



Interview with Willie Ann Lucas

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Brinkley (Ark.)

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Center for Documentary Studies at Duke University

Behind the Veil: Documenting African American Life
in the Jim Crow South

Interview
with
WILLIE ANN LUCAS
[DOB 11,11,21]

Brinkley, Arkansas
July 7, 1995
Paul Ortiz,
Interviewer

Lucas: We moved from Oneida to Marvell, and that's mainly where I grew up. We were farmers. I worked on a farm all my life, and finished high school at Marvell and went to college at Pine Bluff and got married, and my husband went in the service in '42.

My mother was a midwife and a schoolteacher. My father didn't teach school. He was a logger and a farmer. But my mother strongly believed in an education, and I'm the eighth child out of ten. My mother had ten children, and I'm the eighth. She had nine boys and one girl, and we all got some form of education, because I got married and later went back and got my college degree, and I followed in her footsteps as a midwife. I was a licensed midwife for the state of Arkansas from '45 to '72. I taught school here in Brinkley for twenty-

three years, until I retired.

I have three children, two girls and a boy. Both my daughters finished Philander Smith College in Little Rock, which is a Methodist school. My son finished at Hendrix College, and he majored in P.E. When he got out, he taught P.E. for two years. He said he couldn't make a living at that salary, so he went back to school for an FBI agent, so now he's been an FBI agent for twenty years. He's worked in Indianapolis, New York, and Belleville, Illinois, and now he's stationed in Little Rock.

Tomorrow he's leaving for Haiti on special assignment, going there for a couple of weeks, he said.

My oldest daughter passed away in '86. She was an English teacher at Hall High School [phonetic] in Little Rock, and she taught there for twenty-three years before she passed. My other daughter lives in Chicago, and she's a supervisor for the state of Illinois for the blind and handicapped and a librarian. She's been there now for thirty years. She'll retire when she comes of age. Working for the city, you have to be so old before you can retire.

We had a farm down in Phillips County, and we still have a farm in Phillips County. We try to hold on to a little something that my parents had. Of course, we had to walk to

school in those days. We did no transportation for blacks. They passed by us on the bus and knock mud up on us every day, but we still had to keep on walking. Our school burned down. Well, then we had to go to churches and places until they got the school back up.

That's about it, until I married by '42, at least, and we moved over here, and I've been here since. My husband went in the service in '42, and he got out in '45 and he came here and started work. It was hard at that time because of segregation.

[Telephone interruption.]

I learned in school that you don't say you go two blocks and you turn and you go that a way and then you go down there and you turn and you go that a way. I started to say it's so many blocks.

Ortiz: Mrs. Lucas, I was wondering about your experience as a midwife. Did you learn from your mother?

Lucas: Well, my grandmother was a midwife, my mother was a midwife, and I guess I took it up from my mother. But I had to go to school a year, to class, you know, to learn all about it and everything, and after that I had to go out with an

experienced midwife, which was my mother that I went out with, to deliver babies. The first one that I went with her that she delivered, they named their child after me. My first delivery, the lady named it after me.

Yeah, it was a requirement that you go to school a year to learn it, so I did. Of course, that was way back in--it was in the forties when I started. I think I got my license in '45. But back in those days, you delivered a baby for \$5.00, and sometimes you didn't get that. I remember before then, in the late thirties and all, my mother would deliver babies and they would pay her with corn. Corn was 50 cents a bushel. Pigs were a dollar. They would pay her in corn, pigs, and you'd get a half a calf sometimes for \$5.00, and that's the way she got her money most of the time for delivering babies back in the Depression days, I guess you'd call it.

Ortiz: What county did she mainly work in?

Lucas: It was Phillips County. And Phillips County is the county I grew up in.

Ortiz: Mrs. Lucas, your mother had learned from her mother

about midwife. Can you compare maybe your experience as a midwife to your mother's and your grandmother's, what things changed.

Lucas: In my mother's days, they would just engage you to deliver the baby. You know, if they got pregnant, they would come and ask you if you would deliver the baby for them at such and such a time that they thought they were going to [unclear].

But in my days, I had to have what they called a blue card. They would issue them to me from the health office, and I would give them to the patients when they come and engage me to wait on them. They would have to take them to the doctor, and the doctor, every time they go to the doctor, the doctor would fill out this card with their blood pressure and whatever else on there. And if they had any danger signals, like feet swelling or high blood pressure or something like that, they wouldn't recommend that they have a midwife to deliver, and that was the difference.

