I am Dr. Treasure Shields Redmond, and I'm executive director of the Community Archive. It's a oral history nonprofit 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.

I have to tell you, this episode is different. Never have I interjected so much because the respondent, uh, Ms. Rachel DeGuzman, was so intelligent, so steeped, so well researched and uh, felt so much of an affinity for her ancestor's story. I have to add that in this political moment. We are in the month of May, in the year 2025 when this is first recorded and because of the political moment, um, the increasing rise of the erasure of black histories, black stories, black realities.

So much of that bled into the conversation and I hope you enjoy. What is a telling and an exchange?

Well, I mean, I love, I love the coming together and the diversity of the two sides of the family. We have Kentucky, formerly enslaved, uh, one of the enlisted colored infantry that saved us. Uh, I really was just reading about how it was a general rebellion, I'm almost quoting word for word at the end of the Civil War that is credited with turning the tide toward the union.

Yes. And so enlisted men, enslaved folks just coming out of the fields, taking up arms, whatever that meant and liberating us. And I'm so, so grateful to people like your ancestor who, you know, did what it took to put that final nail in the coffin of enslavement. Well, I think for, to a large degree, and this is not just the people who fought in the Civil War, but black people who come from chattel slavery in this country, they are indigenous to this nation.

They're not indigenous to the land, like in, you know, native American people are, but this nation was formed with black people at, you know, building the capital. Mm-hmm. Doing everything. So I, I feel like. That their spirit was in the spirit of how people approached building a, a black community in East St.

Louis and so many other places. But certainly we're talking about East St. Louis here. So just the, you know, the, I think that, um, just the, the richness of my grandmother when she talked about East St. Louis, she loved East St. Louis. Mm-hmm. Now, she never talked about the massacre, but she loved East St. Louis.

So I have to feel like there was a real richness and togetherness of the black community there. I feel what you're saying, I mean, I've even heard, um, folks from East St. Louis, you know, I'm a dual citizen, but folks who are native, native to the area call other East St. Louisans, the East St. Louis diaspora, almost like it's a small African country.

And I'm starting to, and they, I feel like a diaspora. Yes. Yes. And they claim that they can notice one another. You know how when you meet Nigerians, they say, oh, that person is from my country. Oh, that, oh, that person is, uh, ibo. I know you a ibo. That's how, that, that's how East St. Louisans are wonderful.

They saying something about the accent, the walk, the, the, the, the cut of the shoulder. I don't know what it is, but it is deep. Well, I think East St. Louis, because she had roots there. So I grew up in Detroit. I was born in Ann Arbor, Michigan and grew up in Detroit. And certainly they say something about Detroiters too.

You know, they have that attitude. So I think my grandmother fit right in. Mm. Um, I think that that's probably why Detroit really appealed to her because it's, it's a radical attitude too. It's, it's a pro, it's a, it's a pride in being black. Um, and it's a particular type of pride. My grandmother was a very proud.

White looking black woman. I mean, she was very proud to be a black person. And she raised us, she raised her children to be proud of being black. Mm-hmm. And, you know, which it fits right in with Detroit. She also, um, you know, I looked at what school she taught at. She taught at Dunbar. Mm-hmm. Like the way back when she was teaching in 1918, maybe at Dunbar was, um, named after Paul Lawrence Dunbar.

Mm-hmm. I mean, you know, we're changing schools now that have Confederate names. The black people went to the fact that East St. Louis was ahead of the game and already had schools named after Black Heroes, I think says something about East St. Louis. And it makes me proud, even though I never grew up there or visited there as a child.

I mean, I think I went once and my grandparents, my great-grandparents were dead. You know, I never met many of her siblings that lived there. I do feel like it's a part of me, and it's certainly a part of who I am. So I do think there is a diaspora. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Well, I think, I mean, generationally, those, our ancestors, right after the Civil War, they were just like superheroes, right?

Yeah. Right in, in collaboration with well-meaning white allies. They founded every HBCU. They founded the naacp, the Urban League, the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs, I mean, all kinds of mutual aid societies and you know, faith denominations, like every institution we have that we trust almost was founded by that group of people.

So they were just. Incredible. And that they would have to endure the insult of these attempted pogroms, these attempted racial cleansings is just, you know, it's, it's breathtaking in, in the way

that it gs you. But let's move forward. Let's move forward in history. So we have a foundational ancestor from Kentucky foundational ancestor coming up from what is southern Missouri?

Cape Gerardo. Mm-hmm. And coming together in East St. Louis, uh, starting a family. And is it one of his sons, you said his son-in-law? Yeah. Bell. His, my great-grandmother's name was Bell, and she was one of his, um, she married John Eubank Senior. Mm-hmm. Who, um, became the detective, you know, later on, but when they got married in the 18 hundreds.

