

Margaret Sampson Rogers: Ritter elementary school near Walterboro, South Carolina, and this was 1974. And as far as I was concerned, there was no longer any Jim Crow in the south, especially North and South Carolina. But when I arrived in Walterboro, I was sent to a doctor's office for what they like to call physical, but my temperature was taken and my blood pressure was taken. But I had no idea that the doctor's offices were still segregated. So I pulled up in my little sports car in front of the doctor's office, jumped out, and I went in the front door. Well, I noticed when I entered, there were no Blacks in the waiting room. But being naive as I am, I just figured, well, none of us were sick today.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: So I went straight up to the nurse and her face was red. She was very curt, but it still didn't phase me. And I told her—She says, "We know who you are. The school board called. The doctor will see you immediately." And I said, "Well, thanks." So she ushered me into the doctor's examining room. He took my temperature and my blood pressure and said I was fine and that was it. On the way out of his office, I just happened to turn my head to the left because I heard a sound, and there I saw a small windowless room with Black people in it. Then it dawned on me what I had done. I had come in through the White waiting room and this still was not done. And so I left immediately and I sat in the car for a few minutes trying to really get my bearings after that because I never expected to find that, not in 1974.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: And one of the things I enjoyed doing was rollerskating. I used to rollerskate for four hours every Saturday and every Sunday, even during my pregnancies. I loved to rollerskate. So knowing I would be stuck more or less in Walterboro and only able to come home every other weekend, I asked about a roller rink and I was told that there was a roller rink in town. So I went over, had my own skates. I went over, parked the car, hopped out with my skates and walked up to the door. And this White gentleman asked me, "Just where do you think you're going?" And I stopped and I said, "Well, I'm one of the new teachers at Ritter Elementary, and the principal told me that since I loved to rollerskate, I might be able to come over here to skate." He says, "This a private club and only members are allowed." I said, "Fine, then I'll join." He said, "You don't get the message. This is a private club. There are no niggers allowed."

Margaret Sampson Rogers: And I just stood there. We're talking 1974. I just stood there. I could not believe this man was saying to me what he was saying. So it hasn't completely died out. And in the smaller areas, you still may run into it in what we quote-unquote call the back wood communities. But during the time that I grew up here—I'm 54. I was born 1939, so I was here during World War II and beyond. There was discrimination in this area, a lot of it, but it never really, really bothered me to the point that I felt violent about it because I like to use my education with it. And I more or less would turn the discrimination against them. I would do little things I knew would aggravate them constantly, but I was never hostile in doing this.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: The water fountains, of course, were marked Colored and White, and I would make a habit of drinking from the White water fountain, especially in the courthouse, and would be asked, "Why are you drinking out of that water fountain? Don't you see the Colored fountain?" And I would say that my chemistry teacher told me that Colored water is polluted so I don't drink Colored water. My mother was

always terrified. She swore out the Klan was going to kill me.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: We only had one incident personally with the Klan. The Klan came to my house. My father, Haywood Wesley Sampson, worked for Atlantic Coastline for 50 years. But his father was White. He had a half-brother who died in 1984, who was a very prominent lawyer here. His name was John Bright Hill. And my father had more or less White hair, as they termed it. It stood on end. It was very stiff. We used to call it horse hair because he had to wear it in a crew cut. It would not lay down. There was nothing you could do.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: So Black barbers had a problem in cutting this hair. There was one White barbershop on Market Street between Front and Water that would cut. The barber would cut his hair, but he'd have to go in late at night through the back when the business was closed, of course. And somehow the word got out. So the Klan showed up at our house one night. It didn't take long for them to leave. Although they had on sheets and robes, my father recognized voices, so he started calling them in by name. And as soon as he called them by name, they immediately left. But it was comical to me. That was the only incident that I can remember as a child personally being involved with the Klan. But I was never afraid of them. I don't know whether I didn't have sense enough to be afraid of them, or I just simply was too stubborn to refuse to allow them to intimidate me. I just wouldn't let it happen.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: There was an ice cream parlor at 17th and Dawson, and my favorite dessert has always been cherry ice cream sundae. I just love them. A girlfriend of mine and I used to walk over there every Sunday. I grew up at 513 South 13th Street, so it was not a real long walk, but it was a nice walk for a teenager on a Sunday afternoon. We would go to Shields every Sunday. They didn't want to service. We weren't allowed to sit and eat. We could stand at the counter and eat the ice cream sundae, although they preferred that you take it and leave. And they usually kept you waiting. And I'd stand there patiently because I refused to leave. I would just stand there and as the White customers would look at me, I'd look at them and smile. No anger. I'd just stand there. We were well-dressed. We were well-mannered. And so we stood there. We would just do it more or less to aggravate them because we knew they didn't want us there.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: So a lot of the—I never experienced the dogs and water hoses and that type stuff until the demonstrations in the sixties. We didn't really have that much of a problem here in Wilmington. For one thing, we grew up in neighborhoods and there were Whites and Blacks in those neighborhoods. So we socialized to a point. The children played together. There were times when my family would just go out on what a lot of people did during that time, the Sunday afternoon drive. You just rode around. I went with the White children in the neighborhood. The White children in the neighborhood would ride with me and my parents. We played together. We just didn't go to the same schools. We knew that when it was time to go to school, we would go to Williston and they would go to whatever school they went.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: So there were not a lot of problems in the neighborhoods. We would get on the buses and depending on how we felt or just what prank we decided that day, we may ride in the front. And the bus driver would tell us, "You have to move to the back." And we'd say, "The city's paying you to drive the bus. You drive the bus. We'll ride where we want." And most instances, it went that they would argue,

