# I See My Light Shining: Oral Histories of Our Elders

Oral History Interview with

Michael Grice

Columbia Center for Oral History Research

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# PREFACE

The following oral history is the result of a recorded interview with Michael Grice conducted by Renée Watson on April 17, 2023. This interview is part of the I See My Light Shining: Oral Histories of Our Elders project.

The reader is asked to bear in mind that they are reading a verbatim transcript of the spoken word, rather than written prose.

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Q: Hello and thank you so much for being willing to talk with me. I'm very excited to get your story on record and I want to start with your beginning. Can you tell me your name, what year you were born, and where you were born?

Grice: My name is Michael Leroy Chappie Grice, born in Portland, Oregon, 1948, a long time ago. Interestingly, I was born at Emanuel Hospital in Portland, and in 1974 my daughters, my twin daughters, were born at Emanuel Hospital, and later, twenty years later, my grandsons were born at Emanuel Hospital in Portland. It's right in the heart of the community. The several Black doctors that we did have—DeNorval Unthank, Dr. Unthank, they named a park after him, and Dr. Reynolds, chief of staff at Emanuel Hospital—that was the hospital that they worked out of. It's like Martin Luther King Jr. Hospital in Los Angeles.

Q: Yes. And what was Portland like in your childhood years? What are your memories of growing up in Portland?

Grice: Well, I grew up very naive, and as I reflected on it, there were two reasons why. I was such a little gangster, trying to get around all the boundaries that my parents set up for me. But in reality, I had three things that made my childhood wonderful. I had a bike, I had a dog, and I had a baseball glove. That's all I needed. The bike, while my mom thought we were just riding

around the block, we would be off into the suburb. We would be miles from home, me and my next-door neighbor Russell Dawson [*phonetic*]. Was my idol up until high school, and we went to different high schools. And so I had a bike and a dog. My dog's name was Lucky. And of course, it's a lot of detective work to find out, but Lucky is in all my passwords.

Q: [*Laughs*] And tell me about your baseball glove.

Grice: Baseball glove, there's a question that you put forth about, what was my earliest real dealing of racism. I experienced racism, but I didn't know what it was when I was a child. Because Portland really is a nice place, and a lot of racism everywhere like anyplace else. But unless you know what to look for, [*unclear*] it is, you just thought it was bad luck or didn't deserve it or whatever. Now, my friend, Russell Dawson, whom I celebrate, we were next-door neighbors for years. And it was a critical [*unclear*]. The little league years, from eight to twelve. When I moved there, I was probably about five or six years old, but then we were next-door neighbors. Houses were so close, we strung a wire between—you know, we learned this in Boy Scouts. We strung a tin can with a wax wire and you could talk into it. We were talking loud enough that you really didn't need the wire, but we thought that was something. We were communicating before that led to the cell phone. Don't laugh, that led to the cell phone. But we played baseball, and he told me later that I used to stand out in front of my house, against the stairs, lined up, [*Makes sound*] no strikes and balls, and I would call the game. Because I knew all the players. I'd say, "Roberto Clemente is coming to bat, Grice [*phonetic*] is on the mound, he rears back, fires, strike one!" He said I would call the whole game out loud, and he could hear me because we would play outside until sunset. And I was a pitcher. And so I got good at it. And

I was smaller than some of the guys, but about average when I was ten, twelve years old, and I was fast. And when he was in his last year of eligibility for little league, he made the all-star game. That was the first time in life I had a goal. I was going to make the all-star team. Because I wasn't better than him, but I was faster than him, I'd gotten more hits than him. He was a little taller and stronger. He could hit home runs, I could hit singles and doubles and I was fast enough to hit a triple. But when it came time for my final year of little league, I played my tail off, me and a guy named Larry Florendo [*phonetic*] who's Filipino. And he played second base, I played shortstop and pitcher. And we could turn a double play on the right ball. I mean, we were that coordinated and that good. And I think I was batting, like, 460. Incredible number in baseball, little league. To hit three hundred, you're doing something. But I kept track of my stats and everything, and when it came time for the all-star team, they chose the coach's son and the assistant coach's son. And neither one of them could play worth a darn. I never played baseball again.

Q: Really? You never played again?

Grice: It took the taste out of my mouth. Because I had my heart set. I knew I was going to make the all-stars, if they had any kind of voting chain or whatever. And, of course, then I went to [Ulysses S.] Grant High School, because my family moved from the [Thomas] Jefferson High School district to go over to the Grant High School district. It wasn't very far, but they had dividing lines. And at Grant High School, no Black player had ever played on their team at that time. It just wasn't—like the golf club or what. You wouldn't know, but part of the reason was that nowadays—they tried to keep us out of professional sports like basketball, baseball. But

Jackie Robinson, and not only Jackie Robinson, but several others, Satchel Paige and guys that came out of the Negro Baseball League, so good that they just couldn't pass up letting them play. So they could afford to do without me and keep their white baseball club going at the high school. It just never crossed my mind and I never played organized baseball again. And I was good. I was good.

Q: I'm going to pause us, hold on.

[INTERRUPTION]

Grice: All right. I said I was really good. But I think beauty is in the eye of the beholder. I thought I was really good. Compared to my partners, I was really good. They couldn't be that good, either. But I was twelve years old. You know, who gets drafted into the Major League at twelve years old? But I had dreams. I did, because I followed baseball. San Francisco Giants and Willie McCovey. And I knew some guys that played baseball, too. I'll tell that story later.

Q: Can you talk about what the neighborhood physically looked like, or what some of the things—the stores, the shops—what was the atmosphere in Black Portland when you were growing up? So, let's say middle school, high school years?

Grice: Well, in the early years, I lived in Portland, when I came home from the hospital—I wasn't born at home, I was born at the hospital. Just three blocks from the hospital, on Rodney and Sacramento. And my mom's sisters, they all lived right within the next few blocks. That was

on the west side of what is now Martin Luther King [Jr.] boulevard. We were part of a movement that changed from Union Avenue to Martin Luther King boulevard later on. And then we moved across Union Avenue. I never knew that it was redlined, that you could only move so far. So the first red line was seventh avenue. We moved to sixth avenue. And then, when they moved the red line to fifteenth avenue, we moved to twelfth avenue. And my family, we were working class. We weren't middle-class, because there wasn't no such thing as middle-class. It was working class. And it was called “working class” because we worked all the time. Everybody worked. My mama worked, my daddy worked. My dad always worked two jobs. In fact, when I look back on it, I realize he died at age fifty-six in 1975. And he worked himself to death. And he died from lung cancer, but he didn't smoke. I think he smoked when he was in the Army or something like that. But I realized what got him was that dust from the metal wheels coming off the train down there in that environment where, hot, dusty days, you don't know what you're breathing. Of course, your body filters and can handle a lot, but I realized that that was what got him and that he worked himself .