And my grandmother is one of their children. So it was his son-in-law. Okay. Um, John Eubanks, who's, um, who was involved directly now, Martin Hawkins at that time when in the, in the congressional testimony. Mm-hmm. It says that the first thing he did, he, if you know, I mean, you do know better than I do, 6 28 East St.

Louis. I mean, St. Louis Avenue is around, is around the corner from Lincoln School Old, the first Lincoln School. Mm-hmm. Two blocks down St. Louis Avenue is where everything started for the mm-hmm. That day on the second, it's where the speeches were be being given to, to, um, so he was going to work when he noticed something, and this is according to his testimony, so he, he went back home.

So we're on ju we're on July 1st. July 2nd, July 2nd, 1917. Right. And he noticed something was happening. So the first thing he did before he went to work, which made me fall in love with him, I didn't know, you know, I, we never met. Um, but it made me fall in love with him for real, is he went and got his family.

He knew something was gonna happen. Not to go through the whole history, but, you know, stuff had been happening since May. And so he knew, and he had the instinct of being a detective too, of knowing when something was about to pop off. So he went and got his family and he took them to the free bridge.

Among those people he took to the free bridge was my grandmother, his wife, his other children, and Mark Morton Hawkins. 'cause Morton Hawkins was a frail man then old man, he died in 1918, and so he escorted them as he's leaving the free bridge. He comes across two, well, first one group of about 32. Black women and children and they asked him to es escort them to safety.

Mm-hmm. Because I can only imagine they knew he was a police officer. 'cause it's a small town, everybody knows everybody. Mm-hmm. And so they asked him to escort him and he did before reporting to work because he said that their husbands were on those 12 hour shifts at the pla, at the factories. And they wouldn't even know anything was hap starting to happen.

So he escorted one group and then another group. And then he went to work. And then he was talking to, according to this testimony, the mayor and the chief of detectives. And I'm like, so when I went to the Belleville Historical Society, I'm like, why are, why is the mayor talking to my greatgrandfather? And somehow he was at the center of things.

I don't know why he was at the center of things, but it's a long story. But he was at the center of things and then they were trying to send him into areas where there were a bunch of, um, where there were a bunch of white crowds, like 80 or more people, mobs. And he said he didn't go into the mob. And so they were critical of him in this testimony because what I, my, as what I was trying to, what I get out of reading the whole thing is they were trying to make it like it was a gang collision.

Like there were the white mobs and the black mobs there, and he would not say that there was a black mob. So they were trying to say there were good people on both sides. Remember when certain person said that about Charleston, he was trying to say that and he was what he did not want it to be. Was that the, because remember at the time the United States, because, 'cause these, this is a congressional hearing, we were trying to promote.

You know, this democracy all over the world. And we, people were laughing at us. There were headline stories all over the world about this. And they were like, well, how can President Wilson be promoting democracy over the world and chastising us when they don't even treat their own people? Right? Look how they're treating their own people.

And it was particularly horrific. And as you know, you know, you have all of the white people, even some of the white papers were like horrified. But then you also have WEB Du Bois coming in for the crisis, and you have Ida B. Wells coming in from her group in Chicago. So they were, they were trying to reframe what happened in East St.

Louis into this, oh, you know, white people and black people don't like each other, so here's this collision. And he wouldn't do it. I mean. Through, that's why they're 91 pages of testimony because mm-hmm. They kept trying to, and at first I was like, why is he being so dodgy? You know? Because he wasn't answering their questions.

Mm-hmm. But he was only an not answering their questions. 'cause he knew he wanted, they wanted him to name names. They, he knew. And at one point they even said to him when he said he wouldn't go into a crowd, well, for the record, you're a mulatto. Right. Trying to divide. Mm-hmm. Like not having none of that.

Mm-hmm. They actually put that in the congressional hearing. Right, right. So you guys wanna, you guys wanna hint at, you wanna hint at me being mixed now, but I bet if we looked at my salary, I wouldn't have, you know, the same salary as you during this, they were saying wear a uniform. Right, exactly. Man, they, because they didn't want them in uniform.

He knew, and everybody knows when you're in a small town, I don't care what your complexion was, one drop rule, you are a black man. Exactly. He knew it was a black man. Those people in those crowds knew he was a black man. And this was, they were trying everything that they could to reframe things. And it was just, it, it felt like some of the Trump hearings.

I mean, it really did when I was reading it. And what, what it did for me was, um, you know, the more things change, the more things stay the same. And white supremacy is white supremacy. It's so true. And you know, I, here's what's fascinating, uh, this sort of, uh, circular hamster wheel that white supremacy has the US on.

You know, there's an incident and then there's a congressional inquiry. A hearing, they bind it all up in a book and put it on a shelf. They don't use any of the lessons from it. And then a few years later, there's an incident, we start all back over. And we've been doing this for now 200 years. Well, they're trying to take, we're doing something like it for 200 years.

