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Adejuyigbe Adefunmi
Unknown Interviewer
Summer 2013
Oyotunji, SC

AA: [Speaking in Yoruba] Okay, Okay good. We got audio? Am I on? [Speaking in Yoruba] Okay, yeah, you're gonna need that. Oh yeah, you know where you are. Well, (Yoruba Greetings), as we say here in the Yoruba language. The Yoruba are a people from West Africa. One of the significant groups of Africans brought to the United States and also one of the most highly developed societies, and highly developed sociologies of the continent of Africa, belong to the Yoruba people. So here we speak the Yoruba language and we greet you in the language of our ancestors, or one of the languages of our ancestors, which is Yoruba. So we say Ek'abo. Oyotunji grew out of the need for African Americans to have a place, a pilgrimage, a monastery of sorts for the restoration, rediscovery, reinstitutionalization of African culture. And so Oyotunji was founded in 1970 by my father, Osejeman Adefunmi, who was born Walter Eugene King in Detroit, Michigan. And there, of course his highness grew and left the church at the tender age of twelve, and at fourteen began the serious pursuit of African culture. And he died doing so and had accomplished building Oyotunji and throughout his life accomplished the reintroduction of traditional African culture practice and customs. Okay, now I want to really hit that home because today you got universities with African American courses, people wearing African clothes, African festivals, African dance troops, I'm sure you've seen one or two with the djembe drums, they're on every corner, people are selling, 125th street in New York is a vast African market. All of that, all of that exposure of African beauty, pageantry, and culture, the credit goes to, of course, Mr. Walter King, okay? Wwho will begin in 1957 he created the first African church, so to speak, or first African center dedicated to the institutions, the religion, and culture, of Africa. Wholeheartedly. It was called the called the Order of Damballah Hwedo. This place, of course, was a place where all people in Harlem could come and get a glimpse of Africa. Many people received their African names from that temple. Many notable historians, professors, and musicians. Stokely Carmichael received the name from the Yoruba temple. Malcolm X received the name. I'm not sure of his Yoruba name, they called him brother Omowale. He received that name from the Yoruba temple and so did Abiodun Oyewole from the Last Poets. Okay, so many people came by that temple in New York. My father was a part of three different temples in New York City that sought to establish African culture in New York. And they established it through parades, through the remanufacturing of African clothes, the remanufacturing of African jewelry. Okay, none of this stuff existed in America prior, zero, none of it existed in America prior to Mr. Walter King, who later became Oba Osejema, and who later became King Osejeman. Okay, you go from Walter to King, to King King. So he became king, of course, after he established his village. But what led him to the throne of a kingship title is that he established a village, he established the first village, a small enclave not far from here. And one morning, the villagers woke up and they with firecrackers, and guns, and shooting in the air, they awoken him. He thought it was an invasion of the Klan. They got him from his bed, set him on the chair, and put a crown on his head, and the village people, the handful of village people, they proclaimed him king on that day, October 5th, 1972, here in Sheldon, South Carolina. So it was an act of self-determination by the African Americans, who sought to crown their own king. And they crowned him the king based on his leadership skills, and his understanding of African culture. His understanding of the sociology, his understanding of the psychology, and his understanding of the world view of African

