

Interview with Elizabeth (Liz) Chambers on March 24th, 2018, conducted by Erisa Apantaku and Olivia Obineme.

Erisa Apantaku (EA): First of all, what is your name? Can you say it and spell it for the record?

Elizabeth Chambers (EC): Okay, my name is Elizabeth Chambers. C-H-A-M-B-E-R-S.

EA: When did you start attending Robeson?

EC: I started in the fall of 1974.

EA: And so technically then it was Parker.

EC: Correct, I had also attended Parker Elementary School from grades 1-8, so I just walked across the street to the high school.

EA: I am curious about that transition between Parker High School and Robeson High School. Can you talk to me about when you guys found out that they were going to build a new school and what your thoughts were about that? Were you excited? Were you scared?

0:54

EC: I had conflicting emotions, I wanted to actually graduate from the old school because everyone else in my family had, I had four older sisters and they all graduated from there. So, it seemed like I was missing out on a family tradition. So, I did want a new school, but I didn't want to graduate from the new school. So, we found out about maybe in 1976, because it took about a year to complete. And the biggest thing for most of us was that the name was going to change. And we were so used to saying Francis Parker High School it was a mouthful to change it to Paul Robeson High School. And so we had to first learn who he was because he wasn't really taught in our history books so we had to learn who he was and the significance of changing the name. So once we wrapped our heads around that it was an easier transition than when we first heard it.

EA: That's very interesting. That's actually one of the things about the new school that people are concerned about, what will it be named?

EC: A name is really important. We had a lot of grassroots people in the neighborhood who were really adamant about having black children attend a school named after a famous African American. So, we didn't realize that in the beginning because it wasn't that popular in those days to change the name of the school, so it was kind of ground breaking to do that.

2:24

EA: What about the physical... physically how the new school compared to the old school. Talk to me about that transition.

EC: Actually I think the new school had a more awkward layout. The old school was kind of your typical H Shape school. You know you had the typical long hallways and then on either end you had the shorter ones, so, we were so familiar with that school, and we actually liked climbing the stairs to the fourth floor. And so when we had to do most of our classes at the old school, and only science classes at the new school it was just kind of hard for us. Like you had your swimming class and then you had to come out wet and go over to the new building for any of the newer classes that you had over there. So we weren't very happy about that.

EA: And when you're saying old school and new school is that because while they were building the new school the old school was still around? Old school being Parker, new school being Robeson. Can you explain that, how that building process went.

3:27

EC: Actually, the new school wasn't large enough for everybody because at that time I think we had 1000 Freshman who came in at one time, and I don't know if they anticipated that many kids coming into the school. So the juniors and seniors had to have classes in the old building, which is Parker, and the freshman and sophomores had all of their classes in the new building.

EA: That's very interesting. Why did you attend Robeson?

4:15

EC: It was close to home, and my mother when I told her I was considering other high schools. She was like why? When you could walk there why would you ride the bus and you know brave the elements to go farther when it was two blocks from my house.

EA: When did you graduate from Robeson?

EC: I graduated in June of 1978.

EA: Is it true you were the valedictorian?

EC: That is absolutely true.

EA: Do you mind, is that in the yearbook?

EC: It's not, it's not in there at all. At the end of the yearbook I think they called it seniors... Each seniors said what they wanted to be, and actually I turned out to be what I said in 1978.

EA: What did you say?

EC: A teacher.

EA: Aww where did you teach?

5:10

EC: I have taught... I started at St. Thaddeus Catholic School, stayed there four years. Went to a suburban district, District 143.5, and then ended up in Chicago for the last 29 years. So, in total I have taught 36 years.

EA: Wow, congratulations! And you just retired?

EC: I will be retiring in June.

EA: Where have you been teaching the past 20 years?

EC: In Chicago for the past 20 years I have been at three different high schools, Harper High School, which is the one that's closing also, Dunbar High School, and I love vocationals, and my current school is John Marshall on the West Side.

EA: Do you remember the names of any teachers while you were at Robeson or any classes that were really impactful for you?

