



My name is Johnny Irving Campbell from age 82. 82. And how long have you lived in East St. Louis, Illinois? 82 years. Wow. 82 years. Was born in in my house. Oh. 15 Tudor on 15 Tudor. I know exactly where that is. It was used to be right next to True Light Church. Mm-Hmm. . Mm-Hmm. . Yep. Okay. So 1941, born at home, assisted by a midwife.

Yeah, she was, yeah. Mm-Hmm? . Do you remember the midwife's name? Oh, hell no. . I thought maybe she was famous in the neighborhood. Well, she was delivering all the babies. Well, she was, but I, you know, I didn't know her. Okay. I don't remember. Okay. And what were your parents' names? My daddy's name was Mo Campbell.

My mama name was Dorothy Olivia. And your mother was from? Tuscaloosa, Alabama. Really? Yep. Wow. And we already talked about the fact that your dad was from Meridian, Mississippi. Yep. Where I am also from. Right. Amazing. And Tuscaloosa's like kind of like right across the state line. Oh is it? Okay. Yeah, yeah.

So they, they weren't too far from each other, but they didn't meet there. They met in East St. Louis, correct? No, they met down I think in Meridian. That makes sense. Yes, yes, yes. Do you know what year he came to East St. Louis? I don't know. Laughing It said, I think in an article it said he, uh, he was here seven months.

Mm hmm. So I don't know when that article was printed or when that, what year was that? In 1917, the same year as the East St. Louis race massacre. So that's when he came here. Okay. Okay. Wow. And so you weren't born until 41. So we're, you know, of course going to be talking about what you remember your father mentioning, and maybe even other community members mentioning about the 1917 East St.

Louis race massacre. But you weren't born until, what is that, 1727, 37. So that's 24 years after the race massacre. That sounds about right. Yeah, yeah. So, as a young child, do you remember people bringing it up? Your father or twice. Okay. Yeah, he did. He mentioned it to me once or twice. He never adored none of me back then.

I don't even know how old I was when he talked to me about it. And when he mentioned it to you, did he seem agitated? Oh, yeah. I guess, yeah, he did. Yeah, he, he was a fiery old man. Was he also a fiery young man? Yeah, I would think so. I don't know him when he was young. Okay. I think they told me he was about 65 when I was born.

Oh, really? So you were the child of his old age, as they say. Yeah, I was a baby boy. Okay. I had one, one under me, but he died. Okay. How old was the one under you when they passed away? Probably about two years old. Okay, so they died in infancy. Yeah. Okay. So as the youngest, you were able to... Have some years with him.

How old were you when he passed away? Oh, I was in my mid twenties, I think. In your mid twenties. Okay. So you were able to get to adulthood? Oh yeah. Mm-Hmm, . And how many siblings did you have? I had, uh, five brothers and five sisters here. That was living in a, I think three of 'em died. Um, and then I had the 10 down there in Mississippi.

Mm-Hmm. . And then Alabama and Mississippi. Okay. So, Mr. Campbell, your father had a family, uh, down south. And then he met your mother and they moved to East St. Louis and also had a large family down south. You said it was... He had ten. Ten down south. And then he came up to East St. Louis, Illinois and had... Yeah, he brought her with him.

Okay. And, and then you had five brothers and five sisters. Yep. Okay, so there were 11 of you. Yep. Okay. So that's 21 children all together. Right. Wow.

I, I guess that what the good book says, go forth and replenish the earth or something like that. Oh yeah. And your father said, check mate.

Yeah, Mose of a man. Mm hmm. Mm hmm. Did he work in the same industry all of his life? He worked at the B& O for 60 something years, I think you should say. Alright, so the B& O was the railroad. Yeah, it was the railroad where he was working when, when the riot was happening. Right up there in that same area up on that hill.

Mm hmm, mm hmm. Up on the hill, that's where he, uh, where, you know, all the black folks. Went to the hill when they came here, when they initially came here. Mm hmm. Mm hmm. Then they spread it out. Mmm. You know where the hill is? Yes. Yeah, okay. Mm hmm. Mm hmm. So, where you lived in Tudor, that wasn't his first home?

