

An Interview with Lovell Gaines

An Oral History Conducted by Claytee D. White

The Boyer Early Las Vegas Oral History Project

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Table of Contents

Thumbnail sketch of growing up in Louisiana; degree from Louisiana State University; taught in Washoe County after Vietnam; officer, corrections counselor, and camp manager for Nevada Department of Corrections; Reno site of first connection with NAACP; worked with Bertha Woodard, Bill Moon, Clark Phillips and Coach Cooper; transferred to Las Vegas in '75 when correction facility in Jean, NV, opened; stayed temporarily with Reverend Bennett; more information on community service with Freddy Little in Carson City-Reno area; involved in Las Vegas NAACP through wife Ida, friends Vergie Fitzgerald, Ruby Garland, and others.....1-3

Ran for NAACP presidency in 1980; list of members and executive board members include Sherman Hatchett, Reverends Willard Davis and Jesse Scott, Marion Bennett, Mr. Aderholt and wife Mary, Ida Crockett, Willard Davis, Jimmy Gay, Ruby Garland, Bernard Hampton, Lubertha Johnson, James Shipp, Drs Porter Troutman and Thomas F. Wilson; Sherman Hatchett served as treasurer; Reverend Sam Roberson was vice president; Dr. James McMillan preceded Mr. Gaines as president; mention of consent decree; issues addressed were insolvency, police brutality, and housing; second reference to consent decree.....4-8

Opinions on “underculture” created by consent decree; mention of Dr. McMillan meeting with hotel representatives at Moulin Rouge in March, 1960, to work on details of consent decree; Charles Keller, Attorney Reese, and Marion Bennett were involved in school integration.....9-10

Second mention of Jimmy Gay, who got Sammy Davis, Jr., to speak at Freedom Fund Banquet in 1981; Jerry Lewis, Sammy’s wife Altovise, and regional director Helen Cannon also attended; discussion of reports sent to regional and national offices; comments on percentage of dues that stay in Las Vegas; second mention of Helen Cannon, director of region nine, which includes Hawaii, Nevada, Utah, and parts of California.....11-12

National Conventions during Mr. Gaines’ presidency held in Denver and Baltimore; active non-blacks included Greenspuns, Senators Harry Reid and Dick Bryan; Reverend Allen of the AMC succeeded Mr. Gaines as president of NAACP, followed by Jesse Scott, Gene Collins and Reverend Rogers; opinions on importance of recognizing past presidents.....13-14

Pride in having Sammy Davis, Jr., as speaker; fond memories of working with students; thanks to bygone generations for building foundation; faith in younger generation to learn and lead; closing comments about Frank Hawkins’ leadership, working on recruiting members, showing support and love by mailing out cards and letters.....15-19

Preface

Lovell Gaines talks about growing up in Louisiana and graduating from Louisiana State University. He mentions his service in Vietnam and moving to the Reno area to be near his brother Roosevelt. He describes teaching for one year and then working for the Nevada Department of Corrections for thirty-plus years.

Mr. Gaines shares how he got involved with the NAACP in the Reno area and mentions some of the people he worked with there. In 1975 he moved to Las Vegas and in 1980 ran for president of the local NAACP chapter. He mentions many notables from that era, including Jimmy Gay, Ruby Garland, Reverends Jimmy Scott and Marion Bennett.

In describing his two-year presidency, Lovell gives a detailed history of the NAACP, including discussions on the consent decree, integration, Freedom Fund Banquets, national conventions, and addressing police brutality and housing issues in Las Vegas. He names many individuals and describes the contributions they made.

Mr. Gaines' closing comments include thanks to past generations and an abiding faith in future generations. He mentions his current involvement in recruiting members and showing support, gratitude, and love through cards and letters.

This is Claytee White and I'm with Mr. Lovell Gaines. It is July 1st, 2009. And we're in his home here in Las Vegas.

So how are you doing this afternoon?

I'm doing great. Thank you.

Oh, this is good. So now, who's in this photograph that you're showing me?

That's Freddy Meyers. He was a local businessman. This is Robert Nelson. He was a Farmer's Insurance agent and a Realtor. And that was during my -- when I first had eyes and decided I wanted to become president of the NAACP.

