



I'm Dr. Treasure Shields Redmond, and I'm Executive Director of The Community Archive. It's an oral history non profit designed to collect the stories of the African American community and preserve them for future generations. As a dual citizen of Meridian, Mississippi, and East St. Louis, Illinois, I have such a passion, almost an obsession, About the migration, Black people, and the cultural ways that followed us all the way from the continent to now.

Along the way, we've had to survive some incredible obstacles. And one of them was the 1917 East St. Louis Race Massacre. Popularly known As a race riot, this is the class of 1917, where I'll be talking to descendants of survivors of the 1917 race massacre and connecting some of those dots about what led up to it, what happened during it, and how we've survived past it.

Welcome to the class of 1917. Um, could you start just by telling me who you are? Okay. Well, I'm Kujali Y. Kennedy. Um, Terry Kennedy. I had, you know, I have a twin brother, Gary Kennedy. I was born first. We were 19 minutes apart. Um, my grandfather, my mother's father was born 1883 and he lived with us till 1973 when he passed.

Um, he was His parents had been held in bondage here in Missouri. And so all the stories that he told us around the kitchen table came from, uh, not only his experience being born in 1883, but also that of his parents who had been held in bondage. So we didn't learn the, um, the stories of Burr Rabbit or Bruh Bear, uh, on TV or in books.

We got that directly from our grandfather across the kitchen table. Mm hmm. Being born in 1883. And what was his name? William Johnson. William Johnson. William Johnson. Mm hmm. And where had he been enslaved in Missouri? I mean, where had his parents been enslaved in Missouri? In DeSoto, Missouri. DeSoto, Missouri.

Which is right out, it's 70 miles from St. Louis, southwest. Um, it, that city was founded by, uh, one of the French explorers. Uh, who then got a hold of some black folks to work and pick up lead in that area. Um, on my, my mother's mother, Tempe Rusan, um, which would have been, she was married to my grandfather, William Johnson, uh, is a descendant of the first 500 Africans that were brought up.

From directly from Haiti, they came up into this area, the area of De Soto, uh, by Francisco Reynaud brought 500 Africans directly what they called in Santa Domingo up into this region, that area of De Soto. And that would have been our great, great grandfather, uh, who they gave the last name of Roussan. So my grandmother's, my mother's mother.

Last name was Roussan. Her father was Augustus Roussan, uh, who was born 1830, and his father was Paul Roussan, who had been born around 1790 something. Both Augustus and Paul Roussan were held in bondage in Missouri. So on both sides, both my mother's grandmother and my mother's, uh, grandfather were both held in bondage in, uh, that DeSoto area where our grandfather was.

That's how he actually worked. On the farm that had once held the family, uh, in bondage, he was, he went to make money and that's how they made the money by going back and working in many of those places. And we have that, that history as well. I am one of those descendants. My mother had, you know, my mother and father had five children.

Uh, Thaddeus and I were the youngest. And since I was first, 19 minutes, he was the youngest. He was the baby.

Whenever I needed to pull a rank, I pulled that. Right.

So, um, so far, we're the only twins that we know there was in the family and what our research has shown. I'm sure it had to be some others, but that's all we know, grew up here in St. Louis. I went to public schools here for Sean High School. Um, and so we, uh, then I, from there I went. Uh, to school, you know, here initially at Forest Park Community College and then later to Howard where I graduated from Howard University in D.

C. Part of my reason for going out there is directly related to the East St. Louis Race Corps. Um, the horns on my father's side, his mother was Catherine. Um, horn, and his father was Norval Kennedy. Um, the horns, after the East St. Louis race ride, left, uh, East St. Louis and went out into, uh, ultimately into Washington, D.

C. And so part of my reason for going out there was to reunite the family, that section that went out to DC. So, um, our cousin was Shirley Horne, Shirley Horne, the jazz singer, uh, direct cousin, her, her, uh, father, or really been her grandfather and our grandmother were brothers and sisters. And so it was a direct line descendant.

And so, um, Then after that, you know, later my father was, they were able to get it together. Uh, he became an alderman himself in the city of St. Louis, was there from 67 to 88 when he passed. I was on, Thottie and I and our other sisters, my oldest sister, Joyce, Dr. Joyce Kennedy, was a part of the sit in movement.

You know, she actually was sitting in on the lunch counters. with Norman Say and NAACP in St. Louis, in St. Louis. Yes. St. Louis, which, um, I remember Mr. Say, Norman Say, who was leading that came to our family's home and spoke to my parents about what to expect. You know, some of them may get arrested. This is how they went over the whole technique on how they're going to do this.

