

Andrea Smith: What kind of service were—what were available? You were saying, a White doctor—?

Ruby Osborn: That you couldn't? I think Black people had a tendency basically to go to Black doctors because of what everybody did more than they did to White doctors during that time. But there were no Black dermatologists, so you didn't have a choice. People tickle me. It has always amazed me that a lot of people think that there is no difference in people. There are lots of differences in people. Hair isn't just hair. There are all kinds of hair textures. There are all types of skins. And I think you have to have some knowledge of a particular group of people, or studied that skin type to be able to treat something. I think that's just common knowledge as far as I'm concerned. So when people say, "Oh, you can go to anybody," that's not true because this man, he treated me with tetracycline, which is a good medication for skin problems, but I have damaged skin today.

Ruby Osborn: Now why that is, I'm not really sure because he treated me with tetracycline and that is a medication that you take to skin problems. But my skin didn't get better. It got worse. I just think he didn't know how to treat me, that's all. He really hadn't studied Black skin. Now we have Black dermatologists who studied Black skin and who studied White skin. So they can do both. And we probably have Black dermatologists now who studied Black skin also, but at that time it wasn't important. It didn't seem after thought that is of course, I never thought of that then. But now that I think back, it probably was not important.

Ruby Osborn: It's just the way it was. Obviously you didn't go in certain restaurants. There were bathrooms. I vaguely remember that. I remember the bus station in particular was down on the corner Main Street and Dillard Street and they had a bathroom and it said C-O-L-O-R-E-D on the bathroom and that's where you had to go to the bathroom. We would take the bus sometime and go down in the country where her father and her brothers and sisters used to own land and they still lived there then. And we would go to visit them. That was in Maxton, North Carolina.

Ruby Osborn: And we would take the bus and we would stay a couple months in the summertime visiting all her different sisters and brothers and their children and what have you. And I remember there was a sign and I remember asking, "What does that mean?" And my mother simply said, "That's where you go to the bathroom". She never explained that the Whites went to a different bathroom. I learned that on my own.

Andrea Smith: I'm sure you learned a lot of—

Ruby Osborn: She never told me that. It's kind of like when I first got my period, my mother said, who was a very intelligent woman, went to school, graduated from a very prominent school who said to me, "Now you can't let boys touch you now that you have a period." It should have been the opposite. Don't let them touch you when you're not having your period. But, that was like, don't let them touch you, period. You have

to be married and an adult personally before you do anything like that. Especially when you have a period, it's ugly and it's nasty and it's dirty. So she sheltered and kept us from a lot of things I suppose.

Ruby Osborn: And my mother didn't like conflict. She loved easygoing, just a normal smooth life. She didn't like arguing and fighting and fussing. She was a very sweet person. She hated that kind of stuff and she never tried to initiate it or anything like that.

Andrea Smith: Right. And I'm just trying to describe, what was your neighborhood, where you lived right on the edge of another White neighborhood and that you had a friend—?

Ruby Osborn: Virginia.

Andrea Smith: And that your parents raised you so that race was never—

Ruby Osborn: An issue.

Andrea Smith: An issue. Was it the same with her family? In their response to you?

Ruby Osborn: They never treated me any differently. So I'm assuming that it was that way because they never did anything to hurt me or to make me feel badly. They never not allowed her to play with me. We always played together. Their parents ran a store. They own the store right there on the corner of, what is this? That's not Sparella, that's Commonwealth, Sparella, and I can't even think of the name of that street, that third street. But anyway, my street was the third street down from where the store was and where the store was, is now a house there.

Ruby Osborn: But her mother never treated me differently. Never ever. But then it could be that I didn't know what different was. She never hurt my feelings. She never did anything to hurt me. I never remember anything. Not even a look or nothing. I don't remember any of that kind of stuff. Virginia and I just loved each other to death. And so we played together. She went to a different school. She would get out of school. I would get out of school and then we'd meet him play or she'd come down the street to our house or her mother would walk her down or bring her down or whatever. She would have to do her homework too. But then we would play because there was nothing else for her to do. Once she got off the bus at the store where her parents owned the store, the mother and father would be at the store. I often times wonder where she is and what she's doing because I have no idea.

