

HL-

I was born in C_____ Texas, forty miles north of Houston. My parents were divorced at the age of 2, so I went to live with my dad's parents. I lived with them till I was 14. They were very strict and religious. They did not have much money and lived on a farm. Grandfather was a logger and my grandmother was a cook in a cafe. My grandfather would work me and my brother on weekends to pay off his debts. He bought this car and told the man that he and his boys would work off debt, so we did. We would go and work in the ~~swamp~~ swamps putting up barbed wire fence. The mosquitos would be biting and eating you alive. Hard labor.

I attended school about ten miles away. I could not go to school on a regular basis because I had to work. I left my grandparents at the age of 14 and went to live with my mother. She was working in a ~~hospi-~~ hospital since I was two years old in the dietary department. My mother worked but never had enough to support us, so that is why I had to work. I went to school three days a week and worked 2 days. Doing odd jobs, like unloading box cars, anything to make a dollar from.

My father was a rolling stone. He did something of everything and yet he really didn't do nothing. He was an insurance salesman, he hauled pulpwood, an accountant, private investigator, and was part of a band with Wilson Pickett and latter became a minister. My father has been married six times, I guess he was married I don't really know. I can't ever remember my father and mother being together.

I attended Booker T. Washington school for 13 years. I got retained in the eighth grade, because I was not interested in going to school. Those thirteen years were spent on the basics, reading writing and arithmetic. Got to set the school for you. In this town the white people they gave us this little piece of land. Build this school. We had kindergarten to 12th grade in this one school. They taught mostly agriculture, you see in the part where I came from people worked mostly with their hands. They lived off of the land. In this school we were not allowed to leave campus without a permit from our parents. Canteen across from the school, kids go there to dance their frustrations away. You see the teacher they would beat us. I guess they call it trying to stimulate you to learn. I look at it like they were trying to take their frustrations out on us because these ~~the~~ teachers knew something was wrong with the system but they just couldn't deal with it. No kind of Black history was taught. All the books were handed down from the white schools. Getting back to teachers, they just beat us for anything. I got expelled from school a lot because I just would let them beat me. That was one of the reasons I left grandfather, he wanted us to work for him for nothing. Some of these same teachers taught my parents. They did not feel they were qualified to teach in the white schools because racism was so high. They had a section of town for the whites and one for the blacks. There was no vocational studies, except agriculture. No black history was taught in the school. The only other thing that was read ~~concerning~~ concerning black people was the newspaper, and the only thing that it contained was the crimes that black people had committed and the punishment dished out. If black people committed crimes against each other that was all right you were doing them a favor. They were true capitalists. This has been a hard week for me because I had to relive all this, been a strain on me. This is the way it was.

~~The things~~ people in town, as long as you work for them, if you stay out

the white

HL

of the graveyard I'll keep you out of jail. I remember this fellow name Leotis Johnson who was given 45 years for one joint, because he was in the political scene. I was in the jail at the time in Houston. I spent nine months in the rehabilitation center before I was brought to trial. I remember this incident when some friends of mine went to this shopping center. It's a place where white people are walking down the side walk you are supposed to get out of the way and let them pass. We walked by these two white boys and I did not get out of the way and I hit him. He turned to his friend and says "did you see what that nigger did" and they went running to their truck to get their guns and so we split in a hurry. This was a common thing for racism was so high. I knew there had to be a better life somewhere else. So after I finished high school the thing to do was to get a job and get married and that is what I did. Getting married kept me from going into the armed services because I had a dependent thing. I love my wife E. As a matter of fact, here grandmother delivered both of us. She was a midwife.

When I left high school I was awfully confused. I knew that things should not be the way they were, but there was no one I could talk to. people just accepted the way things were. I talked it over with mother and with E and we decided to move west. I knew I had to leave, because someday I would have gotten in trouble and maybe got myself killed or something. Got to the point where I was setting traps and things. I guess you could call be a racist to, because I was blaming all white people for what had happened to me and my ~~own~~ people. Frustration I was feeling, I remember us fooling the white kids down into our part of town and then kicking their ass. Later I found out that not all whites are bad, just like all blacks are not bad. Like when I meet SW my eyes began to be opened. I'm still in learning process, in the very delicate stage. Like I really hated white people at that time for I feel that they had taken from me what they had not taken from anyone else and that is my ~~own~~ heritage. I don't have a homeland and I still don't.

Questions

DL- Were your teachers black?

HL- Yes, all black

RM- Why did they beat you?

HL- They did because they were all messed up inside themselves and took their frustrations out on us.

