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McKinzy: Today I have the opportunity to interview Mrs. Mamie Hughes at her residence. Today is September the 23rd, 2019. How are you doing today, Mrs. Hughes?

Hughes: I'm fine, thank you.

McKinzy: Great. I really wanted to take the opportunity to interview you, because you're such a brilliant person. And so we're going to start from the very beginning. Where were you born?

[0:00:35]

Hughes: I was born in Jacksonville, Florida. And not too many of you knew about Jacksonville, Florida until the 33rd Super Bowl. At any rate, I'm married and came to Kansas City 70 years ago. And for a short while, as a couple, we lived in Mississippi.

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Greenville, Mississippi. But we only stayed there three years and came back to Kansas City. I did live in Tennessee, in Nashville, Tennessee, when, as a student, I was at Fisk University. And I graduated from there in 1949 and came to Kansas City as a bride.

McKinzy: Wow. Let's back up just a little bit.

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Who were your parents?

Hughes: My parents were James Currie Senior and Amy Ramsey Curie. Amy Ramsey Stuart Currie. They were both from Florida. My father was from Clearwater, Florida, and my mother had been born in Jacksonville. And her grandmother and great-grandmother all were from Jacksonville.

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They lived, were born, and grew up there.

McKinzy: What was it like growing up in their household?

Hughes: It was fine. I'd only had a younger brother. And we lived in the days of two worlds: colored and white. But we had our own schools.

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There was only one high school for coloreds. And my mother taught there. But we went to elementary school with children in our neighborhood. We came back. We didn't have sidewalks on our street, although our grandmother lived closer in town, and hers was a new house, fairly. They had built it the year I was born. And there were sidewalks and the paved streets.

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But the sand didn't bother us too much, because my father would draw up a hop stitch plan in what would have been the sidewalk. And we played baseball in the street. There weren't too many girls in our block, but I liked playing. And so with the boys, was just as much fun.

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McKinzy: That's so nice. Do you have any of your friends that you're still friends with from your childhood or close relatives that you still...

Hughes: Everybody has almost left. I have one classmate that I think is still in Jacksonville. But the last information I got was that she was in an assisted living place.

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I enjoyed hearing about her, because we had been friends from the third grade in Jacksonville all the way through Fisk University and graduating in 1949. When we graduated from high school in 1945, she was the valedictorian, and I was the salutatorian. But we stayed good friends.

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And she was just very studious. We both majored in math. But I was satisfied with that. And we did well and we made As, but when we finished and took our developmental test and passed, I was ready to just have a good time there in my senior year, and she went on to take accounting and became a CPA.

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But there is one other classmate who lives in Washington. And I only know her over the telephone, or certainly, through emails.

Chavez: I would like to ask a question. Your family, how did they end up in Jacksonville?

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Were they born down there or were they maybe slaves at one time? Any of your family.

Hughes: Did you say slaves?

Chavez: Yes.

Hughes: Okay. And I will go to the Stuart, my mother's family. As much as I know about them, her mother was born and raised in Jacksonville. Her grandmother was born and raised in Jacksonville. And I don't know very much about them.

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My father was raised in Clearwater, Florida. And what I did learn about him is that his mother had migrated from North Carolina, and that they were Native American. But we also knew that the native people took in the runaway slaves.

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And then my father's father, my grandfather, was the child of the slave master. And so there were slaves and slave masters in Clearwater, Florida, but they migrated - at least my grandmother and her family migrated to Clearwater.

McKinzy: You mentioned that your husband, you and your husband married and moved to Kansas City.

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Hughes: That is correct. We married in Jacksonville, Florida. And immediately after the reception, we came to Kansas City. Yes.

McKinzy: What was your husband's name?

Hughes: His name was Leonard Hughes, and his family, his father came from West Virginia. His mother came from Topeka, Kansas, and she was one of five children.

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And there were five girls and two boys. One of her brothers owned a grocery store down on Vine Street. And her youngest brother did join him and worked for him. His oldest sister married a lawyer and moved to Denver, Colorado. The next sister finished college but went to live in Chicago.

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The third sister was Flora, who became a nurse in Kansas City and worked at the general hospital. The fourth one, fourth daughter or sister, was Eva, who

came to Kansas City and who taught school for a short while and got interested in resale...