6:05

EC: I remember a lot of my teachers, especially my English teachers, I had one Ms. Gibbs. She was so adamant about us knowing how to speak correct English. She would even follow you into the lunch room to make sure you didn't change or switch codes. Like you would talk one way in her class and then go into the lunch room with your friends and talk another way. So, she would even follow you in the lunch room just to see if you were continuing what she had already taught you. Ms. Gibbs, I heard, had passed away but she was an excellent teacher. Ms. Miller, Ms. Moore, all of those English teachers really taught from their heart, it was a passion, it was something that they were really sincere in wanting you to learn and do your best once you left high school. They were really trying to prepare you for life after high school.

6:57

EA: Do you remember any assignment that those teachers gave you that has stuck with you since then?

EC: That's a good question. I really don't. I think... but English and Math were always my favorite. Math even more so than English. So probably my math teacher Mr. Gulkowski (?) that really challenged us because I don't go to many schools now that still have Calculus and I know we took Calculus so that was one of the classes that I know was very challenging for us.

EA: Yeah that's very hard. That was my least favorite course. Describe your group of friends.

7:40

EC: That brings me a lot of joy to describe my friends because we are still friends after 44 years! We met, we were in division 850, which was the honors division we are proud to say, and we met Freshman year and we are still best of friends. After we left the reunion on Saturday we went ahead and had dinner together. So those are Linda Jones West, Hellen Tringleth Anderson, and Jeanette Little Davis, those three we have been best friends since high school.

EA: What sorts of things would you do?

EC: Now?

EA: Well, both. But first I want to know about then. Both in school and out of school. What was social life like?

8:25

EC: Social life revolved around at your locker, talking, playing, and then in the lunchroom. Those were the two places you could really be yourself. In class you had to be a certain way but when you were around your friends in those places that were unsupervised you could really be yourself. And then outside of school we did untraditional things for kids our age, we would go sledding, going to the park. We were really outdoorsy kinda kids we liked doing things like that.

EA: Are there any stories either from hanging by the locker or in the lunchroom that you remember?

9:06

EC: I remember my locker partner, Jeanette Little Davis, we had a key lock instead of a combination. So, she would lock her keys in the locker. And then come and get mine to get her keys out and then lock mine in the lock in addition. So, we would both end up having to find the janitorial staff to cut the lock off.

EA: Did that happen more than once?

EC: Often! At least once a quarter. So, four quarters about four times a year.

EA: I am surprised they didn't switch you guys. You guys stayed locker partners?

EC: We stayed locker partners and she is one of my true friends to this day but I don't give her my keys anymore! Haha!

9:48

EA: That's so funny. What about outside of school? You had mentioned sledding and going outside in the woods. Are there any particular moments from those times that you remember? Stories? [Interrupted] I was asking you about times outside of school, with your friends in the woods. Any particularly fun stories from that? Or like interesting stories?

10:22

EC: Well we only had one car between the lot of us. I forgot to mention another girl who we brought into the fold because she had the car. Her name was Bridget Hampton. And her father had given her an old Nova. I guess it might have been an early 70s car. It didn't ever break down on us though. It took us to a lot of good places. It was a place called Chances R Us. It was on the North Side, for us that was like a whole other world. So, when she could take us to Chances R Us and we could have some peanuts or we could hang out on Rush Street or something like that, it was like we were in another world almost. You know, little South Side girls leaving the city, or to us it was leaving the city cause that's all we knew, that little urban circle that we all lived in. None of us lived more than a mile apart. So that's as far as our lives had extended until that time.

11:21

EA: What about extracurricular activities?

EC: Well, I hate to tell you this but I was a majorette. And I dropped a baton a time or two.

EA: Why do you hate to tell me that?

EC: People think Majorettes are pretty airheads, you know, because I think we've got hit a few times in the head from a fallen baton. But it was fun. It really was a good time.

EA: Describe, for listeners that don't know, what is a majorette? And what sorts of activities would you do as a majorette?

EC: We would lead the marching band. So during football games at half time and parades that we were in, the majorettes were always in front of the band.

12:06

EA: Can you describe a particular football game that was really exciting, where you had to rally the team or the crowd. Or a parade?

EC: Oh parades! We would always have a back to school parade down Halsted. Where the new Kennedy King is. That used to be all shopping center, so it was kinda like going downtown, like State Street. If you were on 63rd and Halsted that was a big deal. So we always had a parade before the homecoming game that would go down Halsted Street.

12:39

EA: How did you get to school?

