

Felix Armfield: It is June 23rd, 1994. My name is Felix Armfield and I am doing the interviewing. I'm at the home of Miss Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud. We're in the company of Miss Jessie Laurence Mouton. Basically, we're going to sit around and we're going to have a conversation with the two of them as they share their experiences here in New Orleans coming up in Jim Crow.

Felix Armfield: The interesting thing about Mrs. Pajeaud and Mouton is that they have been lifelong friends. They even were schoolmates. I think that you're going to get a chance to hear about that in just a moment. Would you state your full name?

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: Just speak in here? My name is Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud.

Felix Armfield: Would you state your name?

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: My name is Mrs. Jessie Lawrence Mouton.

Felix Armfield: Okay. Miss Pajeaud, would you just sort of tell me how long you've been in New Orleans and if New Orleans has always been home for you?

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: I have been living in New Orleans all of my life. I was born in New Orleans and—tell my age?

Felix Armfield: Mm-hmm.

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: And I was born November the 11th, 1919.

Felix Armfield: Okay. Right here in New Orleans.

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: Right here in New Orleans. My parents also were born here in New Orleans.

Felix Armfield: Okay. Okay. Miss Mouton, what about you?

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: I was born in New Orleans but my parents were both from Pointcoupee Parish in Louisiana.

Felix Armfield: That [indistinct 00:02:04] that you told me about a while ago? P-O—

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: P-O-I-N.

Felix Armfield: I-N-T-C-O.

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: C-O-U.

Felix Armfield: C-O-U.

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: P-E-E.

Felix Armfield: E-E. Pointcoupee.

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: Mm-hmm.

Felix Armfield: Okay. You were born here in New Orleans you said?

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: I was born here in New Orleans.

Felix Armfield: When were you born?

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: June 27th, 1920. My birthday is Monday.

Felix Armfield: We got a birthday coming up. Okay.

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: Do you have one of these on you?

Felix Armfield: No. No. This is picking us up right here.

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: Oh, I see.

Felix Armfield: How long have the two of you been friends?

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: We have been friends since the end of the first grade, and I imagine we were five or six years old at the time.

Felix Armfield: Okay.

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: We were in every grade together in the same room.

Felix Armfield: Really?

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: From first grade all the way through high school.

Felix Armfield: Really?

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: We graduated together in 1936.

Felix Armfield: Graduated high school in 1936?

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: From high school. 1936.

Felix Armfield: Where did you graduate high school?

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: From McDonogh 35.

Felix Armfield: McDonogh 35. I've heard of this McDonogh 35.

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: The only Black high school, public, in the city of New Orleans.

Felix Armfield: Now when you say public, what are you trying to differentiate?

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: There were other high schools but they were not public high schools.

Felix Armfield: Okay. Other Black high schools?

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: Paid by taxpayers.

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: They were Black. One was by Methodists and other religious—

Felix Armfield: Sectors.

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: Yes.

Felix Armfield: Within the city.

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: The other—Both of them were religious. One was Catholic and the others were by the Methodist congregation religion.

Felix Armfield: You all attended the only Black public—

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: The only Black public school in the city of New Orleans.

Felix Armfield: How do you suppose you didn't go to one of those?

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: Well, our parents just sent us to public schools.

Felix Armfield: Okay.

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: And public school is the school system that is funded from the taxpayers monies.

Felix Armfield: Okay but did you both grow up Catholic?

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: Yes. We were Catholic.

Felix Armfield: And you didn't go to none of the public—

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: No. I don't know why.

Felix Armfield: —or Catholic high schools.

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: The Catholic high schools—

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: We did not.

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: I went to the public school, because of my parents—They were unable to send us anyplace else. They didn't have they money.

Felix Armfield: Okay. Okay. Now what end of town—Where were you born here in the city of New Orleans? Where did you grow up?

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: In the Treme, the section of New Orleans that's called the Treme, T-R-E-M-E.

Felix Armfield: Okay. Over in the Treme section.

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: Yes.

Felix Armfield: Now—

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: Our school was McDonogh, O-G-H.

Felix Armfield: O-G-H.

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: Adapted—adapted—

Felix Armfield: D-O-N.

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: O-G-H.

Felix Armfield: Oh. Okay. I'm glad you corrected that spelling.

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: McDonogh.

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: Jessie, since you're not hooked up, would you mind go stirring my red beans for me, please. (all laugh)

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: You see, this is where we—she knows I don't like the food hot—

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: This is where we fuss.

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: Yeah.

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: This is where we fuss. (all laughing)

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: No, this is—I'm sorry, [indistinct 00:05:30] get me to cook. (all laughing)

Felix Armfield: Mrs. Pajeaud.

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: Pajeaud.