Andrea Smith: Did you stay friends past childhood?

Ruby Osborn: No, because they moved. They moved and their store ended. And I don't know where she went after that.

Andrea Smith: And did it seem natural or normal that she went to one school and you went to another?

Ruby Osborn: Very much so. Very much so. Now I knew she was White and she knew I was Black, or different. And that's what everybody did. Nobody went to the same school. So how could you think any differently? I mean—

Andrea Smith: Never—

Ruby Osborn: Until the '68. You knew there was some difference, but what it was, you didn't really know.

Andrea Smith: As a kid, were you always aware of race or were you aware of difference?

Ruby Osborn: I think that I was always aware that there were different kinds of people. There were Black people who were Black Black. There were Black people who were brown. There were Black people who were light brown. There were Black people who were real light. And Black people let you know that. Black people caused a lot of that because Black people were very prejudice. They still are to this day. I have a girlfriend who almost always talks about how her father looks like a real White man. Her father's brother, they all looked White. They were whiter than you. Much whiter than you. I have a grandson who's blonde and blue eyes, okay? Right this day. But this girl's mother was Black, blacker than I am. And her father looked like a White man.

Ruby Osborn: So all her children were all different shades of colors. My brother married a woman like that. And so those kinds of people were very snotty and color was a big deal. And Black men, Black, dark skinned men always chose these women that were that color, for whatever reason. And there was a joke and a saying long time ago where they would say, "You have to be careful what your children come out looking like. So you don't marry no boy, no man blacker than you. You'll get these Black children." People used to say things like that. I remember hearing people say things like that, or I've heard people tell me that they've heard people say that. To me, that was very, very sad.

Ruby Osborn: I told my girlfriend, I said, "You are very, very sad. We've been friends since childhood," when she talks about color and how light and dark and men like women this color. And I say, "You know, you are very sad. That doesn't mean shit to me." I say that to her all the time. Every time we get into that, she'll say something about color and I'll say, "You know, you are so pitiful." And she'll say, "Ruby, that's the way it was." And I say, "I don't care how it was. It's sickening and it makes me sick. And you are sick for telling me that stuff. Who gives a damn what color you are? Doesn't mean nothing." Just had that conversation, almost fighting about it verbally because I get sick to my stomach when she tells me that crap.

Andrea Smith: Does it come from the way that she felt not only about Blacks, but about Whites?

Ruby Osborn: That she feels that way? Yeah, because years ago, White men used to go down to farms and stuff and have sex with these women. That's how we got all these different races of children, different complexions. Black people have different complexions because of who intercepted into that race. Who sexually went into the Black neighborhoods or Black barns or Black whatever and had sex and caused all these different colors of children. White people weren't just came out with all these different colors. Look at

the people in Africa who are really Africans. Do you see in different shades? They're all about the same. Think about it.

Ruby Osborn: But we've had a lot of interracial mixing in America, in this part of the world. And so you got all these shades of people. It's wonderful. It's just that the hatred is so sad. The mixing is wonderful, but the prejudice and the hatred is very sad. That's the part that I just feel is very, very sad. I love to see people of different colors. It's great. But all these—they call themselves rednecks or whatever they call themselves.

Ruby Osborn: Whoops! Excuse me [indistinct 00:13:52]. That just fell off my—[indistinct 00:13:52].

Ruby Osborn: And I don't want to be one of those people. I don't want to feel that way about anybody. And I probably never will 'cause I ain't taught that way. So I probably never would have experienced that. Thank God. Am I still on? Oh, okay.

Ruby Osborn: I wondered who, that person was behind [indistinct 0:00:14:26]. That old lady [indistinct 00:14:28] "I'm just a plain old redneck." And I was hoping it would be her behind me because I wanted her to hear what I had to say, because I think people say things, they ought to be careful what they say. And they ought to be careful how you act, you never know how it affects the next person or the person sat beside you. [indistinct 00:14:52]. It may be true, but I don't think it's grand. So anything else? If you need to see me again, you can let me know. Okay. You are very welcome.