

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: When I look at some of the shows, and what's the one that—In Living Color, I think—

Edwin Thorpe: [indistinct 00:00:11].

Stacey Scales: Right.

Edwin Thorpe: Today.

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: Yeah, today. How do you like that show?

Stacey Scales: I have to be quite honest. I don't watch very much television.

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: Oh, I see. You don't have time to watch TV.

Edwin Thorpe: Well, you have to have mixed emotions even today with things like that because we—

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: Well, I think what he's trying to do is to—I mean, in a subtle way, he's trying to poke fun at these character types.

Stacey Scales: Right.

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: And to show them for what they are, but in the meantime, how many people are going to look at it that way are just going to see it as another stereotype?

Stacey Scales: So most people, you think, weren't bothered by those images? Do you think most people were bothered by the—

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: No.

Stacey Scales: —stereotypical watermelon eating?

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: No. No. I don't think—

Edwin Thorpe: Not a long time ago.

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: Yeah. I don't think—

Edwin Thorpe: We are now are more conscious—

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: Yes.

Edwin Thorpe: —of these things.

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: Thank goodness for those who made us conscious.

Edwin Thorpe: And we had to sort of live in this system. I mean, you couldn't get your neck cut off. That's what I mean.

Stacey Scales: Right.

Edwin Thorpe: You had to learn how to—And this is a joke on a White policeman, he said, he stopped—And I'm going to use the word to show you how funny it was. This is an ignorant White policeman, stopped somewhere. And this was during the—

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: It was you. By yourself.

Edwin Thorpe: No, I know. I was with some others.

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: [indistinct 00:01:31]

Edwin Thorpe: And so he said, "Don't you exist, nigger, don't you exist." And he didn't even know what the word resist was, he called them "exist."

Stacey Scales: Exist.

Edwin Thorpe: "Don't you exist, nigger." It was so funny.

Stacey Scales: Exist.

Edwin Thorpe: "Don't you exist." Because a lot of the White policemen were ignorant. Ignorant.

Stacey Scales: Right.

Edwin Thorpe: I mean, [indistinct 00:01:49] but not educated.

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: And about that—

Stacey Scales: Were there any Black policemen around?

Edwin Thorpe: They just had came on the scene in the '50s.

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: Yeah.

Edwin Thorpe: Wouldn't you say?

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: Yeah. Right.

Edwin Thorpe: And that was the problem. That's the problem throughout the South, all the policemen were White. [indistinct 00:02:04] whatever, all the police—

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: All the judges.

Edwin Thorpe: Yeah. Everybody—

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: Everybody who was in—

Edwin Thorpe: And that was really one of the major problems of this whole thing.

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: And it continues to be a problem.

Edwin Thorpe: Yeah, the people who were running things, controlling things, disciplining their people, all White. But in the beginning—

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: And generally came from a background of ignorance and prejudice. And therefore could not even see that their actions were—

Edwin Thorpe: Ridiculous.

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: Or were bad.

Stacey Scales: Did you all ever run into any racism while working some of your earlier jobs prior to teaching?

Edwin Thorpe: Well, I started off teaching, so did she.

Stacey Scales: Oh, you both started off-

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: No, you didn't.

Stacey Scales: —teaching?

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: When you went to New York during the summers to work.

Edwin Thorpe: Oh yeah. Well that, all right. But—

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: When he was a—

Edwin Thorpe: —of course, you know, she—

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: But did you?

Edwin Thorpe: [indistinct 00:03:05] not much to run into.

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: Because he—

Edwin Thorpe: Dining hall waiter.

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: Because he worked in New York, so—

Edwin Thorpe: In New York. You didn't run into any—This is the one place in the world. New York City.
[indistinct 00:03:15]

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: I grew up on a farm and we worked the farm. So I didn't come in contact with
[indistinct 00:03:22]

Edwin Thorpe: I was—

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: —that cotton.

Edwin Thorpe: I was so pleased to be free.

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: And those sweet potatoes and the corn and whatever else we were growing and the chickens and the cows. So I didn't—

Stacey Scales: What'd your parents do for a living?

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: Your mom was a—

Edwin Thorpe: School teacher.