But we always had a working-class family. And the neighborhood was nice. If you were there now, you'd say, “Huh, that's a big old house.” Three-story house on the corner. And they were big on yards. I grew up cutting lawns. You know, my own, first. And me and Russell, my next-door neighbor, we laugh about, different people had different ideas about how you'd keep your lawn. But my dad, he was big on cutting grass, keeping everything neat and clean and orderly and each thing in order. But that's the way railroad men are. See the film, look at any of the films, look at our people back in the Harlem Renaissance, they were dressed to the nines. And, to this day, still carry that trait. But, of course, it has shifted to tennis shoes. Because, see, if I can't

afford a big house, I can afford a nice car. And you would never know the difference. I can't afford a nice car, I've got some nice shoes. You know? And so we always had a nice house. That little house, always clean and nice. And the neighborhood we moved from, Highland neighborhood to the Irvington neighborhood. And Irvington, right now, is a prime neighborhood because it's in the center of the city, and you know what gentrification has done. They came and reclaimed all the properties where we used to live. They didn't want nothing to do with us at first. They ran out to the suburbs to get away from you. Then they realized, "Hey, those guys don't commute. They can walk to school, and they walk to work." [*Laughs*] They said, "Oh, that's what we want." And now they've got bike lanes and everything.

But the neighborhood was decent, and even by comparison, there's other neighborhoods that remained west of MLK and west of seventh avenue. The reason, and part of it, my mama was spoiled, they always wanted a nice property, so they moved there. And it wasn't that they had so much money, but they worked. My mom worked a job or two, my dad worked two jobs or three. He worked from [*unclear*] o'clock in the morning until three o'clock in the afternoon. He was a redcap down at the Union Station. And then from five o'clock or six o'clock until nine o'clock, he worked as a janitor. And later on he'd take me to work with him. And I thought he was giving me a chance to make a little money. But the fact is he never paid me much, you know? So I was [*unclear*], but I didn't have a choice. Then, later, I realized that I was making it possible for him to do the work because he had me doing half the work. So that lightened his load and everything. And so we worked at a place called Consolidated Freightways. Worked with a guy—what was his name. Royal Harris [*phonetic*]. And he had a little janitorial company. And the janitorial company would have different contracts, different buildings to clean up. Sometimes you'd have

two or three. But we had one, Consolidated Freightways, a big trucking company. Big operation, lot of trucks, and they had a lot of employees. And they had a big cafeteria, and once a week, you'd have to not just sweep the floor but mop it down. And then once a month you'd have to wax it down. And I don't know if you've ever seen those industrial mops, they've got a metal handle on them, six feet tall, they weigh about seventy-five pounds when they're full of water. And you'll get a workout with them. And I was sweating one night, and he came in there and we were running a little late, and he was saying, "Hey, son, how do you like dancing with that girl?" I said, "What girl?" He said, "That dirty, stinky one that you got on the floor. I'll tell you what, son, if you don't get an education you'll be dancing with her the rest of your life." I didn't want to do that. I believed everything my dad told me, so I wasn't going to do that. I got an education.

Q: So what were your dreams? When you were a young child or teenager and you were thinking about your future, what did you see for yourself? What did you want?

Grice: Well, I wanted to be an engineer, because I heard them getting a lot of money. But I didn't like mathematics, even though I was good at it. And so, when I was coming up, I didn't really have any dreams about the future. I'm kind of like today's kids, you know? Tomorrow was good enough, and we kind of had that made, so there wasn't a need to dream beyond tomorrow. We weren't goal-oriented, my family. We were work-oriented. We'd get the work done and let the future take care of itself. Save your money. And speaking of which, my dad told me, he said, "Son, you've got to do better than me and your mom. When I was young, I was hard at working, made a lot of money as tips." That's why I tip when I go to the restaurant, because some of his income was gratuity income. And he got that gratuity income, not by shuffling and smiling, but

by giving great service. And of course he was courteous and he had the gift of gab, so on the way to the train he'd tell you a story, sort of make you laugh, and that fills up the little cookie jar. But when I first started working, all the money that I had in the tip jar at the end of the week, we would take it and throw it up in the air. And all that stuck to the ceiling, we would put it in the bank. The rest we would scoop up and go out on Friday nights and spend it.

Q: Where would you go, some places on Friday nights? Where did you like to go?

Grice: Now, we were talking about going to the nightclub, and my life changed drastically because I was smart but I was always—okay. So, I went to Grant High School. Grant High School is mostly white kids, and since I grew up around—nobody ever told me about prejudice. My daddy, he never complained. Every once in a while, he'd tell you something about them peckerwoods, and how they'd treat him down in—but he never set me up to be biased along racial lines. Everybody knew, but I was just too busy playing ball and riding a bike, cutting grass and making money. I hustled all my—earlier, we sold newspapers. Me and Russell Dawson, the guy next door, we sold newspapers on the street. A lot of people had paper routes that they would get in the morning, and they would have a hundred papers and they would have to load them up and go and throw them on the door. And they made a penny a paper. But we'd get twenty or thirty *Oregon Journal*, sell them for a nickel, and we'd keep half the money. I think it was, we got two and a half cents for each, three cents for each paper that was—so we sold fewer papers and made more money. But that kept me going.

So I never went to no clubs or nothing, but I went to parties, we had basement parties on Friday night, Saturday night. You know what those looked like, had the red light parties and, you know, you slow-danced and all that. But my mom and dad, they were party animals, and about half of the parties were at my house, because my mom—I'll tell you their strategy, I'll try not to forget any of this, but I'm kind of all [*unclear*]. I'll come back to high school and that in just a second. My mom and her sisters came from De Kalb, Texas, and they came with the Great Migration. First went to Chicago, and my dad met my mom while he was traveling in the military and brought her back home to Portland. And her sister, she told her sister, who was still in Chicago, that she'd better come on out here. You know, had a guy waiting for her. He had never seen her. But mom was beautiful, there wasn't no reason why he wouldn't think that Aunt Margaret wouldn't be just as beautiful. And so they came out here, and so that's how they settled here. But my mom had personality. I wish I could show you a picture. Mom had personality. And so their strategy was, since we don't belong to the upper echelon of African Americans who work in the insurance business or in the car sales business or—they eventually did work in the department store. My mom was in the newspaper, she and a lady named Clara Peoples were the first African Americans to work as elevator operators for Olds[, Wortman] & King, who was the downtown department store. Ten floors and they had elevator operators. It was a really big job, great job. She got that through her connections.

They wanted me to come up in the right way, and so they joined a church, which was the only Black Episcopal church in Oregon. It's called Saint Philip the Deacon. And the pastor, Reverend Lee Owen Stone, he took us under his wing. And so we ended up going to an Episcopal church. Episcopal church was kind of like, it was a step up from the Holy Roller church my wife came

from down there. I like those churches, but I like singing and so forth. You could go to an Episcopal church, they're singing hymns and reciting the different prayers and all. And then they made me an altar boy. I was an acolyte in the Episcopal Church, I was in the system then. But those people had a lot of class. And so, excuse me, my mom and her sisters, they joined that church. Aunt Helen did not, but my mom and her sister Margaret joined that church. And then they were then in the company of people who were really decent people, the professional people. The dentists, the lawyers, the judges that were Black, they all would go to that church. That wasn't the only church, because you had African American professionals in every religion. Bethel AME, you know, First Baptist, they all had—but it was a way for mom, who didn't have an education, to be around people who did have an education. They liked her, and she always cooked fried chicken. And she belonged for a group that's—I'll look for a picture of them, the SOBs. Because you have to be careful when you call your mom an SOB, but that's what she was. The Social Odd Balls. The Social Odd Balls, they were together for fifty years. They had no officers and they had no rules. You couldn't join. You might get affiliated, someone would invite you to one of their parties and you might end up with them, but you couldn't join. And when you'd come over to our house, now, my dad was real strict about, “Don't touch my liquor. You can do a lot of stuff, but don't touch my liquor.” They had a built-in buffet in the dining room. It was a small house, it wasn't a big house. The first house that we had was huge. I can say it had an attic. From the street, right now, it looks like it's three stories high. But there was liquor on the bar. You know what I'm talking about. That's my dad.