Well, fantastic. Well, first, before we start talking about the NAACP, tell me where you were born.

I was born in Louisiana.

Where in Louisiana?

In Monroe, Louisiana.

Okay, Monroe. So not Tallulah?

No. I spent time with grandparents in Lake Charles, Louisiana. And later on I came back to finish school in West Carroll Parish at Magnolia High School under the leadership of Dr. Professor Grady Murphy, who still lives today. We communicate at least two or three times a week.

Oh, good.

Now, he lives in Lake Providence, Louisiana. He graduated from Southern University along with Dr. Scott back in the early 50s.

Jesse Scott?

Yes.

So now, tell me -- you went to school back there as well?

Yes.

Where did you go to college?

I started off with one semester at Grambling and transferred to LSU, Louisiana State University. And I graduated from there, from Louisiana State University.

Wonderful. And how did you get to Las Vegas?

After Vietnam by way of Reno. My brother Roosevelt lived there when I got out of Vietnam. He

was a veterinarian there. I taught school one year in Washoe County. I got tired of it and the State of Nevada Department of Corrections and Prisons was hiring at the time. I wound up spending over 30-plus years there.

Wow. Working in what capacity?

I started off as an officer. And then I became a corrections classification counselor. Then I became manager of the camp system, the honor camps where the clients went out, you know, more of a lower custody level. They worked on community projects such as forest fires and cleaning up communities.

I like the idea that you use the word client.

Yes. Sure. I'm proud of those guys. I was questioned a lot of times saying a man of your caliber, why would you stay there? Because I felt it was God's vision to send me there. And I always told them regardless men can do no wrong. So I had some tears with guys. I had good times. And I felt good turning all these young clients around. Back then I always said, you know, you can be paraphrasing and taking a quote from great authors. You can be born in the ghetto, but the ghetto don't have to be in you.

That's correct.

So you made a mistake. You can retool yourself and get out of here. And that's what I want you to do. Gave many of them -- made them get their GEDs and stayed there with them. And I'm proud of that also.

You should be. How did you get to Las Vegas? Well, first tell me about your first involvement with the NAACP.

Oh, in Reno. In Reno. The late Mrs. Bertha Woodard -- she's passed. William Moon, William "Bill" Moon. And some other guys like Clark Phillips and my friend Coach Cooper. He was president two or three times in Reno. And I got involved with them.

But, however, I had sort of a daughter by divorce down here and the opportunity there we built our first correction facility at Jean. And I took that opportunity to get back with my children to spend time with them because I believe in family. And I was just tired of driving every weekend to get down here that long, 400-plus miles. But that's how I really wound up down here. Got tied up with my great friend Reverend Bennett who opened his doors and took me in. And I

stayed with him until I got on my feet and got an apartment.

Fantastic. I talk to Reverend Bennett tomorrow morning as a matter of fact.

Right.

So did you hold any of the NAACP offices in the Reno branch?

No. I would say I was something like a member of the kitchen cabinet. And I say that. I was often asked about that. I played a role in the background with Mrs. Woodard. She asked me a lot of things and I was in the background.

I was involved in the political structure at the time in Ormsby County where I lived. In Carson City I was a member of the Ormsby County Democratic Board. And I also ran a close unsuccessful campaign with about ten blacks. I ran for board of supervisors, which is equivalent to the Clark County Board. Ran a good campaign. I lost by 50 votes. I ran against a lot of other guys. But they accepted me once I showed them that I was serious and elected me as a person that can do the job. I need your vote. I was involved in that and I did a lot of community service within that area in Carson City, such as with one of my friends who used to be assistant director. His name is on the cornerstone of the Sahara branch of the DMV, Mr. Freddy Little. He used to be light heavyweight champion of the world. He and I played golf and supported senior citizens all through that area, Gardnerville, various areas, Tahoe, et cetera.

Okay, good. So which year did you move to Las Vegas?

Around '75.

And then how did you get involved with the NAACP here? I know Reverend Bennett was a close friend.