Um, so it comes from a pretty different perspective. activist family. My father was a union organizer in the early days of the union. And so by the time all of that got down to our age grouping, talking about my sister, Isima, who's four years ahead of us, and Thani and I, we were pretty primed to be involved.

And so we were very much involved in the student activist movement here in St. Louis and wherever we went. So we were those, if anybody has ever gone back and read those newspapers about the student walkouts. And our petitioning to have black studies and black books and our petitioning for, uh, the women they call girls who were in high school at the time to be able to wear pants in school because they were required to wear dresses.

Wow. We were those students, we were not on the sideline, we were those ones actually organizing those demonstrations citywide and meeting with the Board of Education and the superintendent to make those changes. So we've come directly out of that. Out of that movement, including the Black Arts Movement.

Hmm. What year did you graduate Vaan? Uh, 1973. 1973. Okay. So that gives me historical placement. Mm-Hmm. . We had our 50th anniversary this year. Oh, wonderful. Mm-Hmm. , I grad Darlene Green. Who's the president? Who's the president, comptroller of the city. Mm-Hmm. , uh, we all graduated together. Wow. Um, she was the treasurer of our Black student Union.

And the black student unions were those activist organizations at the time. I was the president and she was the treasurer, so she'd been handling money a long time. She did a good job with our little 55. We thought we were rich when we had 60. Right, right. We had bank sales and everything to make that money.

Well, you know, it's interesting. Whenever you say Vashon, I think, I think about that one red fox episode of Sanford and Son. Right. It's a pretty black woman that came to the door. You know, he always had beautiful actresses come and interact with him. And, and she said, I'm from St. Louis and his character, you know, he was playing a character, but he used a lot of his biography and his character said, I'm from St.

Louis too. She said, yeah, I went to Vachon. And I just, I noted that as I was watching it, I said, okay, you shout now St. Louis in a subtle way. Mm-Hmm. . Yeah. He was Rashan. So Donnie Hathaway was also Rashan Gray. Wow. And Clark Terry. Wow. And a number of other, you know, really famous people. But, you know, my father has talked about Clark Terry.

He's a Mm-Hmm. . Big jazz fan. Mm-Hmm. . Mm-Hmm. . Wow. So that gives you a little background. I could continue, but it give you a little bit. It does. And you know, I made a couple of connections between you and Mr. Johnny Campbell also interviewed. I don't know if you're familiar with him, but he's a certified public accountant from his father is the one that W.

E. B. Du Bois quoted in the crisis, right? And because his father had him at a late age in his sixties, That is why we're able to talk to the literal son of a 1917 riot survivor, his father also



Um, well, he came up from Mississippi. Mm-Hmm. . But he, uh, used his ability to, you know, um, flip homes and, and do real estate and be a landlord.

And he also sent a number of children to Howard. Mm-Hmm. . Mm-Hmm. . So when you said Howard, I thought interesting. Right? He might've been walking with the same, you know, with those similar stories. Mm-Hmm. . Mm-Hmm. . Uh, but of course, of course, his. Uh, it's just so interesting that Howard connection is interesting.

And also, um, just that high achieving, um, and I wonder about the young people who became parents who were impacted by the riots is seen to really put a fire in them for a sort of self determination. Uh, entrepreneurialism. Mm hmm. Absolutely. The, not only the East St. Louis race, right, but even that in Tulsa, um, you know, Thottie and I were in the Boy Scouts here in St.

Louis, we were in the oldest, the first black troop in the state of Missouri, which I call Troop 124 from Lane Tabernacle Church. Its leader, Mr. Leon Dixon, was, uh, a really renowned and

Um, but he was a survivor of the Tulsa attack. Wow. And so he protected us as, as, as, uh, black boys, you know, and he wouldn't allow, cause we're talking about being Boy Scouts in the 70s, in the 60s. And so racism was very apparent back then. Um, and he would make sure that we would not hit, get the brunt of it.

Because if they went in the wrong way, speaking about the, um, the white, uh, administrators of the Boy Scouts, he was sticking to them. I'll never forget it. He said to one white guy, he wouldn't even let them get closer than 20 feet to us. He said, you can talk from over there. It does. But he was a very, he himself was a higher chief.

There's a tendency for those who don't look like us to interpret. The character of those who survived those kinds of, of attacks as if they were docile after that were so defeated, right? All they could do is survive. You know, we're near the truth. I can list black folk who have to have all see we just didn't know our father, who was a survivor to East St.

Louis race war, but his sisters. And brothers, and their friends, and other people in the community who have now moved over to this side. At this point, I want to let you know a bit about the geography of East St. Louis, Illinois, and St. Louis, Missouri. So East St. Louis, Illinois, is directly across the Mississippi River from St.