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: School teacher.

Stacey Scales: Oh, yes?

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: And your dad was?

Edwin Thorpe: Daddy was—Even though he was a college graduate, he found he could make more money being a sort of a—I don't want to call him a servant. He was a maitre d' for the doctor. This man called him his friend.

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: Mm-hmm.

Edwin Thorpe: His mother was a very—He was a maitre d'. He worked for a very rich family in the mountain in the summer. Zillionaires. He put in a call from Baltimore and he'd hire all the help and it'd be about 15 people—

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: [indistinct 00:04:10] house.

Edwin Thorpe: [indistinct 00:04:10] 20, 30-year-old mansion.

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: He was the maitre d'.

Edwin Thorpe: And then in the winter, he worked for Struthers Burt also as his—

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: As a chauffeur.

Edwin Thorpe: No.

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: Oh, a valet?

Edwin Thorpe: Valet. Yeah. Just a general—

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: Oh.

Edwin Thorpe: —person around the house. He was a butler. In addition to whatever, Struthers Burt wanted him to go and—

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: And he also—

Edwin Thorpe: Gopher.

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: Yeah.

Edwin Thorpe: He was a gopher.

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: And he also sold insurance too.

Edwin Thorpe: Sold insurance in Monroe, North Carolina before he decided to go with these rich people. Struthers Burt a writer in Southern Pines and he respected my dad as Mr. Thorpe. Charles. But he was a really fine person. He was from Philadelphia. The Cohens, even though they were rich and paid him good money, they always call him Charles. And anyway, when we were in Baltimore, I asked about this address.

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: Yeah.

Edwin Thorpe: [indistinct 00:05:10] Eutaw Place and the guy said it's no longer.

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: That's right.

Stacey Scales: How about your parents?

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: My father was a physician, a country doctor, he was. And my mother taught school before she married my dad. But after she married him, she—

Edwin Thorpe: Had eight children.

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: —became a housewife. Hm?

Edwin Thorpe: She had to take care of eight children.

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: [indistinct 00:05:37]

Stacey Scales: That's a nice number.

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: Well, so she was a housewife, but she had finished high school and was teaching. She didn't go to college. Was it—What was it?

Edwin Thorpe: You could teach back then.

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: Oh, yeah. Right. Because my oldest sister went into teaching.

Edwin Thorpe: Well, we blazed a lot of—My family blazed trails. In the mountains, we were the only Blacks that owned a home.

Stacey Scales: Oh, yes?

Edwin Thorpe: Yeah. And because my father working for these millionaires, they did not bother him very much because then he worked for the Cohens.

Stacey Scales: Did the Depression have an effect on your family?

Edwin Thorpe: Yeah.

Stacey Scales: Big?

Edwin Thorpe: Yeah. By that time, let's see, my father died in '31. We were in military school in Virginia. My mother really had it tough for one or two years. Matter of fact, only because we didn't pay anything the last two years [indistinct 00:06:26] We paid no money at all.

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: They let you go?

Edwin Thorpe: Just let it go.

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: That's great. You got financial aid.

Edwin Thorpe: They knew what the situation was.

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: Right.

Edwin Thorpe: They didn't pay it.

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: Yes. Well, the Depression, my father was practicing in Memphis and in the meantime he had bought a tract of land just in a community called Cordova, which is about 20 miles—Is that 20 miles east?

Edwin Thorpe: West?

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: West.

Edwin Thorpe: West.

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: —of Memphis.

Edwin Thorpe: I'm sorry. East.

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: East of Memphis. So when the Depression hit, we left the city and moved to the country. And that's how we survived.

Stacey Scales: Okay.

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: We went to school in this little country school. But later on, we drove into high school because this little elementary school that we went to did not go farther than sixth grade. So then we had to go back. So then we began to rent. But also we traveled back and forth by car. I also went to LeMoyne College. What were those financial aid programs that they had back in those days?

Edwin Thorpe: Yeah, I got one. [indistinct 00:07:55]

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: [indistinct 00:07:55]

Edwin Thorpe: FERA, Federal Emergency Relief Aid. NYA.