Felix Armfield: Pajeaud. Where did you grow up here in the city of New Orleans?

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: In the same area as she did.

Felix Armfield: In the Treme?

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: In the Treme.

Felix Armfield: Treme?

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: You know where the Lafitte project is located?

Felix Armfield: What project is that?

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: Lafitte.

Felix Armfield: Lafitte. Spell Lafitte.

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: You want me to pile that high under the pot?

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: Yeah. That's okay. L-A-F-I-T-T-E.

Felix Armfield: T-T-E. Lafitte. Okay.

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: It's the Lafitte project. There were houses there where the project is now and that's where I was born and lived.

Felix Armfield: Okay. Okay. How many brothers and sisters did you have?

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: None.

Felix Armfield: None? You were an only child?

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: Only child.

Felix Armfield: [indistinct 00:06:24]?

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: Mm-hmm.

Felix Armfield: What kinds of things did your parents do for a living?

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: My mother was a homemaker and my father was a racehorse man. (laughs)

Felix Armfield: A racehorse man? That's interesting. That is so interesting. Your father was a racehorse man.

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: Yes. Yeah. He fooled with the horses.

Felix Armfield: Really?

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: Yeah.

Felix Armfield: He obviously made a living from it.

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: Yeah. Yeah. He did very well. He did very well. He did very, very well.

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: We aren't picky and choosy. My father was a mattress maker. He worked in a factory for many years.

Felix Armfield: Really?

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: In fact all these Black—

Felix Armfield: There was a mattress industry here in New Orleans?

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: Yes. Southern Mattress Company. It was at one time the only, and then there was another one that—

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: There was a Black one, wasn't there?

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: No. Mr. Reed was the Black one.

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: Yeah. Mr. Reed.

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: Mr. Reed worked with my father at one time but then he went into his own business.

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: His own business.

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: He wanted my father to go but his business wasn't doing so hot, and Father's contentions was that he had five children to feed. He wouldn't take the chances and so he stayed. My brother also worked at Southern Mattress Company. My father worked there for 40 years.

Felix Armfield: What did your—

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: —for 40 years.

Felix Armfield: What did your mother do?

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: My mother was a house—

Felix Armfield: Was a homemaker?

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: A homemaker. A housekeeper, if you want to call her that.

Felix Armfield: Housewife?

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: Yes. She worked one day a week out. You know, as a maid.

Felix Armfield: She did domestic work outside?

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: Outside.

Felix Armfield: Now where did she go to do that work one day a week?

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: Back of Dumaine Street for some of our richest people. Dumaine and that's by St.

John.

Felix Armfield: Now was this a White neighborhood, Dumaine? (phone rings)

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: Positively. Yes. All he could give us was a decent place to stay, and something to eat. That was very important.

Felix Armfield: Now Mrs. Mouton, you're talking about your father?

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: My father.

Felix Armfield: Okay. Okay.

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: He paid high rent through all calibers.

Felix Armfield: Mm-hmm.

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: So that we wouldn't be sleeping all in one room.

Felix Armfield: Really?

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: That's right.

Felix Armfield: This was over in the Treme area?

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: That's right.

Felix Armfield: Really?

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: We lived right in front of the school that we attended.

Felix Armfield: McDonogh?

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: No, no. As children, we went to Craig School, Joseph A. Craig School.

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: Tell me what.

Felix Armfield: Okay. Okay.

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: Craig was on St. Philip, it still is.

Felix Armfield: Okay. Okay.

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: That school was built before we started school.

Felix Armfield: That school has been around almost a hundred years.

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: '20 something, something like that. We had first grade in another school, and then the next year we went to Craig School. It was a brand new school.

Felix Armfield: Really? Then you went to first grade. Was it like a one room school or something?

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: Did you tell him that? Did you tell him that? So he's—he means he's making those lies up on you? Yeah—

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: No. Indeed, it's a whole block school. A half of a square.

Felix Armfield: No, not Craig, but the school that you went to before you went to Craig.

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: No, Craig is the only elementary school that I entered.

Felix Armfield: Ah, okay. Okay.

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: We entered Craig and it was the first—Really one of the first newer schools, brand new schools that Blacks had here. If we had any other, I don't know of it.

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: Would you have a man—and not to be emotional about it but, woman! I mean—

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: Craig was a brand new school when we went, because I remembered how Mama used to say, "Don't put your hands on the wall and dirty the wall, because that's a brand new school." You know? Keep it clean. This was just a part of that, because I don't ever remember being real dirty. You just have to know families to know why things go on as they do in the house. I was brought up in that kind of family. My mother washed every day.

Felix Armfield: Really?

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: Really, so that we could go and hang our clothes on the line in the yard, so that we could go to school clean every day. The teachers would comment on the fact that we were always nice and clean.

