

VDC Interview Transcript

Elaine Gibbs Redmond

2.19.18

Total Time: 2:14:09 (usable footage ends at 2:05)

Home of Elaine Gibbs Redmond

Beachwood OH 44122

Key:

CF: Candace Feck

EGR: Elaine Gibbs Redmond

JC: Jessica Cavender (VDC team)

JD: Jane D'Angelo: (Ohio Dance Director)

MG: Morgan Goldstein

ZG: Zach Goldstein

LV: Laverne Wilcox

PK: Patty Kendrick

JB: Jalen Black

CF: I'm Candace Feck, and I'm talking with Miss Elaine Gibbs Redmond at her home in Cleveland, OH on February 19, 2018.

There is a background sound problem that needs to be addressed...

It's a great pleasure to get to talk with you, as I've heard of you through your students, who seem to adore you, and on whom you have made a great impression. I'm thinking about such students as Dianne McIntyre¹ and Adenike Sharpley, among others.² I think that when there is a teacher who regularly comes up in her students' conversations, it indicates she has had a powerful influence on them — and that's why we're here today, to learn about how that came to be.

So, my first question is "Who taught *you*?" They are talking about your influence on *them*, but I wonder how *you* learned about dance.

EGR: Warm memories... Viola Gensler³ was my first teacher, and I'll say my only teacher, really. I must have been about twelve to thirteen years old. I was one of four children, and my mom and dad just didn't know what to do with me. Jane Edna Hunter,⁴ who went to school with my father — they both graduated from Hampton [Hampton Institute, VA] — said, "Well, Clarence, I think I know what we can do with that little one." She said, "I have dear friends, and I think I know what we can do with Elaine." And of course, my family was very happy to hear about that, because pre-

¹ Dianne McIntyre is a highly acclaimed dancer and choreographer, who maintained her company *Sounds in Motion* for many years in New York before returning to her native Cleveland, from which she continues to choreograph nationally and internationally.

² Adenike Sharpley is a dancer and educator specializing in African movement, who founded and directed the Cleveland-based company *Dance Diaspora*, and taught for many years on the faculty of Oberlin College.

³ 1900 - 1984

⁴ 1882 – 1971: A renowned social worker, Ms. Hunter, among many other accomplishments, founded the Phillis Wheatley Association in Cleveland, a landmark institution originally founded to serve single African American women.

teens are at a sensitive age. I went and I met Viola Gensler and she felt that I would work out well; we just immediately meshed because I was *fascinated* by this beautiful studio, which was the entire floor of the Rockefeller Heights Building on Mayfield Heights and Lee Road, if you're familiar with that area. I think it still stands. And my job there — I knew nothing about the world of dance — was to tidy up the studio, arrange the chairs. And at that time, studios were not closed and private to parents; parents brought their children, sat around the edge — and it was a massive studio. I was impressed with that, and carried it straight through my teaching life. There wasn't a parent that couldn't come in my studio and understand the dance technique and the language and the rhythm...

We are interrupted by the arrival of two guests, two young adults named Morgan and her younger brother Zach Goldstein, who had been Miss Gibbs' charges as children.

EGR: (excitedly) There's Morgan!!

During this arrival, the film crew recalibrates the sound and lighting, so there is a pause in the interview.

CF: You were saying during our technical adjustments that you learned from Viola right away, and incorporated into your own practice, the policy of allowing parents to be spectators in the studio, as Viola Gensler had done.

EGR: It was done to piano music. Mr. Wiesenberg was the pianist. Live piano music — no records! And then as the students came in — the classes started at three and a half year old dancers — it was my job to bring them in and line them up at the *barre* into first position to get ready for Viola Gensler, who taught with a stick. Are you familiar with that technique? Have you ever seen it?

CF: I have.

EGR: Well, she taught with the stick, so immediately as Mr. Wiesenberg accompanied her with her stick and piano, classes would begin. From three and a half years of age, they went on up, and by the end of the day we were into the immediate and advanced classes. Now at the beginning of my tenure there, I knew no more than a three-year old: first position, heels together, toes out. And that's when my training began — right there, at that *barre*, with that beginner dancer. This went on every day, Monday through Saturday. Saturdays were the longest days. In the summertime, I was the person that she took with her to workshops. I *was* the legs, and then of course it became more involved, and I trained. Because I was Black, and so many people ask me about Viola — and life has changed so — at that time, at her studio, she had — (she looks to her daughter Patty Hendricks) Oh, Patty! I don't even like talking...

CF: Is it painful to talk about?

EGR: No, it's not painful; I just don't know where to begin!

CF: Well, allow me to ask you some questions.

EGR: Yes.

CF: What I understand from what you've been saying, is that you were hired there as a way to keep you busy; you were a fairly precocious young woman and your parents were well-connected to

important people who knew other important people, so you got this position. It was really a job — you were hired to be Ms. Gensler’s assistant. But to do your job, you literally learned dance because you were the person who was charged with actually placing the students’ bodies where they were supposed to be.

EGR: Absolutely.

CF: Amazing.

EGR: And her studio was very personal to her. It was not a commercial studio with turn-over and advertisement and soliciting. I cannot tell you where her students came from, because that was not done. I would say that her students came to her very much like mine did — by social connections, word-of-mouth. She did not do recitals — there were no public recitals — which I *did*. I remember she gave one at the time I came into the dance life; she gave her last big recital at Music Hall. Viola Gensler was married to Clayton Heinz of the Standard Oil Company, and I think that she came *to* this country, and that the dance studio — because he traveled a *lot* — was her personal enjoyment: her dance studio and her “pet.”

CF: Do you know anything about her training?

EGR: I know that she was the *prima ballerina* of the Elliott Comstock Company in Europe. I can’t tell you a lot about her personal background because that door of her life never opened to me. We spent all of our time in the studio or in workshops, traveling. I have been to her private home here in Cleveland — the last one was in the Mayfield area — and when I came home in the evenings, my mother would say “You’ve been there *all day*! What is...? Hang up that phone!” Because she would call to say “Elaine?” And then we would discuss every detail of everything that had gone on. She had a very sharp and keen eye for screening. She did not invite the enrollment of Blacks or Jews. And she would say “I think that’s a Jewish name...let me check. Let me tell her I’ll get back to her.” And then she would whisper to me “I think she might be Jewish.” I took care of all the books. By the time the end of the day was over — or halfway through the end of the day — I did all of the desk work, all of the book-keeping. She had no contact or conversation with parents — *at all*. The only old family that I can remember, and I’m sure that that daughter would be... there was a florist that was on the corner of Carnegie, the Sieglers. And that florist is still active. There was a youngster there that came to dancing school; I remember that well, because I remember...I would say “Oh! There’s...” and I believe that family was Jewish, and I believe that child was accepted in dancing school because of who the Sieglers were... I think they were a well-grounded family at that time.