They're trying to repeal the, um, the 14th and 15th amendments right now. They really are trying, or actually 14th amendment. They're trying to, they're trying to really, you know, that they're trying to really break any kind of, um, progress that black people and indigenous people have had in getting a racial reckoning.

And, you know, when we've actually started drawing blood is when they start acting like fools. And we're in one of those cycles right now. Mm-hmm. But also, you can't forget the fact that historically, you know, when they talk about the red summer. 1917 is two years after Birth of a Nation. And the, you know, and so a lot of what happened was, you know, a precursor to what you're gonna see later on with Red Summer.

But East St. Louis was too prosperous. They were voting still, and they were, I'm talking about black people. And black people were finding ways to have impact on the government. And so it wasn't ethnic cleansing and you, it wasn't just, I think that the thing to remember, I think Charles Lumpkin is very, um, adept explaining this, it, this, um, east St.

Louis was founded by the Morgans, by the Robert Barons, by the, um, Carnegies those people. This was not just an uprising of, um, people coming from Eastern Europe. And, you know, resenting people. This was actually saying, I think these people have got too much power. They were useful in the beginning. We don't need them anymore.

We don't want them here. We're gonna get rid of them. Mm-hmm. Well, I mean, I, I, I, I couldn't agree more. I mean, I'm sure you've seen the historical document, I can't remember if it is the Chamber of Commerce, a businessman, a an industrialist, it's own letterhead and it's basically a meeting calling all the white men together because quote unquote, the long time resident black people and colored people, that's not who we're talking about.

It's this influx of new ones that we've got to, you know, address. And I thought to myself, what is really happening here? And you're right, it's. It's basically racialized capitalism. Absolutely. We always think we, capitalism is always racialized. Mm-hmm. Either racialized from a, um, na national basis or a colonial basis, but capitalism is always racialized.

It came up at the same time. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. At least the form of capitalism that we experience now in the world, it was always racialized. Mm-hmm. And, you know, I'm convinced

that, um, that the people who, um, you know, make the most money, who take the most resources and had, and have had time to study, um, the signals.

Like you said when, when you said, you can tell we're drawing blood, when they start to act a fool, the, the enemies of good. And the capitalists, they study the signals. And I think there are moments where they can tell, oh, okay, they're about to slip over into class consciousness. Okay? If we continue to let this happen, those, uh, you know, Lithuanians and, and and other eastern Europeans, they, I saw them going to the black woman's cart buying collars.

I saw them at the, going into the jook joint and they didn't get kicked out. I, I saw them standing out having a cigarette with the shoe shine, guys. Uh, oh, let's, let's not, let's not have some class solidarity here. We gotta, we gotta interject them. Don't forget you white, don't forget you a cut above. Don't forget you better and keep that Oh, but you're almost white.

Uh, right. Prove yourself and you get white. Yeah, you're almost white. I mean, and then, you know, and it's so, it, it's. It's not for people that don't understand the race is a social construct. They may be confused, but my mother told me when she was growing up in the forties and fifties in Detroit, that Italian people and Jewish people were, and Greek people were not white.

Mm-hmm. Now they weren't black, but they were not white. Mm. You know, and I think that, so we also have to look at that whole trend, but you can go back to the bacon rebellion anytime people start getting together and see where, um, you know, you have black people and white people of the same class starting to get together.

And it's a threat to the powers that be because we want to make, um, racism and racial violence low class because we don't want people to be aware that the people who are perpetuating or stoking the fires for this kind of racial violence are really protecting their billions. Mm-hmm. That's right. And that's, that's everyone involved is protecting the billions.

But back back to your incredible ancestors. So you said that morning before the real peak of the violence, he had already helped, uh, a group of women and children. He had gotten his elderly father-in-law, um, his wife and his children over the free bridge. Do you know where they went in st. In St. Louis to kind of like lay low?

I don't, and I don't know if I ever will, you know, the, there's so much in books and in, you know, that I can see like this is a treasure trove of information. Mm-hmm. And when we first spoke, I hadn't seen this. Mm. I think I got it like maybe a week after when we first connected, because, um, it's on ProPublica now.

But I hadn't gone, I would've had to go to the Library of Congress and find the archives there. But, um, it really changes everything. I was so glad to have it before I went there, because then I could actually trace his steps in East St. Louis. Mm-hmm. And for those listening, she is referring to the Congressional testimonial record.

Uh, yeah, it was, this was from Friday, October 26th, 1917. Yes. And my, my sense is it, it, yeah, you can definitely pick out from the line of questioning the, the, you know, just intense racial hierarchies that existed during that time. Um, I can't remember her name. She was a survivor. Her picture is very signature because she was shot and became an amputee, I remember.

Mm-hmm. And there's that moment in the congressional testimony where they're questioning her. And I'm sure she showed up of course to the testimony missing an arm, which is quite uncanny for us humans, no matter our race. And I could see through the questioning that they were having trouble, uh, accepting that, that she had done nothing to draw the ire.