RB- ~~When~~ When did you come west? and when did you meet SW?

HL- Came west in 1971 and I meet SW about two years ago at NL. Since I have been out here I have done a lot of different jobs. First did construction work and also worked at BJ. I am the only one from my side of the family out here.

SW- Tell us about that company that was close to your town

HL- Grogan Lumber Company. In a sawmill town. Grogan owned everthing and he paid starvation wages. He had this store, where his workers brought their food. If they didn't have any money, which they often didn't, they could get credit at the store, but it would be taken off of their next weeks pay check. This company employed quite a few black laborers from that area

AV- Why were you in jail for 9 months?

HL- Charged with illegal possession of firearms(?) When I did go to court they had to throw the charge out because of insuffiecent evidence.

DL- After I was born I moved to downtown LA. I lived there till I was 8 or 9 years old and from there we moved to East LA, to the so called barrios. My mother and father were divorced when I was about three years old. We were living in these apartments downtown where families with six and seven kids would live, and there was ~~six~~ seven of us, four boys and three girls at the time. My father was a construction worker. My mother worked for a while, but this did not last very long because one of my brothers died when he fell from the third floor of the apartment, that same night he died-he was 10 years old. After that my mother just blew it, she was in Norwalk hospital for a week or two trying to get care. After that when she came home, my mother who had never done any drinking started to drink and her and father I guess they could not deal with my brothers death, so one went one way and one the other. Half of us went with my father and half of us went with my mother. My mother remarried right away. Me and my two sisters went with my father, and my three brothers were with my father. My mother was still running around, and so it was easier for my father to take care of us than my mother. I think my father was more together than my mother. Finally we ended up going back to my mother. During this time my brothers who were older than I, they were like 13, 14, 15 years old, they had already started to get into trouble. They would get in trouble everynight for curfew because they would go to the show around the corner and the cops would pick them up for curfew and so they had a long record already. Little things but it was like their beginning. Then they got married. My oldest and my second to the oldest got into heroin. They were 18 and 17 at the time. This was in 1955. My other brother went pretty straight and he got married too, and went on his own.

My mother had hassles with the police a lot. I remember when we were still down town, and the house would get raided. My brother, I think, he never got taken from the house because my mother would not let them take him. ~~ONE~~ time my mother was pregnant during the time with one of my younger brothers, they raided the house and my ~~mother~~ brother was in the house and my brother had his outfit and stuff. So my mother sticks it in my pants and tells me to go and hide it somewhere. She was trying to protect my brother. I knew it was wrong, but I did not want to see my brother or my mother hurt so I ~~went~~ hid it in a real good place. I hid it in this old house under the foundation that was across the street. When I came back these two huge detectives were trying to get through the back. They didn't have a search warrant. My brother was in the ~~fr~~ bathroom and there were police in the front and in the back and they wanted him. This huge policemen tried to get in but my mother went at him and bit him in the stomach and he just jumped back and he wanted to hit my mother. And so my mother said "Go ahead and hit me, I'm pregnant". This this guy runs out mad. While all this is going on, my brother took off thru the back and got away. So I was experiencing stuff like that.

Then we moved to East LA and it was still going on. They raided the house there too. But they would never take my brothers. They came without search warrants. They probably thought that we were ignorant and let them in, but we knew better for had that experience.

I went to a grammar school when I was downtown LA. I was never taught anything about racism in my family because we had neighbors that were black and in my grammar schools it was a mixture and I had black little girlfriends. It never dawned on me to what racism was or anything. For my family & everyone was equal to them. The only thing was that when I was growing up, in junior high school I would never go out with a white guy.

DL-(continued)

I would go out with Mexicans and that was it. Maybe in a way I was racist, but towards white people, only. When we moved to East LA two sisters got married and they ended up with heroin addicts. None of my brothers and sisters finished high school, they went into Junior high school and that was it, they just dropped out. My sister quit school at the age of 15 and went to work in this perfume factory, she got married but it didn't work out, for her husband had turned into a dope addict. My sisters could not cope with that type of life, because they had already lived it during the time that my brothers were growing up. So they kinda fell to pieces and they themselves went onto drugs but not stuff. AND NOW ONE OF THEM has six kids, and she ended up with another heroin addict. My other sister is still with her original husband, and one time she was loaded and she tripped and cracked her ankle and they sent her to one of the community hospitals here in East LA, they reset her foot wrong and she got gangrene on her toes so now she has her big toe and one other and that is it. And her leg got shorter and now she limps. She is so messed up. She has to be on drugs and she is addicted to all these medicines that they have given her. She is not together at all. They give her so much money and her case is still open, but she is not going to get anymore and her husband has already taken half of it and has gone into his arm. She has two boys. She has no security at all and any of my two sisters. When I was growing up they would always tell, "Don't end up like me" and look at this, and my mother would say look at what your brothers and sisters are going thru. And it would hurt me because I would see what my mother was going thru. Thru Junior High and High School I would say to myself, "I don't know what I want to be but I know I don't want to be like them" and I came to resent them, to hate them, because I thought they did it because they liked it. So I ended up the only one graduating from high school. Then I went to East La college for two or three months and there was a dispute over the money situation between my mother and father, he was giving money to me every week but he was starting to complain, so I said you know what forget it, I'm not going, so I didn't go and I went and got a job in a hospital. I worked there a year.