Louis, Missouri. And during the events in the midst of the East St. Louis race massacre, lots of black people fled across the river to St. Louis. Some fled across a bridge that was then called the Free Bridge and has since been closed. And some fled across a bridge that still remains today called the Eads Bridge.

For some of the victims of this race massacre, um, the Mississippi River was their final resting place. And for many survivors, St. Louis, Missouri became home. Right. Exactly. Exactly. There was some great achievement in there. You know, some of them were involved in, like a father's involved in the union movement.

Some of them were involved there. Some were involved in other community activities. They were, many of them were very much involved in seeing to it that something like that didn't happen again. That's true. So, Your family is descended from the 500 black people from Santa Domingo, which, I mean, you know, when you read about the history of enslavement, they call the Caribbean the curing islands, right?

They would kidnap people and then cure them in the Caribbean. So a lot of us, even on my mother's side, went back to Jamaica. was the, the, the, the black people that were brought up from Santa Domingo That wasn't, that wasn't because of the Haitian Revolution, was it? No. The Haitian Revo, the Haitian Revolution hadn't happened yet.

Okay. That was before that. So that was, and, and that's, I'm, I'm glad you mentioned that because people get confused. This area was colonized by the French, not the English. Okay. And most of America's history is measured by the English Mm. Not the areas of the country that were colonized by the French or the Spanish.

So many people don't know the history out here. St. Louis is a city is older than the United States. Mm-Hmm. . And if it hadn't been for the Haitian Revolution, this would not be a part, could not be a part of the United States. I mean, that's right. Napoleon ended up having to sell this to the United States because he had got whooped by the Haitians.

And could not sustain a fight on this front, as well as the fight that he was having in Europe. And therefore he gave up this land to the United States. First to the Spanish, who couldn't hold it. And then the Spanish gave it back to the French, and then he sold it to the United States. But that was because of The Haitians whooping Napoleon and blowing his brother out of the waters when he tried to sneak up on them on that island.

And so many of those Haitians moved up into this area afterwards. But I can go even further. Um, you know, my mother spoke French. Her mother's first language was French Creole, not English. Her mother, Tempi Roussan, and then Augustus Roussan was not speaking English. So really, the first generation were on that side of our family was really speaking English.

Mostly was our mother's generation. And she still spoke French as well. And so we learned, you know, much of a French Creole mix. When we were children, of which we don't remember as much as my sister Joyce, who is 12 years older than us. She'll be just 80 at this point. And now I've been told this, and I hope she doesn't hear me telling her age.

But they've been punishing, they've been punishing Haiti ever since. You know, the U. S. doesn't want to trade with them or even give them humanitarian aid. They're slow to do anything since they whooped France so badly. Which they should be thankful. That, right. They should be celebrating the Haitians and giving them the credit.

That's right, like they do in Central and South America. Exactly. They give Haiti plenty of credit. They did a service to the United States. That wasn't their intent. Their intent was to get free. Right. So, um, you know, because early on, uh, almost just until the immigration of the Germans into this area. St.

Louis was, had a very strong French population and a population from Spain. Not what they call, you know, Latin America, but from Spain,

Alfonso Cervantes, who was the mayor of St. Louis was of Spanish descent from Spain. And so his family was one of those families that had been here when the Spanish were occupying this land. Hmm. So when he, after the World's Fair, I believe in New York, it was in 62, I believe it was, maybe 67, I was, uh, he brought the Spanish Pavilion, uh, to St.

Louis. And it's the basis of what was used to be the Marriott Hotel there on Broadway and Market. The base of that, where you enter into it, was the Spanish Pavilion from Spain that he brought from the New York's World Fair to St. Louis, and now it's the base of that hotel as a part of the Spanish.

History of the Spanish legacy of St. Louis. So that means on our mother's side, our family has been here a very, very long time. A very, very long time. That's what I was thinking. I was, I was thinking, well, you know, of course we're all African. But I'm sure that you have some interesting thoughts in your head when you hear people say, go back to your country.

I'm sure you think to yourself, I've been here longer than you. Than you have.

We've been here longer than you. Right.

So, um, let's, let's go back to the, the simmering discontents that led. To the pot that boiled over. That was the 1917 race massacre. Oh, of course, in my research, um, what I found was what you just shared was that black people had been in East St. Louis for a long time as well. Um, and that, uh, there was a detente, there was an uneasy peace.