people. A lot of people have never heard of African psychology but it exists. And his understanding, and reestablishment, and reinvigoration, and his reverence for African religion got him the title of king. And then again when he traveled to Ife, to Africa in 1981, to the holy city of Ile Ife, where the king of Ife, thereby after viewing slides of what was being done in South Carolina to preserve Yoruba culture, the king proclaimed him and honored the gesture by the small band of African Americans who made him king. The king in Africa honored that and crowned him as a direct extension of the palace in Nigeria. And so that is, pretty much, in a nutshell, the early beginnings of Oyotunji. We always like to remind people that Oyotunji grew out of the Civil Rights Movement. The Civil Rights Movement was a televised movement. The Yoruba Cultural Revolution or Movement in North America was a clandestine movement. You probably never saw it on TV. You probably never seen the face of Mr. Walter King before in your life, so that's proof that it was a clandestine movement. However, today, though out the United States you're gonna find many temples, many shrines, and when I say shrines I mean like homes that people have turned into African Culture centers and religious spiritual guidance centers throughout the country, even in Cleveland, I know several there. Throughout the country, there they are, and that is a result, a direct result of Mr. King's work. Okay, Walter King and Dr. King, Dr. Martin Luther King, came up around the same time. Born approximately six months, eight months apart. One was born in Detroit and Dr. King was born here in the south. One from the north and one from the south. Both kings wanted liberation for their people. Both kings wanted their people to understand what it meant to be human, you know, because we were treated inhumane. And so with that understanding one king, however, wanted to assimilate directly into American society thereby forgetting all of where this group of people originated and their tens of thousands of years of history in their originating land. And the other king, of course, did not want to assimilate, and wanted to, not necessarily drawback or disassimilate, but go on a investigatory mission of who we are as a people, where we come from, what we do, what is our meaning on this planet, and then devise a way to integrate into modern society. Okay, just wanted to point that out. Here's a small picture here of King Adefunmi, born Walter Eugene King, in this picture here, in Nigeria, in 1981. That's him there and these are the various chiefs and kings of the palace of Ile Ife. And this would be a picture here of the king who crowned him in 1981. This is the king Okunade Sijuwade Olubuse II. Yeah, that's his name, Okunade, so he was the one who crowned my father back in, of course, 1981. A lot of things are still out of order because of the festival, however, this here is the town drum, Olulu. This is the town drum and this drum right here, people will play it, now people gonna know you're here. Whether they come out to see you or not, it's up to them, but they gonna know that visitors are here when I hit this cadence. [Plays drum] Okay, so the Yoruba people believe in, not believe in, you don't have to believe in it, but the Yoruba people understand the secrets and understand the pitches of wireless communication. And so, that's pretty much the oldest form of wireless communication out there, which is the drum. And then Europeans came up with morse code, which was a smaller drum, and so today, if you notice, before cell phones came out you had these towers who had these big looking drums on them, they don't have them anymore, AT&T used to have them all over, these big tear drop looking drums on them and that would do the sound. Now, today it's something different. However, the African people would correspond distances instead of having a runner run a mile or two away, they would go up on a hill and play a particular drum beat, you know, and that could carry like an antenna with a cellphone signal and alert the villagers of war, if a dignitary is coming, or for any case human, they could play out a cadence. And so, here at the village we play that drum to reach people at the other ends of town. During events they would know our drum would be rung and then now drum, if you will, will be rang from that drum there. So

everyone in the town could hear. The Yoruba people are a polytheistic people. As you can imagine, all African cultures were polytheistic. Because, quite frankly, because their culture was based on the environment, the universe and how they interacted with it. And so, of course, there is one, overall, omnipotent being called Eledumare, which is considered to be, quote unquote “god,” because the Europeans were very confused and said that the Africans didn’t believe in god. Nothing could be further from the truth. And so, the African people then have what we call Orisha. Orisha are deities, lesser deities. Lesser deities that correspond to the everyday plight of man. While the omnipotent being is not approachable, there’s no prayer, there’s no temple and there are very few song for the omnipotent being. Then there are Orisha, which we call heads of heads, or deities, or saints who then correspond to the everyday basic needs of humans. Okay, and if that sounds familiar, it should sound familiar to you if you ever heard of Catholicism. Catholicism is an off-take of African culture and African culture from Egypt to the rainforest has been always consistently polytheistic. And so we start off at the shrine of Eshu here. Excuse me, don’t shoot below my ankles here. I just want to roll these up ‘cause they bother me just a little bit. This is the shrine of Eshu [says extended Yoruba name] Eshu is the owner of the crossroads. Eshu is the messenger to the deities. Eshu is the outdoor shrine whereby everyone comes and brings something for luck. People bring honey, as you can see, palm wine, there’s some rum or something, honey, oranges, a toy. People bring all types of offering to Eshu to open the door. Eshu is the young heart. Eshu is the young hearted child. Eshu is represented by children. When people come here they take coins, they make a wish to the shrine and they turn around, they shake their bum three times, and stop their feet three times to make a offering wish to Eshu. That sounds strange doesn’t it? However, the children are generally the only ones that are allowed to remove the offerings from the shrine. So if there is candy, the children will come and remove it. If there’s money, the children will come and remove it. And that’s how your prayers are taken away, so to speak. Eshu, again, is the outdoor deity. Eshu is represented by that tall mound of clay there in the middle whereby offerings, blood sacrifice offerings are given to that tall mound of clay. And inside that mound are implements of science, implements of African science inside that mound that correspond to the chance, that correspond to the prayers, that correspond also to the blood being poured, or spilled, and thereby the priest, knowing the proper incantations, can take that energy field and direct it to make things happen. And so, Eshu sits here at the crossroads and Eshu you will find at the gates of most temples. You will always find this shrine sitting there beside the gate. We are entering into the palace area. This is where myself, I’m the king here, this is where I live with my family, wives, and children and mother and alike. And this is the main courtyard here, this is where most events are held in this courtyard.