Well, when I came here, my wife, Ida, had been with the NAACP for years. And quite naturally, being with her, I got involved with her and some of the other friends, Ms. Vergie Fitzgerald, Mrs. Ruby Garland and a lot more. They took to me right away. I'm a pretty tall, good-looking old boy and everything.

But I was always community-minded. And we had a lot of things in Las Vegas that I thought could be better. And I thought -- not underestimating some of the people that were already here -- but sometimes you can take another perspective, another look at it and approach it from a different angle. I knew I had that since I was former military intelligence. And I'm not

saying I was smarter than nobody else, but I had worked with various companies. I believe in a justification approach. If you ask for three dollars, if you cannot justify it, you won't get the three dollars. And I felt that I had something to offer, not from an ego standpoint but from a true standpoint, to move this community forward.

I got out and walked the pavement and asked for votes. And I was just talking with a young man -- well, not a young man, an elderly man. I talked to him the other day about coming back. He said, Mr. Gaines, you are the one that got me before. He said you don't know. You came by my house walking and asked me to vote for you. And I voted for you. So I love people. I'm a people person. And that's what it's all about. I give my life to the people.

Now, when you were knocking on doors here in Las Vegas, why were you asking for votes?

I was running for the president of NAACP.

Okay. That's when you were running.

This is one of my campaign pictures here. That's one of the local businessmen. I went out and asked him for his vote. He took a picture of me right there.

So how long were you here before you ran for president?

Well, I was here about five years.

What other things did you do in the branch before you ran for president?

I was a member working with the other groups, just working within the groups.

But no special -- not first vice president or --

No.

Okay. No special office.

No. No.

So you ran in about 1980?

Yes. 1980, December -- November 1980, taking office first of the year 1981.

So January '81 you became --

It's a two-year job.

Right. Two-year term.

So when you were elected do you remember your first vice president or anybody who was on the executive board at the time?

Sure.

Okay. Give me some of those names.

I had 25. Mr. Sherman Hatchett was my treasurer. Then we had Reverend Willard Davis. Reverend Jesse Scott. Marion Bennett. Mr. Aderholt. He's passed on.

What is his name?

His name is Aderholt, A-D-E-R-H-O-L-T. And his wife, Mary Aderholt. Marion Bennett. And Loren Chaney, Lonnie Chaney, former assemblyman. I had my wife -- at the time we weren't married -- Ida Crockett. Willard Davis. We had Mr. Jimmy Gay. Ruby Garland. And Bernard Hampton, Jr., Dr. Bernard Hampton, Jr. Mrs. Johnson.

Is that --

Lubertha Johnson, Lubertha M. Johnson. James Shipp. Dr. Porter Troutman. And Dr. Thomas F. Wilson.

So who were your officers?

I had Sherman Hatchett as my treasurer and Reverend Sam Roberson as vice president.

Okay, great. Did those same people carry over into your second term?

I did not run a second term.

Oh, I thought you said you were president for two terms.

No, no. I said two years.

Okay, one term. What were some of the issues you remember during your presidency?

One of the issues we were having, as my predecessor Dr. James McMillan had stated in the local papers, was that we were broke.

So was McMillan the president just before you?

Yes. Yes, James McMillan.

Okay, go ahead.

And we were broke. The membership in the community, you know, just was not supporting and putting money into it. And the NAACP is all about the people. And if we don't do anything, NAACP just thrives or falls on support from people that care.

Okay. We're back. So James McMillan was prior president.

You were just talking about people not supporting the branch and how a branch

can't survive. Tell me more about that.

We had some good days. We had some consent decrees where some money came in I guess, during the heydays of the organization. We hired a manager.

More than one consent decree or a consent decree?

A consent decree. They hired a manager, the director. You know, spending money and supporting the operation and not generating any more money drains the pot and the bank. And it got so we didn't have any. And the little paid people we had to let go. We were in dire straights. Then different groups came along and, you know, everybody had their agendas instead of coming together. I thought it drained a lot of things. But --

So you were going to tell me about some of the issues during your presidency.

Right. Another issue was that we had a lot of police brutality at the time. Bush and the guy who was shot -- one young man living in a room down on the Strip was shot. They went in looking for another guy, looking for another gentleman. He came down in his robe and the police killed him. A patrolman killed an unarmed man. This is the main article. We used to have a paper called the (?) here. When they finally examined him they said he had a robe on. He reached for his robe. And then they found out he had no weapon.