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...or the sale again of clothing. And she opened a resale shop, which was very, very productive. The fifth sister, the fifth girl taught school and met Hale Woodruff, who was a famous Black artist.

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They lived in Topeka for a short while but lived other places. He was a professor in Atlanta. I'm not sure if it was Atlanta University or Morehouse College. But then they moved to New York City. And we called her husband Uncle Hale.

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And we knew about his artwork. And one of the things I remember so vividly is him telling my children one time when he saw Amy and [Sean] doing some drawings, and he said, "Oh, you guys have some artistic talent." And then he polished and said, "But don't try to make a living at it." And the irony of Uncle Hale and his life...

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...is that he did that teaching art. And they made enough for a living, but Uncle Hale was dead and buried. And Oprah Winfrey has one of his collections. Bill Cosby has one. And not very long after, Aunt Charisa - and we called her Auntie.

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Right after she died, the manager of their estate and collection had a collection of Hale Woodruff's work valued at \$300,000.

McKinzy: What year was that that you would drive to Kansas City?

Hughes: When I came to Kansas City was 1949.

[0:11:00]

McKinzy: When you arrived here in 1949, what was your career path? What did you do while you were here?

Hughes: When I came to Kansas City in 1949, we stayed only a short while, because we went to Topeka. We lived sort of back and forth. Leonard was admitted to Washburn Law School. And so he went to law school Monday through Friday, and we came to Kansas City on the weekends.

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But during that first year that we were married, I was trying to get a job teaching school. I had the “education courses”, but they were for secondary school. And at the time that I was studying and taking that secondary education, I was just sure I wanted to teach high school math.

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And I think it was because I knew that my mother had been a high school teacher, or was a high school teacher, and she taught senior high school English. So I think I just wanted to sort of be in her group. But I didn't get a chance, because what I learned was that in order to teach at the high school, one had to have a master's degree.

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So I went to school out to what was the University of Kansas City, now UMKC. And I took some education courses, but it was just the non-degree area of subjects. And after I graduated, I was qualified, certified...

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...to teach elementary school, applied, and was hired to teach third grade at Attucks School here in Kansas City.

Chavez:

Was Attucks School segregated at that time?

Hughes:

Oh, yes. All the schools, there were Black elementary schools, several Black elementary schools, Alex and Banneker and Booker T. Washington...

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...Phyllis Wheatley, just to name a few. But there was only one high school, and that was Lincoln High School, which today I think is referred to as Lincoln Academy. But everything in Kansas City was separate. There was an area from Ninth to – I'd say 29th. A lot of people say 27th. But Aunt Flora and Uncle Jean lived south of 27th on Park Avenue.

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And that area, from Troost over to the east, and those east boundaries were not clear. There was a gap. And this area, Dunbar, was also a Black area.

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But it was not developed as it is today, and not until the 60s. And when this area over here, where there are six houses, there was just a blank, open

area. And the people began to buy the lots. Mr. McGinnis bought the lot on the northeast corner of 34th and Quincy.

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And he built his house. And Dr. Samuel Rodgers bought this lot and built this house. And the others succeeded all the way down to the corner. But there were not many city services. They did have electricity, but those people, from what I heard, were a bit alarmed when the sewer system was being put in for these six houses...

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...and rightly so, they wanted to know when those services would be extended to them. And the young people, Black kids who lived over here, walked from here to Central High School.

McKinzy: What was it like going to the restaurant or eating at a public restaurant?

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What was that like?

Hughes: We used the restaurants. We ate in restaurants within that very same area I just defined. And so if there was the need to go to a public restroom, you went there. I would like to tell you about five department stores that were in downtown Kansas City.

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They were Jones and Pecks and Macy's and Kline's and Emery Bird Thayer. Black people, like me, could go in, and we could shop and we could buy clothes, but not try anything on. There were restaurants in those stores, and no way did they serve anybody but white.

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And I'm not sure whether it was us Black or those brown got service. And I say all of that because we did not live with that for too long. Of course, counting the years. But at one time we had a very successful protest that led to the public accommodations law in Kansas City.

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They got a referendum for a while, but the group of us - I was a pretty good follower - and the leaders showed us how to get together and vote, register, vote, and let's undo that referendum. And we did.