"You know you're not supposed to be here and you know where you're supposed to sit," and all of this. And we'd say, "I paid my nickel like everybody else did."

Margaret Sampson Rogers: Occasionally, there were a couple of incidents and the bus driver was beaten in the head with a lady's shoe. When the three-inch heels really first started coming out, they were metal. Those high heel, really high heel shoes. And this driver decided on Castle Street, which was prominently a Black area, that she was going to move. And so he got up to—Instead of driving the bus, he got up. He was going to move her. And she beat him in the head with the shoe and he had to have a few stitches but there was really not a lot done about it. So during the forties and the fifties, the major thing was accommodations. When you traveled on the buses on what was then Queen City Trailway and Seashore Transportation, you sat in the back.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: The waiting rooms were very dirty, very unkempt. You didn't go in the restroom. It had to be a dire emergency for you to go in those restrooms because they were just that filthy. And they would make you wait at the counter before you got your ticket. And you could see through the window where you bought your ticket, you could see over into the White waiting room and you could see what kind of accommodations they had as compared to yours. You saw that. The train was the same way. We traveled mostly by train if we didn't by car, because with my father's employment, we were able to ride free. When you left Wilmington going north, the Blacks were all in a separate car, not a very nice car.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: A porter would usually come through after you had been on the road for a while with stale sandwiches and sodas and whatever. But generally, Black people carried their own food and the main staple was fried chicken. You never left to go on a trip unless you had fried chicken. You had to have fried chicken or you just couldn't go. Once you reached Rocky Mount, then they changed cars, but you were still segregated. Once you reached Richmond going north, then the cars were integrated. But up until then, it was segregated. But even with those conditions, that was still my favorite form of transportation. It still is. I still love the train. I don't care.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: But you—The hotel or living accommodations along the way—In fact, the first time I'd ever heard of anything called chinch— I know that's a new word for you. My grandparents referred to them as chinchies. They were called bedbugs. They were little tiny red things. I had never heard of these things. And we went to Rocky Mount. Sometimes we would go to Rocky Mount when my father was on the run from Wilmington to Rocky Mount on the freight run and spend the night or spend the weekend with him up there and then come back. Well, when we did, you stayed in one of the Black—Well, we weren't called Black then. You stayed in one of the Colored rooming houses or hotels. And that was the first time I'd ever run into anything called chinchies. Something was biting me and I just started screaming. And my mother turned on the light and there were these little red bugs. And so they were trying to kill them. And of course, I just sat up the rest of the night. I didn't try to go to sleep.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: But you knew, more or less, what was expected. And to a point, you let it go. You learned how to deal with it. Here, the most frustrating—Maybe it wasn't frustrating. The thing that I remember most that still sticks in my craw, I don't like to this day, is Wrightsville Beach. And I don't go to