EC: I walked. It was only two blocks from home so I walked.

EA: Let's repeat that.

EC: I walked to school. I only lived two blocks away so I walked.

EA: How did that feel during the seasons, was there ever a particularly bad snow storm that made it challenging to get to or from school?

EC: High school I don't remember a really bad storm. But elementary I did. But I love the fall because there were so many trees along the way that you could play in the leaves. Even as a high schooler I still loved playing in the leaves and making snow angels when there was a lot of snow.

EA: I asked that cause I interviewed another student, I think he graduated in '84. And he was talking about one day, it was a beautiful morning, he walked to school with no coat, and then suddenly, like, boom! Blizzard. And everyone was running home.

EC: That sounds like Chicago. My mother always gives me a story about how she came from Mississippi during the great migration time to Chicago during the '40s and how she left home thinking she was grown, she was 17 going on 18, and her mom was still in Mississippi, and she was like, let me call somebody and let them know you're on your way. And she was like, no I'm grown, I can handle the city by myself. And she said she had on a little spring dress because of course it was hot in Mississippi and you know what our Aprils are like in Chicago. So she learned the hard way, she said she looked up and she saw her cousin and she couldn't thank her mother enough for calling somebody in advance even though she told her not to call, and let them know she was coming.

14:40

EA: What was the learning environment like at Robeson?

EC: It was very nurturing. We had teachers, especially those who had gone to HBCU that had come back and really been invested in the students. They really wanted us to succeed. They poured their hearts into what they did. So it was a very nurturing environment. Didn't give you busy work, gave you assignments that they knew would pay off in the long run. That you would know how to write, that you would know how to read, that you would know how to do some math, so you wouldn't need to start classes in college with remedial classes, or you know, taking classes that didn't count for anything. So you were going to be ready to be a professional.

15:30

EA: Do you remember any of those assignment?

Ms. Moore, she always gave, she was our English teacher for senior year, she always gave you an assignment that you had to go to the library, you had to do some research. And there was no internet. And these kids have it so easy now! So I would have to get on the bus and go to 95th and Halsted where the Woodson region library was. Because you couldn't just go to any old library, to do HER research you would had to go to the *regional* library and that was just one, which was Woodson on 95th street. So she was a person who really challenged you to step it up. Like don't give me a paper that you didn't research.

EA: Do you remember the topic of any of those papers?

16:12

EC: One paper I chose my own topic and I talked about the 60s. Since I was born in 1960, I was really interested in the revolutionary events that had occurred in the '60s. So, to me that was my greatest accomplishment, to research everything I could about the '60s.

EA: Do you remember what you took away from that?

EC: I think I ended up being very sad at the end. Because after Martin Luther King had gotten killed and everything took a turn from nonviolence to violence. So I think all my research ended up making me not so optimistic about the future.

EA: How do you feel now about the future?

17:00

EC: For people my age? I don't think we stepped up and did what we should have, so I am very optimistic for the new kids that I see now taking a stand. I am optimistic for them, not for us. I think that we'll just go away quietly, we won't make any waves, we won't make any changes. But I am optimistic things will change, but we just won't be the ones to do it.

EA: That's really interesting. Yeah, but I mean in some ways, hindsight is 20/20, it's easy for you to look back and think, I could have done more, but for us youths trying to be prescient, that's harder you know.

EC: Yeah it is. But I think it's possible. I think you guys can, even though we dropped the ball, I think we still have instilled something in you that will say, you know my mom couldn't do it, my grandma, she was on the cusp of it, but imma do it.

18:05

EA: What do you think you wish you'd have done? Or, your generation had done.

EC: Well when I was in college I think I kinda lost my passion, just trying to survive, trying to work, trying to go to school. But I had some friends who only had to go to school, so they kept that kinda revolutionary spirit cause they didn't have to be diverted by work. You know, they just was in school and they were in that atmosphere 24 hours a day where like minds were and they had time to join the black student union and all those things on campus. I didn't go away to school, I was a commuter student and that takes away I think some of your passion for what you really believe in.

EA: Definitely, it's hard. I mean when you're caught in just trying to survive, it's hard to move the needle towards justice or anything.

EC: That's true. That's true.

EA: Were there any negative experiences you remember from Robeson?