My dance attire was the black leotard, the black leotight with the — what do you call it — apron? What kind of apron was it? (She confers with her daughter, Patty).

CF: Picking up on their conversation, I ask: Was it the type of apron that a maid might wear?

EGR: Yes, but it was pretty — it was like a tea apron...

CF: Sort of French? With a scalloped edge or something?

EGR: Mm-hmm. With the little hat — which I never wore! She’d say, “Elaine, where’s your hat?” And I’d say “I don’t know.” But anyhow, with the hat — and that was my dance attire. Now there *were* other leaders that were students. There were leaders that were used in the class as I used Dianne

(McIntyre) and Laverne (Wilcox), and Carla, and they were leaders, who were strong dancers and I can't tell you that much about their background; they were not *seasoned* dancers, but they spent so much time in that studio!

CF: Did they wear the same uniform as you?

EGR: No, they didn't. They were part of the community.

CF: You were the only person wearing an apron. Did it strike you as odd? You did say you thought it was pretty...

EGR: Oh, I was so *dazzled* by what *I* was getting! I *immediately* became in love with movement and music, and I was busy!

CF: Let me ask you about those workshops. When you would travel with Viola Gensler, where would you go? Who would you study with?

EGR: (She confers with Patty) Up to Chautauqua Lake. To Julliard...

CF: Do you recall who you studied with?

EG: What did I care? I was a young mind — what did I care? (to her young guest) I was like you, Morgan! All I wanted to know is "I wonder how long we're going to be here?" I liked what I was *doing*, and that was exciting! But names? Names and individuals were not.

CF: During the school year, in the studio, you worked as her assistant. When you traveled with her in the summer, was your role different?

EGR: I was in classes. And they were training classes. *Long hours*. And also at that time, she would take notes, so that she also was a part of my training then, too, which I think is wonderful — I just don't understand the privacy of dance studios. And then after class, do you want to know what we would do? We would go to lunch maybe or someplace quiet before, and we would go over her notes, and the movements, and we would discuss everything in detail, which was another long session. And then when we would get back to the hotel, I *might* fall asleep on her discussing the dance. Did we ever talk about anything personal? We would go shopping. Now ask me where the shops were?

CF: Where were they?

EGR: On 5th Avenue, Lord and Taylor. I learned many, many wonderful things about shopping. She *loved* to shop! But...

CF: You indicated she didn't talk about anything personal with you...it was all dance or shopping, food...

EGR: Mm-hmm. And what we would do the next day...

CF: Was it all ballet?

EGR: That's it!

CF: That was the only dance form she taught?

EGR: No. Ballet, toe, tap. But by the time they got to the tap classes, if a student came in to take ballet, that student might take an hour of ballet and have a half hour of tap. By the time we got to the tap, I was dismissed from the dance floor. Tap was not an interest of hers for me. Did I tap? Yes. Did I take tap? Yes — the *basics* of tap. You know, Morgan, “Brush, brush, stomp. Kick, toe, heel.” Anything that I could take a student to or perhaps a weak tapper, that’s the student that I might hold their hand and work with until they got the rhythm, or picked it up. But when the tap picked up or, say, routines — by that time, I was at the desk. And guess what? It was *okay* with me because to me everything was an open book in learning. I *am* a people person, and I *enjoyed* that part, too. As a matter of fact, I thought being at the desk made me very important. I was no longer placing chairs and removing the water jar from underneath the piano. To me, that was a fun part.

CF: So it sounds like an amazing education that you fell into — an education in dance and sort of an education in the world, simply due to the fact that your parents wanted you to do something constructive, something to take up your energy, I guess. So, we know now that you went on to have your own school and your own career. But I’d like to know, thinking back to your time with Viola, do you think she was grooming you to *be* somebody on your own, or do you think she was using you — and maybe there’s a wide range between those two. But I’m curious now with hindsight, what do you *think* was going on there?

EGR: She chuckles.

CF: Is that a fair question?

EGR: It’s not an unfair question. And as an adult, as I have lived long enough to see the world move, I now know what I was a part of. At that time, I think that Viola Gensler loved me and groomed me for her own. I *was* her studio, her life, and a part of her life. Was she grooming me to become an adult and use what she was giving me? No. I grew up and I *took* that. And when I began to realize what I wanted to do, I walked away, gradually, because I decided that we weren’t giving recitals. Once again, my father knew I was becoming restless. I was the happiest, I think, when I was with her in the summer in New York City and I think that’s when a light bulb went on. My father’s family is all from New York. My uncle was the manager of Small’s Paradise, one of the largest cabarets in New York City — in the Black [community] — of *substance*, where the Cotton Club girls would come, and people would come after the shows. He and Bill Robinson were very close friends, and therefore a lot of the dancers would come to Small’s. And that’s when I thought, “Gee, other people dance, besides just these people that sat and watched the training.” And because I had friends and relatives in New York, and they were all in the theatre or entertainment world, I guess my genes kicked in again, and I became alive. And my parents began to worry about me again, and even Viola began to worry about me again because (imitating Viola’s voice) “You’re just not...Elaine, you’ve got to get a hold of...where *were* you?” By the way, when I got out of high school — I’m going to back up to tell you how isolated I was from everything. I *never* walked home from school, I never got a bus home from school. There was a cab; the Yellow Cab Company was waiting outside to pick me up, to get me to the studio because I think school got out — the little ones got out — at 3:30 or something like that, and the studio had to be ready for them. So, I got out; I had an early work permit, and the cab was waiting. Well, can you *imagine* the freedom I felt in New York City? Oh my God! At *this* child’s age? “Yours!” (gesturing to Morgan). “You’re 18?”

MG: Yeah.

EGR: I was 18 or 19. I was loose again! I had a cousin; I wish she could have been here. And she was taking dancing, but it was tap. Ballet was *not* a part of black culture at that time. *Not* at all! If your youngster was involved in dance, they were in a strong modern dance (program). Katherine Dunham. Ballet? They didn't know anything about ballet! Tap. Step Brothers. Did Bill Robinson teach me tap? Not really, but as we sat there at Small's in the late hours of the evening, and the girls came in and they tapped, that's when I picked up the style of routines. Did I know the basic steps? Yes. Gensler had given me that. But the ability to dance or go through the routine — I was very limited in that area. That's when I began to realize, "I want a studio. I want to teach. I want to share." And that's when I began to formulate in my mind what I wanted to do. And I *did* it.

CF: Yes, you did. Might I ask you to clarify this time of the light bulb going on in New York about what you wanted — and *that* life, that freedom that you hadn't enjoyed before — was that post-high school, would you say?

EGR: After high school. I was about 18, 19. (Morgan's graduating in June.) No, that was after. And by that time, I knew the dance and teaching the dance, but I still never left the ballet world. I couldn't! I didn't *know* anything else! And I didn't *want* to, because it was so different. No, I didn't want to do modern dance — because I realized what modern dance... It told a deep story, yes. And was beautiful, yes. But it was not anything I could share. My appetite was different.