[End Clip 1]

[Begin Clip 2]

AA: Many events are held in this courtyard, from we have thirteen festivals per year and so you can imagine the amount of footprints and mashing that goes on in this yard and the amount of drums being beaten each year. Now that’s thirteen festivals per year for almost fifty years, you know, so that’s a lot of drums, lots of people. And so Oyotunji continues to educate people who come to Oyotunji seeking a glimpse of Africa. That’s all we can give here is a glimpse, you know, and then you can come to Oyotunji and be a part of the day to day life, festivity life. And then you can learn aspects of the culture so when

you do travel to Africa you will be acculturated decently or understand bits and pieces of African life to assimilate just a little better because if you go as a tourist you're liable to get broke really fast. But knowing the culture people then bring you in as a part of the culture. They do. It's different knowing the culture traveling to Africa and just going to Africa. Because you're going to get treated like an outsider. They gonna tell you, "you're not one of us." And quite frankly they're right, you do not have the culture. So African people here we teach them how to honor adults, how to honor older people, elders. What do you do when you see an elder, you know? In American culture when you see an elder you extend your hand and say good afternoon. While in African culture when you see a elder one would get down low and say greetings mama, or greetings baba, you know, and while they talking to the elder they stay down low, about like this, you know, you don't talk to elders, you know, leaning back like that, you get down low depending on your rank. Me, being the king, I'm forbidden from doing that. I'm just teaching you. However, that is the culture and so Oyotunji supplies that for people here at the village where you and come and learn aspects of the Yoruba speaking people. And do you see these ladies holding up the building? These ladies represents the women of the palace because it is through the women that the king yields and yields his power throughout the community. The king utilizes the women of the palace to head certain societies thereby he's able to have their ear and they're able to give their directives to the people. And so women always played a powerful role in African leadership and African kingship. The Europeans were highly confused and continue to be highly confused when they consider that African people didn't have a place for women in society. Well, nothing could be further from the truth. Women and men, often times women in African society had the opportunity to be just as the male financially, economically, spiritually, and socially. Now there are clear divides for many women in African culture. Like men, for the most part, build houses. But some cultures, the women do the roofs, you see. So there's always a shared workload of African men and African women in traditional African culture. And so there's the proverb that says men build nations, women preserve nations, and children become the nation. Here we have the royal Bayra which is the ancestor shrine of the palace. This is where the palace inmates come to venerate the royal ancestors. We come to venerate those who cam before us. Those who made it possible for our first king to be born into the world, and those who made it possible for us to be born into the world, and those who made it possible for the entire family to be born into the world. We come here and give offering. Those names you see on the wall are translated, for the first time, African ancestors who were born in America under European names who, once this culture was established, my father then began to rename his family. And so you have Oluwa Adefumi, that would be the grandfather, that would be my father's grandfather. And then you have Alada Honu, of course, that's the direct link to Africa. That particular ancestor there is a direct link to African. He was one of the people who came over from Africa. And so, as you go on the wall here, you have Ibatan Adefumi, don't step in though. But you have Iyoba Adefumi, you have different characters on the wall. The king's mother, she died as Willamina Hamilton and she's memorialized via her African name as Iyoba or her African title. Okay, people in traditional African culture were not always recognized by their names, they were recognized by their title. And your first title in a traditional African setting or village, especially the Yoruba people, your first title is baba, which means father, or iya, which means mother. So once a woman has a child and she names the child Oju then her name becomes Iya Oju, or mother of Oju. Iya is a actual title to the community. It's a titled person that means that this person is not just a normal person they have graduated life, so to speak, by creating a child and they ought to be given a title. So this is the Shango courtyard. Shango festival is going to be upon us in about two weeks. And the priest will come in here and he'll probably repaint a lot