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And that was one of the things that helped Leon Jordan think about Freedom Incorporated. He owned the Green Duck Tavern. And he was good friends with Leonard Hughes. And as I tell people, when the phone rang, it took like - in the morning, I knew who it was.

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But he and Leonard talked about the fact that we had a good series of activities that led to us getting people registered and us outdoing the referendum. And so why don't we continue to be organized, get some more people registered. And it was Leonard. And few people know who came up with that name, Freedom Incorporated.

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Leonard is who got the incorporation. And he signed the incorporation papers. But there were seven of them. And there was one woman. And they were Leon and Leonard and Bruce Watkins -- I have to put that woman in here -- and Howard Maupin, who was a barber...

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...and Dr. - I'm not sure if Charles Moore was a doctor, but at any rate, then Fred Curls, who had a real estate business. But they were the people who got together and said, "Yes. We can do this." So they divided themselves up and they were assigned the wards...

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The woman who was among that group of seven, who founded Freedom Incorporated, was named Marion Foote.

McKinzy: I also wanted to know, because you were the reason why 71 Highway they named Bruce R. Watkins.

Hughes: I cannot take credit for the naming of 71 Highway.

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That came from Emanuel Cleaver, who at that time was a member of the council, the city council. And he put that ordinance, that renaming in. And it was successful. And of course, from downtown Kansas City out to about 77th Street. At 77th, there's a sign that says Bruce Watkins Drive.

[0:21:01]

McKinzy: Would you be able to tell me what 18th and Vine was like?

Hughes: Oh, would I be able? You asked the magic question. I would like to go back. I'll take you back to my days in college. And I mentioned Fisk University. But one day I met this gentleman from Kansas City, Missouri. Kansas City.

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"Hey, tell me about 18th and Vine." His name was Robert Ellis. He said, "What do you know about 18th and Vine?" "Nothing. That's why I'm asking you." And so he told me a little about what was there at 18th and Vine. And we became just friends. He was a major in physics. And we would share the lessons he learned in physics, which were a little beyond me. And I talked about math and our courses.

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He was a sophomore when I was a freshman. When Leonard Hughes came to Fisk University, after he was discharged from the Navy at the end of World War II - because he had been to Fisk as a freshman, but then got drafted. "Kansas City is where you are from Tell me about 18th and Vine."

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"What do you know about 18th and Vine?" "Nothing, Leonard. That's why I'm asking you." But I did have a chance to tell him that I wasn't sure. I said, "When I was in high school, there was a record with Joe Turner talking about [Piney Brown] crying at 18th and Vine. I have no idea how I knew that there was 18th and Vine, Kansas City and a lot of that activity.

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Maybe I studied and learned, but it wasn't long before we were married. And Leonard said, "Oh, well, talking to the family. There's no question in my mind. I know where I have to take my wife." And they were like, "18th and Vine." And so I say today, "I have a love affair with 18th and Vine."

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For a while, for about five years, I worked at the Black Economic Union, which had its offices in the Lincoln building, located on the southeast corner of 18th and Vine. So I was just there in the heart of it. And there were some interesting stories. By the time I got to Black Economic Union though...

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...things there were not like they had been when I came to Kansas City, because as Black people began to be able to move south of 29th Street, when the people moved out, the businesses moved out too. So we were in the process at the time I was there in what we told the...

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...owners, property owners, who were still there, that community development was what we would be talking about and what we would be translating into bringing businesses back, and putting Kansas City's 18th and Vine back on the map.

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Chavez: Was Gem Theater a Black theater?

Hughes: It was a Black theater. It was. And Leonard loved to talk about their showing the cowboy movies. They love the cowboy movies. My sister-in-law was one of the young people, and she was who ended up marrying Leonard's twin brother. But her nickname was Bob, as spelled B-O-B.

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Her name was Barbara, but they teased her and said, "Oh, Bob would go in there, those cowboy movies, and that's where she got her name, Bob, Cowboy Bob."

McKinzy: I heard about the restaurants too. They would have some type of event for all to...

Hughes: There were a number of different things, because there were a lot of restaurants.

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And so each one had its own activities. I liked to refer to it as a town within a town.

Chavez: What about the jazz scene at the time you were there?

Hughes: The jazz scene was alive and well.