No. No, he first lived in, they first lived on the hill. Mm hmm. And he moved, moved down there on Tula. The railroad job, was it a Monday through Friday, just daytime, or did he work nights as well? Well, when I, when I, when I knew him when he was working at the railroad, he was working more like the 3 to 11, 3 to 11 shift.

Mm hmm, 3 to 11. But he came here with the B& O. He was working at the B& O down south, and he came. Came here, he's still working at the B& O. Oh, really? He worked there about sixty something years. So he transferred with the job? I think so. Interesting. I think that's what happened. And were you all known to be a family where he was getting, you know, larger than usual wages?

Did the B& O pay really well? Shhh. For the time? I don't know. You don't know? Uh uh. How would you characterize your home life? Were you, did you feel like you were struggling or did you feel like, oh no, you had enough? I had a damn thing I wanted. Okay. Yeah. I was the baby . Okay, so you were the beloved baby boy?



Yep. And you, are you named after him? No, I'm na. My name's Johnny. I got a brother was named Moses Jr. Okay. He was a junior. Okay. Yeah, that's what was named after him. So, would you do me a favor, Mr. Campbell, and would you read beginning at the words, I was attacked, and just read the, your, uh, father's testimony regarding the, uh, massacre?

Yeah, let me hit the light. Testimony of Mose Campbell. For seven months a resident of East St. Louis. I was attacked by the mob of about 50 or more with stones and shots, but gave chase. They shot continuously and before we reached the southern freight house, which is where he was working, one, one bullet passed through my hand, shattering the bones.

The mob threatened to burn, the mob threatened to burn the, uh, freight house, so I crawled to the other end and found safety under the trunks, trunks of a freight car. Another victim drew the mob away by this time. This man was beaten until unconscious. And, and when he revived, the cry, the soldiers who were watching him raised a cry which brought the mob back to complete the murder.

While this excitement was at its height, gave me an opportunity to make my way to Brooklyn by back lanes. I saw the mob fire into the houses, the first being my own, afterwards proved to be the bearer for fire were Allen Lewis, Jess Thomas, and Aubrey Jones.

Wow. Thank you. Thank you so much. Yeah. Um, he hadn't been married that long to your mother by then, correct? Yes. Okay. Okay. If you were to compare your life to your father's life, what are some ways in which your lives are different? Well, he worked on that railroad, started out as a water boy. and, uh, shit that, and worked on it, uh, all them years.

I didn't, I didn't, I didn't get a chance to do a lot of manual labor. Mm-Hmm. . I wasn't too good at that. Mm-Hmm. . Yeah.

He wanted to make sure I got an education, all, all his kids that he could. Mm-Hmm. . And I got, uh, I got, I did get an education. I got a bachelors and an MBA and I'm a CPA. Wow. So, uh. Where did you get your bachelors from? SIU Edwardsville. Okay, SIUE. And my masters I got at, uh, St. Louis U. Okay, beautiful, beautiful.

And then became a certified public accountant. Right. Fantastic. So, I, you know, I Was interested to know about, um, our ancestors who came up through the migration up south, up from the south for a better opportunity and what that meant for the next generation. I suspect it means what you said. They wanted them to have less manual labor, more education, more opportunity.

Yeah, and it looks like that has borne itself out with you, right? and my daddy I Guess if they hadn't cut off his education Well, you couldn't go no further what the eighth grade in that you go



no further. Mm hmm something like that Shit, he'd probably been president. Mm hmm And do you say that because of his intellect and didn't in part because he was in the next

His intellect and his whole well being, he was a hell of a man. Yeah, a hell of a man. If he was in the Army, he would have been a General. He'd have been running that. Mm hmm. Yeah. And definitely a survivor. Yes, Lord. Because as he related the incidents that happened during the race massacre. He received three gunshots and he said I'm gonna keep running.