of the walls and take up the grass, and bring up the chairs and tables and get ready for the celebration of Shango. Shango is the Yoruba king of fire. You know, I'm getting ready to you take on, I guess we can call this a cosmic journey because as we go through each temple and each shrine it's sort of like walking the cosmos, walking the universe and stopping by each one of those planetary configurations. Because, as you know, the planets have always been the gods and goddesses, have always been that since time immemorial. People would like to dispute that and debate that. However, the Africans of ancient Kemet and ancient Kush had mapped the universe in knew where every planet was, prior to Galileo and Copernicus. This is the Shango alter. This is where the priest of Shango come to invoke the spirit of Shango. This is where people come to give offering to Shango because, as you know, each deity has aspects, has positive and negative aspects of life, and to attain those aspects, or to rid oneself of the negative aspects of a particular deity, people bring offering. So lot of the implements you see up there, the statue, the heads, and the shells and things were offering. The candles and fruit are offerings to the gods, or to Shango. Maybe someone was beginning to open up a business, Shango is the deity of business, and they came here and gave an offering so that Shango can protect them in the decision making, and protect them in the finances of their business. Or maybe a person was seeking a title, a personal title like a doctor or a sergeant, or a community title like a mayor, chief, or king, they would come to Shango and give an offering. Offerings are given to Shango for things like dignity, respect, when people are looking to attain that. And also offerings are given to Shango for people who might have a hot head and they're looking to cool their tempers, they bring offerings to Shango because Shango is, in a negative, the deity of a hothead. You know, someone who goes around with a large ego and they talk, talk, talk, talk, talk, talk. And so, as you can see, the priests for Shango are either male, or female. The notion that in African culture that women came from the rib of a man is totally preposterous. That is, of course, directly from a Greco-Roman idea, Christian idea, and also an Arabic idea of male and female dichotomy. Buried here we have some of our fore fathers, don't get the fence, it just fell down in the shot. But go ahead. These are our fore fathers here. This is chief Olu Lawal. He was responsible for implementing the Yoruba language here. He said that, "If we're going to be African like we say we're going to be African we need to speak at least one language of our people." So we Yoruba practicing people we going to use the Yoruba language. And here is Mama Keke. She was from Barbados. She was one of the early members of the temple in New York, back in the fifties. She was one of the first people, a woman, she was one of the first people to listen to the words that Mr. Walter King, who later became King Adefumi, listened to the words that he articulated in terms of African people reestablishing their connection with their traditional culture and religion, she was one of the first people to follow. And here we have a shrine for chief Owudekune, one of the chief's, great protege, best friend of the first king. This is the town hall. This is where the elders come to meet to decide issues, good and bad, in the community. Monthly, a meeting is held here by the elders, and they will sit down and debate. They will pass judgment on criminal cases, pass judgment on misdemeanor, and pass judgement on just about most anything, land disputes and alike. Here at Oyotunji, you only become a part of this council, if you own land. So, if you live on someone else's land here, then you're not allowed to be a decision maker. And so, in the African tradition, the decisions of the community, what happens, is made by the elders of the community. A police official, and an army official were pretty much unheard of in African society. And I want to make that clear is that, yes, of course, there was accountability, however, it was not done, or left up to a group of individuals. It was left up to the elders of the town because it was those people who were elders, who were in their sixties, seventies, and eighties had an opportunity to see life from a different perspective than the twenties, thirties, and forties

people. So then they were more apt to make decision based on life rather than making decisions based on some funny little rule book, or making decisions based on their heart, which most people would, you know, if they hadn't seen life from that angle. And so, we do not sell land here in the village. If you want to move to Oyotunji we will supply you with the land that you need necessary for your needs. But the maximum, of course, I believe is one-hundred by one-hundred feet. Generally, we issue fifty by fifty feet of property to people and the payment is two coconuts and two bottles of gin that is presented to that town council hall over there and the offering the gin and the coconut is then offered to the deity of the land, which we call Oneele. Oneele is the mother of the earth, so it's just like offering mother earth, I guess. And mother earth concept, obviously, is not a European, Roman-Greco, Roman-Arabic idea, it's an African idea. And so, that is offered to them and then the town council, of course, everybody take a little sip of the gin and congratulate you. During festivals as Oyotunji, each festival is pretty much the same for the most part with different aspects in colors. But straight through here you have parades that parade through the village. The parades will snake through the village, stopping by each temple to pay homage and obeisance and then, of course, they will continue on out. Everyone here at Oyotunji, when I was born received the traditional tribal marks on the cheek. These three marks are of the Yoruba speaking people. The Yoruba speaking people, of course, as I said earlier, are from southwestern Nigeria. Okay, now within the Yoruba kingdom, or the Yoruba nation, today I believe there's some thirteen to fourteen million people living in that segment of Africa. They have a multitude of ethnicities and social codes and cultures. And so, to differentiate, tribal marks are given. And so, if you are from Oyo, which these marks are from Oyo. Oyo is the ancient city in West Africa, which is where king Shango, the temple I just showed you was the temple of Shango. He was actually a king in Africa. He died and became a, quote on quote, saint, god, deity whichever you prefer. He became that and so Oyo has always been looked at as the cradle of Yoruba culture, Yoruba political culture, because Ife, when my dad was the cradle of the spiritual culture. So, Oyo, in which this city, this village is named after, Oyotunji is the name of this village. Oyotunji means Oyo rises again. My dad chose Oyo as a namesake because Oyo embodied the height of the political, the military, and the social progress of West Africa.

[End of Clip 2]

[Begin Clip 3]

AA: Again, the Yoruba people is one of the most developed social systems. And so, with that in mind, he named the village Oyo, and we received the three marks on the cheek of Oyo kingdom, so if I ever go to Africa, or I run into an African from Nigeria and they are here, and, you know, Nigerians are everywhere by the way, and they are here then they gonna recognize my three marks. Generally, when they see them they say, "Oh we don't do that anymore. Why you do that old thing? Ah." And I remind that, you know, the reason you don't do it anymore is not because you don't think it's a proper thing to do, it's what the white Christians told you not to do. So who do you listen to? You don't have to record this part, but who's your daddy?