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It wasn't long before I heard, but I think I knew -- and maybe that was a part of knowing about 18th and Vine -- but that something called Kansas City Jazz was born within that 18th and Vine district. And so there were the players. There was the musicians' foundation. Interestingly, I should take you a little ways back or a little forward.

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Because during the time that I was at the Black Economic Union, there was a very wonderful woman named Jane Fifield Flynn, who was the administrator

of the Landmarks Commission, and who talked about Kansas City Jazz, and that is what was played there. The musicians came to this place.

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It was not foundation at that time, but they came to get their gigs, and they went to play. But at the end and when things were closing down in the restaurants, they came out to that place and continued to play, the musicians, the music, until dawn. And that was every night.

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And it continued. Jane Fifield Flynn decided that there was that thing called jazz, Kansas City Jazz, but there were also the businesses and the residential areas, and people lived there. They had their businesses there. There was the music and entertainment. And she did a bit of research, but relied a lot on her own knowledge...

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...because she said, "Yes, I'd be down there at the time of the musician." And she was white. And she said, "But we were there. That place was just integrated. It was the people who loved the music." But she said, "We have the need to develop and to create and to have..."

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... "a place called 18th and Vine Historic Area listed on the local register of historic places." And then she was instrumental in getting it listed on the national register of historic places. I mentioned that place that it was at that time, Union 635, I think.

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But that's where the musicians went to get their gigs. And Jane said, "That place needs to be put into history. There needs to be a name that is foundation." And so Jane did the research and was able to get that place, the musicians, the Mutual Musicians' Foundation...

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...which was the only -- but now it was the first -- national historic landmark in Kansas City while Truman Library. Truman's Home was in Independence.

Chavez: Any other questions?

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McKinzy: I have like two more questions. In your time in Kansas City, have there been any obstacles that you've overcome, any accomplishments that you have made?

Hughes: I would like to say when I was asked to join 11 other women to talk about women, okay. So there was one woman on and with the men who started the Freedom.

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There are places that have work for women, but this was in 1978. And we began to get together. And there were 12 of us who talked about what is, what was, and what has to be. But it's not going to be unless and until we are able to show how it can be done.

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So we talked about women, about issues that were important to us. But the fact that women could take some leadership, but we would not be doing this alone. We talked about the fact - and I wasn't one of them. There were only two of us who were not white. And we knew that their husbands belonged to clubs...

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...clubs that Black men couldn't belong. But they didn't have any membership. They could go and have some friends, because their husbands were members. But that was it. No other activity. And they talked about the fact that why couldn't we develop and have a place where we not only could bring these issues to the table...

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...talk about them, find out and place the contacts, but how we could make some of those things that make sense, that ought to become a reality. And so we worked and worked for two years. The women who were really the leadership - the woman - if you talk about - you're familiar with Powell Gardens...

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...Margery Powell Allen was really one of the main forces. But Adele Hall was one of those. Adele Hall, Margery Powell, and Beth Smith, who were the people who then gathered their friends. And I think that it was Beth Smith who knew Dorothy Johnson and me...

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...and said, "We can't be all white women." And so that was how the minds got together. But as I said, the women who did not have businesses of their own but had the businesses within their families, had the money within their families, and an understanding and a desire...

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...that this can be for more than just their small segment of society. They created a budget. And they said, "Okay. We need \$30,000." And of course I liked to say and have used that story a lot.

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And all we have to do is find 30 women, 30 people, who give us \$1,000. And we'll have enough money to get started. But they did start the campaign. And what they said is, "All right. So if we can't get the \$1,000, two of the 500s will make \$1,000, and then we can have some slots of \$250." At any rate, that was these brains, these minds.

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But we came up with \$30,000. And at that point, I think it was Adele Hall who made the contact for us. And we had a tiny spot back in Crown Center, like I like to say, in the booth, in the back, in the corner, in the dark. But it was a start. It was a beginning.

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We didn't have a place to have activities or things like that, and we weren't there very long. And then there was a better space for us at the Muehlebach Hotel. But still, it was the Muehlebach, and it was good for our membership, members to meet there. And all those wonderful thinkers had to do was say, "There's a place for us."

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And we are getting memberships now. We have decided on - they had just a really sensible budget that they knew could be achieved. And so we started talking about - as I said, we got that \$30,000.