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: NYA.

Edwin Thorpe: NYA.

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: NYA.

Edwin Thorpe: And FERA. Federal Emergency Relief Aid.

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: [indistinct 00:08:05]

Edwin Thorpe: National Youth Administration.

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: Right. Through the NYA, you got a little job on campus with that. But we always had to have that bale of cotton fixed and planted and sold.

Stacey Scales: How was farm life compared to your moving into city area?

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: Oh.

Edwin Thorpe: But you were rotating—

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: Back and forth.

Edwin Thorpe: She wore it very well. I mean, this is a big deal if you owned a farm like they did because many Blacks didn't ever own the farm. And they did their own—They had 250 acres, didn't they?

Stacey Scales: Who would you sell your crops to if you had that much land?

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: Oh, well of course, there was a—Let's see, there were merchants that would come to—

Edwin Thorpe: Well, the cotton people.

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: Right. For, to buy the cotton.

Edwin Thorpe: Yeah.

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: And then we had, my father sold the corn and he would take the hogs into market. And let's see—

Edwin Thorpe: I remember he—

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: We had a dairy for one year.

Edwin Thorpe: They weren't doing too bad.

Stacey Scales: Did folks ever try to cheat your family or your father out-

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: Oh, I don't know. And I don't think so because I think they respected him a great deal. They knew that he had this training and he was the Black doctor for the surrounding area. Now there was a White doctor and that was a White dentist. But most of the Blacks came my father for treatment. So he had a very good reputation in the area. They respected him. They didn't call him Dr. Pinkston. They would—

Edwin Thorpe: He was Doc.

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: —call him Doc.

Edwin Thorpe: Doc. Doc.

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: Doc.

Stacey Scales: Where did he go to school?

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: He went to Meharry.

Stacey Scales: Okay.

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: Went to Meharry. Yeah.

Edwin Thorpe: [indistinct 00:10:02]

Stacey Scales: Oh yes? Beautiful.

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: Well, listen, let's don't keep you too long. How many more—

Stacey Scales: Yeah?

Edwin Thorpe: We [indistinct 00:10:08] We trying to—

Stacey Scales: It's very interesting.

Edwin Thorpe: —just giving you off the cuff.

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: How many more people have you got scheduled to see today?

Stacey Scales: Well, sometimes we make phone calls up until 5:00 and 6:00. But I don't have anyone else to see today. If you have anything else you want to share. I don't have any more questions really. If you had anything else you'd like to share, you can—

Edwin Thorpe: Well, you see the general idea.

Stacey Scales: Right. Right.

Edwin Thorpe: But we appreciate the fact we lived through this, complete segregation and on into the way things are now.

Stacey Scales: Right. Okay.

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: And we really are proud of the way Tallahassee has—

Edwin Thorpe: Changed.

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: —has grown.

Edwin Thorpe: Yeah.

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: We used to have—The local newspaper used to have a Black page for Black news. You remember that, dear?

Edwin Thorpe: Yes.

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: And most of the news was about—

Edwin Thorpe: First we had no news.

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: —funerals and—

Edwin Thorpe: And [indistinct 00:11:04]

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: And crime.

Edwin Thorpe: And crime.

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: That was the Negro page.

Stacey Scales: Oh, yes?

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: Uh-huh.

Stacey Scales: That's the Tallahassee Democrat.

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: The Tallahassee Democrat.

Edwin Thorpe: Jacksonville had one too. Jacksonville, big city, they had a Black page.

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: A Black page.

Edwin Thorpe: News for and about the Colored peoples. Colored. Because you know—

Stacey Scales: Right. Colored, Black.

Edwin Thorpe: Colored, Afro-American.

Stacey Scales: American.

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: Afro-American [indistinct 00:11:36] African American.

Stacey Scales: Well, I'd like to thank you all.

Edwin Thorpe: Oh well.

Stacey Scales: [indistinct 00:11:36] everything—

Edwin Thorpe: We hope we gave you what you wanted.

Stacey Scales: Most definitely.

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: Let's see, now wasn't there a Black newspaper? Did we ever get one?