[End Clip 3]

[Begin Clip 4]

AA: But yes and so here at Oyotunji, for the most part, we exist to stick it to popular culture, which believes that Africans had no religion, they had no culture, they had no people, they had no land, they had no dress, they had no sociology world view, they were just a bunch of savages waiting on Europeans to bring Christianity and civilize the place and if you look at Africa today, nothing could be further from the truth. If that was the case it hadn't worked. Okay, this is the temple for Olokun. Olokun is the deity of the African race. Olokun is the deity of the deep ocean. Olokun is a she. She is the deity of the African race, the African star just as many cultures like Jewish culture, the Jewish people believe that they are the chosen people of god. Which could be true. Inasmuch as Olokun is the deity, she is the goddess of the African race, then we become the chosen people of Olokun. And we know that we're the chosen people of Olokun because Olokun is the deity of the ocean. The ocean is rhythm. The ocean is the emotion. The element of water is a gullible element, it can be molded into anything. Water has no shape, neither do African people that's why when you look around the world you find black people in about every religion on the planet. The same thing doesn't go though for most other peoples, you know, you find us deep in everything else except our own, for the most part. And so, Olokun gives us that, so we become the sacred people of Olokun. Rhythm, rhythm is Olokun. Olokun rules over rhythm, so that is why we, as the sacred children of Olokun, the chosen children of Olokun were given rhythm. Far different than anybody else's rhythm, you know, nobody got rhythm like African people, you know, and that's from birth. You can take a two year old child and do that and they can dance on rhythm. Why is that? What is that? That is a direct connection to Olokun. Olokun is a understanding, and a philosophy, an energy, and a deity that transcends borders in West Africa. Now remember, all of these deities change name as you move throughout Africa, but primarily the understanding is the same. You can find correlations and parallels in Egyptian kinetic system. So again, the Yoruba culture and many West African cultures are rainforest versions of the Egyptian mystery systems. Now there's a big debate today to say who came first, the chicken or the egg? Did people go from West Africa to East Africa and settle Egypt? Or did people go from Egypt to West Africa to settle? There's a confusion because they're finding new artifacts in Yoruba land, West Africa in Nigeria, that are carbon dated, you know, just a little bit older than the Pyramids, so they're starting to question, which is good. We should always question history to get deeper and deeper into what could possibly have happened because none of us having been there, getting locked into one place, could lead us into doom in the future in terms of articulating the history to our young people. And so, Olokun then becomes the deity of the sea, and ocean. We worship Olokun as she has the largest temple because of the fact that she is the goddess of the African race and also, it was Olokun who carried us over here during the Transatlantic Slave Trade, and, on the way, depending on which priest you talk to because, to African people, every event has a significance in the grand scheme of the world. And that makes sense because a scientist could tell you that every event has a significance in the grand scheme of the world. And so, Olokun would often times call her children home. And so, many people jumped off the boats in the Middle Passage. They were two months from home and two months from America and they jumped off the boat into the ocean being called by the great deity herself. They were martyrs of our culture and should always be remembered, so here at Oyotunji, when we give prayer at prayer time, we remember we touch the ground for those ancestors who died in the Middle Passage. Here we have the shrine for Yemoja. Yemoja, she's also a water deity. Yemoja is the mother of the pantheon of the deities. It was said that Yemoja, from her womb, birthed all of the gods and goddesses of Yoruba land, or as we say, Orisha. And from her womb, flowed the Ogun River, which flows in Nigeria today. It is a tributary of the River