Q: Oh, I love that. That's a wonderful photo.

Grice: Yes. He's a classy guy.

Q: Yes, very classy. Dapper.

Grice: And all his partners were. Same thing. So that's why we grew up—that's what separated the railroad men from everybody else. Comb your hair, brush your teeth, shine your shoes, let's go. And, to this day, if I put the camera on my shoes, you'd see my shoes would shine. That's my mom and dad.

Q: Yes.

Grice: See, she's drop-dead gorgeous.

Q: She is.

Grice: Yes. And that's back in the day. So when her girlfriends would come over to the house, first question that was asked was not “How's your kids?” Or, “How're you feeling?” Or, “How's your day?” First thing they ask is, “What're you drinking?” And you'd go over to the counter, before you even started telling your tale, they'd fix you a drink. And since we were right in the center of town, we were a crossroads for people and very convenient, and so one of the women who'd call up and say, “Where are you at?” “Well, I'm around Leeds [*phonetic*].” “Tell her I'll be over there.” Would say, “Girl, what's-her-name says she'll be coming over here.” And so we always had people at the house. And a lot of the time they would—that group, the SOBs, you'll

see them in a minute. They were famous for their New Years' Eve party, and they always had the great New Years' Eve party. And one of my mama's sisters—she had two sisters, Margaret and Helen—Helen was a very quiet soul. And she was married to a merchant seaman. We'd only see him, like, twice a year. But when he came home, he would buy her a brand new Thunderbird. You know, he made up for being away by having her live in style and everything. But she was a seamstress, and so, come New Years' Eve—here's a real picture of my mom, this tells you the rest of the—

Q: Okay. Yes, ma'am. [*Laughs*] Yes.

Grice: She was a gangster. Yes. Didn't want to cross her.

Q: I love it. I love it.

Grice: Yes. And she was regarded highly by her friends. Not only did she have personality, but she was a great cook. We always had fried chicken, that's what they came over there for. You'd think they came over for—some people drank a little bit, but mainly came over to get some of that chicken. Oh, I hope I find it. Anyway, they ended up having me go to Grant High School, and Grant High School was lily-white, and some of the guys I played ball with lived in that neighborhood, too, and some of them had swimming pools in their backyards. I never heard of anybody having a swimming pool in their yard. I knew a couple of them might—this is the group of them right here.

Q: Oh, that's—

Grice: Yes. Now, they're dressed up for their New Years' Eve party. And so Aunt Helen would make all the outfits, and one year, they would buy a bolt of green satin cloth, she would use different patterns and make different patterns. And then the next year they would buy one pattern but different colors. So they were very economical, they were very practical, they were very good, and they were all cool. So then I went to this high school, Grant High School, and I tried out for the football team, but I didn't like that. Balls were slamming into me and everything. I tried to play basketball but, again, I wasn't that big. Basically, I became a coach and I coached for years. I started running with these European American guys. Neighborhood guys, everyday guys. They taught me how to drink beer. So most of the kids in high school didn't drink beer, and nobody knew that we did, but they would go on Friday night, the other guys would go over to the house and play checkers or whatever and these guys would go and drink beer. I thought I was doing something.

But the other thing that our little club—first day of school, they'd give you your books. History book, give you a science book, give you a mathematics book, and an English book, right? And about three days after school started, we'd go up to the teachers and say, “Hey, I lost my book.” They'd say, “Well, I'm going to give you another one, but at the end of the year, you're going to have to find that first one or you're going to have to pay for it.” I'd say, “No problem.” So I had two sets of books. One I kept at home, one I kept in my locker. Never carried a book. And getting straight As. Other people couldn't realize, “Well—” I was doing my homework, but I just didn't carry books. Looked like we were just lollygagging all the time. We were, most of the

time. But I didn't have to carry any books. And in those days they didn't have backpacks and knapsacks, you just had to carry an armload of books. You can see that. So, my high school years, I'm telling you that because I didn't much study. You couldn't bring a C home. You could bring a C home, you were going to be on punishment. Punishment was very severe. When I was little, they whooped you. When you got older, they isolated you. You'd be in a room all yourself, that was no fun. No company, take no calls. So went on and got my Bs. No As. By the club I belonged to, As were not allowed. So I got a straight B average all the way through high school, which was good enough to be considered for scholarship but not—I took a test called the NMSQT. National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test. And I scored so high on the test, people started visiting me. I got an invitation to come to [University of] Notre Dame, the U.S. Naval Academy, Amherst College, all these colleges were writing me. Because in those days—this was 1966—it was riots in the city, and they were trying to open the door for Black people. And so I was recruited.

Q: Why were people rioting in Portland? What was going on?

Grice: Well, John F. Kennedy got assassinated, and Martin Luther King [Jr.] got assassinated, and, you know, it was the civil rights era. And so there was a great outreach for affirmative action. They didn't call it affirmative action then, but it was along those lines. And even today there's a lot of colleges that have scholarships to help underclass—they've got names for it, you know. Underachievers and low-performers. And, you know, [*unclear*]. But mostly now there's—

Q: Do you remember where you were when you heard the news about Dr. King's assassination?

Grice: Well, I was in Iowa. I was going to school. I went to school at Cornell College in Iowa and I heard about it.

Q: And how did you feel? I'm curious, as you're living and starting to have your own independence and leaving home and growing into yourself, and then you get this news, how did that impact you?

Grice: Well, it made you more determined. It made you more determined to be somebody. It shook everybody up, you know. And it was more sad than it was inspiring. Just to think that, already, they shot John F. Kennedy, and so they were already trying to kill the dream. And then, by that time, Martin Luther King had the March on Washington and we were [*unclear*]. So it was quite a blow. Quite a blow. But then I was in Iowa, going to school at Cornell College, and there were only ten Black students on the campus, and so we had to absorb that blow. And I'd had episodes before that weren't racial but traumatic in life, so, I don't know, we just absorbed the blow. Kept on going. Then after that, in the night, Robert [F.] Kennedy was assassinated. But it wasn't until after I got out of college and started teaching Black history as a way of filling in the blanks of things that I did not know. And it cost me a lot in my career, because I was at an alternative high school, teaching Black history, and it really wasn't welcome. They couldn't figure out a way to [*unclear*] not teaching it, you know? So an African American like myself couldn't touch it, because they didn't want any problems. I didn't have any offense. I had been—while my people in Portland—because after I finished college, I returned to Portland. I returned to Portland and got my master's degree, and I got my master's degree at Reed College, which is

also the main college among colleges. And I got a master's degree from them, which had a lot of prestige with it, and it was a master's in teaching. And I liked that, because they paid my tuition and then I worked as a teacher and got a salary. I was getting paid to go to school. I didn't just get a scholarship to cover the cost, I was getting paid to go to school. And so I liked that and I stayed with it. I found out that it was my gift, to teach.