CF: How long did you spend in New York, then? When you were with your Uncle Frank and at Small's Paradise?

EGR: Well, I went to a studio. It was Rose Morgan. I did not do well there. My parents did let me go back to stay, because I was going to study. I took classes at NYU. Dance classes that I knew how to filter, and I took. But I still had a difficult time getting grassroots. What did I *do* in New York?

CF: Did you live with your uncle?

EGR: Yes, my aunt and uncle.

CF: How wonderful!

EGR: And, of course, they were very close to my father. Not close to my mother — that in-law/family thing. But mom was happy to let me go, because she knew where I was — and *most* of what I was doing. (Parents *never* know all of what you're doing!) And I just had a strong desire to *share*. By this time, my relationship with Viola Gensler was strained — I'm going to put it that way. I would come into the studio and do what was to be done, and that was it. I realized very much what a part of her need for me was, and I remained there. But I began to cut my hours shorter and shorter. I would go into her studio, like, on Monday — but on Friday I was through. And I would begin to teach (*we pause here due to an incoming telephone call at the house*).

CF: Hold that thought! (She asks someone in the room to hold it for her.) I've got it. I am holding it, too. Take a little break. It's a *lot* — to remember so far back...

EGR: I don't *like* it, either.

CF: You don't? I am really interested in it! How come you don't like it?

EGR: (in a whisper) Because I've grown! (Back to regular voice) Not only have I grown older, I've grown *wiser* — in time — but the timetable in which we live now. That's why I don't like it.

CF: But it's a *part* of it — part of getting older and wiser was going through it. Right?

EGR: Mm-hmm, I guess.

MG: I think your stories are so cool!

EGR: I don't think so.

MG: Maybe that'll be me. Maybe that'll be me next year if...

EGR: I hope so!

ZG: Nana, every time I'm with you, I hear a new story about your life.

CF: Ninety years worth, right?

ZG: Mm-hmm...

EGR: But you see, there it *is*, Zach! You've heard these stories before...

ZG: I have.

EGR: ... but you're older and you can put more together...

ZG: I can understand them now.

EGR: ...because you know what you're *doing*.

ZG: Exactly.

EGR: Right. (She instructs Zach to tell the people on the phone in the house that they're holding us up.) And I don't want to cry too much...

CF: I'm sorry. It's really valuable. It's part of a story that should be shared.

EGR: I can sum it *up*, quickly.

CF: No thank you! It's fascinating, because we live in a different time.

EGR: It's a different world!

CF: Well, in some ways different, in some ways the same...

EGR: Can you imagine spending twenty-four hours a day with an individual (she chokes up) that you don't *know*? Seven, five, six days a week! Well, you *know* them. I knew her, but I knew her in a different way. Was she caring? Was she loving? Was she interesting? Did we go to museums? Did we go to the nooks and corners of the cities? Well, we did. Did we eat in the best of restaurants? Uh-huh. But we never talked about anything other than... Her husband, Clayton Heinz, I never knew. He never walked into the studio. I would hear snatches of phone conversations: "Hi Clay. Where are you? How's the weather there?" They talked formal. She was a *formal* individual. She was formal! I would hear her talk to her mother and she would say, "Mom, how *are* you? *Very good!*" I mean, the studio is empty. She's not whispering, because she doesn't want anybody to hear — there's nobody. "Oh *good!* *Very good!* Did you so-and-so and so-and so? Good, mom! I'm proud of you.' So, I mean, I didn't feel that I was different — and when she would tell me not to go downstairs with the other girls, with Maureen and Betty... They would have lunch breaks, you know? And go downstairs to Strights Pharmacy? There was a drug store and they had a ... soda fountains were great then. They were *very* important in young people's lives. She would say, (imitating Viola's smooth, quiet voice) "Elaine, I don't want you to go downstairs." I was *not* a part of the teenagers that I worked with, that I danced with — the leaders — every day. Like, Laverne knows Dianne, and *my* girls are all *still* in touch with each other, and they're in their sixties. (She whispers) I don't know where these girls are! Who they married...

Mrs. Sharvat was a baker — (to Morgan): Oh, Morgan! She would come in with pastry like this that she would bake at home. And she would sit there all day waiting for her daughter, who was a leader in the dance. She brought Viola Gensler pastry every week. She would never share it with anybody. It would disappear. Not even would she share it with me. It would just disappear, because to her it was like, "How can you bring this?" And to this very day, do you see the fruit on that table? That's how I've learned to eat in my home — we're not pastry people. I had to ask Laverne to bring the cookies (referring to a tray of cookies she has offered us) so that we could make them.

CF: Did Miss Gensler speak with an accent of any sort?

EGR: No!

CF: So, you think she was from *this* country...

EGR: No, she spoke very *clear* English.

CF: ...so she only performed in Europe, but had not come from there?

EGR: I have no idea! I used to have all of that history. I *had* her history, and I went through the basement, but couldn't find it. But I do know that she ended up with the Elliott [Comstock Company] ...I think she came to this country. I don't know!

CF: I can see that it was a very strange experience you had, in that you were intimate with her in the amount of time that you shared... Your common ground was dance, but other than that, you were shut out of her life...

EGR: Totally shut out!

CF: ...she had such an impact on you, but you don't know...

EGR: I know once I left and decided to teach...I didn't leave, I was telling you that I began to teach on Saturdays, and I rented space at a large church, Cory Methodist Church.⁵ I rented their gymnasium and I began to teach dancing. Maybe I started out with maybe about eight students, and that was not a lot. And by the way, Dianne [McIntyre] was a part of that headcount — mm-hmm — about two or three years old. When she came with her shoes, the ribbon of her ballet shoes would — I'd say, "Oh, your shoes are going to get wet and sticky!" You know, she was so short. But the elevator girl that ran the elevator, Margie, told Viola Gensler, because I gave a recital...

CF: ...that you were moonlighting!