19:03

EC: Just one. We were practicing after school and we didn't have our own stereo system to practice with and we needed music. So, I had a nice little radio system that I brought to school and I put it in my locker and somebody stole it. So, that was my most negative experience that someone stole my... And it was a gift from my dad, and I would have still had it till today. I like to keep things, especially things that people have given me. So that was my negative experience that it was stolen from me.

EA: I'm sorry. And you never got it back or knew who stole it.

EC: I never knew. It was after school. It wasn't during school time. We would have after school practice so I put it in there after school and then the next day when I came back it was gone.

19:55

EA: Describe your Robeson experience in five words.

EC: Fun, free, memorable, it was wholesome. We didn't fight like I see kids fighting now. We didn't do curse or get high. So I think it was very wholesome and it was very productive.

EA: What has life looked like for you since you graduated from Robeson?

20:38

EC: It's been a bowl of cherries. I have been steadily employed. I've never not been employed. I've never not been able to take care of my family. I didn't struggle. And I am happy to say that. I always had a loving, supportive family. My mother passed some years ago in 2009, but up until the day she passed she was always there for me, my biggest cheerleader. So, I never had to struggle like some of these kids have to.

EA: Do you think... How has Robeson impacted your life? Like, having graduated from Robeson and learned from Robeson. How do you feel like that had an effect on the subsequent years?

21:24

EC: I think it prepared me to be mentally tough and to be able to survive, to be a person with character not somebody who would give up easily, not someone that would harm you in any way. And I see that in the other kids that have graduated with me, even after all these years. I see that they have good character.

EA: What do you think about Robeson makes that happen? Is it the teachers? Is it the mindset of the students that go there?

EC: I think it's everything, all of that combined together. But the leadership was good, and I think that's what makes it trickle down. We had really caring counselors and teachers, and that made the kids not want to be mean to each other. I didn't hear about bullying, I am sure it happened, but that's all you hear about now. I didn't hear about anybody doing suicide, it was just a different time all together, the kids were just more carefree.

EA: How do you feel about Robeson closing?

22:28

EC: I am sad about that, really. Because I think it's an end of an era that was different than now. Maybe it needs to close to get a new start because I see everything changing not for the better, so maybe it will be a new start. It's sad for us that attended but it might be a good thing for those that will be attending in the future.

EA: What do you want to see in the new school?

EC: I want to see students who really are engaged in learning, not just going because my mother told me to or I had to leave the house, or it's somewhere to go, or it's somewhere to sell some drugs, it's somewhere to do anything that not conducive to learning. I just want them to be active, engaged learners there.

EA: What do you think it will take to make that happen?

23:21

EC: It'll take a lot. Cause the society now, I see the biggest thing now is social media, and I hate to always talk about it but the kids can't sit next to somebody and talk to them. They would rather text somebody in another room besides using a social person that they have right next to them to talk, so it's taking away from your common sense. It doesn't make sense not to talk to the people around

you, but to text people who are at home or at another school. It just takes away from your common sense.

EA: Yeah, social media is very very strange. Um, last question. What's one of the most striking memories you have a Robeson?

24:11

EC: Probably all our senior events that we had. It was culminating into you know that time we knew we would not see some people ever again. We had picnics, we had luncheons, we just had all kinds of things just to commemorate that time because you knew it was the end of one thing but the beginning of something else.

EA: I'd love for you to show me some highlights form this yearbook.

EC: Sure.

EA: Highlights, what do you want to show us?

EC: Well the first highlight I want to show you is how I looked in 1978! Ha!

EA: Ha!

Olivia Obineme (OO): Ha! Of course! Gotta be about you first because anyone else.

EC: There she is!

25:24

EC: So, one of the highlights I'd like to feature out of this 1978 year book is myself. I am the second person in the top row. And at the time my name was Elizabeth Eatman. And all of my best friends were in the same division as myself.

EA: Is that Kim Edwards?

EC: Yeah! She's a teacher too. She teaches the little ones.

EA: I think I. I'm not sure if we set up an interview yet, but I definitely remember her form the part last Saturday. And what about Helen.

EC: Yeah, Helen is sitting right next to me. Is she on this page?