Q: What made you want to be a teacher?

Grice: I didn't want to be a teacher.

Q: You didn't?

Grice: I just fell into it. It was the program that got me a master's degree. And then I found that I was good at it and I liked being around people, and I've been pretty firm along that line. It's not like I set a goal and I met some obstacles and overcame them. I didn't. I had a pretty regular life. But when I was in college in Iowa, and I ended up in Iowa because somehow I thought Iowa was closer than Massachusetts, but when you're a few thousand miles from home, you're not coming home on the weekends anyway. So the fact that—but that's how little counseling I got. Nobody ever said to me—at my high school, nobody ever oriented me toward college. I had a counselor, Mr. Woodward [*phonetic*]. I may have talked to him once a year for those four years. Nobody ever said—it wasn't that you weren't college material. They just didn't plan on you going to college. And to this day, my mom, who's been dead for many years, would tell you, "Yes, we put Michael through college." They called "putting me through college" sending me a fifty-dollar

check about once every three weeks or a month, something like that. They'd take up a little collection. They had no idea. They had no idea how much college cost. They had no idea. All they knew, that I was gone and I was on a scholarship. I don't think—because we never translated into money. Yes. I like your questions.

Q: Oh, thank you. [*Laughs*] Tell me what schools you taught at in Portland, and what was it like falling into education and realizing you loved it and wanted to keep doing it? What are some of your early memories of teaching?

Grice: Well, I taught at John Adams High School, which was an experimental school. And John Adams High School was the newest school, the most well-equipped school, the most modern school in the state of Oregon. They tore it down. And the reason that they tore it down, they said that they found mold in the walls. And it was a hazard. But in reality, it was situated right in the heart of what would have been the Black community if the Black community had kept on moving east. And it was getting students from the Madison High district, the Grant High district, Benson [Polytechnic] High School, and then Jefferson High School. Which meant those schools lost teachers. And so when they stopped Adams High School, stopped it dead in its tracks, then each of those schools got two or three hundred more students back to their student body and the teachers that went with them. We never realized that we were a sitting duck, but that's where I started. And teaching Black history, man, you're getting wound up. But then remember, because I went to school in Iowa, instead of coming home on the weekend, I went to Chicago for the weekend. You start going to Chicago every other week, you're a different person than the rest of

these negroes in Portland. And if I didn't go to Chicago, I'd go to Saint Louis. If I didn't go to Saint Louis, I'd go to Kansas City. And we didn't travel very far.

It wasn't until I discovered one year, in the fall, it must have been sophomore year or junior year in college, and the guys were coming back. And I said, "Where were you guys? You've been gone for a year." They said, "Oh, yes, we came to this school so that we could participate in the EIL program." Experiment in International Living. "And we've been overseas for the last year." I said, "Well, I want some of that." They said, "Oh, it's too late. You have to apply for that when you're a freshman." Nobody never told me anything about the EIL program. So as a consolation prize they gave me a year at American University in Washington, DC. So I moved to Washington DC and I didn't have any money. They paid my tuition, but that doesn't pay for your going to the movies and your loose change. So I started teaching in Washington DC, because then you didn't have to have a teaching credential or anything, they just needed people. And I was good. But I was with the elementary school. And then I came back, and I started—

Q: [*unclear*] What was that like? What was that like, living in DC? In comparison to living in Portland, Oregon?

Grice: Well, DC is a city, Portland is a town.

Q: Tell me more.

Grice: DC is a big city. In fact, they would call it “chocolate city” when I was there, and that was one of the things—I didn't know that I liked my people so much. Growing up in Portland, you like your neighbors and so forth, but you didn't hear the radio. And chocolate city—and it's this point now, this would be my twenty-fifth year, going to Fort Valley State University state university in [*unclear*] for the summer in engineering. When you go to Atlanta, all the cops are Black, all the Black, all the workers, everybody is Black. All the churches are Black, all the bus drivers are Black, everybody on the bus is Black, every day. You just don't see no European American peoples walking around. And it was like that on the South Side of Chicago. You left the South Side and go to the West Side and it was the same thing. Go to Kansas City, the same thing. Four or five different radio stations, bowls, parties. Musicians that were coming to town and all that. I want to tell you this story because I get to flatter Mike Phillips, a friend of mine. We play golf together and he's a musician, you might have heard of him. Mike Phillips?

Q: Yes, I know who you're talking about.

Grice: He came out of New Rochelle, New York. And when he was in high school, he said, “I was the baddest saxophone player I had ever heard.” He said, “I mean, I could play. I went to the saxophone camp in summertime in Detroit, and out of 211 players or artists, came in 209th. So I got my hat brought to me. I went back home and I practiced in my bathroom—that's the space I had—practiced in my bathroom for two hours every day. After the camp the next year, not only did I come in first, but the next morning Stevie Wonder called me, and I've been on the road ever since.”

Q: Wow.

Grice: And we love his music. [*unclear*] of him. So when I came back, I started teaching. I taught for ten years at Adams High School. And then I was selected to help build Harriet Tubman Middle School, starting from scratch.

Q: Really?

Grice: Yes. I was on the team to build Harriet Tubman Middle School, because they knew I had an inkling for the community and they needed somebody to help.

Q: Tell me about that. What were those conversations like in the early visioning of what Harriet Tubman Middle School could be?

Grice: It was going to be a school for the Black community. The Black community didn't have a middle school until we built Harriet Tubman. In the community they were talking about [*unclear*], but this one was going to be focused. And it was called the New Middle School for two or three years, they didn't have a name. And they hired a white lady to be the principal when I was assistant principal, and then she lasted until January, she just couldn't take it. The pressure from the parents, and you were dealing with real negroes there, you know? And so they put another lady, a sister, in charge of it. They made her the principal. She was a figurehead, and I was running the school. And I was doing it not to compete with her at all, I didn't have that much sense. I just wasn’t that kind of person. But I wanted to see her succeed. And so I patched up all

the holes and solved most of the problems and broke up most of the fights and greeted the people when they came on campus. Because I'm a railroad man, you know, I'm looking for tips. But she thought that I was trying to be the principal. No, just that she wasn't being the principal, and you needed leadership. So the word got out that Mr. Grice is going out in the community telling people that he's the principal of the school, and I never would—well, it'd be stupid to do such a thing. But people would come to the school to say, "Oh, I want to see Mr. Grice." And they'd say, "Mr. Grice, well, but he doesn't even—" And she'd say, "But I'm the principal." "Well, you may be the principal, but I came here to see Mr. Grice." And that's how that got started. You know, rumors. And so then the school district, in its wisdom, thought it better that I not be a school principal, even though as early as 1974 I was a professor at [*unclear*] College and was training people coming through the education program. But the school district, because of who I was or how I was, was in orientation coming out of Chicago, and with Malcolm X and one hip and Marcus Garvey on the other, they just wouldn't entertain it. Many of the African Americans who are here now would have qualified as republicans because they were so conservative. You just didn't rock the boat, you just don't—and to this day, this day. Starting in 1970, to this day, they may have won in recent years, and they're taught Black history in the public schools.