EGR: Mm-hmm. And she said, "Elaine, is *this* how you've been spending your Saturdays?" She very gently questioned me, and (to her young listeners in the room, "Put your fingers in your ear") I lied and denied for a minute. I didn't own it, and then I thought "Why am I not?" and I think it made a little difference. And then as my classes increased, and as I increased in age and I saw that it was of worth and value — and at that time Karamu was just beginning. Karamu is 100 years old — I just figured that out this last week and thought "Wow, that was when we were this, that and the other" — but anyhow I was involved with Karamu. I was involved with Antioch Baptist Church, where all of Morehouse — Martin Luther King was a guest in our home, because Blacks did not come into Cleveland and make reservations at the Hotel Statler. But because once again, of certain individuals that lived in various areas, through my dad, my parents — and we had a big house, then they would take "x" number of girls or "x" number of boys, and they would stay with us while they were singing in the senior choir or whatever the youth program, Youth Week, like Martin Luther King last week? My house would have been full, because of various students coming in from different places. And my father — we had a huge rec room, which I taught dancing in, also — Dianne danced downstairs there, too. And *my* house was the party house after the affairs and functions, and that's when the exciting things would happen, you know? Like Martin — Morehouse boys — because at that time, he was just Martin. And he was — what do you call it? — he was not the party animal or the "swift" of the boys. He would stand back, and he would say "No, I'm alright, I'm fine" — and watch us clown and dance, and if we had a bottle of rum or something — we were doing things that maybe we shouldn't do because we were in our twenties — 19, 20, 23 years old — but at that time we were sneaking and doing things that maybe our parents wouldn't have approved (she imitates parental voices: "*How* did that beer bottle get down there?" You know? Wow, that was a biggie! (to Morgan and Zach) It was — it was big! And when my mom, who had a beautiful voice, would come to the top of the steps, and sing "Goodnight, Irene," I would want to *crawl* under one of the chairs, and so everybody else said "That's your mother singing — it's time to go. Time to leave." And it may have been 12:00 or 1:00 — and I'd say, "Well, it ain't New York! And I'm not loose, I'm at home! So, yeah, you got to go, see you in the morning. We'll go maybe horseback..." We were programmed, we were scheduled, we were not loose. Spellman girls and Morehouse boys were *not* turned loose in Cleveland. They had a schedule. They had to be back to the homes, and those homes were

⁵ Located at 1117 E. 105th St. in Cleveland, OH, Cory Methodist Church is one of the oldest African American churches in Cleveland. It was one of the largest Black-owned churches in the United States at the time of its dedication (at its present site) in 1947, and has remained an important historical landmark, serving as a nationally important stop for Civil Rights luminaries in the 1960s, such as Martin Luther Kings, Jr. and Malcolm X, who both gave important speeches there. The church has also always housed a number of community services, such as the dance classes taught there by Elaine Gibbs Redmond.

scheduled, too. We had a program. It might have been to go horseback riding in the morning, or breakfast someplace. But we were still young adults, programmed.

CF: Let me take a brief pause, because I think Laverne Wilcox is in the kitchen, and we'd like to have her join us. Her grandson, Jalen Black, a dancer, is also with her. We need to rearrange the seating and sound. Patty Kendrick, Elaine's daughter, will also join us.

Lots of talk going on informally, some of it valuable:

There is, for example, much conversation about the photos of dance students scattered around the house. One of these is a photo of a very young Morgan with Dianne McIntyre.

MG: She was so great – she always came to my stuff.

EGR: Oh, Dianne has followed Morgan ever since first position!

CF: Before we officially bring everyone into the conversation, I would like you, Elaine, to talk about the sequence of events you've touched on so far once we are on record again. If I understand the timeline correctly, you opened up the first studio in the rec room of your parents' home, and then you branched into Cory Methodist Church...

EGR: Mm-hmm...

CF: And then from there, I'm not even sure.

EGR: From there, a private studio...

CF: Let's wait until the film is rolling, but I want to get the outline in my mind, because we've been skipping around, including our discussion of the interlude in New York...

EGR: Yes.

CF: I'm interested in all of that, and of course I know a lot of famous people came and went in your life...

MG: Yes.

LW: A lot! A lot of those!

CF: ...whether in your home or Cory or elsewhere! I understand that Paul Robeson and Janet Collins passed through your studio...

EGR: That was at Cory.

MG: Halle Berry was in and out of your dance studio!

EGR: You know what?

MG: She was, like, best friends with Langston Hughes! She's so modest — she's like, "Oh, it was just normal — Martin Luther King..."

EGR: Langston worked at Philiss Wheatley. Jane Edna Hunter was the founder of Philiss Wheatley. And Langston, who at that time was much older than me, was a young college student coming to get his early training. Jane was a social worker — I think you know the history of Philiss Wheatley...

CF: Yes, I do know something about Philliss Wheatley. But please tell us about the progression from your basement to Cory and onward. And I'd like the others to introduce themselves for the record and talk about studying with you.

Elaine is discussing the order of studios with Patty:

EGR: Where did I go? To the Union Studio, and from the Union Studio, we went to Scottsdale Blvd. and Lee Rd.

PK: The Union Studio was the Patricia Leah Dance Studio.

EGR: I was pregnant and in love!

PK: And she asked me, "How long was it that? And I said "about six months!"

EGR: As long as I kept her father in my life.

There is general laughter at this statement.

CF: Was that a short-lived kind of thing?

PK: *Real* short. Now when did it become the Elaine Gibbs Dance Studio? I said about three months after...

EGR: ...we opened the door.

LW: I always remembered it as Patricia Leah...

EGR: Mm-hmm. Patricia Leah, always.

More discussion between Patty and Laverne follows, trying to work out the timing details of this...

EGR: At that time, when I was at Cory I fell in love...

CF: Okay.

EGR: ...with her father (gesturing to Patty), who was about twenty years my senior.

MG: Wow, I never knew that!

EGR: (playfully) Yeah, well be quiet. You're going to learn something.

There is a long pause. Problems with lights and then parking issues...

Resumes 1:03:25

Please introduce yourselves.

LW: I'm Laverne Wilcox. I've known Elaine since I was four years old; I started dancing with her at four years old, and at that time she was at the Cory studio, in the gym there. I was with her from about four years to about sixteen or seventeen years old. So, she taught me all that I know about dance.

PK: I am Patricia Leah Kendrick, and I am Elaine Redmond's daughter and former student, and of course I've known her all my life. I think I started dancing in the womb. I stopped dancing in recitals at about sixteen; that was my last recital, and then I was the person that did the stage — staging and bookkeeping, and that type of thing.

CF: I'd like to reconstruct for the record the series of studios. I think perhaps it began in the rec room, was that the first?

PK: Yes.

CF: (To Elaine): And that was during the period when Elaine was moonlighting on Viola —teaching there during the week, and running her own program out of her home. How long did that go on, and then what happened next and when?

EGR: Well, that maybe lasted a year — or two. I would say over a period of about — between Gensler and home, couple of years.

CF: When Miss Gensler had her moment of confrontation with you after the elevator lady informed on you, did you then start teaching every day in your home?