26:30

EC: So, this is Bridget, the one I told you that had the car that would let us drive around with it. Then my boyfriend, he did not take a picture that year. I don't know why. His name was Dwight McComb (?). He didn't take a picture. I think you had to go to the studio instead of them coming to you. So that's why a lot of people did not take a picture that year. I was gonna show you some other people who were very important to me. My friend Linda Jones.

27:26

EC: Right there. Her name's Jones West now, but she was Linda Jones then.

OO: Did you guys ever have a friends group nickname?

EC: We didn't. I'mma tell them it's not too late. Let's make that nickname up now. Let's see... Jeanette Little, where's she. There she is. That's the third one. The last one in that...

28:14

EC: And to round out our quad is Helen, right here. I was gonna ask you had you set up an interview with Lisa Ballard (?). She was our class president and she loves to talk. I mean you could get some good stories form that girl. She is a pastor's wife. Actually, she's a pastor herself now. They co-pastor a church called Sunrise. It's still in the Englewood area, that church. So, she'd be a good person to talk to. She was the class president.

EA: Do you have her contact information.

EC: I'm Facebook friends with her so I could send her a message through messenger. What about Miller? Ariel (?) Miller? You talk to him?

EA: Yes, I believe so.

EC: Yeah, he's always instrumental in getting the reunions together.

29:21

EC: He and Adrian Jones.

EA: Yeah, there was an alumni meeting on Monday and I went to, yeah.

EC: Oh cool. He should've been in this picture, Adrian, but he wasn't in there. He might have been absent from school that day.

EA: And he played football, right?

EC: That's Miller that played football.

EA: Oh okay.

EC: Let's see, I'll show you a picture of him. He even signed the book right here.

OO: Was Curie the...

EC: Of course! Let me show you a picture of him. He's actually in the '68 yearbook with my sister. I don't know if that was his first year at Parker, but he's actually in the '68 yearbook. Not the high school, the coach. He is like Dorothy Gaters (?) is now to Marshall High School. Everybody knows him because he has been around so long and so influential to all the students. Here he is. He's a PE teacher by trade by a football coach by renown. Everybody knows him. He was at the reunion last Saturday. He's one of the only teachers who's still, everybody just... and he makes you feel like he remembers you and he knows you even though there's no way you could remember these hundreds of thousands of kids who have come across. But he always makes you feel like, yeah, hey, how you doing?

31:06

EA: We should try and talk to him too.

EC: You should! He's a legend!

EA: Gotta figure out how we can get these contacts.

EC: Well, you talk to Miller, I know he's gonna have his contact. Because he keeps up with all his football players still.

EA: Great. Is the teacher you mentioned, I'm sorry, I'm blanking on her name, but who would make you do research, can you show us her?

EC: She's in the English department. That's her right here. Ms. Moore. This is the one that would follow you in the lunchroom to correct your grammar.

32:00

OO: The teachers, the administration, looks diverse. But it definitely seemed to have a lot of admins that were Black.

EC: They were. Because here's the principal and all the APs. So, it was, yeah, at that time... and they had been around. If you looked in the yearbook ten years previous these people had still been here. So, they had a lot of history with the school. And so it makes a difference when you just not there for a year or two, that you been there for the long haul and that you really know the kids,

know their families. Because they knew my sisters and they knew me as a result of having all that experience with them.

33:11

EA: Jacqueline Simmons. Did you ever interact with her?

EC: Not a lot. You know, back then you really only saw the admin when you were in trouble. The good kids didn't really come across them a lot. You know, if you weren't in the dean's office for any misbehavior, you really didn't see them a lot. Unless it was an assembly or you know. So, I didn't have a lot of contact with her.

EA: Can I ask you to read this for us.

EC: This says: [Reading Principal Simmons 1978 yearbook post] "The Flagship For Century I. The flagship for Century I marks the beginning of a new era. It records a graphic history for the Paul Robeson students. Most space navigators determine the weather conditions, set the course and check the condition of the equipment before a maiden flight. This is also true in establishing a new program for a new school. (WE HAVE DETERMINED THE CLIMATE IS JUST RIGHT) for recruiting out community students again to the community school. Parents and students alike are eager to support a new high school and a new high school concept. (THE COURSE IS COMPLEX BUT CLEAR). We have struck a course in new directions with program options and alternatives. While we offer more program options we are insisting on in-depth participation of students within career areas. (THE CONDITION OF THE EQUIPMENT IS IN GOOD WORKING ORDER). Our equipment has much to do with student motivations, determination and eagerness to achieve. A new building and new programs are only part of the requisites for a successful educational journey. We must emphasize the necessity for personal involvement and personal investment in a meaningful high school experience."

