

Kisha Turner: Can we begin by you just stating your full name and when you were born?

Toledo Knuckles Littlejohn: My full name, that's not including my maiden name and everything?

Kisha Turner: Your maiden name too, please.

Toledo Knuckles Littlejohn: Toledo, like the city, and B., Beatrice, and my maiden name is Knuckles, and now I married a Littlejohn, Toledo Knuckles Littlejohn.

Kisha Turner: And what year were you born?

Toledo Knuckles Littlejohn: March 8th, 1928.

Kisha Turner: Where were you born?

Toledo Knuckles Littlejohn: In Gaffney, South Carolina, Cherokee County they call it.

Kisha Turner: And what kind of community? Were people primarily agricultural workers?

Toledo Knuckles Littlejohn: Yeah, they all were agriculture. They did a lot of farming with the cotton, wheat, and that's about the biggest thing. Some of them did have, in the spring, they had a lot of cucumbers they would grow when you pick— Oh peaches, I forgot about that. Peaches, can't forget that.

Kisha Turner: And what kind of work did your parents do?

Toledo Knuckles Littlejohn: They farm. They were sharecroppers mostly, and they raised a lot of cotton, and that was corn and all of that had to be gathered and shared with the people that own the land. Like on half us, they had to share half of it, whatever they got. If they had two bales of cotton, we'd keep one and they would take one and stuff. That's just an example, and the same way with the corn and stuff like that.

Kisha Turner: Now, did you participate, did you work also on the farm with your family?

Toledo Knuckles Littlejohn: Yes, when I got older, I did, what little I did. They told me I never did do too much, because I was always slow.

Kisha Turner: Couldn't keep up.

Toledo Knuckles Littlejohn: No. But yes, I participated. I had to be out there whether I did that much or not

with my parents, because we all did. There was eight of us in the family, and we all had to go out when we got large enough and help work, [indistinct 00:03:01] the cotton and picking it. Then during the break in the season when we were waiting for it to get large enough, mature enough, then we had other little things we did, like picking peaches or picking cucumbers to help out with the income.

Kisha Turner: Did your mother or father have a plot, like a garden?

Toledo Knuckles Littlejohn: Oh yeah.

Kisha Turner: Just for your family?

Toledo Knuckles Littlejohn: Oh yeah, you had to do that, otherwise you wouldn't have any food to eat.

Kisha Turner: So that's what you all ate pretty much?

Toledo Knuckles Littlejohn: Yeah. You just about had to raise most of your food, your chicken, all of your meat, just about, because you really didn't have that much money to go out and buy. Plus, you didn't really have that much food in the store like they have now at Market Center. So everything just about was fresh.

Kisha Turner: Did all eight of you live together?

Toledo Knuckles Littlejohn: Yes. Well, for a while I lived with my grandmother. My grandmother raised me. Then I would go back and forth to live with the—

Kisha Turner: Oh, you would go back and forth?

Toledo Knuckles Littlejohn: Yeah, back and forth to live with my, because I was the oldest one, so they told me I was four. You know how you go visit your grandparents, and then you decide you want to stay and you come back and stay with them.

Kisha Turner: But you just didn't do it?

Toledo Knuckles Littlejohn: Yeah, I get lonely. I'd go back and stay with them a while and come back and stay with my grandparents. But most of the time, she just about, I guess you could say my grandparent raised me.

Kisha Turner: And did your grandparents live nearby?

Toledo Knuckles Littlejohn: Yeah, [indistinct 00:05:09].

Kisha Turner: Also in what plants are good for the Midwest in the summer and require very little water?

Toledo Knuckles Littlejohn: It was in walking distance.

Kisha Turner: Did they also share crop or?

Toledo Knuckles Littlejohn: Mm—hmm.

Kisha Turner: On the same land?

Toledo Knuckles Littlejohn: No, they had a different, I guess what you would say, a different person that owned the farm maybe. They lived on the, the same person didn't own all that land, so they lived on one person's farm, and my mother and father lived on another person. Then we lived in the same area, got together in the same area, and then they did live on with the same people, the farm or with the same farmer. My grandparent and my mother and father did.