Felix Armfield: Really?

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: This has been something that we hand down, because I did the same thing with my two children. Both of them went to elementary public schools but when they began to get to high

school, they both went to Catholic.

Felix Armfield: Okay.

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: You see, I was more in a position to pay tuition than my parents were, because the first time I went to college, right after high school, I did the first year but the next year—it was a struggle that first year. I had to stop for financial reasons. See, she taught longer than I did, because she went on through college, but I was out of college 20 years before I went back. I did better than a lot of the youngsters and I had two small children, two and four years old, and a husband giving me a hard road to travel.

Felix Armfield: Really?

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: That's right.

Felix Armfield: And you persevered.

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: I persevered. I was determined, I had to be—I had done housework, domestic, when I first came out of school. I knew that this wasn't what I wanted to do all my life. I really didn't like to be. It just happened that the people I worked for were so very kind to me. You know, in many ways. I worked there four years and the war broke out. Four years and the war broke out.

Felix Armfield: This was what war?

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: World War Two. The jobs were opening up everywhere. And when I applied—

Felix Armfield: With the war opening up?

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: Yeah. The war. When I applied for a job in the war industry, at that time, they were giving most of the jobs to the White girls in the daytime, but I passed examination and everything that they gave but they wanted me to work from 12 o'clock at night until early morning and my father could not see that, no more than he could see my mother going to work and leaving five children in the house.

Felix Armfield: Okay. Okay.

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: He said to me, I wasn't outdoors and I wasn't hungry, so I didn't work, I didn't take that job. I took another job working in a sewing factory and I worked there, all in all, for about 10 years. This is when I made up my mind that this wasn't what I wanted to do either. That was hard, strenuous—That was a very nerve-wracking job because you just work, work, work. The salary wasn't what I had thought it should be. I needed a job. As one woman said, "Why are you working here? You've been to college", "Because I need a job." The children now don't want a job and the man didn't pay but 15 cents an hour.

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: That was a very low-paying job. Like I said, I guess you have to know what you

want to do with your life. Some of them don't know. My father used to use an expression about you must want something in life, even if it's just a new pair of shoes, and I could never—I used to say, "Why do you always tell us that?" You have to want something bad enough to work for it. That's all it meant but I didn't understand that but I understood it afterwards, later.

Felix Armfield: Yeah.

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: Like I said, we were poor but we had loving parents, and I say my children—so my father, but my mother had died before my children, because I was expecting my son when my mother died. My children have experienced the love of family life. You know? With the rest of my sisters at the time. I lost the last sister three years ago. I'm the only living one now.

Felix Armfield: Okay.

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: Of my mother's children.

Felix Armfield: Now what was life like there in the home amongst you and your brothers and sisters?

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: Loving, because you didn't get mad and say, "I am not saying anything to you." You had to get the Bible. Anything you did, that's why I say we got a lying—you told a lie, you had to get the Bible and say tell the truth and shame the devil.

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: I'm sorry, that was my daughter. Her daughter had an accident. It's not serious, though.

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: Who?

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: Dominique. She slid into a bump up on the [indistinct 00:15:37]. She slid into a lady's car but Daphne said the damage is not even—In other words—

Felix Armfield: Miss—

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: Pajeaud.

Felix Armfield: Pajeaud. Miss Pajeaud is now joining us back in our conversation. We've just been speaking with Miss Mouton and she was telling me a little bit about what she was doing and the kinds of things that her parents did. What do you recall your parents doing? Do you have any memories of your father?

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: Oh, yes.

Felix Armfield: Horse race man?

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: Oh, yeah, because my father and mother were married 54 years when my father died.

Felix Armfield: Long time to be with someone.

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: Yes. A really long time. I was very close to my father. In fact, my father was much more lenient with me than my mother. When my mother told me no about something, I'd go ask my father.

Felix Armfield: Used to play for kicks—

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: Yeah.

Felix Armfield: With an only child and [indistinct 00:16:39].

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: Yeah. Right. Right. Right.

Felix Armfield: Really?

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: Perhaps you would like to know something about the economics and how they lived, because I really thought that was a good way of doing things. My father would put the money on the dresser for my mother to run the house with, and then he would give her money for herself. Like an allowance or something.

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: If she wanted something for the house like a new stove, or something like that, he would give her the money to buy it and whatnot. To me, that was a good way, because the woman didn't have to worry like I did. In my marriage, I took care of everything. My husband wouldn't know whether I got a new stove or a new anything. (laughs) He'd give all the money and I had to—If I spent all the money in one day, that was it. He didn't care what you had. You know? Whatnot or whatever you want. I kind of liked the way my father did things. Then he would give me money for myself, like 25 cents, which was a good deal during that time and whatnot.

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: She got a lot of money when she was coming up, being an only child.