Q: Yes, I know that you and I remember Mr. Brooks—

Grice: Mr. Brooks. He was my best friend growing up.

Q: Was he? I loved Mr. Brooks, he was my teacher.

Grice: And that's what we called him, “Mr. Brooks.” We didn't call him “Jeffrey,” we called him “Mr. Brooks.” And he never knew how great a teacher he was because he clowned so much, people didn't take him seriously. But he was very studious, he was very knowledgeable. And with teaching, he was good. He didn't know how good he was as a teacher, because he grew up where there's kind of a hierarchy with the athletes at the top and you've got the scholars underneath them, and you've the working class and you've got the people that are average. Smart, but not going to be invited to be in the fraternity or [*unclear*]. And Jeff's dad, James Brooks, was quite the scholar himself. He was the director of the Urban League. And he made contact with some Jewish fellows who wanted to put him into a law school. And after going to American University, I learned a few things, but I was very well-equipped to go to law school. I went to law school for a year, but I didn't like it. This is how I said it, I didn't want to make money off of people's problems. It never dawned on me that I might make money helping people solve problems. I just saw it as, you know, you were exploiting people who—you'd end up in the public defender's office and help people and whatever. That's not how I wanted to spend my time. I had found out that, even though it wasn't very prestigious, even though it didn't make very much money, I liked teaching. And I'm good at it. I still am at it.

Q: So after you left Tubman, where did you go? What was happening after Tubman?

Grice: Okay, now, we built Harriet Tubman, and always used Harriet Tubman, even though that's the word “Tubman,” came out of my mouth. Because, after a while, people would never know, and now we have Ida B. Wells school and Rosa Parks School, but we don't truncate it, we call it “Parks” and that. Because you know that it's a woman, an African American woman. I met

some kids some years later who I had in the school, and they called it “Tugman.” T-U-G-M-A-N. Said, “We went to Tugman.” Because they were just—nobody ever corrected them. So, anyway, I've had great scholars. So then they wanted me to help turn Ockley Green, a K-8 school, into a middle school. I knew about being what a middle school was like. They made me the vice principal at Ockley Green. When you're a vice principal, what they're really telling you is that you're not the principal. Your job as the vice principal is to handle all the bad kids. So I didn't care. I had a job. I had a family, and so this was a job to me. I had an administrative salary. Hadn't told me nothing. But, of course, for the first seven or eight years that I started teaching, coming right out of college, even though I was teaching at the university, they would fire me every year at the end of the school year and hire me back the day after school started, so I would always get a temporary contract and never a chance to gain tenure in the district.

Q: What?

Grice: Cheated me out of about five years of tenured status that way, and I didn't know. Nobody told me. I found out a little later on, but I look at my life now, I can see how that worked. They wouldn't let me be a principal. And then something happened. A guy by the name of Matthew Prophet came along. And by that time they had moved me from Ockley Green over to MLC [Metropolitan Learning Center]. MLC is a nobody school on the West Side. You definitely can't make any trouble over there. You're not going to be popular with the negro community, you're just going to be over there. Out of the way. And when I got over there, let me see this here. This is what the people from MLC did for me. They so appreciated me, they made me a plaque. “I have a dream” plaque, gave me awards and everything. And so they didn't kill my popularity

when I went to MLC. They just extended my—every district should have a K-12 school or a school should be K-12, because the little kids learn not to be afraid of the older kids, the older kids learn to be custodians for the little kids, it's a good educational model. But it doesn't have a football team. America is based on football. Friday night lights. That's it. If you don't have that, you don't have a school and your district isn't going to fight that philosophy that way.

And then, after I was positioned as a vice principal at MLC, the principal there turned out to be a good friend of mine. His name was—had big, white, fluffy hair, and every day in his office, we'd sit down and just shoot the facts for two hours. Almost lunchtime. Cloudy Byer [*phonetic*], that's right, I remember his name. They called him Cloudy Byer. And he told me, he said, "I'm going to retire. When I retire, this job is yours." The district had different plans. And so when he retired, they put somebody else in the job and moved me over to the research and evaluation department. So now I'm really—I'm in the big house, I'm tucked away, and instead of coming around and inspiring youngsters, now I come around with a clipboard as kind of a threat to the teachers, you know? Because I'm doing evaluation. So now my popularity was gone. Until Matthew Prophet said to me, he says, "You know, Mike, I'm supposed to be at a convention in Saint Louis," I think it was. "And I can't go. Would you go for me?" I say, "Sure, I'll go." And that plugged me into a national network of educators. I was popular again, but not in the city, across the country. And then I met congressman [Augustus Freeman] Gus Hawkins, and he was forming an organization called the National Council on Educating Black Children. And then, long story short, became president of the National Council. I brought back to Portland schools something called the STAR Plan. And that was Students At Risk. We stopped using that language. But then they had a document called the Book of Infractions. And I was invited to San

Francisco, asked if I knew about this [*unclear*] called the Book of Infractions in San Francisco Unified Schools. And so I had to tell the truth. They asked me, "Had I ever heard of the Book of Infractions?" I said, "I helped write it." They hired me on the spot, brought me to California, gave me half a million dollars a year to work with—not salary, but to build the program. And we did. And it's a considered education model, I use it today. I'll be talking about it this afternoon over at the Racial Equity and Social Justice. And, you know, national. And when I went to San Francisco, instead of being a principal of the school, I supervised seventeen principals. But eventually that ran up onto rough ground, too, because you start navigating African history or African American studies, or Black history, we call it. European Americans get nervous. And that what all the fuss in 2019 and, what's that other little three-letter word they've got?

Q: CRT?

Grice: Racetrack. Huh?

Q: CRT? Critical Race Theory?

Grice: Critical Race Theory. Isn't no such thing. But in the big picture I just have had an incredible journey. All the scholars that I met. I met the best people in education, from Marian Wright Edelman, Gus Hawkins wrote the Voting Rights Act, [*unclear*] Rights Act. The Title I law. And I was his compadre the last four years of his life. I'd travel with him, even though I was still working. He would call me and have me come to Washington, DC and pick him up and take

him to a meeting in Los Angeles and then take him back and drop him off in Washington, DC and then come back home. So, I mean, wrote a film about it.

Q: I love that you have all this passion and influence and advocacy for teaching Black history in schools and helping young people understand our nation's history, right? I would love for you to talk about your initiative with renaming Union avenue and how that became a project of yours, and if you could give some history and context to that street, that corridor, and who else was involved with you to change the name.