Kisha Turner: Do you remember that farmer's name, that landowner's name?

Toledo Knuckles Littlejohn: Let me see, when it was separated. Let's see, seemed like my mother and father lived with, I believe their farmer's name was called, I'm not sure how it's spelled, Sosong, Sosong. I'm not sure what his name was. I'm not sure how that's spelled either, Sosong. But they lived there, and then my grandmother and father was living with Blantons. They're called Blantons at that time.

Kisha Turner: That's right.

Toledo Knuckles Littlejohn: But you were just about doing the same thing with all the farmers in that area, because that's about all that was done there in Cherokee County was cotton and peaches.

Kisha Turner: As your grandparents grew older, did they still share crop or how did they—

Toledo Knuckles Littlejohn: Yeah, until they got where they couldn't and then they moved away and they lived on their Social Security or welfare. Well, then they didn't get that much Social Security because most of the White people didn't take out Social Security on them. So when they got where they couldn't farm, got older, then I went to school and I became a teacher. So they lived with me at that time when I was older.

Kisha Turner: Good.

Toledo Knuckles Littlejohn: I just started to say, and as they were older and I had gotten grown, so to speak, or then we moved into the city in what little city it was. But they were too older for them, and I was teaching at Granard High School.

Kisha Turner: Let's back up just a little. When you were young and you'd visit your grandparents, did they ever tell you about how Gaffney was when they were younger, or wherever they grew up? What life was like?

Toledo Knuckles Littlejohn: I used to hear my grandfather say that during the time when he was childlike, it wasn't called Cherokee County then, he knew it as Union County. Then as the time went on, then the county was, it was Union and York County, and then they formed Cherokee County. I'm not sure how they did that, but I guess he knew or whatever. But at that time, it wasn't. Early, it was called Union County.

Toledo Knuckles Littlejohn: Then I guess they deeded off part of their land and called it Cherokee County or something. That was back in the beginning, in the 19— Back in the 1900s. I'm not sure what year and what part of the 1900 it was when he was in a Cherokee County, because I think my grandmother was born in Union County. My grandfather was born in York County and then it became one in Cherokee County, I guess they call it. So I can't help you too much with that.

Kisha Turner: No problem. How about your parents? Were they also from Gaffney?

Toledo Knuckles Littlejohn: Yes, uh—huh.

Kisha Turner: And did they talk about it?

Toledo Knuckles Littlejohn: Oh well, when they came along, it was all Cherokee County then. It wasn't too much— It wasn't York County or Union County at that time. It had become, because my mother was born in 1917, I think. Or 1918, somewhere along in there. But it had become a county, Cherokee County, then when she was born.

Kisha Turner: She was born in 1917? Or 19, I'm sorry?

Toledo Knuckles Littlejohn: I think it was, I believe it was 1917, somewhere back. It was in the teens. I have it here somewhere, but I think it was 1917 she was born.

Kisha Turner: Did they ever talk about social relations? Just the atmosphere or how things have changed from when they were children to when you were a young child?

Toledo Knuckles Littlejohn: Yeah. Well, when I was a young child, everything was segregated. You had your own school, you had your own church, like you said, church school, and it was the same way when she went to school. I think she started the school in [indistinct 00:12:23] Ville. Seemed like I heard it say she started school in [indistinct 00:12:33] Ville and that was a church, and then they had the school there.

Toledo Knuckles Littlejohn: It was just a one room school, and everybody was in that same one room school, and then from there, she went to Wesley Chapel. That was on one room school. I think she got exposed to, I believe, seventh grade or eighth grade somewhere. She didn't go to high school.

Kisha Turner: How about your education?

Toledo Knuckles Littlejohn: Well, I started my education at a church school. It was called Mount Sinai.

Kisha Turner: Mount Sinai.

Toledo Knuckles Littlejohn: I went to school there. Then I think until I was in the third grade, and we moved and I went to another school called Shady Grove, and we moved back to that area, where there's a different farmer, a different plantation, I guess you would say, and that's where I fit. I moved back and started school back at Mount Sinai. I think I started in the fifth grade there, because I went to Shady Grove and we stayed there about two years and moved back to— You just went back and forth, you know how that— No, you don't know, but I mean in—

Kisha Turner: Why did you go back and forth?