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: Yeah. An only child.

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: I used to come in on a Saturday and put the money on the table and then with all us hanging around the table, and I remember that very well and my mama is sitting there and they would put so much out for the rent, because they paid rent every week to this man, who was our landlord. Then you put money on the side for the groceries, for the rest of the week, and then you put—Then he had his car fare to get to work, and he was a heavy smoker, so he had to have some money to buy his cigarettes. And I think cigarettes must have been 15 cents a pack at the time. I used to put a lot of it before the—

Felix Armfield: Tell me about—When was this?

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: In the 40s—

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: That was in the '30s.

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: That was in the '30s.

Felix Armfield: We're talking about actually end of Depression.

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: Yes. Mm-hmm.

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: In the '20s also, because I was born in 1919. If you remember, she was born in 1920.

Felix Armfield: Okay. You're talking about cigarettes were about 15—

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: Yeah. 20—

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: Yeah. I remember him—I could go to the grocery and get it and I used to like to throw things up on the house top, then he'd have to get a ladder or a stick or something and get the cigarettes, because he didn't have another 15 cents to buy another pack. Money just was hard to come by.

Felix Armfield: Mmm. So you didn't want to use that for cigarettes—

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: —but all we got was a nickel. You know? When you have five children, everybody got a nickel.

Felix Armfield: Okay. That one quarter had to go five ways.

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: Yeah.

Felix Armfield: I imagine you must have bought an awful lot with that one nickel.

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: You could buy good candy for a penny. You could go buy—You could get two and three cookies for a penny. You know? That meant that—Then my mother was a person who made something all the time for us. It wasn't a matter of every time—We'd buy Snowballs and Snowballs wasn't but a penny, two pennies if you wanted two colors.

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: Being an only child, I was very protected in all that, especially by my mother. I couldn't do this. I had a tricycle and I couldn't ride. I had a swing in the yard. The bottom in the two swings, and I couldn't do that, I couldn't skate. So many things I couldn't do. That's why I had all the children that I

had. I didn't want one child, I said that.

Felix Armfield: Really? Just did not want an only child?

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: Nope. I didn't want only one child. No. So I had about—

Felix Armfield: You're saying, you got lonely as an only child?

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: No. I wasn't lonely. I wasn't lonely.

Felix Armfield: But you certainly you would have liked to have had some other siblings?

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: Not necessarily, because, you see, in the south, we were a very close family. The cousins and whatnot. You see, there's this aunt, she lived with us. She and her husband separated when her son was 10 months old, and she came to live with us. Her son and her daughter really grew up like my sister and brother and whatnot and we're very close now, her daughter.

Felix Armfield: You had what was clearly what was called the extended Black family?

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: Yes, we did. We were definitely an extended Black family. I had grandmothers—

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: —we are—He tells people that I'm his sister and they don't refer to us as cousins. Except the people who really know us. You know? Because we were raised and was born in the same house, and then when we moved on St. Philip Street, they moved in the apartments in the back.

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: That's how she was. You see? She's the one, her mother and—

Felix Armfield: Okay. Okay.

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: She and her brother lived with us, so we were very, very close. Then my father's mother lived in the 7th Ward and I was always there with them, with my aunts and with my—

Felix Armfield: Where is the 7th Ward? I've heard people talk about the 7th Ward. What is the 7th Ward? What should that mean to me?

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: The 7th Ward started at—

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: That's where the Creoles lived.

Felix Armfield: That's where the Creoles lived?

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: Mm-hmm.

Felix Armfield: Okay. Now did you ever live in the 7th Ward?

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: Not until I was a teenager. The project that she was telling you, the Lafitte project, we had to move and so we moved downtown.

Felix Armfield: Okay. Okay.

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: That's the only thing that they—

Felix Armfield: You didn't move downtown, Ms. Mouton?

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: Yeah.

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: I never lived in the 7th Ward.

Felix Armfield: You never lived in the 7th Ward?

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: Yeah—

Felix Armfield: —but you had your family?

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: Yeah, but that's a different 7th Ward. Yeah. It's different. It's different. It's different from downtown. It was never the 7th Ward like Blacks think of it.

Felix Armfield: Okay. Okay.

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: That was downtown.

Felix Armfield: Okay. Okay. Now when you talk about that 7th Ward from your childhood, that was clearly where the Creoles lived?

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: Yes, but, as I said, I did not live in the 7th Ward.

Felix Armfield: But you had family in the 7th Ward?

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: I had family who lived in the 7th Ward too.

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: I did not.

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: Yeah. They were light skin people, it was straight hair, and whatnot. As I said, it isn't only fair skin and straight hair. Creole is a form of life, a form of culture, because I have a friend who is

very, very dark and I'm always teasing, we've been friends for years and years, I say, "Girl, you sound just like one of them ol' Creoles." I tell her. And act like it. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. It wasn't just the fair skin and the straight hair.