They kept, they keep asking like, did you have a gun? Did you run toward them? Did you make any movement? She's like, no, I just walked outside. And when I saw all of them with guns, I turned to run inside. And that's when my arm was shot off. Well, it it's also very clear that they don't really care. Yes. I mean, it was very clear that they had to do this.

They, they, um, they, there was pressure to do this for multiple reasons, including the interstate commerce was interrupted. And that became a big deal from a national perspective. Mm-hmm. But, um, this was not, this, just like with many of the inquiries that we've experienced even in our lifetime, this was not because they were outraged by what happened.

They, they wanted, they knew that they had, that their position in the world was taking a hit. And that, you know, there is a tipping point. You know, my grandmother on the other side of my family, not from East St. Louis, she was a communist and she was an activist. And when she was a communist in the thirties, 1930s, that was something that wasn't just her.

There were so many people in this country that were communists and Roosevelt's. Um, a a lot of Roosevelt's acts did not really have to do with, um, helping black people. It was how to keep this country a capitalist country. Hmm. I mean, and so I really feel like we're gonna see that cycle again, preach soon.

But this was really okay. We studied it, you know, we are a democracy. We've done this. And the report is very interesting too, because what I've read, I've read it all now. Mm-hmm. A lot of reading. I mean, it was almost like taking a course, but I've read it all of it now. And their conclusions were very neutral.

They were, they, they couldn't quite go where they wanted to go with it without being just gross accused of gross hypocrisy. But they really tr they, they had the hearing so they could say, oh, we had these hearings and we can't, you know, we're not, um, these people are not being hunted and this is not terrorism.

And okay. And then like you said, they took it and they put it on a shelf. And for the most part, I'm gonna tell you the truth, I've been working on this project very, um, intently for two years, but I've been, for 10 years, I've been like surfacing stuff. Mm-hmm. So, but two years ago is when I really started focusing on it.

And so many people here in New York State have never heard of it. They're just hearing about Tulsa probably because of shows on HBO and stuff like that too. But they, they're, they have no idea that this happened or that it was as impactful as it was all over the world, that this was something that, you know, like I said, cri, the Crisis Magazine talked about all the time and the people went to investigate.

But what I've also found is if I Google my Grandfa, my great-grandfather's name, I get all these dissertations from all over the world popping up. 'cause people also do their, get their doctorates on this mm-hmm. Studying this. So this is not something that, I mean, with what you're doing with these oral history projects and with what the, um, historical society's doing and everything, it's not gonna be forgotten, but they want it to be.

I agree. I agree. And there's always an attempt to kind of, uh, sway history's meaning to, to in the service of capital. Well, this happened because, you know, black people didn't have enough money and black people should be, should have more money. And, but you, your family had businesses, your family, uh, were in the highest professions at the time.

They, they owned theaters. I mean, when you own a theater, you don't just, you have interstate commerce. Because you have to order the Nickelodeon. There's a technician probably that came with it and all, I mean, you know, they were the equivalent of owning a, a, a small tech store. You know what I'm saying?

When you have the industrial, when you're at the top of the industrial chain at the time, which is what a Nickelodeon would've been, the technology of the time. Well, they did it in the dirt, in, in, um, in a, according to tidbits. So the, um, pet, the Reginald and Edna Petty, I credit them so much with the little black T tidbits because I, I took that, that's why oral history projects and, you know, getting people's, um, histories mm-hmm.

Is so critical because I learned so much about my family. I'm like, wait a minute. That's my family. That's my family, that's my family, that's my family. And it gave me things to follow up on. But I, I don't wanna confuse the fact that they were very industrious and they did well with wealth. They were not a wealthy family.

Okay. Okay. They had a car. Yeah. Which I guess was a big deal then. Um, I don't know if I thought they were wealthy. I thought they were well positioned. They were well positioned, and that's what I would say. Well positioned. They were getting education. My grandmother went to college. Her sister went to college.

Her brother became the president in the naacp. And, um, John Eubanks Jr. The detective's son, and he was a physician. Mm-hmm. Miles Davis's first trumpet. Mm-hmm. Miles Davis's, um, autobiography because he and Miles Davis' father were best friends. Mm-hmm. And, you know, and so, and then, uh, because Miles Davis' father was a dentist.

Right. They were both, both the dentist and the physician? Both of them. Okay. I understand. Well back and look in the, um, autobiography. It's pretty, he, it was a colorful descriptions of relationship, but he called, well it was my uncle Johnny. He knew my uncle Johnny, uncle Johnny was deceased before I was born, but that was my mother's brother.

Um, jelly Row Morton used to go through their house because Horace Eubank was on his dis discography. He was on, it was Armstrong's Discographies. They had a very vibrant house of people. His, her sister, Gladys John Eubanks daughter, Gladys, my grandmother's sister, she was in Oscar Michelle films. Mm. So, I mean, they were, they were the, they were part of the vibrancy of black life at that time.