EGR: No. At that time I became involved with Karamu — and...I don't know what I did! It's a good question. By that time I was loose, and it was time to get grounded. There was Jane again — you're right, Patty. My father and mother... you know you never appreciate your parents enough. By that time, they had begun to say "Enough is enough. You're out every night..." — because Karamu kept you after shows and in rehearsals and in plays. It was exciting, but it was fun. "But it's time for you to think about the fact that you've got to do something other than this." My father would look up and he'd say "Mm-hmm, the street lights are on; she'll be leaving soon." That was to get to Karamu by curtain time. So, once again Jane Edna Hunter said "Clarence, get her down here." Phillis Wheatley also had a huge auditorium/stage, recreation faculties, art classes...they serviced a small community there... piano lessons. And they decided "Elaine can come here. Good idea — dance lessons." Don't I wish, Laverne — you weren't even on the plant then, but I had dance classes there, and what few students I had at my mom's I took with me to Phillis Wheatley. What happened to them? You know they filtered, they drifted into the community. One thing is that Phillis Wheatley was in an area where the students I had taught at home, their parents probably would have turned their noses up at going to the Phillis Wheatley. From Phillis Wheatley, I became involved with their dance program, I would go to — then I became a summertime — perfect, once again, answer for my parents! — not for me, but I became a camp counselor and my summers were

spent at Camp Mueller⁶ — I guess it's still there — Independence, Ohio, where I would spend my summers, camping. I had an Indian name – I was Lightfoot. All the counselors had a name, and I was Lightfoot. I taught the dancing there, and guess what? I *loved* it.

CF: How old were you at that time?

EGR: Very early 20s.

CF: Patricia, as the family historian, maybe you can — can you put this in an historical timeframe for us?

PK: What I know is only what my mom has told me, up until I was born, which was in 1956. First there was the basement at my grandmother's house. Well, according to history, my grandmother closed that studio because she told my mom "This just does not work like this. You need your own studio." That's when she moved to Cory, and she stayed at Cory and I guess while she was at Cory, that's when she met my father, and they married and then I was conceived, somewhere in between. That's when she went into the studio that was in Cleveland on Union and 139th, I think. That's the studio I knew about. That's the studio where most of my dancing was.

LV: Yes.

EGR: (To Laverne) Were you at Cory?

LW: Mm-hmm. Yes, I started at Cory.

PK: Yeah, Laverne and Dianne, both were dancing at Cory. They're older than me, both of them. And then my mom got pregnant, while going into the Union Studio, and at that time — Laverne just told me in the kitchen — that when she moved into that studio, it was called the Patricia Leah Dance Studio.

CF: Your name!

PK: Yes, I really don't remember that, so it must not have been called that for very long.

EGR: I didn't *want* her to remember that.

LW: I remember it very well. I do. I remember it very well.

PK: She changed the name. Well, at that time, I think my mother and father divorced when I was about four years old, just as I was getting ready to start kindergarten. So it was only Patricia Leah for...

EGR: ...for a minute!

⁶ Located amid the Cuyahoga Valley Nature Preserve, Camp Mueller offers a camping experience for African American children and adults, and has been run by the Phillis Wheatley Association for more than seventy years.

PK: ...for four years. And of course I would have known of it as nothing other than the Elaine Gibbs Dance Studio. And she was in that studio from the time I was conceived in 1956 until the early 70s.

LW: Mm-hmm.

EGR: Thank you.

CF: What was that studio like?

PK: Oh, my. It actually was a storefront.

ER: Not a storefront, it was a store.

LW: I remember it well.

CF: I know how Patricia came to it; how did you get to it?

LW: I came from Cory...

CF: How did you get to Cory Church?

LW: My mother.

CF: Your mother knew of Elaine?

LW: Now, I don't recall, because I was only four years old when that was going on, but my mother was determined that I was going to have some culture. And so she wanted me to dance — that would be part of my cultural training — and Elaine at that time was the only dance instructor — African American dance instructor. I don't know how she found out about her, but I remember going to Cory to dance. I still remember that — even though I'm quite old (she laughs). Elaine used to always tell this story. You must have forgotten, Elaine, because I'm surprised you didn't tell it.

EGR: What?

LW: Elaine used to always tell the story that for the first few weeks that I was going to dance school, I apparently didn't want to go and my mom said "You're going, anyway," and I would always have to end up taking a trip into the bathroom, and I would get a little spanking, and then I would come back and I would perform like I was supposed to.

EGR: Go on! Yes...

LW: Oh, it went on apparently — now I don't remember any of this, but she used to tell that story all the time — until I grew to love it. And when she did move to Union, I went right with her.

CF: No spankings required?

EGR: Oh, no! Not by then.

LW: Oh, absolutely not. By then I was really into dance, and wherever Elaine went, that's where I was going.

CF: And Dianne came to Cory and then followed to Union as well, as far as you know?

LW: Yes, she came before I did. Dianne's a year older than I am, so she was already there.

EGR: At that time, dancing was a very — by the way, I was still teaching only on Saturdays, even in the studios. By that time, my dancers were not the bread and butter on my table. If I had enough dancers to pay the overhead and the rent for my studio, that made me comfortable. I took them on field trips...

LW: Mm-mmm.

EGR: ...if a movie came here — I'm dropping a tear again — if a performance came here, that's the kind of studio it was. It was not my livelihood — what I had to do to exist — I did the same thing in those studios that I did in my mother's house. Mom said "You gotta' go out, you gotta' get a job, you gotta' grow up." Then I got a husband so I didn't have to get a job, and I didn't have to grow up. And my father was a master carpenter, and built that lovely studio. It had been a store or a business of some kind...we even had to go out and get a heater...

LW: I remember that heater, too.

EGR: I would have to get up on Saturday mornings to heat it. So I had no high overhead. I had to get a — I don't know what you call people who do windows and things — to put Patricia Leah and a ballet dancer on the sign...

LW: Mm-hmm.

PK: Sign-painter.

LW: I remember that.

EGR: Yep! The sign-painter, to put Patty's name on it, because her father was really the financier and the backer of it, and he was just going to put me in business — and that wasn't going to work because I was a liberated woman then. Viola couldn't do anything. — No, not with my dancing. To *me*, it was a *personal* sharing skill. And I *never* thought of it as a living.

CF: At some point, your day job, I guess we would call it — was at Parks and Recreation — you went on to become a Director there. Did that start at that point?

EGR: Yes! When her dad was no longer available to me, then I had to reach back and use my skills. And my skills took me to the Division of Recreation, and from there to...

PK: Music School Settlement...

EGR: Well, that's true; I forgot about that. But that's when I was in classes.

PK: It was a kind of internship, I guess...

EGR: I had to qualify *myself* to do what I had to do with three little girls. And I never looked back. And I still never worked on Saturday. I always had room for my dancers, and to do what I wanted to do. Always.

PK: You know, this might be interesting. My sisters, who were born while at that studio — my mom taught while she carried twins.

LW: She did. I was there then.

PK: Her twins were born, and they loved to dance. I, of course, enjoyed dancing, but I wanted to play piano, but of course I had to dance because my mom was the dance teacher. But dancing took me so many different places. As far as music, my love for music, my love for the arts, both performing and visual. I'm so thankful that it broadened my horizons for being able to put things together, as far as choreographing style shows or whatever — talent shows — for what I did in my adult life.

LW: Mm-hmm.

PK: Nobody believed that the chubby ballerina was able to coach special Olympics in gymnastics and dance and stuff like that, and that all came from my mom. A lot of my organizational skills. Of course, to my mom, I'm not organized at all; to other people, they see just what she gave me through dance as far as organizing and being able to put things together. And it's done a lot to my life.