Felix Armfield: Now would it be fair for someone to say Ms Pajeaud was Creole?

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: Well—

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: I'm Creole.

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: Everybody who meets—who meets me—

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: See this lady around here, she's so Creole, she still got an accent you can hear.

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: Antoinette Pierre—

Felix Armfield: Okay. She's a dark skinned lady?

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: And Naomi too—

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: Yeah. She's from the Treme too—

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: Yeah. And my friend Naomi is dark skin too. In other words, she's [indistinct 00:24:14].

Felix Armfield: Are you in fact Creole?

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: I don't look upon myself as Creole. Just because I'm fair with as they say "good hair," they used to say and whatnot. I don't look—Everybody who sees me, of course, they have stopped doing that, they will say right away, "You from the 7th Ward." I was not from the 7th Ward. It does me very much good to tell them I was born in the Treme, and not in the 7th Ward.

Felix Armfield: Okay, the Treme is—Clearly, that was the Black neighborhood?

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: Yes. It was a Black neighborhood. It was a Black neighborhood.

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: Black neighborhood. Black area, you may as well say.

Felix Armfield: Okay. It was an area.

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: Yeah. It's a whole area.

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: Let me tell you this, of course, we didn't know when we were coming up—In fact, we didn't know until the '60s, what existed beyond segregation, because that's all we knew. We came up with segregation and that's all we knew. According to us, we had a very good life. We had a full life. We played—

Felix Armfield: What made that life—Go ahead.

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: We played games. We came from the school. We'd play hop scotch, Jack's, rope. We'd play with paper dolls. We had dolls and whatnot. We would—Well, we had friends around the block and we would sit on the steps at night and tell ghost stories and whatnot. Our parents and our aunts and cousins were all involved with us, so we had a good life.

Felix Armfield: Yeah.

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: As far as we knew.

Felix Armfield: Yeah.

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: Because we didn't know anything about all of the this.

Felix Armfield: You didn't know anything outside your community.

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: No. We didn't know. Now we went to Chicago every summer.

Felix Armfield: A family outing?

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: Well, my mother and my aunt and her friends, and myself went to Chicago.

Felix Armfield: Your father [indistinct 00:26:19].

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: Every year. Oh no. My father wouldn't come but he would send those checks. My mother would be looking for the mail.

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: We went to the country, which was rural Pointcoupee Parish for my mother's people and by my daddy's people.

Felix Armfield: And you would go out to the country?

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: I would go out every summer.

Felix Armfield: Leave the city and go to the country.

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: Jessie, go see about my beans, please. (laughs)

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: Now, this is the last time.

Felix Armfield: She can go. She can go. You finish talking.

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: I smell them.

Felix Armfield: It smells good. I know that. Well, tell me a little bit about your parents. You said that they say that you are Creole.

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: Yes.

Felix Armfield: What makes you Creole?

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: Because my father's people were of the light skin—

Felix Armfield: This is Mouton who is speaking? Okay.

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: Because they were of the lighter people but my mother's people were also considered Creoles because my mother's father was very fair and all of his sisters were. My daddy's mother was very fair but she had sisters and brothers far darker than you.

Felix Armfield: Really?

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: They were so Creole. Because they all talked that language. Now my grandmother knew how to talk French, because she's from Haiti, in that area, French Haiti.

Felix Armfield: Okay.

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: My father's mother was born when the slaves were freed. After the slaves were freed, her mother must have married a fellow and had these other five children after that.

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: They were like—You wouldn't believe that they were not lighter people in the 7th Ward. They were prejudiced against dark, because my grandmother's sisters and brothers were very dark. She was very light. They loved—and they'd come here every day [indistinct 00:28:20] the bus just to get a cup of coffee on their way to work. I always knew that we would go by my daddy's and uncle on a Sunday and then we'd go by my mother's aunt and uncle. My father's uncle married my mother's aunt, so that made it both—

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: You burned it? I asked if you wanted—

Felix Armfield: The coffee was a hospitable thing?

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: A hospitable thing and if the person like my mother and her sisters and all of them knew how to make biscuits, and what we call Johnny cake, that was sure good, sat down and you talked about this or that. That was a family, and a friendship thing.

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: Yeah. You should have said something. I had it warming for you.

Felix Armfield: That's fine. That's wonderful. I'd love to have a cup.

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: I have some, because I make it in—

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: You drink slow?

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: [indistinct 00:29:20].

Felix Armfield: I tend to drink it all day long.

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: I have it in the coffee maker, so there's some in the coffee maker.

Felix Armfield: Okay. Good. Good.