Mm-hmm. I would say it like that. And they were also very industrious. But I told you when we met. What I'm finding is, you know, I knew my family was like that. What I'm finding is there were a whole lot of black people that were like that. I think that characterized black people period there, you know, and it probably, they'd have to get, be there a couple of years to get their feet on the ground working whatever jobs.

They had a whole lot of Pullman Porters who were based there. Mm-hmm. There, you know, they, there's a film, a documentary that says the Pullman Porters built the black middle class, you know? Mm-hmm. Both from a communications perspective, but also that, you know, the little money they earned, being able to save it.

But being able to, um, communicate north and south with people on their roots, plus the Pullman porters were exposed to so much so because they were, you know, even if they were, had to be shucking and jiving in the eyes of. The, um, people they were serving, they weren't, they were observing everything. They were figuring things out.

They were exposed to the possibilities, to different people, to seeing, you know, seeing so much. So when I got, my grandmother was very proud of her family, and my grandmother became a socialite in Detroit, but she didn't describe her family that way. She described her family as a very hardworking family, a very close knit family.

But one of the things I also told you was that after the Pilgrim, the massacre mm-hmm. Be UBank and John Eubanks divorced. Now Eubanks was the, the detective, correct? Correct. They divorced his. Interesting. He stayed on the police force for a couple more years and became a real estate, um, you know, had a lot of real estate.

Um, his, his, um, out of his, um. Retirement letter was published in the paper. It was so weird. I'm like, why is this Black man's retirement being published in the paper? But I think that they were, the white people were scared that people would perceive him as being forced out. 'cause he keeps saying, I wasn't forced out.

I wasn't forced out. Which, you know, generally means I was forced out. Yeah. I was totally forced out. But my great grandmother, his wife wanted to go with Garvey to, um, Liberia.

Mm-hmm. She became Garveyite. She was like, we have done everything right. We, they said that if we do things like this, then we will start, you know, we'll get some respect for white people.

And basically she's like, I don't believe it. I wanna go. But she ended up living in Chicago because of course the Black Line did not, star Line did not ever go to Liberia. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Came McGarvey. I, so I also think that there was a element of radicalism. In East St. Louis. Mm-hmm. 'cause what, what is this woman who's been a housewife all this time, living a relatively comfortable lifestyle?

I would say she had people that helped her in the house. Mm-hmm. And she's going, she's like, bumped that I am going to Iberia. Mm. Well, I mean, I think the diversity of thought in your family is really a snapshot of the African American kind of political tree. The Tree of Choices, the branch of choices.

Some people, you know, say, well, there's no hope. Get out of the South. Right. That's, that's what happened with Ida B. Wells after her friends were lynched and her, her printing press was torched. She went all the way up to New York near you. And that is where the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs gave her money to put together her foundational study, the red record, all about lynching.

And she used information she got from East St. Louis in there to, uh, you know, kind of inform her statistics, her numbers, all of that. So she wrote a book, she wrote a pamphlet about East St. Louis too. Mm-hmm. She sure did. She sure did. And, uh, but then you have some people who say, well, it's a spiritual thing, right?

We're gonna go deep into A-M-E-A-M-E, you know, a lot of black people, uh, you know, charge the church with being the great conciliatory force in the black community. Right. They keep us all, you know, thinking about heaven and not thinking about bashing Mrs. Head in and heaven like, but the a ME was a radical force was, you know, had spots on the Underground Railroad.

So. You have all these people, then we have people like your grandmother, the Garveyite, great-grandmother, great-grandmother, the Garveyite, and in the union i a and everything. Well, Mar Morton Hawkins, I mean Morton Hawkins. Her father was a, he was, he was a race man. And he was a, so she was, she was actually exhibiting some of, I think his, um, the same thing he did when he came to East St.

Louis and her husband was not, but that's, that's still, he was still radical. I mean, when you read the testimony, he was still radical. It's just not as radical. Mm-hmm. But there also was something where, that I'm very proud of and very, um, curious about and, and studying more, is the impetus for black people in East St.

Louis to, to, um, arm themselves. They were not, they were not gonna lie down. They take whatever, um, was coming to them. And that was one of the things that. From the, a white

supremacist perspective might say that, oh, this is why we did this. You know, because they were shooting into a car. No, I just, I, I'm in love with all of them.

Mm-hmm. I feel so indebted to them that they actually, and I'm not blaming people who don't arm themselves. I don't have a gun. Mm-hmm. But I, but just the fact that they were going to protect each other, that the Mutual Aid Society meant, also meant the Mutual Protection society. Mm-hmm. And I, you know, one of the things about white supremacy is it, it, it fits all of us into these kind of character slots, these, these stock characters.