Wrightsville Beach. During the forties and fifties, when you went to Wrightsville Beach, you were stopped at the Bridge Tender Shack until they really became familiar with you. If a Colored person came to that bridge, you were stopped and asked where you were going. You had to give a person's name and a telephone number, and they would call them to see if indeed you were going. And if that person says, "Well, yes, I know them, but I was not expecting them today," you didn't get across that bridge. Or if they said, "Well, no, I have no idea who this person is," you did not get across that bridge.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: And so to this day, I still don't go to Wrightsville Beach. And with all of the controversy they're having now about the parking, the whole thing is they don't want anybody on Wrightsville Beach except the people who live there. That's a public ocean, but it always has been. But Blacks had a problem getting on Wrightsville Beach and—

Kara Miles: So were there Blacks living on Wrightsville or [indistinct 00:14:43] Black on Wrightsville Beach?

Margaret Sampson Rogers: Absolutely not. Are you kidding? They didn't want you across the bridge so you definitely didn't live. If you lived over there, it was a live-in domestics job, and they were very much discouraged. They just didn't want you there. And even if you worked there, you weren't allowed on the beach. This is the Atlantic Ocean, and you were not allowed to walk on that sand out there. If you went, you were a nanny and you were walking the child. But to go out on that beach yourself? No.

Kara Miles: So when you—You would have to give a phone number of the White person over there—

Margaret Sampson Rogers: Of the White person—

Kara Miles: —that you were going—

Margaret Sampson Rogers: Yes. That you were going to see. Yes. Or whose house you worked in.

Kara Miles: Okay. So you would be with your family and you all—

Margaret Sampson Rogers: No, Black families didn't go over there unless Black—the whole family worked for one person or worked for several people and were traveling together. But as far as recreation was concerned, you didn't go over there. You only went to Wrightsville Beach to work.

Kara Miles: So where did Black people go to the beach at?

Margaret Sampson Rogers: There was a section. The north end of Carolina Beach at that time was called Freeman's Beach or Bop City, and we had Sea Breeze. Sea Breeze was a very, very famous Black resort. Busloads of Blacks would come here from as far away as California.

Kara Miles: Really?

Margaret Sampson Rogers: Yeah. And that's where you went. When you went to Carolina Beach, when you went to Bop city, you knew that you had to travel through Carolina Beach to get to Bop City. So the parents were always saying, Now, you know we're getting ready to go through Carolina Beach, so let's be quiet. Let's not make any noise." And you went through Carolina Beach to Bop City, and on that end of the beach was where the Blacks were. But there was a difference if you happened to stop at a store. You couldn't eat at the restaurants at Carolina Beach and you couldn't stay in the hotels. But if you went into one of the stores at Carolina Beach to purchase something, you knew that you went in to purchase and you had to leave. But you didn't get that feeling that you did at Wrightsville Beach. The people were at least civil to you.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: But at Wrightsville Beach, they didn't want anything to do with you, period. They didn't want you there at all. I went to Wrightsville Beach with my mother when she worked as a domestic and even had a chance to go out on the boats with the families that she had when they would go out fishing. So I had a chance to go to Wrightsville Beach, but I was not happy. She was very concerned because she was always afraid of what I was going to say. Because I had a habit of if I thought it, I said it. It didn't matter. It just didn't matter. If I felt it, I said that. And so she was always after me, "Please, keep your mouth shut today. When you get there, go and just sit." And so I did that a lot, and in doing that, it helped me as far as my education, really.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: The people that she worked with usually took time with me. They developed— Especially a family, Ruth and Sidney Jones, really started me reading. And they had their own library in their home. So when I went with her, Ms. Jones would usually take me in the library and put me in one of these big wing back chairs. My feet wouldn't touch the floor. And she would suggest books for me to read. And then for birthdays and Christmas, that's what she always gave me: books. So I would sit and read. I was very comfortable with that because I used what I had to get what I wanted, more or less. And I'm just a firm believer, you get more with honey than you do vinegar. So I usually tell them, "Thank you very much and have a nice day." But my husband doesn't like for me to say that because he says usually when I tell somebody, "You have a nice day," they're in serious trouble.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: I won't argue with you, but I feel there's always somebody above you. So if I'm not satisfied with your treatment, I say, "Thank you very much. You have a nice day." Then I'm going to find out who your boss is and then who next person, that person's boss, is and go from there. But it was rough, I guess. By standards, today's standards. I really don't think, well, I know for certain there'll never be another peaceful revolution. There will never be another one of those. I don't think I could go through it. And I was very nonviolent. I really don't think I could go through it. And I know your generation couldn't. They just could not take what we did. They really couldn't. They couldn't do it. But I learned a lot. I learned a lot of tolerance.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: One of the most deplorable things that I remember—So hospitals were segregated here, like they were everywhere else. New Hanover Memorial wasn't here then. The main hospital was James Walker at 10th and Red Cross, a big red brick building. But the Black ward was in a separate building behind that one, which meant if you had to have major surgery, your surgery was done in that main building, but then you were wheeled through the rain, the snow, the bright sunshine, whatever,

