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Ramsay Jefferson
Interviewer: Debbie Frost
2011

DF: Ok. Uh, good afternoon Mr. Ramsay, Jefferson. We're gonna be talking, uh, we're here on uh St. Helena's Island, and I wanna be doing an interview with you.

RJ: OK.

DF: I really wanna know about your story and uh life as you've grown up on the island. So if you can just tell me how um, many generations your family has lived on this island.

RJ: Uh, there's seven of us in the family. Five sisters, two brothers. I've been born and raised here. Got out of high school in uh '83, then in '83 went to New Jersey, came back here in '03. This is my home and I love it. And, uh, it's a beautiful island. People is nice. Family is nice, everyone get along nice. And uh, back in 1975 I worked at Penn Center, in the, uh summer program for the Cedar program and we wrote a book about the island. And I just can't remember who the author of the book was, but it's a nice book and it's been going around to the senior citizens to find out a lot more about Penn Center and this island. And we wrote a book and that's when I first found out that Dr. King had an office in Penn Center. And that really make me proud and dig into it more about the history of Penn Center, and um, I'm still learning more about it.

DF: Well you had your grandparents and generations, and your great-grandparents and grandparents on this island.

RJ: Yes, it's my grandparents and my mom and my schoolmates then also.

DF: Oh and school persons. Are there stories that they've told you that you remember of them growing up on this island?

RJ: Not really. If they did, I don't remember.

DF: Ok, what about you as a child? Do you remember um, maybe just some of the experience that you...

RJ: Coming up, yeah around there, I used around there, coming up, right around Penn Center and um, up to this day, heritage and stuff. I still go around there.

DF: Ok, just stop the tape for a second.

[End clip 1]

[Begin clip 2]

DF: Ok. You mentioned that um, you really love this place and the great sense of community and the people that um, are related. Can you talk about some of your family members that are here?

RJ: Well I have three sisters live here now. And, we have a good time. Especially when I come and go to church and stuff like that. Go to church together and pray together. And um, seeing my niece and nephew then grow up and everything, make me feel like I'm still old. You know? Cause I wasn't here, you know, when they, when they were raised up, I was in Jersey. I decided to come back to Beaufort, I said, this is my root. You know, I love it here. I could do more here than I could do in the city. You know, a lot of land, and a lot of space to do things. This is my home and I love it and I would not, never leave this place again. For another place.

DF: That sounds good. That sounds like uh, that you've really found a sense of community here.

RJ: Yes.

DF: That's much different from the way it was in Jersey?

RJ: Yes.

DF: Now in Jersey, what did you, did you have family you wanted to visit in Jersey? (RJ shakes his head) So you decided to leave the island and go to Jersey but you didn't know anyone? That's ambitious.

RJ: Well I have friends there. But it was nice being there, I mean, job wise. Pay wise. It was nice. I worked with the city housing.

DF: Ok. That was the draw to leave? The money? Getting a job and having it, making more money?

RJ: Came back home, take care of my mom, and she passed away after a year, after I came back.

DF: Alright, Ok? I think that sounds good. We uh, appreciate your time. OK?

RJ: Thank you. Thank you.

[End clip 2]

[Begin clip 3]

DF: Now this land belongs to your family, and you have family members that live here?

RJ: Yes.

DF: OK. And whose house is that over there?

RJ: That house right here, is Ms. Brown, that's my father's oldest niece. And her mom and my father are brother and sister.

DF: OK.

RJ: And the house over here, is my second cousin, Mr. Miller, who owns the store right there. That's in my family also. On my father's side of the family. The next house belongs to my cousins here. The second house, over there, my family members own that house, but nobody lives there.

DF: Nobody lives there? Ok. Now these houses as well belong to your family? So all these are family members.

RJ: Yes. All these family members.

DF: Now you mentioned, or I think we already knew that this is heir's property, so, which means all the heirs own part of the property.

RJ: Right.

DF: Alright, very good. Nice family, family's good.

RJ: Exactly.

DF: Yes.

RJ: And it's nice being here.

DF: I'm really enjoying our time (RJ laughs). Good.

RJ: Y'all gotta come back and visit again.

[End clip 3]