As long as they didn't have to look at the, when I say they, I mean, white residents, they didn't have to look full on at black prosperity. They were fine. As long as it felt sporadic, their interaction with black people, they were fine. Cause of the black migration, that first wave of it. All of a sudden, what had been, you know, one woman selling fruit on Collinsville Ave turned



into couples holding hands on Collinsville Ave, turned into little boys Running dinners from a black restaurant to Denver side turned into a regular free black community.

What black people do when we have an income at leisure time. And that coupled with this intense, uh, anxiety. about jobs. I have to add after white people have willingly given over every piece of integrity to industry. You don't have to clean up the environment. You don't have to have wages. You don't have to have workers compensation.

You can change the town's whole name to the name of the company, but our Waterloo back to, uh, back to Napoleon, our Waterloo is hiring black people. Now you can do everything else, but when you start hiring black people, when we're striking, then all of a sudden we, we turn into mobs. So what were, what was your mother, your grandmother's family doing during the times that, during the time that the riot, the times leading up to the riot?

Okay. Our grandmother was, uh, that's our father's mother, Catherine Horne, who married Norval Kennedy. Uh, Novel Kennedy was um, they called him Stack. Oh, like Stack A Lee. Like Stack A Lee. Break in here. Also

been resonant. Those who, Team 7, Race Massacre. Uh, in 1911, a song was published called Stack A Lee. And Mississippi John Hurt's version, which came much later, is a really popular version of the song, but it is based on real events. There was an underworld character named Stack. Lee, who was killed in St.

Louis, Missouri in 1895, and the members of Kennedy's family would've known about these events, would've known about this song. And it's really interesting that he also had a relative whose nickname was stack from the top part of Alabama to Tennessee and then to East St. Louis. Mm-Hmm. , uh, the horns went from.

South Carolina over into Tennessee, then later into Alabama, then up into East St. Louis, the Hornsworth. And so they got together there in East St. Louis, got married, and it was considered a move upward, you know, to be able to find a job and have a little bit more stability than what was happening in Alabama and Tennessee, in the southern part of Tennessee.

Um, he was a very dark skinned, kind of tall. Uh, muscular black man because he, you know, did labor work and was known to speak his mind. Um, the word that we got is that he was, you know, the story is that he was killed very early before things broke out because there's someone after him to make sure that he wouldn't organize others fighting back.

They went to him pretty early. Catherine Horne with her brothers, then defended the home when, um, the attacks were made at that time. Now, so what So they were there to work. Our grandfather was working very hard mostly, you know, manual labor that he was doing. And this was your father's father. My father's father, Norville Kennedy.

Norville Kennedy. Norville Kennedy. Uh, they uh, Norville had four brothers, there was five of them. Uh, and they gave him some names, let me tell you. What was named Fulmer? I don't know where they got FUMA from. P H U M M E R. One of the brothers. FUMA. Another was Eddie Kennedy. Okay. Um, who gave birth to, uh, our cousin, uh, Betty Kennedy, who was a long time both counselor and, and, uh, teacher and here in St.

Louis and advocated for black youth and students. Um, then they had, uh, uh, Edgar, and then they had a Maryland Kennedy. M A R Y L D. M A R Y L D. After the state called it, we figured that's the case because my grandfather's mother was named Mary and she had five boys. So one of those boys got her name some kind of way as Maryland as the state.

He would not allow anybody to call him by their first name. So they called him boy. So, when my father was born, he got Maryland as his middle name. And out of their wisdom, they sacked me with it. So I would tell, my initials then would be Terry M. Kennedy. And I was not going to tell anybody it was Maryland, so I told them it was magnificent.

It meant marvelous. Well, you know, I love, I love black naming customs. I had an Aunt Virginia and Aunt Pennsylvania. Yes, we call, we call her Aunt Vaney. In Louisville, Mississippi, Aunt Vaney. Aunt Pennsylvania. We have a, we have a custom. But what they also did was to Make sure that, um, various names of those who've done significance in the family are carried from one generation to the next.

So I got Marilyn, my brother Thottie got Samuel and our father's first name was Samuel, but he was actually named after his mother's father, Samuel Horne. Who the story is, is that Samuel Horne took a tree limb and beat the slave master to death and ran off with Ida. A woman who had also been held in bondage into freedom.

Now, that's a story that we were told from our father and our uncles and that they got from their mother, Catherine. Then, when I met the Horns in East St. Louis, I mean, in, uh, D. C., I was asked and said, now, your, your grandfather was Uh, John Horne said, yeah, but my idol is Samuel Horne, who killed the slave master and ran into freedom, had the exact same story.

That's right. That's how you know it was true. Every, that's how you know it was true. That side of the family also, they knew that story. And they actually had photos of both Samuel and Ida Horne. Oh, wow. We have photos of them who were held in bondage. And, you know, it goes back to what you were saying, because what.