But back in my mother's days, they just delivered the baby. But when I come along, you had to have the okay from a doctor, and that was, if you delivered, if the doctor said it was okay for a midwife to deliver, when they went for their last checkup

he would mark whether they're safe or unsafe for a midwife to deliver, and if anything happened, then he was responsible. He had to come if I called him. That was my backup. He had to come.

Ortiz: Mrs. Lucas, during your mother's day, and I guess also in your experience, what role did the midwife play? Well, what role did you as a midwife play in Phillips County? Did you play a leadership role in the community?

Lucas: Back in my mother's days, a midwife was almost the same as a doctor, because when World War II broke out, well, then doctors were scarce and everything else. So therefore, a midwife was just like a doctor back in those days. And I don't know, you just didn't have no problem. They just knew you was a midwife and they'd just come, and wake up twelve o'clock at night and you'd hear this wagon coming down the road, and she'd just get on up out of the bed because there wasn't nowhere else for them to be going but coming after her. They'd come in the wagons. They didn't have any cars. She would come in sometimes when it was raining in the wintertime and her clothes would be frozen stiff on her. She'd be standing up there, and I said,

"Oh, I'd never be a midwife." And bless goodness, before I knew it I was one.

Ortiz: What were the tools of the trade back then? What did you have to work with?

Lucas: Well, you had a suitcase, briefcase to carry. In this briefcase you had a set of towels and you had masks. You were required to have a mask. And you had a pan which consists of scissors. You carried your own pan because that's what you had to sterilize your scissors with, and you would put that on and boil your scissors and sterilize them in order so when you cut the navel cord, umbilical cord they call it, then it wouldn't set up infection or anything. And you had to carry this tape, umbilical tape that you'd tie the cord with before you cut it.

But the only thing about it, you didn't use gloves. They didn't require you to use gloves. I don't know why. Because one thing, you didn't do any examining. You didn't give any medicine. You weren't allowed to give medicine.

In that thing, you carried everything necessary. If they didn't have anything to put on the child, you had something in your bag that you could dress the baby with. Back in those

days, you had what they called a belly band. That wasn't really the name they call it now, but they don't use them anymore, and that's why you see so many babies have a hernia, because the band kept the navel from protruding.

Ortiz: How old were you when you first began to go with your mother on her deliveries?

Lucas: Well, I married when I was twenty. I'd say I was about twenty-seven years old.

Ortiz: So when you grew up, you knew from your mother's experiences that you didn't want to be a midwife.

Lucas: Yeah, that's right.

Ortiz: Mrs. Lucas, did your mother ever talk about some of her most difficult deliveries, situations that she ran into?

Lucas: The most difficult ones were breech first. Breech is where they come backwards. Instead of head first, they come folded up and their rear first, and that was the most difficult

and the most dangerous. But she never lost a patient, but it was just more difficult.

Ortiz: Was your grandmother alive when you were growing up?

Lucas: Yes. My grandmother didn't die until 1947. She was 105 years old, never wore a pair of eyeglasses. And my mother delivered my two girls, and my grandmother nursed them. She said that she tore the baby carriage up bumping it, shaking them going to sleep and all. Yeah, she was 105 when she passed.

See, my mother's people grew up in slavery time. My great-grandmother, my grandfather's mother, she was a sold slave. They put her on the block and sold her, and she ruled the slaves in the field. You know, they had to work under her.

Ortiz: Like the driver.

Lucas: Yeah, something, of slaves in the field. Of course, my grandmother and my grandfather, their father were white. They were Irishmen. Back in those days, they had no choice. Whatever they decided to do with them, they did it. They kept my grandmother, which was my mother's mother, they kept her head

shaved because her hair was just like white folks had, in other words. I hate to say that. But anyway, she never was a sold slave because her father kept her there at the house to take care of her little sisters and brothers. But at that time, she didn't know, really, that they were her sisters and brothers. And see, their maiden name was McIntosh, and that's Irish. That's my mother's mother. So she never was a sold slave, but her mother was a slave down there in Mississippi.

Ortiz: Mrs. Lucas, did any other of your grandmother's or your great-grandmother's experiences, stories about them, pass down to you or to your mother of what life was like during those days?

Lucas: They just had a hard time living and working on the farm. Some of them went to school. My mother was the baby out of the family and she had a chance to go to school, so that's why she finished school and taught school, and she also was a seamstress. She sewed for a living a lot when she was married.

But they had to pick cotton, they had to chop cotton, they had to work in the fields and all back in those days, and they witnessed some of that cruel punishment. My great-grandmother

punished one of my mother's sisters by tying her dress over her head and letting her down in a well of water. I heard my mother talk of that. But that's about the only thing that I know happened, because, you know, they got freed before they all got grown. See, my mother was born in 1882. She was the youngest, she was the baby. The family, I think there's about fourteen of them. See how old she would have been if she had still been living, because she was in her eighties when she passed.