Toledo Knuckles Littlejohn: Well, because we were moving from one place to the other, and then you were too far to go to the same school. See, when I first started the school, we lived, what was his name?

Toledo Knuckles Littlejohn: I can't recall the man's name, and then we moved from his place. I stayed there til third grade. Then we moved from his place to another farmer, which was too far for me to go. I was closer to Shady Grove School and I think we stayed there like a couple years or so, and then we moved back to the Mount Sinai area. But it was a different farmer. We was on a different farmer's place, so Cleary was his name, Cleary farm. Then we moved back to the Blanton's plantation. That's where I finished school and I went to school at Granard High School, which was segregated at that time.

Kisha Turner: Briefly, before we talk about Granard, could you explain what was the impetus for your parents moving from one farm? Was it to work?

Toledo Knuckles Littlejohn: Because, well, in a lot of areas, a lot of times they would fall out with the band, and couldn't get along. Either like I said, the people had to share, and then sometime the man, the plantation owner, it wasn't called a plantation at that time because he didn't have that much.

Toledo Knuckles Littlejohn: But anyways, they would fall out, because of the way the crops was divided, because sometime the White men would take more than he was supposed to and they didn't get along. So they moved from one area to the other, different farmers. And that was the reason for moving around. But we didn't really move that much. A lot of people moved like every year, but we didn't really move that often, because I guess either my father decided that he would just take what the man said or whatever, but some of them didn't.

Toledo Knuckles Littlejohn: Well, they were pretty good people, but some of the plantation owners were terrible. You couldn't really get along with them that well. I can remember three different people's farm that we were on during my time, and after I started to school, things started getting a little better then.

Kisha Turner: For your parents?

Toledo Knuckles Littlejohn: Yeah.

Kisha Turner: And they were still at the Blanton's?

Toledo Knuckles Littlejohn: Yeah, they were with the Blantons, and then we stayed there and then it's another man came in, his name was Weaver. He bought the Blanton's farm, and so that give us a chance. We just still lived in the same area, because he was buying out the plantation. He had peaches and all of that so we could make extra money picking peaches and working like that along with cotton. So that gave you a little more income.

Toledo Knuckles Littlejohn: You just didn't have to depend on one farm to make it, so then that's when things got a little better. So I went to high school. We didn't have a bus or anything, a carriage, we had to walk about seven or eight miles to school. Then when I started the high school, we had to find out our own way to high school, which mean it was about four different people, and one of the guys could drive. He used his father's car to, and we had to go back and forth with them. We paid him and we went back and forth to school like that in the car, because we didn't have buses at that time. Well, the White people had them, but the Blacks didn't, they couldn't ride them.

Kisha Turner: Where was your school and what was it? Oh you said Bernard, where was your school? What town was the high school?

Toledo Knuckles Littlejohn: It was in Gaffney.

Kisha Turner: It was also in Gaffney?

Toledo Knuckles Littlejohn: Yeah, they just had one high school.

Kisha Turner: Now, was this a state supported school or do you know?

Toledo Knuckles Littlejohn: Yeah, I think it was county or state, whichever. They supported because we weren't able to pay or anything. I think we had to try to get our books, buy the books. But it was supported by taxes as far as I know it was. Then I finished there and I went to school in Claflin University in Orangeburg.

Kisha Turner: Do you know Miss Aiwa Blue? Wait a minute. Hold on, I can't put her in here. Before we talk about Claflin, what do you remember about Granard, the structure, the teachers, the other students, anything, your subjects?

Toledo Knuckles Littlejohn: Well, Granard was a high school and elementary school, all combined at the time when I started there, elementary, junior high and high school. When I first started it went to the 11th grade, and then a year after that it and went to the 12th grade, but all the teachers and everything was real nice, principal.