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So there were one or two buildings that were looked at, approached. In fact, there was a business on the southwest corner of 12th and Central. And somehow our leaders talked to them, and that just did not work. But in the meantime, only 100 yards...

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...further to the north, there was a building that once was a fire station that was no longer a fire station and that could be revamped and into a facility, and one that did become the Central Exchange, which is still alive today and has that name, Central Exchange.

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Those 12 women did - most of us, I think, gave the \$1,000. But then that group of women who gave \$500 were named the founding members. And then the women who were able to give \$250 were called contributing members, I think.

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Once we had a chart there. But today I hear them saying, "Mamie Hughes was a founding member." And I admit to scrapping around and getting enough money to be classified with the founding, but I was one of that 12 that was there for two years talking about and deciding and contributing to ideas for...

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...what would be an organization for women. That first, very first moment, we had a man who wanted to join. And all of us said, "Why, yes. That's what we're talking about. This is an organization for all of us people who are interested in these things..."

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... "for our community, issues which affect us." And still it continues.

Chavez: Who was the other Black woman?

Hughes: Dorothy Johnson, whose husband, Herman Johnson, was in real estate. She was a social worker, very active.

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And they used to be - yeah. That Missouri Association of Social Welfare, Dorothy was very active with that. I think she was responsible for my getting it.

McKinzy: Lastly, what would - because I'm a youth educator, and I want to make sure that they know their history, know what you guys fought for.

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Hughes: And you just barely said youth. I'd like to go back to 1978, when we were talking about how the men were all men and the women just had special

categories. And even in the workforce, it was not us. And then at that time, women getting maybe...

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...Amazon 77 cents on the dollar, but questionable. But the name youth also came up. And we talked about the fact that as a group, and considering and just talking about what could and should be, we need some younger ideas here.

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And a young woman, whose name is [Terry Saturley], was that young voice. She's still very active. She is a lawyer. And I'm not sure she was in law school or had graduated, but was active then and contributed, and everybody was glad. I'm not too sure that she liked us always saying, "Oh, Terry was the youngest," but she was.

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McKinzy: And you did mention you would travel back and forth to New York. And you've picked up another language. And I would like for you to tell...

Hughes: I'll tell you, I did not travel back and forth to New York. I went as just, I'll say, a preteen, to Spanish Harlem with my aunt.

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And I did attend middle school, all-girl. It was very, very - the school, very interesting. And I remember that the social worker there took an interest in me, and one day had me take a test, which I learned after I got married...

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And she wrote to me that it was an IQ test. And she told me what my IQ was. And somewhere there close to 130. I don't know for sure. But in New York, there were a number of young women from Puerto Rico and Cuba.

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Spanish Harlem. So it's not going to be Greek and German, not even French. But we did have Spanish at school. And then of course, I heard Spanish as I was coming home, being at home, and just learned the language and was able to be literate in Spanish.

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My father told me, "That what you have and do not use you will not keep." So I still remember that I learned how to say, "Me llamo Mamie Hughes," and

asked that it be pronounced May-mie and not Mah-mie. When I talk or say that to somebody or say, "Hablo Español," and they...

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...smile and look at me. I have to, in a hurry, say, "Solo [southeast] unas quantas palabras." And they're like, "Huh? Okay. What happened?" I said, "I don't know. I lost it." But it is the language that I love. I have still books.

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But I don't think I would do very well on the Spanish test. But I would like to tell you that in that ninth grade, we learned to say the pledge of allegiance to the flag. And I still remember it today.

Chavez: Say it for us.

Hughes: [0:44:52-0:45:25 Spanish].

[0:45:27]

Chavez: That was excellent.

McKinzy: Oh, wow.

Chavez: One other question: would you talk a little bit about Dr. Samuel - was it Samuel L. Rodgers?

Hughes: Samuel R. Rodgers. Yes.

McKinzy: Because I know there's a clinic named after him.

Hughes: There is a \$68,000-square-foot health center. It grew from a clinic to that qualified health care center. Dr. Samuel Rodgers was the child of a country doctor.

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And he loved to tell us that as a child, his father allowed him to follow him around. And he said, "Sometimes we'd get home and there'd be a bag of potatoes on the porch." So you know that it was that, a poor community, an area where the people took care of the people.