Grice: Well, I don't remember who else was involved with me, in truth. We had a few meetings, the Black United Fund, the Black United Front, and the Urban League. The NAACP [The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People] wasn't quite as active, quite as visible. But a bunch of individuals, once it got a little momentum, they couldn't stop it. Because Martin Luther King boulevard ran the length of the city, there was objections. Because it was going to take up too much—they'll give you a corner, you know, they'd give you any other street or something like that. But not a main thoroughfare boulevard. But Carolyn Leonard, who is as underrated—not underrated, what do you call that? An unsung hero, heroine, as any. She was responsible for helping us get the African American baseline essays on the shelf, and she was quite a force. Her dad was quite a force. And when we talk about the railroad man, he was a redcap, also. He was Walter Reynolds, Dr. Walter Reynolds, was a redcap. Those guys started on the curb down there with my dad. But he didn't have no education, so he could only go so far. It's why he was so big on me getting the education. He just didn't have the opportunity. He was

thirteen years old, he had to start washing cars or somewhat a hustler. That's how he made his money.

Q: And can you tell me what you told me—before we were recording, you mentioned this beautiful story of you trying to hold onto your dad's legacy after he passed away, and you talked about the project that [*Laughs*] was birthed from you wanting to reconnect with some of who your father was.

Grice: Yes. If I had been normal, I would have relaxed and let it come to me, because I hear him every day, now. Because, see, the railroad men, they all talk in parables. In little stories, you know? They'd say, like, "Man that gamble wear barbed wire for a suspender." And "Crime with a local bit in the arm." You know, if you said, "I cried and cried because I had no shoes, and then I met a man who had no feet." And one that I never figured out, he'd say, "Layovers catch meddlers." I never knew what that meant, I never could decipher it. But then there was a barber—I'll come back to how I got started with the film, because I don't want to forget about Mr. Maurice, the barber. He had a little one-chair shop on Alberta Street, back in Alberta, and he was cutting my hair. He wasn't the first one to cut my hair, my first—Cherry Street barber, right across the street from the Elk Lodge, out on Tillamook. A little corner, a little cut-in-the-wall kind of, but it had a window. But I go over to Maurice's barber when I came of age. He was cutting my hair, and he turned the clippers off and walked over to the window and looked up and down the street, come back and, "Little Grice, let me tell you something. People are funny." And he went back to cutting my hair, never said no more about it. You know, I knew what he meant, and then, of course, it was such a grounding concept that you come through when your

expectations for people are brought down to a real level. He was not going to do what they said he was going to do, he joined the effort but didn't do any work. Or, Mr. Brooks was good for this, he wouldn't mind me telling. We'd go out and eat, and invariably, we'd get done, get ready to pay, and Brooks would go, [*Makes sound*] "I don't have my wallet." [*Laughs*] Invariably! He'd always have forgot his wallet. "How'd you forget your wallet?" You know? And we'd always have to pay, and we laugh about it. But some years later, I told my brother—my brother is ten years younger than me—about this episode that I had with Mr. Maurice. About how he turned the clippers off and told me that about people. He said, "I had the same experience. I never thought of it because it was so insignificant, but now [*unclear*]." He said Mr. Maurice was cutting his hair, he turned the clippers off, went over to the window and looked up and down the street like he was looking out for the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] or something, said he came back and said, "Little Grice, I'm going to tell you something. Ain't nothing easy." And left it at that. We use that as bookends on our life. Everything falls in between there. "People are funny" and "ain't nothing easy." If you know ain't nothing easy, even if it looks easy, because I play golf, I see [*unclear*] just like this, here, when there's money on the table. Ain't nothing easy. So we laughed about that, and Mr. Maurice, he was quite a [*unclear*]. Quite a gentle soul and loving soul.

Q: And so, when your father passed and you were grieving and wanting to remember him, what did you do to hold onto his memory?

Grice: Well, I didn't have to do very much, because my mama told me that I look like him and I was so much like—[*Laughs*] [*Pause*] Anyway, she said, "As long as you live, Chappie will never

die." So I didn't have to do anything to be like him. He was very, very, very smart. He could do mathematics in his head. He just didn't have the education. But he was very smart, and he was respected for being so smart. But I went crazy because I could not remember the things he was telling me. And he was telling me those little sayings every day. He said, "Now, son, I'm going to tell you. You be good to people. All the people that you meet on the way up, you're going to meet them again on the way down." He said, "Son, you've got to work. If you don't work, you're going to steal. If you steal, you're going to jail. It's as simple as that." But I couldn't remember those things at that time. And so I got the idea, I went to the doggone Library of Congress and got that grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities in order to make a film. And the whole idea of the film was to capture, by interviewing his buddies, the things that they used to talk about and the things that made sense to them. What those old sayings meant, you know? And, of course, I didn't have to go very far before I realized, Oh, yes, oh, now. But then I had this project underway, and so I ended up, I made a half-hour documentary. And I had a friend, a European American girl who I went to church camp with, her name was—I'll think of it in a minute. In Hollywood. And we filmed part of the film at the Union Station, Los Angeles Union Station. And she said, "Well, I'd like for you to talk to a friend of mine. He's an agent for—" You'll know this guy. He's a famous actor. "And he's also an agent for Tim Reid." And at that time, Tim Reid was big in television, had made a few movies, you know. So I called him, and because his dad worked at the Union Station in Los Angeles, he agreed to be the host for my film. So I made a film that chronicled the stories of the men who worked on the railroad, and I worked on the railroad. Because, this is a really good story. The railroad. And there was a guy named Ted Freeman [*phonetic*]. His son, Cliff [Clifford] Freeman, became a judge here in Portland. But Ted Freeman, at that time, was in charge of all the redcaps. And he was an

employee. You put in an application, he'd just set it over on the side, he would decide whether you got hired or didn't get hired. And so, for the college students, we were home for summer vacation, they would put you to work on the railroad. I made more money as a porter on the road than I did—seven years of teaching, I didn't make that kind of money. So I always had two or three thousand dollars in my pocket. My mom said, "Somebody's going to hit you in the head." I said, "I live in Chicago, mom. They're not going to hit you in the head unless they know that you've got that kind of money. And the only way that they'll know that you've got that kind of money is that you're running your mouth. Or you're flashing." You don't have to flash but one time in the city. I got robbed in Saint Louis. The guy had two guns, and we had just come out of a nightclub. We had seen—not Jerry Butler. I can't think of the name. I think the place was called Butler's. We'd seen a very famous actor. And I'm green, you know, I don't know the ways of the street. And we were in East Saint Louis. I had on—I wear a shirt and tie every day for the railroad, right? I haven't worked for the railroad since 1970, but I still—he had on the skinniest necktie. And, you know, he was a scruffy guy. He had on a little stingy-brimmed hat. He said, "Give us all your money and all your dope." And I didn't know what he was talking about. And so they said, "What you laughing at?" I said, "Well, man, I'm sorry, but they've got guns on us." And my partner's from Chicago, telling me to hush up. I said, "Well, man, I grew up in the days of Hopalong Cassidy and the Lone Ranger. You've got two guns and they don't match." They thought I was crazy. He had two pistols [*laughs*] and I'm looking at the pistols and saying, "Those pistols don't match." Were it Hopalong Cassidy—the Lone Ranger, man, he'd take you in. And they knew it was a waste of time, they let us go. He said, "Go on, man, go on." My buddy from Chicago, I don't know what he told them. They were talking gibberish.

Q: Well, thank god they let you go. I'm glad they let you go.