35:09

EA: It sounds like something that could be written this year about the new school.

EC: Mmmhmmm. It sure can. I guess everything goes in a circle. So, all the excitement and all the leadership that they put into starting up the new school will be right there for a new school 40 years later.

OO: Is she still alive?

EC: I don't know. 40 years. I always say she was probably in her 50s now, so I doubt it. She was a good-looking lady, but she was probably in her 50s there. She looks a little younger, but I don't think so. So I think she had been in education quite a while at that point. And I know he has died. He had brothers too and all of them were administrators at either our school or at Englewood. One

of them did driver's education. So his family were very educated and very involved in the community.

36:12

OO: Did it make a difference to have administrators and teachers that looked like you?

EC: Absolutely. They understood us. It's like, I'mma call your mother. So, they more your uncles and your aunties more than your teachers. And they were not to be afraid of. They were people to be respected. And that's the difference. That's not somebody you just do something because you know you'll suffer consequences if you don't, but do something because you don't want to disappoint them. You really wanted to make them proud of you.

36:53

EA: Are there any other parts of the yearbook you want to show us?

EC: Oh, let's see. Oh, I was trying to find the name of what the seniors wrote about in the back. Just senior index. So, they would have your name, and back in those days, we were really big on zodiac signs. So, you have your name, your nickname, you had division number, because that told a lot about your status in the school, what division number you were in, and... so she's in division 868. She's a Capricorn. And her ambition is to be an actress. So everybody's name, nickname, zodiac sign, and ambition, what they wanted to be. And so here I am right here. Elizabeth A. Eatman, nickname Liz, division 850, I told you that was the honor division, and I was a Scorpio, and my ambition was to be a teacher.

37:52

EC: So it would be interesting to see if these people matched up, if they really ended up doing what they wanted to do at that time.

EA: What about, what did the different divisions mean. 850 was honors. What about the others?

EC: I guess, it probably, I don't know if it was based on your grades, your test scores, how you got into the honors division, but I know you had to maintain it. I don't know how you first, you know, when you entered. Because you had the same division number from when you entered in 9th grade as when you graduated. So I don't know how they divided you up in the beginning. So, 950 was the junior honors division, and they would start over after you got to 9, so 050, 150, 250, so when you were in the division that ended in 50, that was the honors division.

38:54

EC: You know how some schools are known for their basketball team or their football team or something. For us, it was modern dance for some reason. These dancers were so outstanding. It was

like, these dancers were so outstanding. They would sell out, you know, who nowadays would want to go see a modern dance, you know, group, but these people always sold out. You get your tickets way in advance for that show.

39:30

EC: Speaking of teachers who really cared about you, let me see if I can find Ms. Johnston. She was the history teacher. And she actually helped pay for me to go away one Spring Break, and then I changed my mind and didn't want to go, but she was willing to pay her money for me to go on a trip. That was her. She would take the kids to the Bahamas or somewhere she knew they'd never be able to go, with the student council, and she would take them. And even though I wasn't part of that group at the time, she asked me if I wanted to go cause they had some extra seats, so it would only cost me like \$200 cause she was funding the rest of it. But I was such a homebody at the time, I didn't want to do.

EA: But you ended up going?

40:28

EC: I didn't. I should have, but I didn't. But it was just to speak to her character that she would be willing to expose me to something that I would never had been able to do on my own. Michael Ford, I talked to him last Saturday, and he knows my niece. So he's teaching with another generation of mine. So it's just funny. He told me his school, I'm at Deneen. I said, my niece teaches at Deneed. He said, that's my girl, when I told him her name. So it's like we just one big extended family. We extend beyond the people who graduated in 1978. We have connections to another generation.

41:28

OO: What feelings do you feel, emotions do you feel, when you look through your yearbook.