You know, the dominating forces want us to believe is that slavery lasted so long because black people were docile and no, that wasn't the case. Slavery lasted so long because it was lucrative. It was lucrative and they're making lots of money. And we're talking to foreign people, but here in St. Louis.



The largest black abolitionist organization was founded in the country. They were called the Knights of Liberty and the Daughters of Tabor. They were an underground organization. They were founded by Moses Dixon. He said he took it as his sacred obligation to see to the freedom of those held in bondage.

They and, and, and Dubois speaks about this in, I believe in his book, Black Reconstruction. They had trained 40, 000 black folks to fight. His plan was to take over the city of Atlanta first, and then take every other major black city in those blacks in those southern states to free those in bondage.

Instead of doing that, he had a vision that a civil war was going to break out. And he, uh, in turn then waited. And once the civil war broke out, when the North finally had enough sense, Because the North was losing to allow black soldiers in. They got 40, 000 already trained soldiers ready to fight. And that turned the tide.

I mention that because Moses Dixon also has a cemetery here in his honor. That was That was, um, created for members of the Knights of Liberty and anyone else who had held in bondage. So both my, uh, my grandfather's parents are buried in the Moses Dixon Cemetery. Wow. That's right out here on Sappington Road.

So there's, so the Samuel then is passed from Samuel Horn to my father, who gave it as a middle name to my, uh, twin brother. Now, when we, I had to tell you this story, they, they only knew it was one. They could only hear. Oh, they didn't know they were having twins. No, no. They only heard the heartbeat of one child.

So our hearts were beating at the same pace. Mm hmm. They could only hear one child, but my grandfather, my mother's father, kept telling her she was going to have twins. He's the only one that knew. So when I came out first, she was still pretty big. So the nurse told him, if that's the child, if that's the child, cause I was, I was so small I had grown to incubate.

They didn't think I was going to live. He said, if this one is the child, the first one that came out. You need to throw that one away and keep what's up in there because you've got a lot of work to do. And then Thotty came up. And so, he got the middle name. As his And so they didn't have first names, they were not prepared for.

Wow. So our older sister, Joyce, the only names they could come up with was Pete and Repeat. Ah!

So, Thotty would have been Repeat, because I was Thotty, and if he was here physically with us, he would be hitting me in the head. Right. So our sister, Joyce, came up with the names Terry and Gary. And that's how we got that. They had to rhyme and then I got Marilyn from



Marilyn Kennedy and he got Samuel from Samuel Horn as our middle name to remember past family members.

Well, you have really, um, gathered a lot of Ashe from those ancestors. I love it. I love it. So. Um, they, they unfortunately kill stack the rest of the horn family was there defending the home. Yes. So it was Kennedy's and horn stack. Our grandfather novel was a Kennedy. Some of his brothers were there because they only have brothers and sisters were there as well.

There have been any. So when the horn house. was attacked or the Kennedy house where Catherine Horne was, uh, our uncle, granduncle, our grandfather's brother was there as well. Eddie Kennedy. And he helped defend the house. Uh, they were shooting in the front and throwing torches in the back. They, their intent was to kill everyone in that house.

That would include Catherine Horne. Eddie Kennedy, Samuel Kennedy, Hal Lester Kennedy, and several other of their siblings. So they jumped out a side window, um, there was some tall grass and weeds, and they hid in there down a ravine, uh, until, um, they had left. Now, when we did, you know, Thottie organized a 1997, uh, commemoration at East St.

Louis Racial Rehabilitation Center. And he had the opportunity to visit a centurion, a woman who was 100 years old. Her name escapes me right now. And he, you know, Thottie was asked a series of questions. You know how the elders at that age, sometimes they woke, sometimes they sleep, but they still answer you.

Yes. So she finally said, you know, baby, who are you? He said, my name is Gary Kennedy. Uh, uh, uh, you know, I'm from St. Louis, my folks, she said, Kennedy, Kennedy, I heard they burned that house down and that mama took them children across that river. She had heard the story and he says he started crying at that point to get that whole story confirmed.

So they, you know, waited there in the grass. Uh, they were not allowing black folks across at that time, across the Eads bridge. on the St. Louis side. They were not. So she built a raft and put those children on that raft, um, and came over to St. Louis on a raft, uh, in the middle of the night. So I'm sure the resonance is not lost on you, Listener, as we think about Moses, uh, being secreted down the Nile to Pharaoh's daughter, to safety.

And The resonance with actually the Katrina disaster, the climate disaster in which we saw and heard stories of, um, black people trying to escape across the bridge to Metairie and being met by white men with guns who did not want to allow them to pass or cross. So we have to lift up this incredible ancestor who through ingenuity and desperation created a way for her family to survive.