Then we had a young man who came from Reno and worked in the hotel industry. He was staying on the Strip out on Paradise in an apartment, you know, sleeping and working. And they entered the place. Knocked on the door. So they finally entered. And that's when they come out with that famous chokehold. And the man didn't have any weapon. So they went in on the wrong guy. They choked him and killed him.

So Mr. Bush was the one that was shot?

No. Mr. Bush was not the one that was shot. This is the young man that was shot. Bush was the one that was choked, strangled to death by the Metro Police, unarmed -- Shelton, Larry Denmark Shelton.

So Shelton was shot?

Yes. Shot and unarmed.

So in those two cases what was the NAACP able to do?

Well, we put pressure on the local police department, on these guys that were involved. They

gave them a way out I think, but they lost their jobs. They lost their jobs, but they got a retirement. But we brought it to the public attention that not all of Metro is bad, but there was definitely a lot of room to be a little more -- be more, not a little more, a lot more sensitive to your community. And blacks being a part of this community, you're not just out there. Because you see one, he or she might have a justified reason for being there. They don't have to be selling drugs. Mr. Bush was a person well thought of and being spoke about with the hotel administrators. And he had a clean record and just a person in -- I guess just taking care of his own business. They had a bad thing. This is some of the things we just couldn't tolerate.

And we were having problems with housing. Housing was the main thing. We had just embarked on a senior citizen project named after our first president, Dr. Arthur McCants, down on Eastern. And we were proud of that. We were trying to get in there and it went for a while, but money and other problems set off. It never did blossom like we thought it would.

Now, that was a building owned by HUD; is that correct?

Well, first it was a partnership, or was supposed to have been. I guess HUD provided its management with the NAACP on the board. It had a board on that.

That's the national board?

Yes, national board. And these are times, you know, when we were beginning to -- as we began to -- this is my thoughts and my beliefs. With the NAACP becoming more visible and the new days dawning, people started paying attention. Then society and the establishment started holding us more responsible. If you made a statement, you have the lawyers suing you. Therefore, a lot of things were done and said where the national found reason to protect the NAACP. If you recall back in the early 70s, they sued a guy in Mississippi or one of the states for boycotting their business, one of their Caucasian establishments. And so we had to be very particular about when you asked somebody not to do this. Then I think there was a time when the national began to take away some of our things. They began to hold it, the leadership, pretty tight. And anything -- you know, the local people that we were challenging realized that we could talk as much as we wanted unless the national said -- you know, just like I said if you were running your mouth, national is going to say yea or nay. So we were in a Catch-22 there.

But we didn't give up. We didn't give up. We still were concerned. I walked those places, went

down to these hotels. Even though we had this consent decree, the hotels were supposed to be -- they had us on the board to monitor the situation. We were supposed to be meeting with various hotel administrators and talk about the jobs, et cetera. But, you know, it lasted for a while. Then once people got comfortable with things, letting it slide and moving on, we began to forget.

And soon with things -- new strategies by the opposing forces, such as what I'm saying about reading in the paper yesterday where the Supreme Court ruled saying you cannot throw a test out. How can we start running the hundred-yard dash and let the other opponent take off two seconds or five seconds before you and you're supposed to beat him or her across the line? So I thought it was a slap in our face. And to see one person of our color, Clarence Thomas, going along with -- he didn't have enough respect to go along with the dissenting group.

Did you expect it?

No. No, I didn't expect it because when you have a lobotomy like he has had -- but it's a sad commentary. It's a sad day in America.

Very.

As you know you've got to realize don't ever forget from whence you came.

That's right.

And if you don't realize -- affirmative action and all these people taking them home on holidays to see their parents. He didn't get there because he was the smartest guy in the box. And that's what bothers me when we begin to let people select. They know who they want to deal with. And the people that challenge the system -- just like I was told. I knew I was going to suffer when you get all the breaks. But I knew I had to do what I felt right about.

So now, the consent decree you're talking about, is that the decree that said that 12 percent of all job categories would go to blacks?

Yes.