Grice: Me, too. I've run up on trouble before. I carried a pistol. In 1969, when I was in Washington, DC, Dick Gregory was running for president in exile. And so I was a bodyguard, he gave me a gun, followed a group around, and you would have little rallies and whatnot. I didn't like that. I think you're carrying a weapon, one, you're asking for trouble, and two, it's the scariest thing in the world. Because unless you're trained or it's your job or whatever, you're carrying around a gun, you're going to hurt somebody if not hurt yourself. You're going to cause trouble, you're going to attract the worst people in the world, you're going to be in the worst places where you need a gun. You don't need a gun to go to Safeway, you know? You don't need a gun to go to the car rental agency or to the theater. I think that, honestly, that if the kids today were to hold a weapon, see, they've got a different technique. Now, they [*Makes sound of spraying*]. Anybody can do that. You don't even have to hit a target. You just shoot into a crowd, and it's cowardly. It's very cowardly. I don't care who does it, European Americans or African Americans. In some cases, they've got retaliation. “What you looking at?” “I'm looking at you, sucker.” “You looking at me now, you won't be looking at me tomorrow.” Bam! You know, they would have that kind of—my dad would point out, the reason he was careful not to give me an attitude about white people, European Americans in particular, that you can't go through life with a chip on your shoulder. And these guys are walking around, they've got a big chip on their shoulder. Chip looking like you can build a house with it, you know? You've got a chip on your shoulder, and then somebody's sure enough going to knock it off. And then there you are, now you're stuck. I see this with the kids at school. You know? I work in an elementary school because I can handle those guys and I can really show them at their early age what not to do.

Q: What elementary school are you working at?

Grice: Rosa Parks.

Q: And what brought you there?

Grice: It's a funny thing.

[INTERRUPTION]

Grice: I had a cartoon from back in the day. *Dennis the Menace*, and his mom had brought him a glass of water, and he asked her, “Is that kitchen water or bathroom water?” [*Laughs*] This is bathroom water.

Q: [*Laughs*]

Grice: So where was I?

Q: Oh, we were talking about what you do now at Rosa Parks.

Grice: Oh, at Rosa Parks.

Q: Yes. And before we continue, I want to—you were involved with Ken Berry, with the Martin Luther King Day celebration. Is that true?

Grice: Yes. Thirty-nine years.

Q: Yes. I want to make sure we talk about that, too, before we end. But you can finish what you were going to say about Rosa Parks, and then let's talk about your friendship with Mr. Berry and the legacy of that tradition, MLK day. But take your time.

Grice: Yes, we'll come back to that. I was telling you, at school, I work with fourth and fifth graders. I have a chess club. And I train teachers. I try to train teachers. “Trying” is failure language. I engage them, to varying degrees of efficacy. And this is why I quit teaching college, because European Americans don't want to take no advice from Black people. Even when you've got research and everything, because everything has to be researched. Well, when you show them the research, they still—they've got to—but this started when I was in San Francisco, when I worked in the elementary school and wound up with fourth and fifth grade African American boys, and some Latino and some Chinese. I had a mixed group, but always had a core that I wanted to do something with. And I said, “You know, if somebody kidnapped you and put up a million-dollar ransom, somebody would pay it. So that tells me you guys are all worth a million dollars. So we're going to call our club the millionaires club.” Bad idea. Pardon me. It became known that Mr. Grice was a millionaire. And that the reason that he drove a Volkswagen was just to kind of cover up. And so people started coming to me, “Mr. Grice, this is Ms. Lopez. My sister is in Honduras, she needs a liver transplant. You can help us, no?” And so word got out

that I was a millionaire and that I had a home in Portland, a home in Atlanta, a home in Hawaii, and a vacation spot in Mexico. And, of course, I had a home in San Francisco. Nobody ever visited me, so they wouldn't have known. I could not shake that rumor. I just lived it. So what could I do? I changed the name from being the Millionaires Club to being the Ambassadors Club. I don't have no more Millionaires Club, I had an Ambassadors Club, and we model ourselves after Andrew Young, the first African American to be appointed as Ambassador to the United Nations. Much better operation. Much better. It still is the case that people think that I'm a millionaire. I dress like a millionaire. So why wouldn't I be? I've got the best shoes, I drive a Mercedes. You know. People make it up the way they want it, want to go. I know you want to talk about the Martin Luther King tribute. I can tell you that, it's short. All my career, all my focus, all my themes, converge. The World Arts Foundation converged at the intersection of education and the arts, and within that, what do you do with education and the arts? We identify and nurture, cultivate, leaders. [*unclear*] nations, [*unclear*] success from it. And I had pointed out to them that, according to my elders, Aesop Filliard [*phonetic*] and Dr. Wade Noble [*phonetic*], Don Clark [*phonetic*], that our job as elders is to reproduce and refine the best of ourselves. That's the function of education, to reproduce and refine. So it's an ongoing job. The best of ourselves. So, in short, we started in the basement, in a little house, my first house. Where the kids were born, over on twenty-first and Oregon. Sandy Boulevard. And we had a little basement and had a couple guys come over there, and we would start something called “One World.” Since that time, and then later, when we abandoned it, it was “World Arts Foundation.” That “One World” was a movement, and it was various, you know? It was [*unclear*] with something. And now, since that time, I've seen some advertisement using the concept of “one world.” One of the telephone companies or one of them uses that. And that dark episode of “one world” has

gone away, and probably just as well. So we did it for thirty years, thirty-nine years. For the first ten years—I'll just break it into ten years. The first of our [*unclear*], we tried to please an audience. We tried to give them everything that we thought they needed. We knew the culture, we knew the people, we knew what time it was, and so we tried to make a really good show. In the second ten years, we decided that, later for trying to please the audience. Try to please the artists. The people that we had invited to entertain the audience. If we rolled out the red carpet for them every time they need a snack or a drink of water, we got them their transportation, we got them put in the program in such a way where it's very elegant. And if we take care of the artists, they'll take care of the audience, and we'll have friends, you know? And then, in the third phase, all of this involved refining our leadership and being smaller and smaller. Taking up less and less space. We weren't any less influential, but we took up less and less space. We decided to make our production team. So the people that run the green room, that run the lights and run the sound, set the stage, people that feed our artists, our production team. If we can make everybody [*knocks*] able to do their job, then we can hold them to it to do your job. Stage Manager, assistant stage manager, runner. And if the team is happy, they're going to do their job, which includes getting the artists prepared. Receiving them, rolling out the red carpet. And that takes care of the audience. So it took us thirty years to figure it out, and it all centered around good leadership. You have to know Gus Hawkins. Congressman. The honorable Gus Hawkins. When I ran into a little headwind in the organization, he said, “Mike, I'll tell you something. Tall trees catch much wind. So if you're going to be in leadership, don't think that it's going to be—” as Maurice the barber already told you. “Ain't nothing easy.” And “people are funny.” What more do you need to know? You need to know that tall trees catch much wind. Then—I can't see him right now. One is called the redcap room, which is a hysterically chronicled treatment of my dad's work,

because he worked the day shift, and then there was a group of men that came in, a group of redcaps who came in for the swing shift. So it was the end of his day and the beginning of their day, and during that time, those times that I was in that locker room, man. You can't imagine the language and the things that was going on. And so, if you put it through a fixed treatment, you've got a lot of guys, yellow shawl [*phonetic*], and mouths big red [*phonetic*], their stories are wound into it. Hold on one second, please. [*Pause*] And the second book is called *Golf Saved My Life*. You play golf?