So black people are just supposed to have history and acted upon us. We are just supposed to be passive recipients who either are saved or killed. Who either get to be the monster or the redemptive one. You know, it's all very binary. So I think when those black people were sick, according to the vernacular history of white people coming through the neighborhood, rousting their porches, shooting into their homes, uh, you know, one of the, the, the, the, um, descendants that I interviewed, uh, Mr.

Kennedy said that his, uh, great-grandfather told him that they were walking the children to school even before the, the, the height of the pogrom happened because people were taking pot shots at the children. So when you think about those ancestors shooting back at a car, coming through unmarked, nobody has on a policeman's uniform.

And they unfortunately, or fortunately. Succumb to their in, in injuries, I don't feel anything. But that's what you get. That's right. And, and, and the fact that, um, and just the, the viciousness and the, um, of, of everything that happened, I mean, I don't wanna, um, I spend a whole lot of time on this, but the viciousness ooh.

And the, and the participation of white men, white women and white children, that part. And actually pulling people off of street cars and burning people alive. I mean, burn, burning people that are alive, all of those kind of things. It's vicious, making fun of people as you're pulling them off of their bodies and everything.

Mm-hmm. And then having survivors go back and see white women in their clothes. That one, that one took me down through there. So listeners, she, uh, uh, uh, Rachel is, is referring to this one, uh, oral history that, was it taken down by Ida B. Wells? I think so. Was it taken down by Ida B. Wells, where In her, she, mm-hmm.

She came back, the, uh, the, uh, person who had been, uh, uh, who was a victim of the, you know, who had to, who had had to flee. And she came back to her home to see what else she might recover, even though they had been fires and, you know, white people looting, blah, blah, blah. And the neighbor had on her dress just as plain as that.

And when she approached her about, huh, I think it was a fur too, or something like that, she had on the dress. And when she approached her about it, she said, well, everybody else was doing it right. And to me, that indicates envy. And I think that that part, I think the thing about it is

that. When you're researching this and when you're reading about it and everything, to not put it all on the same level.

Mm-hmm. People entered into the, into the massacre where they came from. Mm-hmm. So it does not negate the, because she was, um, you know, scavenging people's stuff does not mean that Morgan and Carnegie and those kind of people did not influence what happened. Mm-hmm. It does not mean that the union was not contributing to anti-blackness.

Mm-hmm. The leaders of the union was a gompers. I mean, so these are people that I know I learned in school were heroes from the union. They also were very anti-black. Mm-hmm. It also doesn't mean, and one of the things they discussed in my great-grandfather's testimony. Was the whole unionization versus non-union.

And what he said and maintained is that the black people in including Dr. Leroy Bundy, tried to get the union, tried to have those meetings for black people to become unionized, and the white unions did not want them. So anything you read, anyone listening to this that says that black people didn't wanna be in unions, that's a lie.

They were rejected from unions or they were offered such a bad deal that it wasn't positive for them to be in the union. So, but they were people unions, there were people that just hated black people and wanted to follow, like, you know, they wanted to terrorize black people. They were coming from all different levels.

And the powers of bee were fomenting this, they were the, the speech that my greatgrandfather heard two blocks from his home where the mob is getting all fired up. It's like a Donald Trump speech. Mm-hmm.

So, but women and children were involved here, and that's why it's really critical to me that whatever I write or whatever I, you know, in my research, has to include the fact that this was not men behaving badly on their own white men. Mm-hmm. This was, uh, and this is the history. Look at the lynching pa um, postcards.

Look at the children trying to integrate schools in those women. And white women have never taken, um, responsibility to me for their roles in terror of black people. No. And part of it is, you know, our, when I say our mean, the culture's ingrained sexism that also wants to, uh, you know, just. That, that, that, that doesn't want to give women the full power of their choices.

We wanna believe that there's always a man pulling the strings. Um, and you know, it's, it's, it's something that I've talked with many sister friends about, white and black. Um, no one's voting against their own interests for a hundred years. Stop yourself from having that conversation and asking yourself now, why would they?

Because what you're doing is you're denying that woman, her full humanity, as distorted as it is by her anti-black racism, she's making those choices. No man is put pulling that lever in the

booth for her for a hundred years. They voted the same. So some people, and I wish there were a better way, a better term to use.

But sometimes I say kamikaze, sometimes I say suicide bomber. Just to bring home the strength of when people's project of whiteness supersedes their own survival. They are cognizant of that, just like the kamikaze, just like the suicide bomber is saying, you know, maybe there's 1% of me that hopes this bomb doesn't kill me, but I'm going in knowing that it will, because my mission is bigger than me.

So I really think we have to accept that about a lot of these white women in these racialized and racial terrorist situations, they are just as culpable. They're just, they're making their own decisions and they are just as culpable. And it, it is terrifying. It is terrifying. As women in particular.

Anyone who's given birth or mothered in any way, it's hard for us to accept it, but it it is, the evidence is there.