During my high school I didn't learn anything, I just got by average. I went because my mother told me I should go, she told if I got a diploma I could get a good job. I didn't care for high school at one point I was so bored I wanted to quit but I didn't. I went to beauty college-but I quit that because I didn't like standing on my feet 8 hours, I saw that the owners of the school would charge the people but we would not get anything they were getting all the profits. I quit that. I got a job at another hospital in East LA. I just didn't know what I wanted, I was so confused and messed up. What would come to my mind was that I didn't want to end up like my brothers and sisters. I was afraid of drugs. I didn't care for it. I could have gotten it, it was around home-but I did not want to do that.

Then I meet E again. I knew him in high school but we were just friends. Then one day he came home from Vietnam. I used to hang around this crowd of people, they were these working class kids, we stuck together and even now we still see each other. These friends came to the hospital with E and I didn't even recognize him because he had lost so much weight and when we started going out and then we got married. Every thing that went thru my mind was that I didn't

DL-(continued)

want to end up like my sisters. You know be all messed up like that. He was from job to job, and I got ~~preg~~ pregnant from my first girl. He was looking for a job that payed good wages. He finally ended up at K. His Uncle works at K. and got him the job there. Then he meet RW and he kinda opened his eyes a little. It was real hard for me. I'd seen good changes in E. He had been seeing RW and then LB had been talking with me. But I ~~fast~~ like leave me along I want to do my house work and take care of my kids and was blind to everything else. Finally I started opening my eyes not too long ago to know what was happening. (RB- asked what was the reason for this). Because I had seen real good changes in E. RW and LB and us would go out and we would talk and they would tell me certain things. I And then I could see "and OH thats why", and I guess knowledge, I guess you learn by doing. I would talk to LB, like this about my family and stuff, I would tell her, and then she would say do you really think that is why they did, maybe it could be other things and she would start talking about socialism and I really did not understand what that was, but eventually I caught on. I began to realize what was going on around me.

As I said I was exposed to a lot of police ever since I was really small. One of my brothers is in jail right now. He is forty years old, and he has been in prisons more than half of his life. My mother had two younger boys, ones 21 and ones 18 from my step father. The 21 year old went into the Marines, he was getting into a lot of trouble, in order for his not to go to camp, because of gang violence, they gave him an order of either go to camp or join the Marines. By this time I already had a little political knowledge and so I pleaded with my mother not to sign, that it was no good. The war was ~~over~~ over but I still did not want him to go in because he is going to come out more messed up than when he went in. They go no they are going to make a man out of him. And I say, "No they are not". He didn't like it. He gets a general release. he stayed in there two years and then they threw him out. Then he started in on heroin. He now is on and off the stuff. He has a girlfriend, shes half black and half phillippino, and they have a baby and staying with my mother. He is trying to get off of the stuff. Doing pretty good, now looking for a job. The 18 year old is going to summer school so he can get his diploma. There is eight of us, and just three ~~of~~ out of eight that are not on drugs and the other ones are all messed up now.

Questions.

~~DL- How is your mom now?~~

DL- SW- What would you see as the source of five of your brothers and sisters getting messed up on drugs?

DL- Now I know why they did it. Now I know it was not them, it is just the system.

I want to talk to my mother a little bit more because she is beginning to see things too. As far as religion I can't get thru to her. That is why I want to learn more about religion. But the other stuff she is open to real well. Lot of this stuff she blamed her and her husband for breaking up, but now she realizes it was not her fault. I keep telling her it is because of this messed up society that makes the people the way they are. She is pretty open to it.

RB- Were ^{you} taught in school that the policeman was your friend?

DL- No, I knew that the police was my enemy, in fact when I was small I always wanted to be a lawyer. That was a big joke to my mother and brothers, I told them that I wanted to be a lawyer so that I could take my brothers out of jail when they landed in jail.