Toledo Knuckles Littlejohn: I wish I could have gone to elementary school there, but I wasn't able to go to elementary school. So I mean, not there. But we started in the eighth grade at that time in high school was eighth grade, and we had, although foreign language only thing was French at that time. You had your regular subjects, math and algebra, English and Miss Deedee Simpson, who was from Greenville, South Carolina, was my English teacher.

Toledo Knuckles Littlejohn: She was very good, and I think she did most of the teaching of English. You nobody else. They had some others. But when you got up in the grades, like 10th grade, you had to go through her before you could get out of school. All as a whole, we changed classes, and as a whole, all the teachers were very good I thought. Most of them— All of them had their degree, because at the time then you had to have a degree to teach the high school. Now, you could teach elementary school or something without a degree, but at that time you had to have a degree.

Kisha Turner: What kind of—

Toledo Knuckles Littlejohn: BS or maybe you weren't required to have a master's or anything. But some of them did. I think Miss Simpson had a masters. She went to school in South Carolina State in Orangeburg, and that's about it, as far as the teachers go. Basketball, we had a good basketball team. However, I didn't play. But we had that and everything was still segregated. You had your own, if you went out to places, you had to go to your own Black place, whatever they had. If you went to a doctor or dentist or whatever, you had to go in your section what says Black, or at that time it said Negro and you had to use your own room to sit in.

Toledo Knuckles Littlejohn: You weren't all sitting together. So it was still segregated at that time. And you had to drink your Black water, your White water, White water and Black water. You had your fountains, just call it Black.

Kisha Turner: Did your school sponsor dances?

Toledo Knuckles Littlejohn: Sure did. I guess we had about three dances a year, and you had your junior—senior prom and it was hell at your high school. You didn't have any place else to take it at that time. Couldn't go to a hotel or anything because you weren't allowed, and the other places weren't really large enough. But I don't think anybody wanted to go anyplace else. They did it in, they fixed up the gym, and we did have a cafeteria. So it was a nice school. Well, I didn't know any better. I thought it was nice, and then they outgrew it so they built a bigger school.

Kisha Turner: What schools did your teams play?

Toledo Knuckles Littlejohn: Spartenburg, I forgot. I don't remember their name. Spartenburg and Union, but they had different names.

Kisha Turner: How large an area did your school serve? How far away did people come to—

Toledo Knuckles Littlejohn: Just that school?

Kisha Turner: To Granard?

Toledo Knuckles Littlejohn: It was in just the Cherokee County, but the county wasn't really that large then but they had expanded. It has expanded now, and they had another little city they called Blacksburg. At that time they had to come to— They didn't have a high school in Blacksburg. I think they had to use the school at Granard. That was during that time, and then—

Toledo Knuckles Littlejohn: Let me see, my husband was in the World War. He was in World War II, and then when they came out from service, then they had classes. They had classes for all of the soldiers and sailors that, because they didn't finish their high school at that time, because back then they were drafted. When they came out of service, they could come back and go to school on the GI loan, they called it. A lot of them would go in the afternoon and then a lot of them would go just a regular school, regular time, that was during World War II at the end.

Kisha Turner: Other than the dances at school, what other types of things do young people do or older people for recreation?

Toledo Knuckles Littlejohn: Nothing.

Kisha Turner: Nothing.

Toledo Knuckles Littlejohn: Well, unless the church would get together on the 4th of July, and they'd have a barbecue or a ballgame or something, the different churches would come together. Or a church would have a big barbecue and they would sell barbecue or whatever, and then this church had a ball team and they would play with another church like that. That's about the only recreation you had of what the church sponsored it, so to speak, to get similar to what it is now.

Toledo Knuckles Littlejohn: You didn't have that much recreations. Like I said, some of the different people that owned the different clubs or restaurants, or, well, they call them cafes back at that time, it's like it is now. You weren't allowed to go in because it was kind of rough. So if they had something there, most of the younger people couldn't attend unless you slipped in there. Then if you did, you better make sure they didn't start fighting or what have you, because they would just, like they are now, they still fight and carry on. But they didn't do as much shooting as they do now, and drugs wasn't plentiful back then like it is now. But they did have a lot of alcohol because a lot of people made it White liquor, they call it White whiskey. So they would usually get that.