I will, I will be running. He was fast. Powerful legs. He had powerful legs. Now what do you think about him saying that he made his way to Brooklyn? For the listeners, Brooklyn, Illinois is the oldest incorporated black community in the U. S. It's directly adjacent to East St. Louis and it also has this other history as a place where enslaved people founded Brooklyn, Illinois.

They came to Brooklyn and created that community. Yeah, it was on the ground railroad, part of the ground railroad. Very much so. Um, and at one point it was called Lovejoy, named after a white abolitionist who had a printing paper. And he was killed on behalf of his political views. Oh, that's right. Mm hmm.

Yeah, they killed him over there. Oh, look. Mm hmm. That's where the love jar come from. Exactly. Yes, yes. So, do you remember going to Brooklyn as a child? Uh, or having a relationship with people in Brooklyn at all? Yep. Had a few, had a few friends up there. Mm. Yep. And what do you think he means by back lanes?

He said he made his way to Brooklyn by back lanes. Well, not, you know, didn't go to major streets. Okay, the side streets, the alleys. Yeah, the alleys and back paths and stuff. Yeah, my father, who's 85 and who you know, he talks about in the 60s how they would evade the police when they were doing some of their activist work and revolutionary work.

And he talks about knowing all of those alleyways and back streets. You know, people were literally running through people's houses and they were just watching. Yeah. Oh yeah. So it sounds like your father was one of the early adopters of that tradition. Oh yeah. Knowing alternative routes. Oh yeah. Mm hmm.

Mm hmm. So, did your father suffer from the injuries of those wounds? Not that I could tell. Mm. Not that I could tell, eh. You could look at that hand where he was shot and you could see it was a little different. But I think he think I don't think he lost complete use of it. Well, obviously not he kept working for the railroad, didn't he?

Yeah. Did you graduated from lincoln high school, correct? I got a g. e. d. Okay, so did you attend lincoln at all? That's where I went lincoln. Okay, and what What caused you not to, uh, graduate? I went to the Army. Oh. Yeah, they put me out. I went to the Army. Oh, they put you out? Yeah. Okay. Do you want to share why?

Well, uh, They didn't have, I think I wanted to take,

uh, they didn't have. And I kind of had a little argument with the principal. Oh. And nobody told me. Take my ass on where from there. Oh, that's what I did. I went to the army. Wow. Oh myself. Forge my daddy's name. And my mama went to the army. Sure hate that boy. So you don't feel positively about those events?

Well, I couldn't handle that army. Shit. Them folks trying to tell me what to do. I couldn't have it. I just couldn't have it. Wasn't used to it. Well, you never get used to that, I guess. But, uh, I kind of hate it. I didn't do what I was supposed to do. So how long did you stay in the Army? About 13 days. Oh! Um, not the days, about 13 months.

13 months! Two days, three hours. Four minutes and two Tik Toks. It was horrible, wasn't it? Yes. Can you tell me one incident that really is, hangs out in your mind is like, that is really proof that it was awful. Yeah, when I was in Germany.

And this was what year? So that was about 59 or 58, 59, somewhere in there. And uh, this guy tells me, uh, you, you know, y'all got a guest house down the street. You have to get out of here. I proceeded to whoop his ass. Because he was trying to segregate you according to race. Yeah, he was trying to tell me that kind of stuff.

And he was your fellow enlisted man? No, I didn't know him. Yeah, he was an enlisted man. I didn't know him. I never did know him. But I beat his ass. Yeah. Yeah. Oh, goodness gracious. That didn't take no shit. Well, it sounds like you got that honest, because your, your father was using the retreat strategy because he was outgunned and out, man.

Yeah. But it sounds like if it had have been one-on-one, they would've had a problem. Oh, really? . Yeah. They had real problems. He right, he, right. So, um, were you dishonorably discharged? Uh. Other than honorable. Other than honorable. So there are a couple of ways you can be discharged. I guess. And they say other than honorable.