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: I made it this morning. We used to go to Chicago. There was a railroad company here, TNP. I think that had excursions for \$9—This picture of me when I was 11 years old, that's where it was taken, in Chicago.

Felix Armfield: Okay. Is that the one that I'm going to take with me?

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: Yeah. My mother—You want to take it with you?

Felix Armfield: No. Well, I'm going to get a copy of it.

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: A copy of it—

Felix Armfield: I'm just going to get a copy.

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: You see how? That was taken in Chicago. You see the buildings?

Felix Armfield: Yeah. Look at that. Look at that. We want a copy of that.

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: My aunt had friends. I was 11 years old then.

Felix Armfield: 11 years old.

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: Every summer, we went to Chicago.

Felix Armfield: Now whose car is that you're on?

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: That was—

Felix Armfield: The family or someone, a friend—

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: We didn't have a car. My father never learned to drive. I don't know why.

Felix Armfield: He was busy driving horses. (all laugh)

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: He was busy going to the racetrack, betting on those horses (laughs) he was busy doing that!

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: And mine was so busy working, he used to do mattresses on a Sunday in the yard, and we had to help pick the moss to make extra money, so that he could have that for us.

Felix Armfield: Really? He would bring his work home with him?

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: Yes.

Felix Armfield: Was your father a workaholic?

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: No, but I guess he knew that this was how it got to be when you have children, because he didn't believe in you being hungry. My mother used to say he didn't come in the house unless he's—when we would get—say, "Where are the children? Did the children eat?" People didn't have telephones, so if he had to work overtime, he had to know that evening before, so when he worked overtime, mama didn't have to wait to feed us until he came home, because eating at our house has always been that everybody sat down and ate. You know, like, everybody—

Felix Armfield: It was a family affair?

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: It was a family affair. Everybody sat to the table, ate, and then you told papa what you did in school.

Felix Armfield: What do you recall—What do either of you recall about the Depression years? What stands out in your mind most about the Depression decade? Did you feel the Depression? Did it bother you? Did it impact on your family lives? Your social lives?

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: We just kept on living after we finished school and getting a job. That's the thing.

Felix Armfield: Because you're finishing high school in 1936?

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: And couldn't get a job that some of these White girls who didn't have the education I had would get jobs far better than—Like salesgirls and things like that. They didn't give us jobs like that. Domestic—

Felix Armfield: You had just as much education as they did or sometimes more.

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: That's right.

Felix Armfield: Really? You came out of high school right at the height of the Depression.

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: I think so.

Felix Armfield: Yeah. [indistinct 00:32:11].

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: No, '36.

Felix Armfield: Yeah. 1936. The Depression was still going on.

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: But, you see, quite as this kept—the Black people were not affected too much about any of this, because we were not high rollers. We were not high livers. It didn't affect us too much.

Felix Armfield: Basically [indistinct 00:32:32].

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: Even after World War Two, or during World War Two, when they had the rationing—You wouldn't know about it.

Felix Armfield: No I don't remember but I've heard—

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: The rationing of shoes and the ration of meat, the ration cards. I was very young at the time too but I realized, I said, "This is not affecting us."

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: It didn't affect us either.

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: No.

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: Because we were still living—

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: We were not accustomed to having gobs and gobs of shoes and all like that, and

all of this—

Felix Armfield: You weren't accustomed to living that high anyway.

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: No, we weren't. We didn't have—and the Black people who were living— Sure. The way we had been. It affected the rich White people.

Felix Armfield: Okay. Okay.

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: More than anything.

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: The middle class Whites. You see?

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: They started killing themselves during the Depression. They were killing themselves because they couldn't—

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: Because they couldn't take it.

Felix Armfield: Now who is they? White men?

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: The White people.

Felix Armfield: They were killing themselves?

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: They jumped out of windows. When the stock market crashed in '29, they—

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: They killed themselves.

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: Because they couldn't take—They couldn't live without money and big cars and whatnot.

Felix Armfield: You're saying for Black people, they had been accustomed to living without all along.

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: —accustomed to living without. Yeah.

Felix Armfield: Yeah. Yeah. That's interesting.

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: We lived decent. You know? And whatnot. But we didn't have all of the luxuries we have now when we were coming up.

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: We have more now than what my parents had ever had.

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: Most of us—all of us—

Felix Armfield: Basically, your parents were concerned with making ends meet?

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: Yeah. That was about all they could do at that time would be to make ends meet. I'm telling you now, you put that little money on the table and everybody would come—

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: But they enjoyed their life and they were satisfied because I'll never forget during the civil rights time—You can relate to that, can't you?

Felix Armfield: Well, I do know about the civil rights movement.

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: You know about it. How old are you about?

Felix Armfield: No, I was born in 1962, so I was too young to have been a participant.