Well, I know that the, at the, the, my grandmother went on, she taught a couple years in East St. Louis. She never went back. Mm-hmm. Loved it. She taught in Indianapolis. They lived in Chicago. She married my grandfather and then they lived in Detroit. Um, her sister Gladys, who was in the Oscar, Michelle Films, she ended up living in, um, Chicago and Muskegon, Michigan.

Her brother stayed. Um, her brother, um, her brother Horace was a musician in Europe. An expatriate. Mm-hmm. Europe. I guess one of the things I didn't say that I should probably say here terms of, um. What was happening in 1917, John Eubanks Jr. The, the son of the detective in Horace Eubanks were fighting in Europe.

They were in the, they were in the World War I. Mm. And IF read that more black men from Illinois enrolled or enlisted in the First World War than anywhere else in the country. They were part of that. And they were part of the, they were musicians, but they were part of the battalion that actually went to fight with the French.

French. So all that's happening. So while his father's trying to fight things at home, two of his sons were fighting in Europe. Mm-hmm. In World War I, uh, which I think, I mean, yeah. The irony is staggering. The irony is staggering. Wow. And I wonder what, I really am trying to research Edward Stanton Hawkins now.

Mm-hmm. Because my, so Morton Hawkins, one of his, his first born son Edward, was the first black postal work post officer poster carrier in East St. Louis. Hmm. Okay. What was he carrying the mail? I mean, what, what happens there during, I wanna know what he was doing during that time. Did they stop mail service?

You know? Hmm. He was, he was, he was among the first black, I mean, postal carriers, the first six in, um, east St. Louis, I think were in 1906. Mm-hmm. But there was one black man

again that, that's, that I think patronage. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Why he was able to get that job. But he was the first black male carrier. Mm.

Well, so the, the last, uh, ancestor of yours to remain in East St. Louis was the one who was a musician, and then they eventually went to Europe. No, the last one to remain there was, um, John Eubanks Junior. Mm-hmm. Who got, you know, got married, who was, like I said, the, he was the head of the president of the NAACP at one time, and he, St.

Louis, he was a doctor there for many years. I think he died in 1958. Um, but he was a physician, so he was the one, he and his wife Alma, stayed in East St. Louis. And my, and, and, um, so did, um, John Eubanks Senior was still there. Mm-hmm. His wife left him and mm-hmm. And, um, he stayed there. Hmm. So my grandmother would go, she would go back.

There were things in the paper that would say she's going back and or her brother was coming from East St. Louis to Detroit to visit her. But, um, I went only once when I was a little girl. We drove through. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. So after the Eubanks passed away, the physician and his wife and then his son? His son, yes.

Go ahead. I have to take back what I said. You're asking about Eubanks and my grandmother's family. Certainly there were other people there. Okay. In the greater family. And the Beasleys. The Hickmans. Mm-hmm. Um, they don't live in St. Louis, but, um, Dr. Novella Hickman is, I guess my second cousin once removed.

She's still there in the Green Norville, Hickman the third. Who I corresponded with recently. He lives in San Francisco, but he went to high school in, I mean he went to school in East St. East, St. Louis schools. Um, so the Hickmans have been a lot of the Hickmans are there, the Beasleys. And there's probably family, I don't know that are still there because my family names are Hawkins, Beasley.

Hickman. Eubanks. So as we move to a close, what I was wondering is did your family pass down stories about the impact of the race massacre? How did you find out that your family were even actors in such a integral way in those events? I didn't know anything about it. Um, my grandmother never mentioned it to me.

She mentioned, she told me all about East St. Louis, the schools, the food, the, I mean, and how much she loved it going up, having to go up this big hill to school at one point, you know, she, the wi the winters, the flooding, you know. 'cause when she was born, she was born in 1897, um, that her grandfather, the house on east, on St.

Louis Avenue actually was three levels because they had a kitchen on the first level and the second level. So then when it flooded, they would go up a, she told me so many things about it and how much she loved it, but she never mentioned anything about that to me. How did I learn about it? Um, I learned about it.

It's a kind of in a, a, I started, my grandmother had, she has scrapbooks. Mm-hmm. And, um, so I knew what her brothers and you know, what her family looked like. And so I was watching Kim Burns jazz series with, um, my husband, and this is when it first came out. So it was a long time ago. And I said, that's Uncle Johnny.

And my husband said, that's not your uncle Johnny. And of course I was going to find out that I was gonna prove him wrong. Mm-hmm. So I contacted the, um, photo, um, producer for the series and I found out that it was indeed my uncle Johnny. And then I found out he was with this man named pg pg Lre Bands.

And PG Lre was like a precursor to jazz. I mean, he was the big bands and everything, and he would play at circuses, but that's where a lot of the jazz was played at that time. Longer story than for here. Mm-hmm. So as I started looking, because my family's in so many dissertations and books, is I learned it that way.

And I actually don't even know if I knew about the, um, massacre, the time that I first started looking. But then, so that's been probably 20 years that I've started poking around. And as more and more information became available, I would research and I had no agenda just to know. And Ferguson happened. Mm.