If she had not done that, we, I wouldn't be sitting here today, able to speak to you. Her, that what she did and all those that helped her has created. A whole generation of Kennedys and



horns that would not have existed if she had not done that. So, you know, there's my cousin, Cynthia Kennedy, who was, you know, the daughter of Halester Kennedy, my father's brother.

He became the leading bail bondsman in St. Louis. Halester Kennedy, very much involved in politics. He funded lots of political campaigns. Uh, his daughter, Cynthia Kennedy, has. Children, many of them who are now involved in archiving this story, one of those Kezia, you've probably seen her before, but she's very much into photojournalism and all of that.

It is working a lot with Anne Hamlin, you know, Anne Walker rather on making sure that all this is documented as well. So that's how we got over here. Then they had to go through the struggle of not having a thing. The house was completely burned and gone. Uh, the other horns home had been attacked. And so the family on both of those sides was in total disarray.

So our father lived in shantytowns along the river with his brother, Halester. for several years. Then, as you know, later, the Urban League was formed, and then they got land out in Kinloch and relocated many of the survivors out in Kinloch. And that really is what grew the city of Kinloch into what it became, you know, a black city out in the county by the airport.

So my father and his brother used to walk from East St. Louis, because some of the horns were able to reestablish themselves there. Uh, and walk from East St. Louis, cross the bridge, follow the train tracks, and follow them straight on into Kenlock. So they walk from East St. Louis to Kenlock quite often.

They used to swim in the Mississippi. He has lots of stories of how they did that. Mm hmm. It was not foreign to them. Uh, and then later, the Depression hit. We're talking about the East St. Louis Race War in 1917. He was 10. He was seven years old, being born in 1910. By the time he got to really be an adult, the depression hit.

And so that threw them back out into chaos. And so they developed with others. His best friend, what we call our Uncle Frank, who were also a survivor of the East St. Louis. They were tough. That's right. They're very tough. And we're able, then we had other neighbors in the neighborhood, uh, who we would visit, our father would visit frequently, who were also survivors of the East St.

Louis Race War. And they stayed close and supported one another. You know, we'd hear the doorbell ring and, uh, our Uncle Halester would have left because Uncle Halester was older than our father. He left, now our father's Alderman now, he'd been working in, as a, um, leader of his union, the Textile Workers Union of America.

So he had a job and he had money, but my Uncle Hollister would always leave shoes and a nice suit jacket, you know, on the front porch for his younger brother to make sure he had stuff.



Beautiful. So out of that grew, you know, also out of that grew knowing that story. And then from the Johnson side, my mother's side, it made the rest of us.

Pretty much very active in, in the movement here in St. Louis and then later into elected politics of which I would think you would, I would have been the last person you would have thought would run for political office because I was on the more radical side, you know, the protest marches, the organizing Angela Davis support committee thought he was a part Black Patriot Party, I later became a part of the Congress of African People, who were on the more radical side of things.

But when my father passed in office, a group of elders came to me and said, um, yeah, we want to talk to you. Come, come to our house. Come to one of those kitchen table talks. And I wasn't going to turn them down because they saw me grow up. So they said, we want you to run. We know you. We think you'll be a good person for it.

We knew your father. We want you to run. I said, well, um, I'll think about it. I said, well, then they hit me. You always talking about building a legacy. Here's your opportunity. So what are you going to do? So I got into the race after speaking with some other folks. We were out of nine people. We were the last to file and we won and had been in office for 30 years from 1989 until.

Just a couple of years ago, you know, all the way up into from 1989 to 2019. I called it quits after that. Then they elected me. They selected me to be the clerk of the board. I see. I said, I said, I thought to myself when I saw you there, I said, he's going to haunt this place in purpose.

I'm the chief of chief of operations. Um, on my last day, they asked me to leave the room and then they unanimously unanimously elected me to be the clerk. And I found out by some people calling me because they saw it had been tweeted. I was the new, I'm the first black clerk in the history of the city.

Wow. The first black to be over the, the operations of the Board of Aldermen. Well, I mean, What did you say? I said after 250 years. After 250 years, we're still having firsts and that's a whole other complaint. That's another whole story. So the, the, the person that you lived with in your home that had experienced the, uh, 1917 rise was your Father.

Your father. Yes, my father. Now, did your father talk about those experiences? He did. He did. Did he ever mention any compensation for the home that was burned or the property that was lost? Other than saying that we didn't get any. Oh, okay. Never got any compensation for. You know, it's fascinating. In my research, I was reading the transcripts from the state elected during that time, right?