How long do you think that was in effect, solidly in effect?

Not very long. There wasn't really anything. They threw some of it out there. But we're in the process of finishing all the plans. We haven't signed the final document. It was opposition still, strategizing to find a way not to go through with your fulfillment. And it created an underculture.

What do you mean underculture?

What do I mean? This might touch on people wrong. But I think once a deprived group -- our dealers, crap dealers, keno runners were basically porters. And once they got there it began to create a group that felt they were better than the other blacks in the community and it divided us a lot. It divided us. They started getting a lot of breaks, a lot of tokes, wearing the tailor-made suits and tailored shirts and it began to set up a different culture.

Well, I hope that's not true because in our neighborhood didn't we always kind of honor the preacher and the undertakers, schoolteachers who dressed better than we did and all of that? Didn't we kind of always honor that?

This should be. Where I came from, sure. But I remember getting a professor that made the statement: You students in election class go on and try to further your education. You will have the masses against the classes. Now, where I came from if someone went off and prepared themselves, they had a moral obligation to come back not to be better than to you but to pass it on to you. But you've got to have people accept this. Well, oh, he thinks he's better than me because he's a teacher. And so that's what I'm saying. If you say no, I don't think I'm better than you. You might think I'm better than you, but I'm here. I went off to prepare and to bring poor somebody else up. You said good, he had to pull somebody else up. I always told my granddaughter you always pull someone else up.

That's right. So that started a controversy in the community?

Yes. If you have two kids, if you give one a piece of candy and the other one not, you can stir up --

Of course.

You've got to understand if you don't analyze where it's coming from. It began to start -- Dr. McMillan and all and Hank Greenspun and Governor Grant Sawyer, they had good intentions. But before it was over with, it started a divide.

Now, you're talking about integration in 1960?

Yes. They worked out the consent decree and all this stuff.

Now, wait a minute now. Did they work out the consent decree or did they work out integration?

Integration was a different thing also. But Dr. McMillan was in on it and met with the hotels on

the consent decree and worked that out, too. They first had met at the Moulin Rouge. That was in early 60s.

That was 1960. March 1960.

Right.

So I know about that meeting. But now, I didn't realize that McMillan was part of the consent decree.

Yes.

See now, I thought that was some of the early attorneys.

Well, there were a lot of attorneys. Charles Keller and McMillan, who played a tremendous part. McMillan never was out of the NAACP. Dr. McMillan played a big part in the NAACP. You know, Attorney Reese. But Charles Keller took it. In the schools with integration, Charles Keller was in the forefront --Marion Bennett -- they were all in it.

So tell me about some of the events that your branch had during that two-year term. If it was just the Freedom Fund Banquet, fine. But tell me about that.

Right. When I took over the office was kind of down. Actually the office was almost closed. And I opened it back up using my credit.

Where was the office located?

Right at 1040 West Owens. Right there on West Owens. You know, the lights were off because we weren't using the office. The money wasn't there to keep it open and we had to meet anywhere we could. So we opened it again. We started it back. Then we were working with a lot of the people that came on that said, hey, we want to help you, Mr. Jimmy Gay and all of them. He had worked in the industry a long time. He had contacts with Sammy. And through him and negotiating he got us Sammy as a speaker, honorary for our -- we had our Freedom Fund, one of the big things. We had a beautiful night, a night with Sammy. He was there. It was a great, great, great night. And we had over a thousand people involved.

So you were talking about a night with Sammy.

Yeah. It was one of the highlights of I think my administration, our administration. It was great to see Sammy so much a part of us. He had Jerry Lewis and Sammy's wife, Altovise, and all of them. It was a great day. A lot of support came out. It was great.

Was that your 1981 or your 1982 Freedom Fund?

Eighty-one.

Great. So first year of your presidency.

Yeah, it was the first year I thought. It was a lot of working with people. Just like I was saying when Michael Jackson made a statement, "We are the World," that song, he asked everybody to check their egos at the door. And I'm proud to say a lot of the community leaders checked their egos at the door. And without them this couldn't have been possible. It was a great success. They had a lot of artists coming from Detroit, setting up displays. It was just a love fest. It was beautiful. And we turned out in our nice tuxedos and different ladies in their gowns and everything. It was a beautiful day for me. Mrs. Cannon was here, the regional director.

