so he says yes. You're blocking this list. What do you mean? He says, Well, you know, we can only X off three people when there's a master list and they're trying to hire. They're trying to hire 150 people off this list. You're number three. You can only, you can only X off three people. Once three people have been X'ed. The list dies and I was number 40 something on that list and they were going to hire about 150, no they were going to hire 75. I think the list was 150, so they were going to hire about 75. So they were going to hire half the people on the list and they'd already X'ed off three people, including me. He says, Now no one knows you. I said okay. He said, they need a black director in South Central L.A.. [laughs] A deputy. I was a deputy then. And he said, Will you go for an interview? I said, okay, I'll go. So I went for the interview and got the job that opened up the list and they went ahead and they were able to hire the 75. But I, but he said to me and he was already a director, he said, No one knows who you are. And your name is the last X. The other two, they're not going to hire. [laughs] I never figured out, found out who those other two were, but I was the one that was blocking the list. So when I went ahead and took the job. I was good at what I did, but I think no matter where you are in your life, you have to be ready to take challenges. And if you're ready to take the challenge, doors will open. There are going to be doors that are going to close in your face because I've had that happen. But you don't cry about it because, you just know there's another, that door is closed, there's another one's going to open. But you have to have your preparation. You have to be ready for it. Years ago, they felt that one of the laws, I'll think of the name of it in a minute, that. Blacks had to be promoted. You had to have certain percentage of this this this. They felt that it was bad. It was bad because of how -it's not a bad law, but it was bad how it was implemented. Because that law was implemented well, the first Black to walk in. And that's what they're going to get because we've got to have a Black. And that really wasn't the intent of the law. The intent was to promote and give to those that were deserving because they're out there. But they didn't follow the intent. Sometimes when we sit back and we're complaining about all the things that are happening in our lives and in this world. It's because someone didn't step up and say the right thing at the right time or we're gonna let this person do all the talking. And yeah, things right now I think are bad. I really do. I think now people are a little more concerned about what they say and how they saw things than we were before. But I bowl with a group of people. I bowl in a, the club is called Clubhouse 55. So you have to be 55 or older to bowl. There are 90 year olds and 80 year olds and 70 year olds in this club. My son came down, he said, Whoa. Because when you look at some of the people, [laughs] he said, 20, 30 years ago, they wouldn't even be talking to you. [laughs] And we're just bowling and having a good time. Because, things have changed. That's the beauty about what has happened. The sad thing, even though things have gotten better, a lot of our youth, and it's not just our black youth, not just our Hispanic youth, a lot of our youth don't want to hear what you went through.

Thelma King [01:39:34] Yeah.

Eunice Lisberg [01:39:36] So because they don't want to hear what happened before, we're gonna have to go through all that again. And we're going to go through it again because they don't want to hear. They're not listening to history because history can repeat itself if you don't use history to improve on. Some of our organizations in Riverside are trying to get our kids to hear. Some of our kids are going to hear and some are not. Riverside can only improve if we continue to try to put information out. And as I said, there's a lot of things going on in Riverside. The opportunity is there. The jobs are there. It's just, we got to get our youth to hear it through our churches. There's an organization in Riverside that they're trying to get all different churches together, all denominations and etc.. I've gone to a couple of their meetings. One of the group's people said, But I don't know you, because you haven't tried. [laughs] You wear that on your head. But this is who I am, you know, and this, it's because we're not listening to each other. We're doing what we see and not hearing. But that's an organization they're really trying to get. But- made it's starts with the seniors. But we're not going make the change. We're not gonna make the change. We can just share the information. There's another group that was trying to just get a community together. Now, that group seems to have done pretty well. The ones who wear the orange shirts, trying to get the kids to school safely.

Frank Taylor [01:41:44] Yeah.

Helen Armstrong [01:41:45] Mm hmm.

Eunice Lisberg [01:41:46] Coalition

Frank Taylor [01:41:47] There you go. Yeah.

Eunice Lisberg [01:41:50] That group seems to be doing pretty good still. Because the parents are the ones out there walking. And then, kind of when you walking, you got to talk. [laughs] So that's kind of getting some communication. And since they're walking kids, it's just hopefully they get the right people saying the right things to the kids. Riverside's doing a lot of good stuff. They're striving to do better. I understand that our congressman had a town hall meeting today, which I didn't know about. Takano.

Frank Taylor [01:42:27] Takano yeah.

Eunice Lisberg [01:42:32] Through his own life, he's gone through changes, and it's good that he has. Because some of the stuff he's gone through. Hopefully he's going to see it begin to happen or can begin to address it cause of his own life, you know. But if you don't experience anything, you don't listen to nobody. We're not gonna make it.

Eunice Lisberg [01:42:55] Riverside has made a lot of changes. We've got a long way to go.