back to this Black building. And it had basically one large ward. The women were on one end and the men were on the other. And you were separated by draw curtains.

Kara Miles: The men from the women?

Margaret Sampson Rogers: Yeah.

Kara Miles: By draw curtains.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: Draw curtain. And there was a curtain that they could pull between each patient. But when you entered the ward, you entered the ward with the men on the left, I believe, and the women on the right. But there was that big opening right there. And on the south side of town on 11th Street was Community Hospital, the Black hospital. As I said, I lived on 13th Street. One Sunday, about 1:30, it was a terrible accident at 13th and Castle and a White female was seriously injured, critically injured. She had—They were on their way to the beach and they had a head on with somebody, and broken glass was just embedded in her body. This person could possibly have survived if she had been taken to Community Hospital, which was two blocks away. But Community was a Black hospital. So they took her all the way across town to James Walker. And of course, she died.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: And that was just so stupid to me because a sick person is a sick person. And I just couldn't understand why, when it's right around the corner. If you don't want her to stay there, which I knew they wouldn't, being White, she could have gone there for—to be stabilized and then taken to James Walker. We had a lot of little stores in our neighborhood, and usually we were treated kindly in those. And as children, we played our pranks on the store owners and they knew it. There was one man, a Mr. Farrow, who had a store on Castle Street. And he kept his empty bottles, soda bottles, outside in crates propped against the building. We used to sell him his own bottles over and over and over. We'd come in with two, three bottles and we'd sell them to him. He'd give us the money. We'd turn around and buy cookies because cookies were two for a penny, and bubblegum was two for a penny.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: And he'd tell us, "Okay, when you leave, put them in the crate. Is there room in the crate outside?" And we of course said, "Yes, sir." And we'd put them in the crate. And we'd leave, and a few of us would come back later and get those same bottles. Of course, we did that with a paper drive in the fifties. Williston was having a paper drive to raise money to buy band uniforms. And we went all over the city on this one particular Saturday with pickup—with flatbed trucks picking up newspapers. And we'd take them down to the paper company and sell them. Well, what they did was they knew the weight of the truck. They estimated the weight of the kids on the back of it. Then they subtracted that, and that gave them the weight of the paper. And so they'd pay us for the paper.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: So then we were to back the truck in, throw that load of paper off, go back and get another. Well, we'd throw about half off each time, and we'd leave the rest on there, put a tarp over it, and the kids would get on it. And we were playing and cutting up, and the guys are telling us to be careful, not paying attention. We'd sell them that same load of paper five, six times. But this was necessary because

Williston received, like all other Black schools in the south, we received the used materials that the White high school had when funds were allocated. The White high school got the new books and new equipment, and then they gave us the old equipment. If we ever received a textbook that we opened that was nobody's name written in it, we knew it was a brand new book. This was exciting. But then we realized that we received that new book because the White high school was receiving revised editions. These books were now outdated.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: There was one incident when it was really—The students had raised money to buy a new activity bus, and they turned the money over to Mr. Fred Rogers. He was called Professor Rogers. He was the principal at the high school. The money was given to him. He was in turn supposed to go to the school board with the money so we could get a new bus. Well, Professor Rogers turned the money over to the school board. School board bought a new bus to give it to New Hanover High School, and Hanover High School gave us their old bus. This was in the late forties. The highway patrol, the police department, and the sheriff's department had to be called in to escort Mr. Rogers from the school because the students were going to kill him.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: They came to—The school situation was Williston Primary, which has now been demolished. And the school now known as Gregory at one time was Williston Industrial High School. And there was an open field between these two. Then in the fifties, they built Williston Senior High School in the middle. So then Williston Industrial High became the junior high. Okay. The high school boys came to the elementary school and they walked down the hall, which was something that was not done. Teachers, when we were going to school, were more like gods. You did what the teacher told you to do or else. And if that teacher said she was sending a note home to your parents, the note got there. There was no doubt about that. And the teachers were very well respected.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: These guys walked in down the hallway and they stuck their heads in each classroom and they said, "Let the children go home because there's going to be trouble." And we went. We went for more reasons than one. A student to stick his head in a teacher's classroom and say this, not get permission to speak, not say, "May I come in, good afternoon," just, "Let the kids go home. There's going to be trouble"? We all ran home as fast as we could. But where I lived, I could see back over to the school. And so all of us in that area, I lived in an area they called the Bottoms, we watched and then with adults went back over onto 11th Street to see what was going on. And they had to get that man out of there safely because those kids were going to kill him. So there was such an outcry until they got—the money was given back.