And I became infuriated that Ferguson's nine minutes from East St. Louis. And that there was, you know, they would be talking about relationships between the, um, police and commun black community, and that there was so little reference to the history. And so I wrote a blog. I think you found the blog.

That's how you found me? Mm-hmm. I was writing a blog for our Democrat and Chronicle paper at the time, and so I wrote about my grandfather. I didn't even have it all right then. I mean, I, at this point, you know Ferguson, what happened in 20 15, 20 16? 2014. 14? Mm-hmm. That's how long I've been studying this, and then af after a certain point, after so much was coming up about Tulsa and nothing was happening about East St.

Louis plus the whole Trump era, which feels so much like the political environment that existed then yes, it felt imperative for me to tell a story, I guess two years ago. I've read so much, so many people have done so much good scholarship about this. I felt I didn't have to write a history book. I'm not a historian, or at least I'm a lay historian, if anything.

But I thought that I had an important story to tell about my family in St. Louis period, but specifically about, with my great-grandfather's involvement as a colored, colored policeman. Mm-hmm. That it was really critical that I tell this story at this time when Florida's trying to erase black history. Mm mm Powerful.

I think, I think the final thing I'll ask you about is the silences. You know, I think a lot about this, um, what we say out loud and what we don't say out loud. Like, I think it's fascinating that you

knew someone who was at least close to Was, was your great-grandmother or was it your grandmother you said who talked about how much they loved these St.

Louis. My grandmother, now it's very close to my grandmother. And how old was she when, when the riots happened? She was 19. She was 19. So it's, it's fascinating to me when it's not mentioned or when it is mentioned, the deeply, uh, disturbing violences aren't ever, uh, so right now I've talked to a descendant whose great grandmother built a raft and they went across the river.

I saw, I listened to that. Yes. And she talked about, you know, he talked about them throwing fire, fire bombing homes. Um, but there, but there's still some strategic silences there. I talked to another descendant whose father was the one that WEB Du Bois quoted and his father ran, hid, ran to Brooklyn, Illinois, heading some trains.

And his father made it a point to not really talk about it. I mean, people would mention it 'cause he had wounds. They had shot him this mob. Um, and, and it, it is just interesting to me what trauma won't let us say and what it will let us say. Well, it broke up their family. She never told me about the divorce either.

Hmm. You know, this was a, it was really broke up. Their family, number one. Number two, my grandmother, by the time I was born, she had lived through three massacres riots. Hmm. The St. Louis, which was probably the most profound to her, you know, being right in the thick of it. The 1943 Detroit riots and then the 1967 Detroit riots and the 1967 ones tanks went down the street.

Two, two houses from her. So, I mean, I think that, that, it's not unusual. It's unusual for my grandmother. My grandmother was very, she talked about a lot of things. She talked a lot about a lot of things in general, but she told me so much, she taught me so much, you know, um, she was an elderly woman, not, not a young grandmother, but an elderly grandmother when, so she was talking about stuff and telling us lessons and everything, and she told us about her father and how conservative he was, but he was kind, you know, so she told me about her father.

It's not like she erased that and she told me he was a detective. She did not tell me about that. And so the kind of pain, I think you see it in slavery with, um, people not really tell, talking about their experiences in slavery too. I think that those traumatic things that the way people cope and move forward with their sanity is to kind of compartmentalize and not really.

Revisit things like that or make been that she didn't want us to have to have that burden of that kind of, um, violence. But yeah, she never told us, she never told me, she never told my, um, siblings. I tried. I'm trying to reach some family members that were still there so that they can talk more from a personal level.

But I feel like I know enough and so many people have written about, I mean, I Google them, they pop up. Mm-hmm. Um, so I also think that the story of their, of how they came there is

important. I don't think I'm gonna go like, into the future, um, like what happened. Like, I'm not gonna try to bring the story to present day.

Mm-hmm. At least in this go round, because I, I do think it's important how they went there. And I feel so blessed to have actually made the decision to go to East St. Louis, not just to feel the ghost mm-hmm. To see the spaces, but the people I have met with. Have really, um, contextualized the brilliance, the, the vibrancy of the community there that existed, and even with the ghosts that still exist, maybe in the diaspora.

Mm-hmm. I feel very connected to people I know and don't know. Mm-hmm. Mm. Same, same. It's all ancestors all the time with me. Um, well, this has been a fascinating conversation that's given me a lot to think about. I, I'm so interested in your grandfather, and I think we might even once my grandfather, huh?

Your great grandfather. Um, we, we, maybe we'll have a further conversation about him over cocktails, over adult beverages. Again, one day,

the class of 1917 was made possible by your donations and support from Illinois Humanities, the Illinois Arts Council, and a special healing Illinois grant. Stay tuned for our next episode where we talk to another descendant of a survivor of the 1917 race massacre.