So your regional director came.

Yes, she came.

Who was your chair of the Freedom Fund?

Mr. Jimmy Gay.

Okay, good. Now, do you have speakers at your Freedom Fund now?

Yes.

Who was the speaker that night?

Sammy spoke.

Sammy spoke. Fantastic. Great.

So you just mentioned the person from the regional office. Tell me how the mechanics work with local branches. How do you get information to the regional and to the national? Do you send reports to the regional office?

Yes.

What do you send to regional?

Just a point like financial reports. So much goes to the region. For example, the memberships, so much goes to the regional office, a percentage -- the national office -- correction; the national office. And a percentage stays at home. However, for the tax deductible thing, the whole \$30 basically is not tax deductible because they got different -- about \$11.20 is tax deductible because they got strings attached to this, the government has on this. And we have to send financial

reports or reports on activities. We had people working in like the police, like labor and commerce committees. We had various committees working like that. But as they said right here this branch it says about the tax deductible thing here, it breaks down affiliated tax deductible amount. We get something like \$11.80 out of \$30 we can write off tax deductible. That's what we keep within our local branch to help with expenses.

But all the branches just like a major fee. The national couldn't exist without the branches feeding into the lifeline. And they set the agenda. And we're expected to follow the agenda. We had an annual convention that we attended. And we had various call meetings. On the call meetings you might come in and say, hey, you need to be in Sacramento tonight. And I had a lot of good guys working around me. They had it taken care of. When I got there they said, hey, we got a ticket; you ready to go; you need to be in Sacramento to meet with them. And Mrs. Cannon was very supportive of our branch. She came quite often and supported us.

Now, tell me who Mrs. Cannon is.

Helen Cannon. She's the late Cannon.

So tell me who she is.

She's the regional director of the NAACP operating out of San Francisco/Oakland area for years.

So which region are we?

We're in region nine. We're in Hawaii, Nevada, Utah, certain parts of California.

So financial reports you sent to national?

Yes.

Does a branch send anything to regional?

Yes. They have copies of whatever we send. Yes. See, the regional is quasi supervisor. They're our supervisor. Right. They are kept abreast. They have a carbon copy of what the national gets. They keep them all aboard.

But you don't actually send any money to regional?

No.

All the money goes to national.

National divides the whole bit.

Okay. Do you remember where the national conventions were while you were president? I

know it's been a long time.

Right off we had a national convention in Denver and one in Baltimore, Maryland.

And do you remember who got the Spingarn Award? I know that's kind of a distant --

Well, that's a time when my great friend was the head of it, Benjamin Hooks, great guy out of Tennessee, Memphis. It would tax my brain to pull it right off. But I have notes. I can get it for you.

Okay. Just a couple of other questions. At the time that you were president did we have any active non-blacks in the branch?

Active non-blacks?

Like at one time the Greenspuns were active.

Yes.

Did we still have any very active ones?

Not per se. Not per se. Like Senator Harry Reid and Senator Dick Bryan, they showed up. But they had been very active before, but not now, no.

Who became president after you?

A guy by the name of Allen -- what is his name? Allen. I forget his first name. But he didn't stay long. He left and went back to New Mexico. At that time it got kind of turbulent. We had a change of about three presidents within that time. He was a reverend. He was African Methodist church. He was over the African Methodist church at the time, Reverend Allen, African Methodist church.

So when you say a short time, did he serve out a term?

No.

So do you remember who became president after that? Probably whoever his first vice president was.

Yes. I think Gene Collins I believe. Let me see. Gene Collins. Allen, Gene Collins.

So did Collins become president more than once?

No. Collins was only once. I'm trying to rack my brain on that. Who became -- Reverend Scott came back.

Really?

Reverend Scott. I believe it was Reverend Scott. Reverend Jesse Scott was president afterwards, yeah. Reverend Jesse Scott. Then you had Gene Collins. Then you had --

Was it Gene Collins or Rogers?

Rogers is after Gene Collins. Gene Collins was the president and then Reverend Rogers.

So Collins was president.

Yes.