Toledo Knuckles Littlejohn: You had to have your own entertainment, and a lot of times the church would have entertainments and things for you like they do now. In different schools sometime, I mean not

different school, well, high school or elementary school sometime would have a little, it wasn't dances or anything. They'd have some little boxed suppers or something they'd have and raise money to buy different little things for the children, because wasn't anything furnished like it is now. Your paper and pencil and all that stuff, you had to buy that, and then a lot of the people or children, just like they are now, were in worse shape than others. Sometimes the different parents would get together and have different little things to raise money at school to help out, and we didn't have hot lunches like they do now.

Toledo Knuckles Littlejohn: That was about way things are, because when I was in high school, we didn't have hot lunches. They would sell different little stuffs in the cafeteria, but you had to have the money to buy your sodas or cinnamon buns. You don't know about those, do you? They had big sodas and big cinnamon buns and sometime different classes would make sandwiches and sell, because they was trying to raise money for a project and that was about it. They didn't have all the food and stuff they have now.

Kisha Turner: Living on the farm, I guess the Blantons, how many other families, sharecropper families lived?

Toledo Knuckles Littlejohn: Oh, they had a good many. They had, well, it wasn't a lot. They had about six or seven other sharecroppers' families there living on the farm.

Kisha Turner: And what was your family's relationship with these other families?

Toledo Knuckles Littlejohn: It was good. You would always meet up with them at sometime different times, and say you get caught up on your farm. I mean, I just say picking cotton, you get caught up with picking cotton and some of the other families needed help or could use you, then you would go and help them. However, you did get paid, or the man, the owner of the farm, would pay you to pick the cotton for them.

Toledo Knuckles Littlejohn: That way they could keep up when it wouldn't get so far behind. They paid you by the pound you pick, it wasn't nothing much, and you would go back and forth like that and help out, so to speak and get caught up, and you get to know some of them. You didn't get to know all of them, and all of them wasn't Black. They had some Whites out there too.

Kisha Turner: Really?

Toledo Knuckles Littlejohn: Mm—hmm.

Kisha Turner: Were they treated any differently?

Toledo Knuckles Littlejohn: Oh well, I don't really know. Most likely they were, but we didn't know that, at least I didn't know how they were treated. But it was more Black families than Whites.

Toledo Knuckles Littlejohn: So the houses weren't all that good, naturally. You didn't know what air condition was. You had your fireplace or heater, which you had to buy your own heater and stuff like that if

you wanted a heater. Most of the time you just had a four room house, two bedrooms and your living room and kitchen. If you had a lot of children, you had to use a living room for a bed. Most likely the parents were sleeping in the living area.

Toledo Knuckles Littlejohn: Some of the houses when we first start sharecropping like that, a lot of the houses, they didn't have electric lights, electricity, and you had outdoor bathrooms and you didn't have electric lights. So you had to use your oil lamps. I guess that must be my husband.

Kisha Turner: You were talking about oil lamps.

Toledo Knuckles Littlejohn: Kerosene.

Kisha Turner: Kerosene.

Toledo Knuckles Littlejohn: That's what you had. Just like when your lights go out now, well, some people use candles now, but you had kerosene lamps all the time back then, wood stoves, no electric stoves.

Kisha Turner: Did you travel much or—

Toledo Knuckles Littlejohn: Mm—mm.

Kisha Turner: No.

Toledo Knuckles Littlejohn: Maybe during the summer when I was in college during the summer, probably I would come out and go someplace and stay with my relatives. But no travel, what you have to travel on? You didn't have no money to travel. You did good if you—

Kisha Turner: So since we're talking about your trips in summer when you were in college, what was Orangeburg like?

Toledo Knuckles Littlejohn: Oh Lord, nothing like it is now. It was still during segregation, and we had but one dormitory. We just had one dormitory at that time. Now, I think they have more than one, and they had about four other buildings, about four other buildings that they were using for classrooms at that time, science and English and all of that. They had a big gym and a big chapel.