LW: May I also add to that, because I was waiting for you to ask, I have finally had the opportunity to share with Elaine what a very important part of my life she has been, how important she has been. She's like my other mom. She really is, and I'm so much like her in so many ways, down to my attire, the way I carry myself — many people have said that, who know who she is. But she has, in addition to the poise and the grace that I developed because of my dance training — because of her, I have done other things. I became interested in fashion. And this is not to say that my mother did not help, but Elaine was the core that helped me to get where I am, or where I have been. I taught dance. I didn't pursue it like Dianne did, but I taught it for many years, not only in daycare centers, but I taught it at Cuyahoga Community College for a number of years; I did some things in between that. I also developed a very strong desire to work in the fashion industry, and developed my own modeling and charm school, and have trained a number of models and I have also modeled professionally, and all of that came from — and I *know* it came from her. And that's the truth — it did. And for that, I will always be indebted to her, because I'm sure that I would not have had any of that. She helped me to develop such a love for the arts, and I'm like Patty — not only dance, but music, art. So many times, I absolutely love classical music. I probably never would have been exposed to that had I not been in her dance studio. And when I tell people that now, they still look at me like “You like classical music?” Yes, I do. And because of her, I attempted to instill in my own children that love and that desire for it. So she — I don't know what I would have done without her in my life.

CF: What a legacy!

LW: And that's the truth. Yeah. That's the truth.

CF: I know it is, because that's how we found her — we found her by hearing people talk about what she meant to them.

LW: Oh, yeah.

CF: Perhaps this is a random question; I'm just aware of the time. Talk about the Civil Rights years in the 1960s and early 70s. I mean, your studio in 1956 was two years after *Brown vs. Board of Education*, so those must have been interesting times. How did those times intersect with your dance training or any of this history?

PK: You know, surprisingly enough, we just had this “discussion” — I'm going to call it — my mom and I. About how race affected the dance world and how it affected her. I don't think my mother saw color in herself or anybody else as she was coming up. But after listening to her background, how she actually *stole* dance from Viola Gensler? Even though it was *presented* to her, it wasn't *intended* for her.

LW: Mm-hmm.

PK: She actually was hired because in those times, Black people *only* serviced white people. Nothing Black or Jewish went into Viola's studio, unless they worked *for* her and serviced her. And fortunately, my mom *benefited* from what she did, and she learned a part of dance that I'm sure she (Viola Gensler) did not share with her own — because they might open up a studio down the street!

EGR: I learned that part well.

PK: And you know, the different things that she — she watched her weight, she made sure she ate well, she made sure she did all kinds of things, and I think my mom got a little upset with me when I said “People take care of their pets.” And back then when someone like a Viola Gensler embraced someone young and Black, it doesn't mean she didn't love her, but she still was not her equal. Mom carried her bags, mom was her legs, her arms, and all of that.

EGR: I *was* her body.

PK: And I'm sure...after all these years, I never heard my mom talk about how much she was paid.

CF: I was wondering about that.

PK: And I'm sure there was some payment, but how much, you know? And she worked, not just Saturdays. Viola Gensler's studio ran what? Six days a week. And my mom received *all* that training. And was able to share it, and when she says sometimes “How do you know what to do?” And I'm like, “Mom, you taught me.” I was not a dancer, and probably would never be a performer, but I'm able to teach — not just dance, but just about anything.

EGR: Because you learned all about the stage, and everything.

LW: As far as I'm concerned, what Elaine did for me, and I think I'm safe in saying for Dianne also — because she and I have talked about this any number of times, is that back during those days it was unconscionable to think that an African American woman could be a classical ballet dancer.

Now Dianne went into Modern Dance, but I always stayed with the classical. But Elaine never once said, “You’ll never be able to do classical ballet.” So in other words, what I’m saying is that she helped me to know that as a Black woman, I could do anything I wanted to do. I just happened not to go into that field, but she never once made me feel that this was something I couldn’t aspire to be. And I think she not only did that for me, but for all of her students — to let us know that we could do whatever we wanted to do. And in that time, in that period, that was unheard of.

CF: What better lesson?

LW: Exactly. So she gave us that pride, she gave us that stability to do, to pursue whatever it was that we wanted to pursue.

PK: And you know what? I wish this — what? Two years ago, we had a kind of reunion, where we gathered up as many people as we could find, and we had a tea outside in the back yard, and I think we might have had two people — two — out of that whole group that actually went into dance. But you had people that went into a court room, people that went into classrooms, people that went into politics. Dance carried so many Black females into — my mom *took* then there.

LW: Mm-hmm.

PK: And you know, you often wonder. The field that I chose is so much off the wall from what dance would be, but I managed to incorporate it anyway, and people have *benefited*. It was interesting that when I would go to work sometimes, once my mom retired, she’d come sit at my job. And people would say afterwards, “*Now* we know where you got it from.” That was like...I didn’t know what they were talking about! And if you notice, I’m holding my hands — we all do — so does she.

LW: Mm-hmm, you notice the similarities.

PK: We’re *constantly* dancing. Actually, you pull dance into your life in so many different ways and you don’t know that’s — unless you know where it came from.

CF: Yes. It becomes who you are, and it takes you places.

PK: Yes.

LW: Yes, it does.

CF: How many students do you think your mom taught, over the years?

PK: Oh my goodness! You know, like I was explaining about the actual pictures that we have. In 1956, we didn’t have a photographer that took pictures. So, I’d say that we started actually taking pictures in the studio in the very late 60s/early70s. So I can only account for who went through the studio from the time I was about 8, because that’s when I actually started remembering who people were — up until the studio closed. So, hundreds...

LW: Mm-hmm. I would agree.

CF: Mm-hmm...

PK: I mean, hundreds. There were people that danced a long time, there were people that danced for very short times. In fact, Carla danced, left, came back, danced some more — and then there were families of kids that would dance: some of them would stay, some of them wouldn't. But they all, you know, floated through the studio. So some people stayed; some didn't.

CF: Sure.

PK: You know, it would totally depend on the child and what the parent...

LW: Jackie Brae--!

CF: What did you say?

PK: Well, Jackie Brae-- danced, and surprisingly enough she wasn't in a lot of those pictures. It's like, the pictures don't necessarily depict who danced the longest.

LW: Yeah.

PK: I think Laverne and Dianne stayed...

LW: Forever!

PK: ...forever! In fact, (to Laverne) I know *you* don't remember this, but *I* do. Laverne, after she had had her marriage, came back and she actually would narrate at some of the recitals...

LW: You're right. I don't remember that.

PK: You know, I do.

LW: Do you?

PK: Because after you stopped, I had to do it.

LW: I don't remember that...

PK: My mom incorporated... the brothers of some of the dancers did the music, and the curtains and the lights...

LW: I remember that.

EGR: And where did I get all that?