Q: No, I don't.

Grice: You nodded at first like you were going to say yes, but you changed your mind.

Q: [*Laughs*] No, I do not. Like, absolutely. I'm not good at any sport, really.

Grice: Well, golf is very revealing. It gives you feedback on every shot. It gives you really good feedback on how you're doing and the scorecard. But a friend of mine named Jimmy Robinson, he's from Portland, and he was a photographer with Georgia Pacific. When they moved to Atlanta, he moved to Atlanta. He finished his career in thirty years, in the pictures. And we play golf. One year, he invited me to come down to the Masters [Tournament]. I went to see the Masters with him, and it was on a practice day, before the match had started [*unclear*]. And you could take your camera, because in those days there were no cameras out on the golf course. Now they're ubiquitous, and they take everybody's telephone and put it in a plastic bag and get it back when you leave. Other [*phonetic*] behaviors. But in those days the cameras were not

allowed. But on practice day, I had my camera, taking pictures. Told me, “Chappie, you're getting as good an image with that toy camera as I'm getting with my professional equipment. Well, why don't you volunteer for the PGA Tour?” And so I did, and he didn't tell me that he was the chair of the photography team, and so I was drafted, and for ten years I went back and forth to the PGA Tour championship in Atlanta, seeing the final tournament of the year with the world's top fifty golfers, including Tiger Woods. And in that journey, playing golf and being among the best of the best all the time, it's been quite a journey. So the book, *Golf Saved My Life*, is not so much about golf as it is about the stuff that you and I are talking about.

Q: What is that—

Grice: And so, Martin Luther King, Jr., the tribute that we wanted to do for thirty-nine years, was not only a salute to Martin Luther King, but it was an opportunity for us to celebrate the people in the community who never would get celebrated. And so we built it around lifetime achievement awards, even though although it was a main part of the program, it didn't look like it. But for those people who received that award, it meant the world.

Q: Absolutely. I grew up attending those programs, and sometimes singing and doing a monologue or reciting a poem. And I have such good memories. I was telling Mr. Berry, I loved the—

Grice: Where did you see it? At Jefferson High, or at the Turner [*phonetic*]?

Q: Yes, in my era of the program, they were always at Jeff. So I remember being in the choir room in the backstage area, coming out to perform, and then just staying all day. It was like, if you were Black and living in Portland, Oregon, that is where you were on MLK Day, and you just planned to be there all day long for this big festival with music and theater and dance. It's such a gift that you all gave to the community and continue to give. It's a very beautiful program, yes.

Grice: Well, thank you. Thank you. I was very fortunate to be in on it and to have Ken Berry as a business partner and educator, colleague. I hired Ken Berry.

Q: You did?

Grice: As a schoolteacher. Hired him at Adams High School. I hired him the same time that I hired my wife.

Q: I'm glad that you said that, because I wanted to talk about brotherhood and friendship between men, because I know that's important to you and I've seen it just from afar. So if you could talk a little bit about your friendship with Mr. Berry and anyone else that you want to mention, and how has that, maybe, anchored you and some of the challenges that you have had to endure in Portland trying to do this work, how has friendship and brotherhood been a support for you?

Grice: Well, Ken and I both are members of the Kappa Alpha Psi fraternity, but neither of us are very active. And I've had a number of friends that are pretty close. We have a group called the

SOBs, Sons of the SOBs, and so all our moms are in SOB, and so we travel together. We meet up in Las Vegas. When I was in San Francisco, everybody came down there for my sixtieth birthday. And we met in Washington DC. We used to meet a lot more frequently than we have since we have since the pandemic kind of came along and interrupted things. But no greater love hath a man that he would give his life for a friend. There's a lot of quotations on this, too. Do you have a copy of my book?

Q: Yes.

Grice: Step in here and feel like this?

Q: Yes, I have it, and I have your film, too.

Grice: Oh. I have five films.

Q: Well, I have the one that is about the porters, the thirty-minute documentary. That's what I have.

Grice: Uh-huh. Here you go. [*Pause*] That's Ken Berry on the far end.

Q: Oh. Yes, I see—I recognize him!

Grice: That's Reggie Gray, and that lady in the middle, holding the sign, is June Key. You know, the June Key Delta [Community] Center named after her. Uh-huh. And that beautiful lady sitting next to her is Joyce Hollis, Joyce Lewis [*phonetic*], who is my sister. And that was my crew. So, from the very beginning of my career, that's my first or second year with the communications lab at Adams High School. I've been in a leadership role. I didn't ask for it and I didn't choose it, suffer if I lose it, had to give an account if I'd do it. As if any little minute, all eternity is in it. No, and so those years on the golf course, gosh. And at the same time that I was working at Fort Valley State University, thanks to Matthew Prophet, and this year will be my twenty-fifth year taking kids to Fort Valley. And what I do, thanks to college, take kids and drop them off, then I toured the South. Went up to North Carolina, South Carolina, Alabama. One year I drove from Atlanta to Dallas, Texas. Through Birmingham, Jackson, Mississippi, Louisiana, Texas. And back. Drove back, a long trip. And I don't carry a firearm. A lot of times, people say, “How do you go down there, how do you do all that traveling down there in the deep South?” I say, “Well, I got angels around me and a lot of people at home praying for me, [*laughs*] that's what I've got.”

Q: [*Laughs*] Amen to that.

Grice: A lot. Let me see if there's any notes that I took that I didn't touch on. [*Pause*] One of the sayings of the railroad men, grounding saying, was, “Pay your bills and be a man.” You pay your bills, it's a finite number, however many there are, however expensive or inexpensive they are. But to pay your bills, there's a list of them. But, now to be a man is a much broader question. And you're fortunate you get to imitate other men. Great men. And I've been blessed with [*unclear*]. Gus Hawkins lived to be a hundred years old.

Q: Say again?

Grice: Augustus F. Hawkins, Congressman Hawkins, my friend and elder, my mentor. He lived to be a hundred years old. And you know what he ate for breakfast every day? Oatmeal.

Q: What is one thing—I know there are many, but what's one thing that you learned from him?

Grice: Patience. Or, as we say—I was going to go to engineering, but I [*unclear*] Boston [*unclear*], where I had an oral exam, so already had conversation. So I studied the Dao De Jing. You know the Dao?

Q: Yes.

Grice: And so, in the Dao, it says, "'Let it ripen, it will fall' is not the way at all." And so if you're right, you have to speak up. You don't have to bang on the table. And most diplomacy that gets somewhere—Nelson Mandela is probably the best example—is, you know, you're patient.

Q: Well, thank you so much. I really appreciate you sharing your story with me. I've been saying this to everyone, it's such an honor to talk with you all, and you don't realize that you're filling in parts of other people's stories, and so there's just this beautiful collage of Black Portlanders talking about Oregon. And so I really appreciate you being a part of the collection. And thank you.

Grice: Oh, I'm honored. I'm really honored.

[END OF INTERVIEW]