And the white elected officials of ST Lewis were complaining that they were having to devote Uh, police forces to escort black people back and forth in St. Louis, who was working there or thing because, you know, we, we often think that, you know, a riot. Is a discreet thing, people, their mind on Thursday, they clown all up to Sunday, then Monday to get their mind back.

But the truth was those, those white people were butthurt, as we say, for months afterwards, they were picking and still, you know, deploying violence and things like that. So it, it, it lets me know that your family's trauma didn't just end with the escape. Not at all. I'm sure that there were lots of, you know, hearing about people, people who didn't get burials.

There's a picture of an ass grave that they did and all sorts of things. No, the trauma didn't, didn't start. First of all, both our father and uncle talked about how when they were trying to go to school, this would have been as early as April. They were shot at, shot at. By white, by, by white, not, I wouldn't say large mobs, but by a collection of white people.

This was even before the riot. This is in April of that year, and the riot happened on July 1st, you know, July 1, 2, and 3. This is in April of that year. So they were having to be escorted to school by uncles and, uh, others with, who carried rifles to make sure that they could make it safely. So no, it, it.

The effects started long before then and continued far after then as well. So they had to, which taught us, you know, our father and uncles taught us this, this whole security protocol. The things that you need to have in your home to remain secure. Uh, we just took it as normal and natural. Uh, we learned later that it wasn't necessarily that, you know, that our father had, and our uncle would take, they would take brackets and put them on the, you know, across on either side of a door and then put a two by four across the door to make sure that no one could kick the doors in.

Uh, we were taught to do that. So when I'm moving to our home, the first thing I'm thinking about putting these brackets up so I can have that two by four across. It was normal and natural to me. Right. And I spoke to my cousin and told her about it. She said, yeah, now this is my, so this cousin would have been, my uncle would have been her grandfather.

He said, yeah, you know, my, my grandfather, uh, how Lester taught us the same thing. That was in this, in our psyche that has been passed from one generation to the next, this whole thing about security consciousness, you know, um, is to say, when you leave out the house, you let somebody know where you going in case we're going to come look for you.

You just don't go. You let somebody know the direction you're headed. I'm going to so and so's house. I'm going over to the store, such and such. And that became a family security protocol that lasts until this day. We've taught that to the next generation. Now you have cell phones, but in those days you didn't have cell phones.

They always said, carry a nickel or some change so if you got to make a call, you can get to the phone book. And make a call if we got to come and find you. So there was a, the result of that were a series of both protocols and ideas about life that grew out of that experience that itself could be a study, to be very honest with you, about the effects from one generation to the next.

The hypervigilance. These kind of things. I'm sorry, say? The hypervigilance. Yes. They call it hypervigilance. Yes. Sometimes people who've been in a war. They also experienced being hyper vigilant. If you remember our beloved, uh, Vietnam vets when they came home. Absolutely. They were hyper vigilant. Our sister Joyce, uh, has a doctorate degree in psychology and was over the, uh, psychology department at Governor State University.

Um, she was also a member of the Black Psychologist Association, uh, with, uh, you know, Dr. Robert Williams, who created. The whole concept of Ebonics. Um, She was in that organization. She oftentimes talked about epigenetics. And how Come on, come on genetic memory! That's it, exactly. And how that, the, that, those experiences become encoded on, you know, in the chemicals that are on the genes.

And how that also gets passed from one generation to the next. Um, She says she, she identified some of that in us. By some of the characteristics that we have and what, how that has been passed to us from that experience and that you cannot overlook that because then it begins to color, um, you know, one generation after next, how they handle the world.

So in this instance, it wasn't negative, but in other instances as a people, it can be and it has been and real study has not taken place in it because people are trying to deny the effects. of decades and generations of exploitation and, and bondage has on a people because if they do that study, then it may also put them in a position of having to recognize what they did and have to compensate people for it.

And America is not ready to accept that responsibility yet. So true. And not only that, I saw a brilliant young person ask about the epigenetics of white people. Mm, exactly. That domineering, domination, uh, unfounded belief of superiority and supremacy. Maybe that's in a chemical on their genes, too. So it was the Kennedys and Horns who were in East St.

Louis. Our fathers. Um, both, you know, sides, his, his mother's family and his father's family. And then, of course, them, those were the two, they were them. And so, and then later, of course, you know, some horns, they were able to reestablish themselves. Uh, one descendant of Josephine Horn was, um, Virtue York, who was there in East St.