EC: I just wish I could see all of them again. Just, not so much as they were then. But I'd like to see them now because everybody doesn't come to the reunion. It's a small number compared to, maybe we had 200 or some odd graduates. So, at the reunion, you may see maybe a quarter of those people. But I would just love to see all of those people and wish blessings on them. That everybody would have a long-extended life and that they all doing well. Just being comfortable.

OO: A lot of people at the reunion said that it was just an extended family.

EC: It is.

OO: That's how you felt?

EC: I do feel that way. I still do. And there's some people that I try to go on Facebook and search for and couldn't find. And it was a girl named Iris Bright. So, if you listening Iris, I would love to find you. She didn't even take a picture. She's not in here. But she was so smart. But, not as confident in her abilities as I knew she could be. And my friend, Robert (Roberta?) Faulkner. She's not in here. So smart, but she didn't go to college. She chose to work instead. Because, you know, college isn't for everybody. But she would've been so gifted at school because she's so organized, and so, you know, like, never procrastinate. Just get it down. And get it down right. You know, not just throw something together. Just do it right.

OO: I'm just gonna have you continue flipping through.

EC: So, it say "Developing a complete person." So that was their mindset. Just to make sure that you got as much as you could out of your high school experience.

43:27

EC: He's another person I would love to find. His name is Jerome.

EA: Did you learn Swahili? Did you have the option to learn Swahili?

EC: They did. I didn't. I took Spanish as my choice. But we did always have three options. Most of the time it was German. This was Mr. Pazeroonis (?). He taught French, German, and Spanish.

EA: It's amazing that you could've learned Swahili. That Swahili was offered. In high school. That's really only like a college thing, and only some colleges. These days.

EC: That was Mr. Long. He had been a shop teacher for a really really long time. So, we just had a lot of people who stayed there when they could've gone places, but they chose to stay and educate us.

44:28

EC: My friend had a sister that graduated in Class of '79. I didn't know them as well as she did because you know they were friends of her sister, so they would come to her house, but I kind of just stuck with the seniors. I didn't really get to know a lot of the people who were underclassmen. And I really didn't get to know the freshmen and sophomores because basically all their classes were in a different building. So it's interesting when you move to the '80s and you talk to those kids who graduated probably '81, '82. Even though we were at the school at the same time, we didn't have much to do with them.

45:28

EC: I guess it would be easier if there had been a campus that you stayed in. Because it was more like college where you had more than one building. So, these are where the football coach is. This is Roy Curry, the one I said it would be really good if you could find him to talk to. We graduated from 8th

grade together. Her name was Marietta. She wrote something really nice in the back of my book. She said: "To Liz, the best friend I had since elementary. Good luck, Marietta." And she said: "P.S." I don't know why we always had to add a P.S. when we writing something. "To the craziest girl and the smartest, best wishes."

46:25

EC: Oh, there's something else in here I didn't even remember. Once I took this book out, it said typist and it has my name. So if there's any errors in here I guess it's my fault. Ha!

OO: Oh, so you were one of the people who typed the stuff up?

EC: Right.

OO: So, you were one of the yearbook staff.

EC: Right.

EA: Oh, and your friends Jeanette and Helen were Editors in Chief.

EC: Yes. So, they probably gave me the hardest job cause they didn't want to do it. That's how my sisters always did me. Whatever job in the house they didn't want to do, like cleaning the bathroom, that was always my job.

OO: Any regrets?

47:07

EC: Any regrets? Hmm. I don't think so. I think when I started I thought I would have regrets because my elementary school friends were going to either vocational or technical schools. One went to Lindblom. One went to Dunbar. So I regretted going, until I met that group of friends and then I had no regrets after that.

EC: That was when I first started teaching too. We just made a way out of no way. We didn't have any money. At a Catholic school, every cent of tuition went to teachers' salary, so that didn't leave anything else for resources. And then teachers' salary my first year was only \$10,500. And that was after 4 years of college, that's the best you could make. But, we ask parents, if you work in the office and you have paper, can we recycle it? Can you give it to us? And we use the back of paper, we didn't have to go to Xerox and buy reams of paper. We just got parents who supported us. You know, if you work somewhere and you got some paper and you messed it up on one side, just give it to us and we'll use the other side. So, we made it work and that's how it was in high school too. We just made it work. So, we didn't have a lot of resources but we didn't need a lot of resources to make it work. Like slaves wanted to learn. Or one room school houses. They wanted to elarn so you made it work. You used some old books. So we probably didn't get new books every two years. We

probably didn't get them every five years. But the knowledge that was in the books, we got it. We valued it. And that's what I see missing now, is that you think you need more than you really do, to make it work.