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And of course, I loved to teach him and call him a country doctor. But he had the mentality of that working for the people. And so he was a doctor, he came here as an extern and then as an intern. That home for him where he grew up

was Anniston, Alabama. But he went to high school and college there in Alabama to Talladega, which was another of the historic Black...

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...college and university, like Fisk University. And then went to medical school at Howard University in Washington D.C. But he was interested in medicine. And something more than for the people who were ill...

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...but only came to the emergency room. And so he was able to get some funding during the war on poverty for a clinic that was at the public housing that was down at 10th and about Euclid, which was the Wayne Miner Housing.

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But it was called the Wayne Miner Health Center. In 1968, he was able to write a real grant and get funding for a building to be constructed on the northeast corner of 9th and Euclid. And that building was the facility. He insisted that the doors stayed open.

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Nobody refused. He was fierce about that. Just here it is for all of us. He had doctors, just the facility, and was very interested in that word we call prevention. And he talked about - because he knew so much about people...

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...being ill being ill, but not doing anything - don't have any place to go to do something about it until it gets horrible, and then you wind up in the ER. And so that was some of what inspired him. He also became very interested and just sensitive to the fact that...

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...this area was also - not only integrated, but had immigrants. And so when you talked about language, there was more than just English. And one day, he came home - he was a very laidback man. Didn't excite about much. And came in just almost dancing. And I said, "What is it?"

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He said, "Guess what? We have a sign up at the health center in six languages. Today there are 38. But it was that idea that quality medical care could be, should be provided for anyone who needs it.

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And right now, the thousands of people who come down there are served. And every one of those categories, when I'm there, I love seeing the little ones come in. And I see everything from the little ones or from those who aren't quite yet little ones, all the way to older people like me. But everybody is welcome.

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Just come in and be a part of this facility.

Chavez: Besides going there for medical assistance, have you volunteered at Rodger's?

Hughes: I don't think in any formal way that I have volunteered. I have been there for special occasions or just - I have cooperated with them at home, just was able to get information for them.

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But I don't know that I had any part in any of the volunteer work. And that is well handled and well run.

Chavez: How is it that you came to purchase this home from Dr. Rodgers?

Hughes: I am Dr. Rodger's widow. And I married him and came to live in this house with him.

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But I need to say to you that when I came to Kansas City, his wife was the very first person to set foot at our door and say, "Welcome," to me. Her family and Leonard's family had been that close.

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Leonard had a young brother who was 18 years younger than - they were born when they were in the military. And Elizabeth was her name. And Liz had taken care of Mike until he was old enough to go for a daycare. And her mother took care of him. And so the families were just entwined. She told me when she came...

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...she said, "I'm glad to welcome you, but I just need to tell you, the real reason that I came is that all summer, every time I'd see Leonard, I have said to him that I heard he was getting married. And he had always said, 'There wasn't any woman who was going to catch up with him.'"

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She said, "I just had to come see the woman who could run as fast as he." And we were friends. She had cancer of the uterus. And she had had the surgery when she married Sam Rodgers. And I think they had been married five years -- not less than that -- when they married. But they became our friends.

[0:54:00]

She could not, did not drive. And I was her chauffer up to and including now. For three years, I had no children. They had no children. And I was going to school right at the university. So I would come. We lived on Tracy between 25th and 27th.

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They lived in an apartment on 27th, which was just sort of a block and a half - somebody young within walking distance. And so I would go there and study and whatever. And she was just pleased to encourage me and so forth. I also will say that Dr. Rodgers was an OBGYN. And by the way, he delivered four of the five children.

[0:55:02]

The first one was born, and the first one's birthday is today.

Chavez: That's your children.

Hughes: Mm-hm. My children. He had three. But they were just theirs. And I had mine. The three years though, as I said, we were just friends, knew each other. But Elizabeth, and I am sure, Sam, wanted to be a mother.

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And of course, just felt that she never would. And so they decided to adopt a child. And they adopted Ricky. Richard, they named him, because they got him as a baby. Of course, for several weeks or maybe months.

[0:56:04]

I think that they got him when he was nine months old. And I had given birth, and my oldest was six months. And so we just definitely, children and her needing the transportation and so forth. But before Ricky could turn two...

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...Elizabeth gave birth to Roselyn, a full-developed just wonderful girl. Before Roselyn was two, somewhere around there, one day I said to Liz, "Are you pregnant?"