PK: ...and it was like the whole family — the whole family — would be involved.

EGR: I'm telling you! I'm telling you...

PK: You'd have fathers that actually participated, and then you had those that didn't do anything, you had those that came and dropped off, you had those that sat, you had those that thought the first time they saw a recital, they decided that their daughter was so good they were going to take her to the studio up the street and have her dance...

EGR: By that time — I'm interrupting you, but see, I don't — *you* caused my mind to cross racial barriers because one of the dancers — we're not going to use names — but I know who exactly what that was about...

PK: There were a couple! There were those that would let you know and those that didn't...

EGR: At that time, there was a downtown studio, and those particular fathers would come to the recital and they would see their *talented* child perform — or, they *thought* talented — that was their opinion — and immediately they would pull them out of my studio and send them downtown to *his* studio or farther out Chagrin — there were two studios that my students bounced back and forth...

PK: They were white studios. Mom, you have to *say* it.

EGR: Well, yes, because there were no other studios — so why do I have to say it? Alright, there were no other studios, but they felt that “This is *it!* Look at my daughter!” One of those mothers still remained my closest friend. “You want to go someplace else?” “Bye!” “Cause I'm not *here* to *keep* students. I only want those who want me.” That was my attitude.

CF: And all this time, you were still only teaching on Saturdays?

EGR: That was it! I never walked in my studio other than my...Patty's stepfather came into our life — well, he really was in my life *before* my husband. I just didn't have the maturity —
(*There is a short laughing exchange here where Patty jokes that she wants a DNA test...*)

Well, let me say this real quick: Patty's father was a very, very *smart* Black man. He *knew* who I was, or he *felt* who I was. And I'm not saying that to pump myself. But I'm saying he knew — he had watched me as a person, and he said “I want to get to know her better.” And he did. He was 20 years older than me. “I'm going to *put* this girl in business.” He could afford to, and he did. I had a father who had skills — my father was the head of the first building — Roosevelt had said “We're going to put people in housing.” My father was over the carpenter division. My father, on his hands and knees, took that area and made it a studio, according to my standards.

LW: Ahhh. I didn't know that...

EGR: Well, that's how it happened. And then my husband was going to tell *me* — he was going to become Viola Gensler! And I couldn't *have* that! I could *not* have anyone who was going to tell me how to manage the studio. That studio probably *would* have been operating seven days a week!

CF: Mm-hmmm.

EGR: Seven, I said!

CF: Mm-hmmm. I hear you.

EGR: Okay? And that was the *end* of that. That *isn't* what I wanted to do. No, I did *not* want to live in a dance studio and teach dancing... I want to go back to Dianne McIntyre. I have always said to Dianne... she has so *much* to give! She has so — dancing is her *life*! I have watched her walk it, I have watched her train, I have watched her *reach* for it. But I will *never* see her in a studio, teaching a dance class.

LW: That's true.

EGR: She's a creative...if she's *moving*, if she's here, if she's ...

LW: That's true.

EGR: And *that's* why I understand...and that's why I could *never* stay in a studio seven days a week. That's why Karamu became such a part of my life. And in those days... *Now* you can go away to a university, you can study the Arts; as a Black, you can train and take as much as you want to away from it, and have it all, and share and give it. So, I understand that part of Dianne, because I have always said, as she grew and since she stayed in my life, and she stayed Cleveland-based, I always wanted her to...to pass on to her — as a matter of fact, I've taken Dianne, Patty *and* Laverne —No, I don't think I've gotten hold of Dianne yet to take her. There's a place I have my eye on even *now*, if they would just let me in there on Saturdays...

LW: She'd still be teaching! That is the truth.

EGR: I *could*!

LW: Yes, you could.

EGR: Because also, remember, I talked about that stick?

LW: Mm-hmm.

EGR: I never realized until I became an adult why I was so much a part of Viola Gensler's life. I *was* her body! So, I don't need a body to teach!

LW: That's right. She used *us*. She used us to teach.

PK: Right. And she doesn't understand that we could do the same thing. We could use someone else's body.

EGR: But I mean, it can be done. If they would give me a studio now, with enough innocent legs and arms...

We pause, briefly. Laverne asks to bring in her grandson, Jalen, who is a dancer.

CF: Please, introduce yourself.

JB: I am Jalen Black, and I dance at the Tri-C (Cuyahoga Community College) Arts Academy, under Terence Greene --- and I know Miss Elaine through my grandmother.

CF: Your grandmother is Laverne Wilcox?

KP: And Jalen is going to Julliard. That's where I want to see him. Of course, what do you think?

JB: That's where I want to go.

CF: Best wishes to you! Hard work, and a wonderful life.

Morgan, you should introduce yourself. (Zach has had to leave for an appointment.)

MG: I'm Morgan Goldstein. Oh, God. Where do I start? So, Nana started out as just, you know, someone to watch me when I was an infant during the day, and nanny me. And it's been 18 years, and I'm still here. She basically raised me. I grew up here, most of my memories are here. She taught me a lot. I was in Dance for awhile — I started dancing, probably, at four or five, and I really got that from just being here and getting a love for dance, and I really started to love dance, and got really serious about it for four or five years up until fifteen. And then I stopped, but it definitely made a big impact on me, still to this day.

EGR: And you stopped for a good reason.

MG: Yes.

EGR: What was your good reason?

MG: Well, obviously, I loved it but I think a lot of dancers' careers where you either know you're good enough to start training to go professional, or there's no place you can go from there. And I obviously knew dance was fun and I loved it, but it was extremely hard work and the hours were only getting longer, and I knew I didn't want to do it for the rest of my life. And I wasn't that good. But I did love it and I love the community. But there are other things I really want to pursue. But I definitely think...it's crazy — there's such a mirror to what Patty was saying: for all those years ago what dance gave her when she was younger, and I feel the same way. My love for Arts and Culture came so much from Nana and Patty, and even now not dancing, I still have such an appreciation for that.

CF: There seemed to be some interest earlier, in speaking about the years of the Civil Rights movement. Is there anything you'd *like* to say? In a way, you said it indirectly, but is there anything else you'd like to say?

LW: You're talking about from our own personal perspective?

CF: Yes, as related to Elaine or your dance training — how it intersected, or not.

PK: You know what? I'm going to be very honest. A lot like my mom, we were so busy dancing that we kind of danced right through it.

LW: Absolutely.

PK: The only time we... I didn't see color actually until I started working. And in my personal life and in Laverne's personal life as we got older, we came to find out we *still* didn't see color.

LW: Absolutely. Mm-hmmm.

PK: And among Black people in our area, we were considered different.

LW: Mm-hmmm.

10 minute lapse in recording

PK: Among white people, we were considered smart. What did they call it? I don't know — different: "Oh, you *know* who that is? You know who Pavarotti is?" And it was through the years that I understood that's where it came from. My mom, "You are allowed to listen to your music, but you're going to know who composers are.

LW: Exactly.