48:57

OO: And you became a teacher too, so, I mean, how do you feel now about those resources and how kids at TEAM Englewood and Robeson are crying for the fact that they don't get the resources that they need.

EC: I understand that you may need more now, because society is missing. So, school is trying to take the place of parenting. So, they need a breakfast program, they need a lunch program. And some school even have a dinner program, because it's lacking. But, when I first started school, you went home for lunch. There was no programs at all to feed the students. That wasn't the schools job. So, as the school took on more parenting, that's why they need more resources. So, if parents didn't their jobs, then schools wouldn't have to do so much.

49:53

OO: How do you... what are your thoughts on comparing the atmosphere, I guess the community for you, back then versus now? Because that also impacts the school and it also impacts the students and how they learn. What does that look like to you?

EC: When I drive through Englewood, it just looks so blighted. It was such a flourishing community. There was a store where you could get your shoes shined. There was a store you could buy anything you needed. Whether it was the currency exchange, it was the dry cleaners. It was everything. It was such a thriving community. You walked to the corner of 69th and Normal, everything was there. There was nothing that you needed to go outside of your community for. But now, it's nothing there. It's only vacant lots. So, you have to, you know, go beyond your community. But then, that's all we had was community. So, we helped each other out and we did what we needed to do to sustain our community. But now there's nothing there to sustain, so people don't have any pride in it. They want more, but they giving less because they feel like, I don't have anything here. You know, this is not really my community anymore. It's all been stripped from me. So, I think the more stores that close, the more people that moved out that could move out, and then just left the people that were still good decent people but just having such a hard time surviving. And so now what I see in our schools is these kids are doing anything to survive. And it's taking away from everything else because they call it just hustling. I just gotta hustle. So, you know that's what they do.

51:53

OO: Did any of your kids go to neighborhood schools?

EC: Well my son and my daughter started out in neighborhood schools. My mother had been in the same house for 50 years. So, when my daughter was little she was still going to Parker Elementary School. She went to the childcare center right there on 69th Street. She started at the elementary school. But she tested out and then went to Morgan Park when they had their middle school program. They called it the academy I guess, and you could go there starting in 6th grade. So, she left the neighborhood school and went there.

52:31

Same with my son, he started where his grandparents, which were on Morgan, and he was at Oglesby, which is an elementary school also. But he ended up going to Beverly, to Vanderpoel. So, they both started in the neighborhood schools, only because we were working and it was convenient for us to leave them with their grandparents. But then, when we saw that this is not really what I want for them, I want them to be a little more challenged, a little more in a diverse community, then that's when we moved them somewhere else.

53:06

OO: Do you think that's why a lot more people are moving to outside schools in the first place? Besides all the other factors that deal with, you know, needing to leave a neighborhood school.

EC: Mmmhmm. And CPS has made that a really difficult process for parents trying to get their kids into what they call a level one school. You know how they level the schools, so it's really hard to get them into a school. You gotta test, and then even if you have a high test score, it's still gonna be based on other things. You know, it's a point system and you have to have so many points if you want to get into a Whitney Young or a Jones or you know those elite schools so to speak, then it's really difficult to get them into.

53:52

EC: [Reading the afterword from the 1978 yearbook.] "Each one of us has been a part of change. We will continue to change as everything and everyone around us changed. New products, new fashions, new dreams, new ideals, new paths to pursue. A change from dependence as high school students to independence as graduates. Our standards, morals and values are continuously re-evaluated, re-shaped, re-cycled and sometimes even re-jected. But this is change and change is inevitable. Our horizons have broadened as the past has dimmed; but with the dimming has come learning from its teachings. This was opportunity through change. This was our beginning."

EA: Do you know who wrote that?

EC: I wish I did. It kinda sounds like Ms. Miller because she was one of the English teachers. She had to help me with my speech, she put in a nice poem that I didn't know where it came from, but it was so well received it was probably her. It just sounds like her. She was such a... And she came to

Robeson after being in Englewood. She had taught there many many years before she came there, but she was just a really smart person.