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Her sister had told me. And she said, "Yes. But I am through trying to prove that Ros was no miracle child." But she did have some recurrence. But when she went to the hospital, she had a mother and two sisters who lived here.

[0:57:31]

But Mamie kept the children. And it was really funny because the first time she said, "I'm going to the hospital, and Mamie's going to take care of you," "Well, who's going to comb our hair?" because I only had the boys. And she said, "Who do you think combs Mamie's hair?" So at any rate, they spent a lot of time, us together.

[0:58:00]

Chavez: When did Mr. Hughes die? Your husband?

Hughes: We divorced. We had been married for 25 years. And I say to the world that he wanted to be somewhere else. And you can't stop somebody who - and so we agreed. But it was a friendly parting of the ways.

[0:58:29]

And my father used to say, "I didn't bring them together. I have nothing to do..." And his mother would say the same thing. He was still their father. I was still the girl, his first wife. And we had, in fact, it took me a little while. Sam Rodgers had - Liz - we're friends.

[0:59:00]

That last time, when she was in the hospital, her brother called me and said, "Mamie, I think you need to get over here. I don't know about Liz. I don't know that she's coming back around." So I went out and I went in. He left. And it wasn't long. And she gave that last breath. Her sister was there with her.

[0:59:29]

And so the two of us, I had known Liz. Her sister, of course, was closer in - here and helping him take care of her and whatever. But I was willing, just as I had been, and Liz had been kind to me. And so she died in April, 1985. Yeah.

[1:00:05]

But I can't say I didn't say that. No. She knew that he was alone. And so we have these cabins down at this lake. I didn't mention anything about Lake Placid that I loved. That was where we spent our honeymoon.

[1:00:27]

We were all down there. She had invited him to come down for Memorial Day. And he couldn't get there. But the Fourth of July, she asked him to come, because Liz had died in April, and May was when she asked him to come. He couldn't. So Fourth of July, he told her, "Yes." And so her was down there. And so we call our mother-in-law. "Mamma, he's..." I called her that even after she was no longer our mother-in-law.

[1:01:02]

And his nickname was Butch. We all called him Butch. And that nickname, I think after he graduated from med school and was over at the hospital. But at any rate, she said, "Butch, you don't have to worry about being a widower, because there are a number of women around here who are widows. And you might just look around and you would have a choice."

[1:01:33]

And he said to her, "Oh, no. I'm not worried." He said, "I think I know. I've got a choice." And he turned around and pointed to me, and I almost fainted. And I was like, "Okay." And that was July of 1986.

[1:02:00]

We married in November. That was July of 1985, because Liz died, yeah, in April of '85. July 1985. And we married in November, 1986. And one day, Leonard saw me, and he said, "What's taking you so long?"

[1:02:26]

I said, "I just have to think about this." But we did marry in November. That was the thing: and I believed there were some symptoms that he had. But he told me, "Just after I know this, we are of course still friends. There's no way this person has been good and kind to me and is saying he wants to marry me. I would look like the world's biggest fool to be acting like one."

[1:03:03]

So he said, "I went to a meeting at Richardson. He said, "I stopped by the hospital on my way back. "He said, "I had to get a portable catheter." And that was kind of ringing a bell, because I remember my father having a little trouble.

[1:03:30]

Wasn't long after that that he told me he was going to have to go and have a little bit of surgery. And he did. He said, "I've told the doctor that I have someone I want to marry, and I want her to know, I've told him." And so I said, "Okay." He said, "If you're there, he can tell you whatever the results are."

[1:04:00]

But I didn't hear anything. And so when he was out, he said to me, he asked me, "Did the doctor tell you anything?" And I said, "No." And he was just looking so down. And of course, I realized, he said, he told me if I had any plans for next week or the next, I might as well cancel.

[1:04:30]

And so I said, "Cancel what?" And he said - before he could say, I said, "What did you tell us?" And he said, "What do you mean?" I said, "You told us to get a second opinion. Leslie Becker is your friend. Marion Jones is your friend. You're going to go see them." And he did. And that road led him to MD Anderson Hospital in Houston, Texas.

[1:05:01]

He lived for 14 more years, no weeks. Yeah.

Chavez: That sounds great. We're going to stop there.

Hughes: Okay.