Niger. Yemoja, her number is seven, her colors are blue and white. Each Orisha have particularly corresponding numbers and colors in which things are done, so Yemoja festival which was about two, three weeks ago, you saw a plethora of blue and whites, and people brought offerings in numbers of seven, seven apples, seven oranges, seven bags of peanuts, and the like. And so, the women meet on this temple ground here because you have to remember, each temple in African culture plays a religious role and a social and philanthropic role, you see? And so, the social role of the Yemoja temple is to be the place where the women society, or Eeg Bay Moremi. More is a great heroine, so the women name their society after her. So the Moremi society is housed over there. Okay, any women that come to Oyotunji, they may have got in a fight with their husband, or sisters, of somebody, they got put out of the house, or they may not have a home could find their way to Oyotunji and then there's a womens' house, that little house there, single women pretty much stay in there. We only have two at the time. And in Oyotunji you must be married in order to own property. And so, you can't get property unless you're married. And so, if you move here and you're not married then you would have to stay with somebody who is married, or you would have to stay on the public female, or public mens' compound. It's kind of like government housing because the king is responsible for the bills and responsible for building the place, so it's like a bit of a welfare system. In traditional African culture the king was the welfare system. So if you found a woman in a town who her husband went on to the farm and never came back, or walked off with another woman and left her then she would move up to the palace area, where the king lives. She would be given quarters there and, for all terms, she would be considered Ayaba, or wife of the king. But she would not be considered Olori, which is a title wife of the king. Someone who actually had a marriage ceremony and the like. Once you move into the king's palace, for all instances, if you're a female, you become a wife of the king. And so goes the local lore, if you move to that village down there boy, I know the king going to marry you and you can't leave! [Laughter off camera] Yeah, that's the local lore. All of the art that you see constructed was built by the Dopway. When I was coming up the Dopway woke up at nine o'clock in the morning and we worked till twelve, took off till three, the heat of the day, then we came back for two hours in the evening. Now the Dopway is a traditional Fon Be word from Dahomey, or Republic of Benin. And the Dopway is basically just a word game. It's something for boys, when they reach twelve, thirteen, and fourteen to be a part of. Some place for them to extend and waste their energy, or utilize their energy positively. And so, they will learn how to build. We learned how to build, we learned how to mud, cement, and just be responsible for general labor on your property. And so, that's how the Dopway is. But today it's a little different. We hire people to do certain things and sometimes we might call a communal work group once or twice a month. But it's not everyday like it used to be. My dad built this place at a frantic pace because it was everyday. Men were not allowed to go to work back in the days. You were not allowed to work on the outside. You had to figure your own business out here and report to the king each morning to build the community. And so, that type of hardcore movement and hardcore, it's not necessarily dogma, but that type of hardcore living for many chased a lot people away and they were not able to stay because they felt that it wasn't enough freedom. However, the king's job was to build the town. By any means necessary. Okay, here we have another temple. This is the shrine for Oshun. Oshun is the mother of the river. She's the river goddess. Oshun is the mother of sweet waters. Oshun is the mother of fish, alligators, turkey buzzards, you see the turkey buzzards? She's the mother of turkey buzzards. And Oshuun is the mother of beauty. She's the mother of gold, brass. Her colors are yellow, orange, red, and the like. Oshuun has a town in Nigeria called Oshobo, where runs the Oshun River, which is again another tributary of the River Niger. And there they have Oshun festival every year

because it is Oshun who, they say, helped them to defeat the Muslims when they came to fight the Yoruba. Pre-European slavery the Muslims came to fight the Yoruba and they defeated them at a town called Onisha in Nigeria and it was credited that the power of the goddess helped the community. And, of course, today Nigeria is full of mostly Christian and mostly Muslim. Much articulation of this culture and religion is not done necessarily many people in Nigeria hide and are afraid of this, what I'm articulating to you people today, which is their culture. It's like Japanese articulating Shintoism or Chinese articulating Taoism, or Buddhism. And so, again, Oshun, Oshun is the river goddess and she's the goddess of love, pleasure, harmony. Honey is sacred to Oshun, so maybe when you were having a problem with your spouse, you're having a husband married to problem, you're having a problem with being sweet, you know, some people have rough tongues sometimes, and they have, you know, they don't know how to talk to people maybe then you can come to Oshun, a priest can give an offering to Oshun and bless the honey, and put it on your tongue so that every word you say should be a sweet word, and a word that attract bees, or attract people to you. Okay, and so that is Oshun. And Oshun is also the mother of culture. She is the keeper of culture. So you talk about your deployment of culture, obeisance to elders, food, cuisine, marriage decorations, town decorations, art, brass construction, you're talking about Oshun. Because Oshobo, her town, is known for some of that high, high detail brass work that you see coming out of Nigeria, and also the terra-cotta work that you see coming out of Ile Ife. They found some terra-cotta here, blew the Europeans away. They said, "No way a nigger knew how to do terra-cotta ten-thousand years before Christ. Ten Thousand years they were doing perfect terracotta that would resemble human beings, you know, to the T, even with the smoothness of the terracotta, you see? So Oshun bequeaths unto us the ability to design. She bequeaths unto us the ability to carve, drum, sing, and dance. So that's why, if you go to Yoruba land in Nigeria, you're going to find some of the most musical, some of the most "celebrationest" people, if that's a word. They love to celebrate in Nigeria and it is because they attribute that to Oshun. And she is also the mother of this village. Obatala is the father of the village, who is the father of the gods, who is the deity of peace, who is the deity of patience is Obatala, and Oshun is the mother, is the deity of culture. And so, what does that mean? That means that okay, with those two as the mother and father of the town it's going to be a very slow moving town. Things are going to happen slow, especially here, they say, "two? You be prepared for six." Ask Mr. Galloway. A slow moving town, slow developing. However, very knowledgeable, very wise, very slow and old man like. And Oshun as the mother you should know that this town would be beautiful, should be colorful, should have art in different places, should have festivals with dance, song, and food. Okay, so that is basically how we extrapolate from the deities, from the characteristics of the deities. We extrapolate our daily occurrences, you follow? From the characteristics of the deities. This is the shrine of Ogoun. [sings Ogoun cadence] Ogoun is the deity of the outdoors. Ogoun is the outdoorsman. Ogoun is the deity of hunting, fights, violence, war is Ogoun's domain. Ogoun is also the deity of men, masculine energy. This is the shrine where the men come to do rights of passage once a year. They would line all the young boys up here who are going into manhood and they would then be announced that they are either beginning their rights of passage training, or they have concluded their rights of passage training. And they would receive eight marks on their back, eight tribal marks on their back. Generally, in pretty much like a V but we call it the shape of the head of the copperhead snake, which is the mascot of the shrine, or the group, the men society. And so, the young men.