That one said other than honorable. Other than honorable. At the time. Okay. And when you came back, that's when you completed your GED studies? No, I did it in the Army. Oh, okay, so we can call that one positive. I knew I wasn't going to be that long. Mm hmm. Yeah, I knew I wasn't going to be there long, so I, I tried to do something positive.

But I wasn't taking no more orders. So, when you returned, had you and your father been at odds about you leaving high school? Yeah, yeah, he was pissed. Mm hmm, mm hmm. Yeah, he was pissed. Was that his moment to say, I told you so, when you came back home? Sort of. Sort of, yeah. I said, well, it was time for me to go.



I thought, I thought I no more than, more than them teachers, I guess or something. Mm-Hmm. . It was time for me to go. Mm-Hmm. . But the army wasn't the place for me to go. Mm. And penitent, I damn sure didn't want to go. Mm-Hmm. So, uh,

and my brother picked me up, Dr. Campbell and took me, no, we stopped. I had breakfast. And he took me straight to, uh, over to the school. And my brother Raymond had already registered me in, in the university. At SIUE? Yeah. Wow! And, uh, I got over there and, uh, I didn't realize that they already got me registered in all them business courses and accounting and stuff.

Mm hmm. That's shit.

I was playing dirty, dirty, what is that, hard, yeah, it Took you ten years. Yeah. How did you earn an income during that time? I worked at the school mostly. Really? Yeah, I didn't, I didn't, I didn't, uh, I didn't, uh, have one of them job, full time job, like that. I worked at the school. spent two years out in the park drinking whiskey and talking shit

Oh, so you were one of those guys when you drive by, they have their own uh, uh, uh, lawn chair? Yeah. Or they sit or they turn over an apple cart. Or something like that. That's right. And they have a lot of wisdom for you. They sip Wild Irish Rose and they have a lot of wisdom for you. There you got it. He just, he just pointed at me when I said Wild Irish Rose, y'all.

Yeah. I grew up on 15 Pickett. All them guys. Most of them guys ended up with Ph. D. 's and what have you. Like Dr. Rossa. Wow. One of your daddy's buddies out in California. That's right. He was president of one of them universities for I don't know, 40 years. They loved him. Evidently. I made it through those things.

I didn't go to penitentiary. Thank the Lord. Yes. Yes. I'm so happy for you. So, your father You have said on a couple of occasions was a hell of a man. You said if he had been in the army, he would have been a general. If they had let him continue his education, he might have been president. Yeah. And I, what I, what I'm also understanding as you say that, is that that might have been true about a lot of people in East St.

Louis during his time. And that's part of what drew. So much rage from the white residents there, is they saw that potential, they saw that intellect, they saw that straight spine, and they really wanted to change that. So, when your father passed away, were you, was your family still in the house you were raised in?

Yes. And do you all still own that house now? It's torn down. Parking lot for the Friendship Church. Oh, really? Yeah. That's where your house was? Yeah, right. Not Friendship Church, uh, True Light. True Light. For True Light? Oh, that's where your house was? Right next door. Where the parking lot is now? Yep. Really?



And you know what's fascinating is that True Light is one of the places where they rang the bell to gather black people so that they could kind of get their thoughts together during the race massacre. Um, did you attend True Light? Yeah, when I was a little boy, Mama had me there every Sunday morning. Mm hmm.

Mm hmm. Either there or at Mount Zion. Or Mount Zion. Okay. Or Mount Zion. Or Mount Zion. She went to Mount Zion. Did your father attend True Light? Uh, no. He didn't go to church? No and didn't let the preachers to come by there on Sundays. Talking about eating up that chicken . Now, um, what were his feelings about preachers or, or the church?

I just told you, , when I got 12 he said, I'll make a decision to go or not. Mm-Hmm. . So I ain't been back. Mm mm And did your father ever explicitly say his feelings about religion or Christianity? Well, he talked. He talk like that. He's, uh, his, his daddy was a preacher. He was a dad. It was a roving preacher when, you know, and that's where he come from.