Kara Miles: Was he aware that they were—

Margaret Sampson Rogers: Sure.

Kara Miles: He knew that they were doing that?

Margaret Sampson Rogers: Oh, absolutely. Yes.

Kara Miles: Okay.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: He knew exactly. He was what a lot of the superintendents referred to as one of the good old boys. "He's a good old nigger over there. He doesn't give us any problems. He does what we want him to do, so everything's fine. We love Professor Rogers." Sure. But that was the problem. That was a lot of the problem during that time, was that you had what people quote-unquote called the Uncle Toms. They made certain that somebody knew what you were getting ready to do. Of course, that's the problem now. That's still a problem. And we are too busy fighting among ourselves to clear this up.

Kara Miles: Yeah. Who were some more people like that? Can you give me other instances of people being Uncle Tom's or—

Margaret Sampson Rogers: That one I think I remember most because it really stuck out. Not offhand. I don't remember. Most of the Uncle Toms were people who were in a position to help, and instead of helping, they did more harm. But that incident with Mr. Rogers, I just really remember because it was just so unusual. It was just so unusual that instead of trying to help us to do better. But he was after his job and he felt that by turning us in, more or less, is what he was doing, that protected his job. But that was not the case. They liked him for what he was doing to his own people, which is what the case is, anyway. We do it to ourselves. And that's something we just can't seem to get this folk to understand.

Kara Miles: So did those boys get in trouble after that?

Margaret Sampson Rogers: Not really.

Kara Miles: No?

Margaret Sampson Rogers: They were reprimanded, but it was just such a large group of people. It's like in the sixties when we were doing all of the demonstrations in the streets. I was involved in one in Fayetteville, and a poli—a rookie officer told the chief he wanted us arrested. And he told him, "Just stop and think about it. Where in the hell are we going to put a thousand niggers?" It's just so many people until you leave it alone. Of course, that was really fun. He's—

Kara Miles: It was fun?

Margaret Sampson Rogers: It was because the officer, the chief told him, says, "Well, all right. Well, we can arrest them, can't we?" He says, "Oh, yes. Get everybody's name and then we'll take the list out to the college and we'll let the chancellor know that these people have been arrested for disturbing the peace." So we all gave him names. And the following day, a vespers was called, and we went into the auditorium. The chancellor was on stage with the policeman, and he says, on the stand, "Because of disturbances downtown yesterday, the following people have been arrested. When your name is called, would you please stand?" And he started reading names. Abraham Lincoln, George Washington, Harriet Tubman. We just named