And then Rogers.

Yes.

And then --

That's what I'm trying to get to say. I think it was Jesse Scott after that. That's right in there.

Jesse Scott came back. He was in there. Yes.

So are you still active today?

Yes.

In any way?

Yes.

What were some of the things -- are you on the executive board or doing anything --

No. I choose not. I choose not. I'm just mostly -- you know, they say the young guys -- warriors are warriors. And I'm often called on for advice and things. And I lend that to Mr. Hawkins. He's a good friend of mine. And he asked me about this situation. He was telling me about how he wants to recognize past presidents. I think it's a great thing. One of the things I still -- my wife be kicking me on the feet. But I think at these banquets I think it's -- I don't know how you can think to have a banquet without recognizing your past presidents. And we're not asked to stand a lot of times until I got (indiscernible) saying about it. I said why don't you have the past presidents stand? That's an honor for us and the people. Let them know who it is. And I sent a quick note. I didn't sit up on the dais, but my wife was supposed to have been up there. I took some older guys, 90 years old, a couple of guys. And I wanted to be with them. But I sent a note real quick and got it up there and gave it to my wife. She got it introduced and they called my name. The lad over there that knew me -- you've been president, Mr. Gaines? I said yeah. But, you know, and all that stuff.

People don't know. That's right.

That's what I'm saying. We've got to recognize the ones that have gone on before us.

That's right. Any other memories of that two-year period that you'd like to share?

Well, I met a lot of good people, older people that have been in the trenches here. And believe me, some might have thought I'd try to do it myself. But I was listening to them every night. People were giving me a lot of advice. They had the experience. And I analyzed it and put it in action. And truly through it all I think we grew. A lot of people held their heads up. During that time I was constantly in the trenches speaking at different schools, talking with the kids. A lot of them went on to college. It was just a great part of my life.

But I'm the type of person -- a lot of people ask me why don't you come back? I say no. I'm the type of person I don't believe in staying, staying, staying. I want to move on and support sometimes. Well, we want -- no. I believe it's best to support, stand from the outside looking in, and help the others grow themselves.

What are you most proud of in your term as NAACP president?

Well, first, one of the things -- when I set sights, thought about becoming president, I was looked as a young outsider. Some of the leaders frowned at it. Before it was all over I met some of these leaders in their stores -- still meeting with them today -- and they respect me and say you did a good job. We weren't on the same page at first, but we're on the same page. I brought them together. I need you. I'm not trying to wash you or set you to the side. You're going to be active if I'm involved. That was one of my proudest moments. Dr. McMillan -- I know he was sick -- saw me in the store, hugged me. Bob Bailey, some of the guys.

Sometimes when you're doing things -- like some guys -- Bob was a great orator or master of ceremonies, but I chose to use a couple of younger people, not pushing them down, but we've got to give other people a chance too. But sometimes it scares people. We are great friends now. We came together.

And most of all a night with Sammy where Sammy was all eyes and lit up. And I looked out among that crowd. There wasn't an empty seat there. And we were struggling to get to that point. And that's when I say, yes, we can. And I continue to believe in the NAACP. NAACP is no more than we.

That's right.

Like I say if you're not registered, then don't come in talking and complaining. Become part of the solution and say I've got an investment here; I got something to say. Get it and make an investment, and you're a voting member.

My proudest memory is working with the kids, speaking with the kids, going out of town to a couple of universities to speak. The kids invited me down in Texas and Louisiana as the president of this branch speaking for some projects that they had to give back. And that's some of my proudest moments.

Great. Thank you.**What would you say to our ancestors if you could?**

I would say in a spiritual ramification keep on smiling. They said with youth approaching these challenges that those young people don't know what they're doing. But I still have faith in our young as well as some had in you and the foundation that you built out of strong mortar and mix. You didn't take no shortcuts. You didn't use the streets to survive. It will stand. And thank you for the foundation that you built for us to stand on and continue to build on. That's what I would say to our ancestors.

Great. What message would you send to the future generation?