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: That was along in the '60s, the '50s and the '60s.

Felix Armfield: Yeah. The movement took place during the '60s and I was a little too young to realize what was going on around me.

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: You're in your thirties.

Felix Armfield: Yeah. I'm 31.

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: Yeah. He's too young. So was my daughter, and my son was young. [indistinct 00:34:47] had to be young.

Felix Armfield: Basically, my parents—

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: If they're 41, they know.

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: Yeah. They know—

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: —Daphne was here the other day and she's 41 and we were talking about some of those things. She said, "You forget, Mama. I remember that."

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: Yeah, they were big enough—

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: "I was part of that." And whatnot. But when they start sitting at the lunch counters, the Black young people, I'll never forget, my mama said, "Why they want to do that? We doing fine. Why would they want to start all of that?" My older son was at St. Aug.

Felix Armfield: That's St. Aug High School here?

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: Mm-hmm. The priest took them one evening after school to City Hall to picket. And they went to jail. My mother she called me on the telephone and, goodness, she would have thought I was two years old, "How could you allow that to happen? How could you allow that? How could you allow that boy to go to jail?" She just carried on so terrible about that. You know?

Felix Armfield: You're talking about that generation who the last thing they want to do was go to jail but those kids who were in that civil rights movement, going to jail meant a sense of pride.

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: They were the ones who did it. If it hadn't been for them—

Felix Armfield: Everybody wanted to go to jail.

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: —we would have still been—

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: I had a friend—

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: To be honest with you, I didn't have enough courage to go sit at anybody's counter. (Armfield laughs) We would have still been standing up in the back and still—

Felix Armfield: Really?

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: I give all the credit to the young people.

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: When I went back to Dillard, all of this was just starting and I sat at the counter when Walgreens was across from the graveyard. I sat, because all the youngsters were sitting at the time, from Dillard, and the professor who had gone with us, we all went down there. We sat in at the Walgreens but nothing really happened except that they didn't want to serve us. But we stayed there.

Felix Armfield: Which was enough by itself.

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: Yeah.

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: I never went to sit down, in fact I—

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: We had one White professor and a Black professor from Mississippi and he was something else. He was in philosophy and he was very good. He was a very intelligent man and he was determined that we go down there and we would sit in. He assured them that nobody would come to any harm. I did that then, because it was necessary. It was necessary.

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: When all this integration came about, I went to register my daughter at one of the all-White schools at that time, and they told me—I had no problems, because when they ask you where you live and I said 3535 Buchanan Street, they had no problems—See, they knew where all the Black schools were located and you were right near a public school, which was Nelson School. That's what they told me. I said, "I did not know that. I thought that I could send her to any school I chose to", because of the integration. You know? And that there was a test, a psychological test being given to these little Black children.

Felix Armfield: Really?

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: Oh, yes. They gave them a test to see if they were capable and I knew that my daughter was capable.

Felix Armfield: Yeah.

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: But they did not give me—They did not give her the test and quickly told me the school that she could go to.

Felix Armfield: Where was the first place that you found work, Miss Pajeaud?

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: My first job was at [indistinct 00:38:31] Hospital.

Felix Armfield: Okay. Is this after high school or after college?

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: It was quite an experience. No. It was a couple of years after—About three or four years after high school. Yeah. It was quite an experience. It was my first job. I had a friend who was working at the hospital. I'll never forget her. [indistinct 00:38:55]. She called me one day. She said, "Girl, come here tomorrow morning." She said, "This man—" I really forgot who the man was, what the name was, but he was a seasoned man and, at the time, we said he was an older man, because he was in his forties.

Felix Armfield: Oh my goodness.

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: He was a legal secretary. He was very well-qualified. Very well-qualified. He was the secretary to the business manager at the hospital and the business manager was a short, White Jew. 73 years old. Mr. Lippman. I'll never forget that as long as I live.

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: [indistinct 00:39:36].

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: Yeah. What I said, "But Hanna, I can't get that job. I don't know enough" because I went to business school at night and I said, "I can't get this job." She said, "Girl, come on, come on." I said, "Ooh, no. I'm afraid." I said, "I can't do that." She said—She kept persisting. She said, "Come on, I tell you, come on. The man is leaving." I got up enough courage and I went, but I was afraid to death.

Felix Armfield: Really?

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: Here he comes and, as I said, he was a little short, White man, a White Jew, a French Jew. He had an accent. He was 73 years old. I was talking myself out of the job. I kept telling him what I couldn't do. He said, "You have a brain, huh?" I said, "Yes. I have a brain." He said, "Well, if you have a brain, you should be able to learn." I said, "I don't know." He says, "Yes. You come here tomorrow morning." I went the next day, but he was hard. He was very hard.