PK: "You're going to understand what this movement of music is about." So, when you talk about the Civil Rights movement and how it affected us, I have to honestly say, we were too busy! We read about it in the paper.

LW: Mm-hmm.

PK: But we were in a different world. We didn't see prejudice. And we don't see it now. And the people we surround ourselves with don't see it. I mean, all I remember is carrying Morgan around like a little bag of potatoes, and people we would run into would want to know who this is. And I'd say, "It's *Morgan*." And as she got older, and she would talk, they would want to know "Well, how do you know *them*? And Morgan would say, "Well, that's Nana."

EGR: And I might add to how I got to be Nana. When I left work, when I left City Hall, there was such an empty void...I had lost my husband. I just had a void in my life. And I said "I've got to do something." And I got rid of the big old Tudor house that caused great responsibility; I knew that wasn't my thing — building garages, and putting in windows and what-not. And then when I came here, I still was not happy. And so I thought, "Maybe if I had just one baby — not a lot — but I'll get a baby." Well, by that time, Morgan's mother was ready to spread her wings, and she had this brand *new* baby, and I think I put an ad in the *Sun Press*, and I think her mother put an ad in the *Sun Press*, and called me up and I said, "Well, come over," and they came. They interviewed with me, and I said "That's it." And they came with her in a little basket and put her in my arms, and I've been satisfied — up *until* about a year ago. Now, I'm getting ready to discard her! (peals of laughter around the room).

MG: Wow! I'm so glad we got *that* on camera! (More laughter)

EGR: It's on camera! She's becoming independent, she's spreading her wings, she doesn't spend time with me...

MG: Nana's always there to put me in line!

EGR: ... she doesn't hug and kiss me, and I don't know where she is and what she's doing. And she's getting ready to go away to school, and I am too old and tired to get another baby. So (to Morgan), you'll never be replaced!

MG: Yeah, I was almost replaced by my brother. But... now she has two babies.

PK: And he's grown...

EGR: At that time I said to her mother, I said "I'm going to enjoy having our children but they cannot call me Elaine. They can call me Grandma, but she has a grandma. They can call me Nana, they can call me Mrs. Redmond." And I'm comfortable with this being *my* baby. This is a part of *my* house. She belongs to *me* for about eight hours — or whenever.

PK: It was *more* like they *lived* here.

MG: Yeah, we really prefer... up until I went to kindergarten, I really did live here. I would sob when I had to come home. I would scream...

PK: We would go out shopping, and we'd come back, they'd (Morgan's parents) be sitting in the driveway waiting for us to come in. One day they were sitting in the house, waiting for us to come in!

EGR: They had to find us and wait. I look up, and she has an earring in her nose! Oh my!

MG: I think that we never expected...(Camera battery dies here, which I announce.)

CF: We might have to circle back to continue with you again. We will have to follow you, Jalen to Juilliard and beyond. Laverne, I have a feeling you have more to tell.

LW: Yes, I do.

JD: And we have a date in June scheduled.

CF: We have a June date scheduled with Dianne, so maybe we can try again then. I would definitely like to know more.

EGR: Would you really?

CF: Yes! I really would!

PK: You keep wanting to talk about the Civil Rights movement, but we really aren't good for it.

CF: That's not my primary interest.

LW: But I also wanted to say something, myself, about it...

CF: The camera is no longer recording, but I have it on this voice recorder, so it could be a part of the transcript rather than the film recording.

LW: The only thing I can say about the Civil Rights movement, I agree totally with Patty that we were so immersed in the dance culture at that time...

CF: It consumed you...

LW: It did! *But* I when I realized that there *was* such a thing as the Civil Rights movement, I was in college. And it was in the 60s and 70s, the *height* of the Civil Rights movement, *that's* when I first realized that there was a rift between black people and white people.

CF: You had no idea up until then...

LW: None. None! Because she had taught us not to see color, so.

EGR: And I *still* don't see color!

LW: I don't either, actually.

EGR: I'm sorry, I cannot see it!

CF: Don't be sorry!

EGR: I cannot feel it, I don't understand it. When I think of my youth, but I was always involved in the art world...and we would never understand color!

LW: Yeah, it was the same with me.

EGR: When I stop to think that right now I could feel this... I'll tell you what. When my husband that I married —I'll make this real quick.

PK: Which husband?

EGR: Your second father! Arthur Redmond and I married. I had already made arrangements to travel with one of my fellow friends, Bobby, that I grew up with — along with Arthur Redmond, who was a young man of culture and deep art. And I said, Bobby if I could just get back to Europe one more time..." — because when I was in Europe with Viola, I could not cut loose, but I did make some contact with some of the — do you remember the show — have you ever heard of *Hair*?

CF: Of course!

LW: Who did *not* know?

EGR: Well, some of the performers that were in *Hair*, I had kept contact with. I had hooked up with them when they came to Cleveland. Now, I want to get back to Europe on my own, and these are the kind of people I moved around with. I mean, when you're talking about color... and I told my husband, I said "I'm not canceling my trip. You get the house ready. Bobby and I are going to Europe." And we went to Europe! And jumped up and down, and I kept in contact with all of them until they left the planet. I have a young man now that came into our lives, and he's now a

pharmacist, getting ready to retire, he's head of the VA in Albuquerque, NM: Darren, who is *not* a person of color. And Darren calls me *every* Sunday morning, *still*. So I mean, my life now — I just don't understand! So no, I don't think I would march. But *ask* me in travel, do I *feel* the difference of color? *Ask* me when I went to City Hall as the first Black *woman* as a department head, did I feel racial color?

LW: I can relate to that. Mm-hmm. Oh, yeah...

EGR: And how did I handle it?

PK: Not very well!

LW: Oh, no — I don't believe *that*...

EGR: I handled it *extremely* well!

LW: Yeah, I believe that.

EGR: (To Patty): Honey, what do you mean? I mean, I don't understand. It never got *here* (she points to her head). When I stop to think of the men that *touched* me and thought they *could* because of who they were and *what* — I didn't say because of *who* I was — but because of *what* I was — a Black female — that it would be alright. I mean, this is not *new*!

LW: No....

EGR: And how did I handle it?

CF: How *did* you handle it? [2:03:22]

EGR: Well, my particular experience with it was in a wide, full office. I've always been a person of size. You know, I was not a frail, little petite dancer. Always had a behind. As a Black woman, I had a Black behind. And he walked in, and said "My!" And I whirled on him, and pointed my finger, and as loud as you could hear across the street, I said "Don't you EVER, EVER" — he thought I was going to do a ballet on him, or a tour jetée or something — "put your hands on me again!" So no, I don't understand. *That* man gave me everything I wanted, encouraged me... I never asked for anything. *Everything* I wanted in recreation in my department was mine from John Nagy. So, no. What I'm saying is "How did I handle it?"

CF: It sounds like you *demand*ed respect.

LW: Absolutely, absolutely.