Keep the faith. We love you and we believe in you. Now, you might be doing a few things that upset us, but we can reach common ground on this. You can do it in a different way and get the same results. But kids are still the key to our future. And we cannot -- we need you. We cannot survive if a total generation is abandoned or destroyed. The world realizes we need all our kids -- a mixture of kids, not one Latino, not one black. We need them all. We need one group or we all fall.

I'll never forget in 1968 when I was visiting in Little Rock, Arkansas, at a national black conference with Richard Hatchett and Maynard Jackson, Jesse Jackson, all of them. And one of the congresspersons from Detroit had made some mistakes. They were saying we need each other and it's time for the young to realize that we cannot fly without a flight plan. And you've got to realize so many players -- they say, well, the plane went off the radar. We don't know. We never had them because they didn't file a flight plan. And we need to continue to analyze and file a

flight plan in life for where we're going. And then we can leave these footprints and we can do some common testing on what the kids have crossed over this territory.

I have faith in our kids and I have faith in this country, in this America. I've traveled and believe me, we can criticize America. We have a lot wrong with it. But I tell you one thing it's the best place I'd want to be. In Vietnam if you traveled from your office to my home, you would have been stopped at least ten times at checkpoints. We take it for granted the way you can travel in this country.

That's right.

So one thing about it, we are strong. And when you realize it, other people realize how strong you are. If you don't believe it, you can't conceive it.

Most of us don't have anything to compare it with.

That's right. That's what I'm saying. Like I tell them. I said, now, we are somebody. Our kids are smart, given a chance. I said, now, I remember -- and this is no fairy tale -- when you can get a book, it's 1952, and your book is 1941, you can get the book, read page 1 and imagine what was in the missing two pages and still come out and challenge the world, become educators, presidents. Yes, we are somebody. And everybody knew it but us. We are gifted people. That's what I'm saying. And that's what I want to let the kids now. And I constantly tell my granddaughter you've got to believe in yourself. You might stumble, but you don't have to fall. And that's what I would say to the young people.

Wonderful. Thank you so much.

Before we turn it off, are there any other memories, anything else that comes to mind?

No. I take this place to thank you. I'm so happy that you visited. Frank Hawkins is geared towards this type of documentation within the organization. I think he's doing a great job. And I see good things for the NAACP. I know I'm out working collecting memberships. And let them work within the organization. There's room for all of us. One thing we don't understand and I see all the time when we take the selfish approach. (Indiscernible.) First of all, we can agree to disagree. Now, that's what I'm saying. But if you say, well, I don't necessarily agree with you about that, but if you go home and say what Ralph was saying was right, be man or woman

enough to call him back and say, you know, I was debating with you, but I looked at that and you were right and I thank you. We have a local group of retirees. We were apart a long time when we were going through the restructuring. They divided us, gave us some promotions, better than them. But I was telling my wife I called these gentlemen. I said we're retired; let's get together and do some positive things with the youth. So we got together. And we're doing great. I'm a writer. I love to write letters and notes and cards all the time. So I sent all the guys a Father's Day card.

Fantastic.

Said what is this; a man sending a man -- and I began to say to them I love you. It's nothing wrong with a man telling another person I love you.

That's right.

They said, man, I ain't never had a man say that. I love you. And I told them we had a person -- one of the members had his hip replaced. He's back in Virginia right now. I'm picking up a card. We'll meet and all of us sign it and we'll send it to him. That's what we've got to send each other, a message of love.

That's right. That's exactly right.

I ain't never had no man call me on Father's Day. My kids -- and I say, well, I'm calling you. And a lot of them called back. That's what I'm saying. It's about letting men know there's nothing wrong with a man crying.

That's right. Our feelings are so important.

That's what I'm saying. And embrace your lady. And don't get on this psychological talking about, well, my wife making more money than me. Hey, as long as you put it together, I don't care who taking the money as long as somebody is making the money. But I can't see "a woman making more money". Man, don't buy into that knowledge.

That's right. That's exactly what it is.

And together you stand. Don't look down on your lady. Take her along with you and let her know you love her. That's where I'm really a strong believer. And that's what we regularly do in this house. Mrs. Gaines, she understands me and I understand her. But you've got to say, hey, you love and everything.

That's fantastic.

And that's what it's all about.

That is fantastic.

And we love each other. And I thank you.

Thank you so much.