Felix Armfield: You did get the job?

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: I got the job, because there must have been something about me that he liked. Maybe I looked innocent or something. I don't know. Maybe he felt sorry for me. But, anyhow, I got the job and, goodness, that man was very hard.

Felix Armfield: Really?

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: I'd write the letters, because the hospital had a lot of compensation cases. You know? The man, the longshoreman would get hurt on the job and they'd come to the hospital, and they'd have insurance and whatnot. I'll never forget it. I think Dr. Geismer must have been—I've never forgotten that name. G-E-I-S-M-E-R, because I used to—

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: G-E-I-S-M-E-R. Because he was [indistinct 00:41:34]'s doctor. Yes.

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: I wrote so many letters to Dr. Geismer. Every letter I'd write, he would tear it up. I said one day, "I'm going home to my mama. I'm going home. (laughs) I can't take that no more." But something kept telling me not to go home, to stay, to stay. You know, the times have changed, so we were paid twice a week. All the nurses, all the dieticians.

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: Twice a week?

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: Twice a month I mean. Twice a month.

Felix Armfield: Twice a month?

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: We were paid twice a month.

Felix Armfield: I did not catch that.

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: My salary was \$75 a month. I made \$37.50 every two weeks. That was my salary. The nurses made the same salary. The only people who were paid by check was Dr. Prokol, who was the superintendent. He had just come. He was new and I was new. Mr. Lippman was paid by check. Every two

weeks, Mr. Lippman would take his briefcase and go—The hospital is on [indistinct 00:43:02] Avenue, if you've ever passed there, you've seen it.

Felix Armfield: Yes.

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: It's a home now [indistinct 00:43:06], a nursing home now. Well, he would leave the hospital, go get the streetcar, and go to the bank on the streetcar with this briefcase in his hand. It would never happen now.

Felix Armfield: No.

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: He would go to the bank and get the money and then he'd come back and he'd come and get me from the office and we would go in the library. It had a big table, something like this, and we would count the money, everybody's salary, and put it in one of these big envelopes.

Felix Armfield: He paid everybody in cash?

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: Everybody in cash with that money. I said the only two persons who received checks was the superintendent, Dr. Prokol, and himself.

Felix Armfield: Really?

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: Paid by check but, otherwise—Do you know? I stayed there and I would run in the hospital.

Felix Armfield: Really?

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: Yes. I used to go—He could go get the money, give it to me, and I'd go in the library, by myself, and count all of this money out for all the people.

Felix Armfield: Really?

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: I'd go on the wards and tell the patients that they owed so much money and whatnot. In the meantime, I got married.

Felix Armfield: Okay.

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: Then I told him I was going to have to leave. Mr. Prokol came in the office and they wanted to send me to business school. They wanted me to take Mr. Lippman's job but while I was at the hospital, that's where the nursing school, Dillard's nursing school was developed.

Felix Armfield: Okay. Now when was this?

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: This should have been around '40. 1940 or something like that. I think it was.

Felix Armfield: Now this Flint Gooderich Hospital—

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: They were housed at Flint Gooderich Hospital.

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: [indistinct 00:44:58].

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: It was called Flint Gooderich Hospital of Dillard University. It was connected with Dillard.

Felix Armfield: It was connected with Dillard University.

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: With Dillard.

Felix Armfield: Okay.

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: That's history within itself.

Felix Armfield: It is. It was being run by this little Jewish White man?

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: This Jewish White man, Mr. Lippman. He was the business manager and I was his secretary.

Felix Armfield: Mr. Lippman, that's spelled L-I-P-M-O-N?

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: L-I-P-P-M-A-N. L-I-P-P-M-A-N. He was a French Jew. He was hard as nails.

Felix Armfield: But, obviously, you got through to him.

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: Oh, I got through [indistinct 00:45:33].

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: Do you remember when they built Flint Gooderich? When we went up there to that Sunday when they had the dedication?

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: [indistinct 00:45:42].

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: Well, I did. I remember that. [indistinct 00:45:45]. You had to wear little white dresses.

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: Oh, yeah. What was this woman's name? The first director of nursing at Dillard.

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: Was that Miss Lyons Baker?

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: No. No. Lyons Baker was a nurse.

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: I don't know. I know she taught at Dillard.

Felix Armfield: Now was this a Black woman who directed the nursing program at Dillard?

Jessie Lawrence Mouton: Yeah.

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: Yeah. Yeah.

Felix Armfield: Okay.

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: Oh my goodness. Did you know Dr. Biles?

Felix Armfield: No, ma'am. I don't.

Marjorie Belcina Pajeaud: You don't know? He should know something about that. I'm talking about the young Dr. Biles now. [indistinct 00:46:25]. His father was a doctor and he was very prominent in the—