them. Jeff Chandler. We named anything. And this stupid man stood there and read them. And so when he finished reading, nobody was standing. Nobody was standing.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: So Dr. Jones told him that he thanked him very much and that he would see—the school would handle the problem. But it was—The demonstrations were interesting because you really got to see different sides of people. And I told— One lady told her little boy, two years old, to throw his soda in my face. And I stopped. And I told him, I said, "You always do what your mother tells you to do. That is your mother. You are supposed to do what she tells you to do." I said, "Baby, I'm not going to hit you. But just as soon as that ice hits my face, I'm going to beat the hell out your mama." And this is the way we handle this. So of course, she snatched him and run. But this is the way it was done. Now, I don't know whether—I still don't think I would've hit that child. I really don't. Even today, I would not hit a child. Because, as I said, the child's doing what the mother's telling it to do.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: But I don't think the demonstrations would be—There will be no peaceful demonstrations because the fuses are too short. But the young people today don't realize that what we did then is the reason you're where you are. And instead of taking where you are and trying to go forward, they're dragging us down. You're making it worse. And that's what we have to do. We have to turn it around. We have to turn it around. Jim Crow era was a terrible time, but then it left a mark according to the way you handled it. I don't think I could have made it in Alabama. No, let me rephrase that. I know I would not have made it in Alabama. They would've killed me. They really would, because I could not have handled those fire hoses and those dogs or walking down the sidewalk and because there's a White person coming toward me, I have to go in the street. No.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: I was taught that I was not any better than anybody else. I rephrase that. I was taught that there was no one better than me. But there are people that because of personality traits, I feel I am better than. So when the Whites started after me for something I said or something I did, then I felt I had the right to stand up for myself. And that's what I said. I'm an American first. I may have African descent, but I'm American first. And as an American, I have freedom of speech and I am entitled to certain things, and I am going to say how I feel about whatever the situation may be. And I've always felt that way. And so I don't really have a lot of bitterness toward that era. It was a learning experience.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: And with my father working on the train, he loved history. He loved history. And he would take me—I was an only child, rotten to the core. He would take me on the weekends to visit a lot of the people he met along the tracks. So I got to meet a lot of, not just Black people, a lot of White people. And I got to see that there were people who actually lived—whose living conditions were worse. And the Whites were considered poor White trash and were treated, in a lot of instances, almost as badly as we were. So in meeting all of these people and talking to them and hearing stories of things that happened to them, then it gave me a better feel about myself and where I lived. So as I said, I turned it all for—I turned a lot of it. Don't get me wrong, there were times when I got angry. Sure there were. But instead of doing something violent at that particular time, I'd go sit down and think about, "Now, how can I get back at this person for that?"

Margaret Sampson Rogers: See, I was always conniving. I always wanted to use my head to do this because I

never believed in fighting, never. I went all the way through school and I had one fight and the person came to my house to do that. And then I lost control. I did. Because my mother had a Tiffany lamp and this child broke it. And I knew that my mother, as Bill Cosby says, was going to beat all the Black off. So I was determined that she was going to be injured. And I tried to break her neck and a neighbor called my mother and told her to come stop me before I killed Marie Davis.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: Because that was my intention, was to kill this child, because my mother, I knew it, was going to kill me about that lamp. But when she found out what had really happened, I was punished. I wasn't spanked that particular time. But I always believed in using my mind and work out the problem. I'll sit up all night long and work on a problem, I will, to figure out a way to get to it rather than to be violent about it.

Kara Miles: Can you tell me some of those times that you got angry and thought about what to do about it?