[End Clip 4]

[Begin Clip 5]

AA: are required to do 21 different things to prove to the community that they're ready to take on manhood, which is a high paced, fast, type of vigorous lifestyle. And so the young men would then walk a forty mile journey in ten hours. They have ten hours to walk a forty mile journey, twenty miles out, twenty miles back. They have to sleep in the woods. They have to hunt, fish. They have to be able to swim fifty yards. They have to be able to bog in quicksand. They have to be able to chop down a large tree. They have to be able to build a house without nails. So many survival techniques they will learn throughout that process, throughout that year's process, and it culminates, here at the temple, with the tribal marks. And then they are considered and respected in meanings when they raise their hand and they are listened to. Failure, then, to complete these tests and challenges, then, we would call you "ini on ne Yoko." I won't translate that, it's rather vulgar.

[End Clip 5]

[Begin Clip 6]

AA: Because of his skin color he was a light man and he had sharp features, so he could be Cuban, you know, Cubans are washed down Africans, you know, African's with clean skin, I don't know if you want to say that. So, people say that was the reason they let him in. Whatever the reason being, he was on a mission to get this African stuff to the black folks in America because he had saw three, four hundred years of the same old thing, of the same cycle of Judeo-Christian doctrines keeping black folks down. He said, "We need our own culture and our own religion to come up." And the Cubans hated him for that because they told him, they said, "Look, Serge, we'll initiate you, you know, cuts you. But don't give this to the black people. Don't give this to the black American because they stupid. They've been slaves their whole life. They could never understand anything else." And so, my dad went, "Oh, okay, wow," and it made him want to leave and go do it even more! So this religion goes from the basement, a very secretive religion, secretive because the Cubans thought that if they get busted sacrificing a chicken, or doing a ritual, or giving fruit to a shrine, they'd go to jail, they had to protect their green cards, you know. My father didn't have a green card to protect. He had a revolution to begin. So he took it, literally, from the basement and put it in the store front, in the street, in the form of a large temple on the street. Even the Cubans had never had temples like that, like with the door and the number and the open and close hours, and festivals, and things going on where people come by and participate. Cubans didn't even have that. So, again, my father implemented a new paradigm in North America, whereby, you open up a temple and you have god children. Those god children come in and they pay for services and that builds the temple and they pay for things and everything gets to be built out and the culture is established in the heart of the city. He began that. So, the Cubans, you know, they tried to do him in a couple of times, they were very upset. There's record that says they were at a festival in New York, a party at the temple, and a Cuban guy walks in and shuts it down, drag my dad, take him in the back, you know, scald him. And told him, you know, "You don't do this type of stuff." And, you know, they said the Cuban left, they said man, my dad said, you know, "Strike it up! Let's go! Back on! You know, pay them cats no attention, you know, this is our culture, this is our inheritance. How's somebody gonna say they own this, or what we can't do,