Toledo Knuckles Littlejohn: That's pretty nice. I hadn't never been away from home to stay for any length of time. So it took me a good while to get used to being away and getting used to the food they had, which is terrible. You all said terrible food now, but it sure enough was terrible back then. But you had to eat it because you couldn't go out to eat.

Toledo Knuckles Littlejohn: When you did go out, you had to be chaperoned. You couldn't go like you do now, just wherever you want to go or wherever, and you had to be chaperoned. A lot of students lived off

campus with different people that board, was boarding. They could board with different people, because a lot of schools knew families that would use boarders because no hotels or anything like that, it wasn't available.

Toledo Knuckles Littlejohn: But the dormitory was pretty good size. I think it was about, what, three or four stories high, and I don't remember how many students lived in the dormitory, probably about 200 or 250 or something like that. Then a lot of the people lived out in the city, and then some had relatives that they could come and live with and some just lived in the area, and that's where they could come from [indistinct 00:40:00] to school.

Kisha Turner: Where both male and female students chaperone when they left?

Toledo Knuckles Littlejohn: Oh no. Well, no. The male, I think the first, the freshmans, I think they had chaperones, the men. But yes, you had to be chaperoned, even to seniors. Some of them, they had to be chaperoned, but they did give them more freedom. They would sometime use the senior students to chaperone the first freshman and sophomore classes like that. You had to go in a group, at least five or six in a group, and you had a chaperone for your group.

Toledo Knuckles Littlejohn: You had certain time to be in the dorm when you went out. Even if you went to one of the dances or whatever they had on campus, you had to be back, because they locked the doors around 12, and you had to be back in unless you had somebody down there to open the door for you, to slip in. So that's the way it was then, and I think you could leave campus twice a week. That was about it, because a lot of children slipped off of campus.

Toledo Knuckles Littlejohn: A lot of them got caught. But you don't always keep up with all of them, because some of the children going to do what they want to do regardless. But that's the way it was at that time. You had to be chaperoned. Even if you went shopping, you had to have a chaperone to go shopping to buy whatever it is. If you wanted to buy a pair of pantyhose or whatever, you couldn't go by yourself, you always had to go. When you went to a dance, you had to be chaperoned to a dance, and that was right there on campus. So they really had some strict rules.

Kisha Turner: How about dating?

Toledo Knuckles Littlejohn: Oh yeah, you could date.

Kisha Turner: What age was pretty much there?

Toledo Knuckles Littlejohn: Oh, when you got to college, you could date back then, because most of the time you were at least 17 or 18 at that time when you went to college. You didn't go as young as the children do now. You were on an average of 17, and so you were allowed to date, but you had certain hours that you could date and certain days.

Toledo Knuckles Littlejohn: But now out, when you were outside, before you came in, in between your classes or going from the dining room or something like that, you could always do that. But then regular Sundays you had dating hours like maybe two to three hours dating and weekends and things like that. If you went to a game or something, you had a chance to see your friend or whatever.

Toledo Knuckles Littlejohn: If you didn't have a friend on school and you went off campus, you had to get permission for them to come to see you whenever they came in town. Like you said, you had a friend or your family or whoever was coming, you had to let your matron in the dormitory know that you were expecting company or something like that.

Toledo Knuckles Littlejohn: Sometime they would, if they spent the night, they had a room or something, I think, downstairs that maybe your parents or something could stay if they came to spend the night. So that's about it.

Kisha Turner: Do you remember organizations that were active on campus or even outside of campus, civil rights organizations maybe, or clubs or fraternities?

Toledo Knuckles Littlejohn: Yeah, they had the different fraternities they have now and sororities. And the only thing that I remember at that time was NAACP. That was the only one. They might have had some others but I wasn't familiar with. They have the different sororities and fraternities that they have now. Maybe not. Maybe they didn't have all of the newer ones that have been organized in recent years.

Toledo Knuckles Littlejohn: But all the old ones, like the Alphas and Kappas, I mean, the Deltas and stuff like that, AKAs, all of those were available at that time. Well, because everybody was trying to make those, because that's about the only leeway you had of trying to have a little more freedom. They did initiation, but I don't think they did it quite as bad as the children are now. Especially the guys, if so, I never did hear about it there.