Margaret Sampson Rogers: Back to the Shields ice cream parlor. Yes. Having gone in—The first couple of times that my girlfriend and I had gone in and the way that we were treated, you felt like, "Well, I'll just break something in here." Accidentally knock something on the floor or whatever. And in one instance, we did stumble. Caught those heels—Your heels got caught in the tile on the floor, so you're stumble against the table and knocked the table over. And then I started thinking about that and said, "That's not really accomplishing anything." So that's when we decided that we'd go in and we'd stand there. If it took two and a half hours to get that ice cream sundae, we would stand there, because as long as we stood there, you had to see me. You knew I was there. So we did that, more or less. Not just with Shields. The dime stores, you either bought the food and left or you had to stand at the far end of a counter. You weren't allowed to sit.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: There was an instance when I was teaching in Robeson County, and I lived in Fayetteville. Taught in a little town called Proctorville between Lumberton and Fairmont. And until I had my own car, I had to catch the bus from Fayetteville. When you change—When I got off the bus in Lumberton, usually one of the teachers would pick me up. But if you had to wait, there was no Colored waiting room. We are talking 1966. 1966. There was no waiting room. So if it's raining, the Blacks were supposed to stand outside in the rain. And I'm saying, "I don't think so." And I went in. The folks are saying, "You can't come in here." And, "Oh, yes I can. I'm not standing outside in the rain." "Well, that's just too bad." No, it's not too bad because I had a ticket. I came on a bus that came here and I'm not standing outside in the rain.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: So then what I did was immediately started writing letters to the company. And I still do this to this day if I have a service I'm not satisfied with. I write the company and the first thing I let them know is the best form of advertising is word of mouth. I have a big mouth. I love to talk and I will tell everybody what you did, how it was done, and why I won't use your services again. So usually— They may call the police. I've had the police called because I have gone into waiting areas where I shouldn't have been. But I'm not doing anything. I'm just standing there. And when approached, I would tell them, "It's raining outside. It's thundering and lightning outside. I'm not standing outside in that weather. I'm not bothering anybody. I'm not trying to sit down. I'm not trying to use your facilities. I'm simply under the shelter of the building." And I would do that.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: But in Wilmington, basically, as I said, the doctor's offices were segregated. The hospitals were. You more or less took it with a grain of salt. And in most instances, the doctors, the private doctors, were very nice. I don't remember going to the doctors and having a problem. I can remember one incident when my left foot was badly frost bitten. And at one point they thought they might have to cut it off. And to save my foot, the doctor worked on my foot from 3:00 or 4:00 in the afternoon to 2:30 the next morning in his office because my mother refused to let me be hospitalized. She didn't want me in James Walker because of the separate building, as I told you. And Community wasn't the best hospital. She wasn't very happy with it. So then he worked on me in his office.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: Of course, he told it was going to be expensive, but she said money was no object. He worked for the railroad and the people who worked on the train had a very comfortable income during the forties and the fifties, along with the doctors and the lawyers and the people who worked for the state port. So with it just being the three of us, there really wasn't a big problem as far as money was concerned. So I went to Dr. Crouch's, my pediatrician, and then when I became a teenager, I went to John T. Hoggard, for whom the high school is now named. And once I married, left home, came back with my children, I took the kids to see him, and he was fascinated. Of course, he told them all the story of my being born so small. They didn't think I'd live for one day. And now can you imagine this child has children? And on occasions when I didn't take the children, if I came into town, sometimes I would just go by to see them.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: I enjoyed talking to them. I enjoyed always talking to the older people, whether they were Black or White, because you learn so much from them. And when I talked to the ex-slaves that we met around here and the things that they told us—I talked to one whose name was Charles McCleese. And when I met Charles, I was about 13 and he was 105. And this man used to race the children in the community. And he would spot us, as he puts it. "You go ahead." He'd give us about half a block and he'd run us down. And he says, "You don't know how to run. See, we ran from slave catchers. You don't know how to run." He taught me how to peel potatoes with my teeth and cucumbers so that you had one continuous peel. He says, "We didn't have knives. We weren't allowed to have those things. And you were hungry. You dug up what you could in the field and then you learned how to survive on that stuff."

Margaret Sampson Rogers: So when I heard of the things that happened to them, then what I was experiencing really wasn't so bad after all. It gave you some kind of focus. So that what's happening with the young people today, it's nothing compared to what happened with my generation. And they just don't see that. But as they said, separate but equal. A lot of Black children were ruined forever because when the schools were separate, they were taught, they felt inferior. And since they felt inferior, then it bothered their psyche. I just never felt inferior. I didn't feel they were any better than me. And so it didn't bother me. I felt that anything I wanted to do I could do. I was a physically sick child all my life. Always have been. So I spent a lot of time reading.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: I loved music, still love music. I love history. And between those two, it just helped me to build, to give me a base to deal with it. And to this day, I have a problem. Some Blacks have a problem with me because I'm fascinated with the Civil War era. But I'm fascinated because I know I could

not have dealt the way these people did. And these were some very intelligent people. If you will stop and think about what the slaves did, these were some very intelligent people. And our people now like to look at it simply that they were slaves. They don't want the history really preserved. They don't want landmarks open that show—There's a big controversy about the slave quarters of Bellamy Mansion at Fifth and Market. I'm hoping that they restore that everywhere they possibly can.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: Our people need to know the slaves who lived there were a better class of slaves than a lot in this era. They had glass in their windows. There were a lot of Whites in this area who didn't have glass windows. It may sound gross to some people, but they had four-seater toilets. There were a lot of White people didn't have one seater of toilets. The Bellamys were high in society, so their slaves had to be people of breeding, of intelligence, to work with their friends. So I'm proud that there were Black people who lived here. They helped me. I may not see it or I may not realize it, but what those slaves did paved a way for us. And what we did during Jim Crow paved a way for the young people today. But you have to look a little further than your nose. And that's what I did in the Jim Crow era. That's what I did. I just looked a little bit.