Edwin Thorpe: Well, yeah, we—

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: Oh well [indistinct 00:11:43]

Edwin Thorpe: That preceded the present one.

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: Right. Well, that was—

Edwin Thorpe: That preceded the present one.

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: Well, what was that?

Edwin Thorpe: It wasn't the Outlook. It was something else.

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: Oh. But I mean, before, was there any Black newspaper back—

Edwin Thorpe: Well, we had the Afro, the Journal and Guide.

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: I mean, in Tallahassee.

Edwin Thorpe: The national. No, no.

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: The national Black papers that would come this way.

Edwin Thorpe: But our lives have been pretty good. As I said, this Black college community is a good life to live. You not bothered with the ongoing problems of world.

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: Kind of isolated.

Edwin Thorpe: And see, we came here from Johnson C. Smith University in Charlotte, North Carolina, where we worked four years. And then I was in high school, working five years prior to that. And she worked at Knoxville College prior to that.

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: Incidentally, I'm a graduate of—

Edwin Thorpe: Atlanta University.

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: Atlanta University.

Stacey Scales: Oh, yeah?

Edwin Thorpe: Yeah. She got her master's degree in Atlanta.

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: That's right.

Edwin Thorpe: AU.

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: That's when—

Stacey Scales: All right.

Edwin Thorpe: When it was Atlanta University.

Stacey Scales: Right. Now they've merged.

Edwin Thorpe: Yes. And we know the president, is son of a friend of ours who is at the University of Florida.

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: Yeah. What's your president's name now?

Stacey Scales: Benjamin Payton. Dr. Payton.

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: Oh, Payton.

Edwin Thorpe: Payton?

Stacey Scales: Yes.

Edwin Thorpe: Payton is the president now?

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: You're thinking about Morehouse?

Edwin Thorpe: Well, yeah. No.

Stacey Scales: No. That's Tuskegee.

Edwin Thorpe: Tuskegee. I thought you meant Atlanta.

Stacey Scales: Oh, the president of Atlanta is um—

Edwin Thorpe: Atlanta U. Well, you're bad as we are now.

Stacey Scales: I don't know why I was thinking about Tuskegee. That's my undergrad.

Edwin Thorpe: Well. I know him too. Payton.

Stacey Scales: Right.

Edwin Thorpe: But the president of Atlanta Clark now is the son of our friend at the University of Florida.

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: Oh, yeah.

Edwin Thorpe: We know him very well. We don't know him, but we knew his father.

Stacey Scales: Right.

Edwin Thorpe: His father was a friend of mine when we were registrars together. He was registrar the Wiley College. That's where he came from. And anyways—

Stacey Scales: Who's the president of Spelman? What's-

Edwin Thorpe: Oh, that's the woman.

Stacey Scales: What's her name?

Edwin Thorpe: What is her name? Well, you're as bad as we are.

Stacey Scales: I sure am.

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: I can see her.

Edwin Thorpe: Yeah. Yeah. John—

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: Cole.

Edwin Thorpe: Johnnetta. Johnnetta Cole.

Stacey Scales: Same name.

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: Same name. That's right. Cole.

Edwin Thorpe: And Tom Cole.

Annette Pinkston Thorpe: Thomas Cole, that's right. That's a good association.

Edwin Thorpe: Tom Cole's father was a registrar at Wiley College in Texas.

Stacey Scales: Right.

Edwin Thorpe: We used to meet at the Registrars Associations and we were friends there.

Stacey Scales: Okay.

Edwin Thorpe: That's right. And we visited him a few times in Gainesville.

Stacey Scales: Okay.

Edwin Thorpe: But it's been interesting. Life as a Black person interesting.

Stacey Scales: Right.

Edwin Thorpe: Though it's been a lot of negatives, it's called how you wear it.

Stacey Scales: Right.

Edwin Thorpe: I've never worn it as a thing that—bribe about anything.

Stacey Scales: Right.

Edwin Thorpe: You take it as it comes. I guess my dad taught me, he learned how to live with rednecks and how to get along with them.

Stacey Scales: Right.

Edwin Thorpe: Because they had to.

Stacey Scales: Mm-hmm. Okay. Good.