Louis, who was buried in, uh, he passed in 1988, uh, went to the funeral. of Virgil York. And, um, he looked just like my Uncle Hollister. But see, his, his mother and Catherine Horn were



sisters. It would have been Josephine Horn. Then later, um, Cleopatra Horn, you know, taught music at, uh, Lincoln High School. And she was, um, uh, Miles Davis music teacher.

Wow. And so then Shirley Horn, who's a horn, you know, her brother was my grand, her father, I mean, was my grandmother's brother, um, was brought into the music industry by Miles Davis, Shirley Horn. And then she became the leading, uh, jazz singer, piano player, and then later mentored Roberta Flack. And, uh, Donnie Hathaway, who's a Vashon graduate.

Right. It all comes back around. It all comes back around. It all comes back around. Okay, so this, thank you so much for sharing this. I have one last thing I kind of wanted to. You know, get your, your answer, you know, you knowing the history now that you know, the worst of people and the best of people, where do you, how do you see that informing where we're headed?

Do, do you see more, uh, 1917 race massacre possibility, or do you see less of that? Well, I would start out by saying, we know certainly racism has not ended. Um, it has become. In some ways, a little bit more sophisticated, it is not as overt or as apparent as it was before, but our community still gets beat up and used to.

And then you sit at home, you realize, why do I have these lacerations and I'll realize that it's come from a endemic system that has now been, um, institutionalized in such a manner that you don't recognize when you're getting whooped, but you are now. Knowing history gives you some perspectives and can better inform you.

I mean, it becomes, there's a difference between a history writer and a historian. A history writer will write about history while historians Uh, not only understand the history, but then can analyze it and give some, some of show some of its impacts today. Uh, and typically historians write about their own people and get that analysis for their own people.

I'm saying that to say is that, um, knowing the history can inform you and give you ideas on how to handle your situation today. For example. Missouri is constantly, and St. Louis tries to push this notion that St. Louis is in the Midwest. But St. Louis was a slave holding city. Missouri was a slave holding state.

And there are not many Midwestern states that were slave holding states. So it gives you some idea of where it is, where you are. If you don't understand that, you'll have an unrealistic expectation of what will be the response when you do certain actions. For another example, in 1861 of April, when the Civil War broke out, the state of Missouri was concerned that St.

Louis was going to try to side with the Union. And it had a group of Irish police officers who were, had sympathies with the black. abolitionist. So the state came in and took over the St. Louis Police Department to ensure that they wouldn't, they were fearing that these police officers and these black abolitionists would take over the armory and leave St.



Louis on the side of the union. So they took over. The St. Louis Police Department, of which our struggle to get it back, was not successful until 2014. Wow. The state of Missouri held us in, held control of the St. Louis Police Department until 2014, after we had pushed and pushed and advocated and passed, uh, resolutions, did a, uh, non binding A referendum vote with a citizen said they want control of their police department.

It took all of that to get there. But if we, if you don't understand that this was a slave holding state and you think it's in the Midwest, then you will not realize that your work. It's fighting things that have not changed since slavery, because Missouri was not occupied by the North and we did not go through Reconstruction like the South did.

Reconstruction got rid of the plantations, but here that didn't happen. Now, from that perspective, I would say that we're looking at, I see a two or three tier thing. One, I see a generation of individuals who are becoming more informed and are recognizing the connections. And are beginning to try to make changes based upon that and are listening to those.

It is not the job of each generation to do exactly what the generation before them did, but it's for them to understand what they accomplished and what they went through as a basis to do their work today. I do see some young people doing that today. I do see another group that has bought into the hype and think that they are at the center of everything and the world started with their generation.

Well, many of them cannot even wear, would not even wear their afros had it not been for us. They wouldn't be able to wear cornrows to work, or be able to have braids or dreads that they can wear to work today, if we did not do that struggle ahead of time. So when we grew our naturals. And it wasn't a lot of here.

We grew our naturals. We faced the possibility of being put out of schools. So my point being is that those generations ahead of us, everybody is basing what they're doing based upon what has come before. So knowing those histories has informed us to act in a manner based upon that information and that analysis in a way that would lead us towards success.

I do see that happening. Um, there's generations who are coming up with Kwanzaa, for example. We were not, you know, we pushed to make it happen. And in that light, that is encouraging. I think that the stark reality of racism will teach the others. Who, who don't want to understand history and think that they're the center of the world.

Racism is consistent. It will teach them that they are not and that they need to know more than just what they have conjured up in their head. I hope I answered your question. You did. All





right now. And thank you. Bye. You're welcome. Thank you. The class of 1917 was made possible by donations to the community and an Illinois Humanities grant.

Stay tuned for episode three, where we talk to another descendant of a survivor of the 1917 East St. Louis race massacre.