what god, or goddess, gave us.” And so my father then went so far and created a village. And then, once Oyotunji was created and built, and being built, it caught national attention. And so not only did he take this religion to another level he brought national attention to this religion from building Oyotunji. Oprah Winfrey came, Tom Shneider, ABC, NBC, Time Magazine, Newsweek, Ebony, Jet, all of them. You know they came to Oyotunji throughout the history of Oyotunji and they still do. Last time we did a show with Lifetime channel last year. Bravo channel was here the other day trying to workout some stuff, so we get a lot of production houses and media people looking to expose African culture, however, we’re reluctant a lots of times because there are boneheads out there in Hollywood. They don’t necessarily want to acknowledge they want to, you know, just kinda sprinkle as a season, “Oh, voodoo gets viewers.” You know, that type of thing. However, we’re here to let them know that they’re going to have to step up their game because Oyotunji as an entity will, you know, alert our people and say, “Look, you can’t work with no voodoo cultural people because you’re going to do XYZ.” So we’ve being really working with lots of Hollywood people to look and say, “listen here people, you can either create, you know, a better world, or you can recreate the same world that you guys have been recreating.” Because voodoo is ok until Hollywood drew out the “O” and the other “O”, “voodoo.” Now it’s scary. “Vohdoon” is the proper pronunciation, vohdoon. How do you get Voodoo from Vohdoon? You know, so again, it was based on-voodoo got a bad name, especially when the Haitians decided to kick the French out and give the French the boot. And they attributed that to their religion, their culture. And, of course, the European didn’t like that, so they made all kinds of stories about zombies. Zombie is an African word, which means someone walking asleep. And so, you see, the word zombie came to America from American soldiers going to Haiti and working down there doing missions and things and coming back and they brought the term zombie back and now you see them zombies, [imitates zombie] this is a zombie, when a Haiti zombie looks nothing of the sort. You know, a zombie was what you did to someone who was indebted to you. You see, someone might’ve owed you 400 cattle and so you made them a quote unquote “zombie,” well, yes, a z-o-m-b-e-e or b-e-a, I believe is the traditional spelling. But you made them a zombie and they performed for you until your services were up and you broke the spell. And it wasn’t like they did something spiritual, like they didn’t go, “Oh, boogie woogie woogie, you a zombie.” No, they went to the bushes, to the herbs. They’re certain types of herbs you can use to put people in spells. The Europeans were afraid of that, like, “Oh, the Africans are spell givers and witchcraft, they conjure or what they call black magic they called African religion. However, African religion is highly scientific and is really based on botany. It’s based on biology, the whole thing, from the blood to the plant blood. All of it, based on biology. We bath in the plant blood for certain things. We may have an ailment, a spiritual ailment, not physical, doctor don’t know what’s going on and you go to a priest, they prescribe a reading and they tell what to go get, you take some leaves, you crush them until they bleed, you bath in the leaf blood. And that is to relieve you of spiritual ailments and physical held ailments. This is the shrine, this is the temple for Oya here. This is where Oya, the goddess Oya, is venerated. Once a year she has a festival here. And, as a said before, we didn’t look everywhere but like Eshew, see the Eshew shrine here. Eshew is at every temple gate. And Oya is the goddess of storms, whirlwinds, tornadoes, cyclones. She’s the goddess of change because if you know anything about a tornado, after it’s gone there’s a great deal of change, yes. And so Oya then becomes a goddess of swift change. And so if you were born under this Oya goddess or Oya is your head then you’re liable to be a revolutionary type person. You’re liable to be a person with a short fuse and you’re liable not to take too much stuff, you know, rhetoric and things, you’re probably like a straight line type of individual, would be Oya. Oya in a negative is like, you know those people that

blow themselves up and things like that? That's Oya in the negative, terrorist type of energy. Oya is a warrior goddess, she's a female, so you know she's got to be worse than any male deity. No one wants to behold the wrath of Oya, and you've seen the wrath of Oya recently in, I think, Oklahoma City. You know, that is what we call Oya. So as a voodoo priest, when I see that I go, "Oh, boy. Oya is bringing change." It's not a bad thing and it's not a good thing, okay, because here at the village we're threatened, we're on the hurricane coast here. So anytime we get threatened with a hurricane and a hurricane starts whistling at us then we come to our temple of Oya, the priest will lay out their implements, they will do what they have to do, sacrifice is given, whether it's an offering a sacrifice, or a blood sacrifice, or a monetary sacrifice, is given to the goddess inside the shrine, things are set straight and, at least, for the last forty years we've been able to dodge them. Okay, this is our other shrine. This is the shrine for Mama Loja. Mama Loja is the mother of the market. Mama Loga is the mother of the market, simple as that. Mama Loga means the mother of the market. And so during Oya festival this big doll, as you will, like this doll figure will be brought out, candles will be placed around it and people will celebrate. During that night, everyone will bring out things that they have to sell, and if you bring out your things that night, you're going to sell. And so that was the high market time, if you will. I think high market time in Western society today is like Christmas, and things like that, sorry.

Interviewer: Any last things? I'm about to run out of battery.

AA: Oh, any last statements!

Interviewer: What you would like to tell the youth?

AA: Well, in terms of the youth, we will always tell the youth to continue to be inspired by the differences. Always look for the differences in life and the differences in our communities. Continue to be inspired by the Earth, because the Earth is our mother and our father. The Earth is all we have, and so we have to continue to be good to it. Conserve. We have to compost, we have to reuse, we have to recycle. And we have to continue to look for new ways of living because the ways that we've been told about living is mostly untrue, or can't sustain human life. Because if it could, then we wouldn't have wars and the like. And so we always like to give that to people is to be, to continue to try your best to be human.

Interviewer: Thank you.