Ortiz: When did your mother's family leave Mississippi?

Lucas: They left Mississippi about 1916. They left Mound Bayou and they moved to a little place called Oneida, Arkansas.

Ortiz: They were living in Mound Bayou?

Lucas: Yeah.

Ortiz: Did they talk about life there?

Lucas: Well, not really. You know, they were just farmers, just farmers. See, my mother was married twice, and her second

husband, she met him after she moved to Arkansas. She was living in Oneida and he was living in Hughes, Arkansas, so I don't know how they got together that far apart. But then she married him in, it must have been about 1919, because I was born in '21 and I had a brother that was born in either 1919 or 1920. He was just older than I was. So they got married probably in 1919 or '18, somewhere along there.

Ortiz: Was she moving out of Mound Bayou?

Lucas: She had moved from Mound Bayou because she had sisters and brothers living in Arkansas, living at Oneida and then out here at Marvell. She had a brother living at Marvell and had a couple of sisters living at Oneida. So she moved. Something happened to her husband. I don't know what happened. He left and never returned. And so she moved over here. She had six boys, and she moved over here with her sister.

Ortiz: Your grandmother was a midwife, also.

Lucas: Yes.

Ortiz: Back in those days, was it primarily women who were midwives?

Lucas: As far as I know. I never heard of a man being a midwife.

Ortiz: Did midwives back during those days, did they use home remedies to help in the birthing process or sickness?

Lucas: The only thing that I can remember that they used was quinine, and quinine was used if they were in labor and, you know, having them little old piddling pains. And they'd give them some quinine, it would cut them off if it wasn't their time. And if it was their time, they would heed them up and they'd go ahead on and make the labor pains come closer and harder and they would go on and have the baby. Some midwives would give the patients castor oil, but I never did that. That's about all they were allowed to give, you know, is something like that.

Of course, when I started, I learned a few more little techniques in it, things you could do--using a hot towel to keep them from tearing, things like that. I got my license for a

practical nurse, and that helped me out a whole lot, too, with my midwifery, but, see, that came after I had gotten my license.

Ortiz: Mrs. Lucas, before the state requirements for licensing, how did you learn how to become a midwife, before there were the schools and the certificates?

Lucas: I guess by just going with somebody, just picking it up from some of your relatives or somebody that was interested in going around with them and all. Now, like before my mother, along in the forties, she had to go take classes. She lived in Marvell, but she'd have to go to Helena once a month and they'd have classes. That was teaching you all the danger signals and everything else that you should know about a patient, because, see, if they had swelling in the feet, you didn't deliver them because that was a kidney problem. Some of the feet would just swell. Well, that was caused by kidney infection, and you didn't dare deliver one with kidney infection. They would teach you all that, things to avoid.

Ortiz: What was your most difficult experience as a midwife or your most harrowing?

Lucas: Well, you know, with the blue card, they had to be approved by a doctor. The only thing, I was delivering twins, and one we thought was dead and one wasn't, and the lady said, "Stop fooling with that one and try to take the other one that's alive." By that time, the baby gasped, and we knew it was alive, too, because they'll be in a sack, and that sack didn't burst, and therefore it was in there with all that fluid, what's called a water bag or something. That's probably most my scariest experience was working with that one.

To me, it was just natural. It wasn't anything. I didn't get afraid, nothing scared me or anything. I could still be doing it, but they got all these health clinics now and they said they didn't need the midwife anymore because they had enough health facilities, health clinics to take care of all the OB patients. And so that's why I'm not doing it today. I would still be doing it. I loved it. It didn't bother me one bit.

Ortiz: Where were most of your deliveries at? Who was the typical--

Lucas: Most of my deliveries were at home, but most of them was

in the rural areas--you know, lived out in the country on farms.

Most of them was in the rural areas. I had some in town, you know, city, but the majority was from rural areas.

Ortiz: Earlier you were saying that during your mother's time you remember hearing the wagons coming up and people would contact her. How would people contact you when they wanted you to--

Lucas: Well, see, when I started doing midwife work, we had telephones. And then when they called and asked me if I would wait on them, then I would tell them you have to come see me and I have to talk to you and I have to give you a blue card and you will have to take it to the doctor every time you go and let the doctor, after he examines you and everything, fill it out. He put the date on there and everything when you visited him. So that was the difference, you know. I had to have proof and my mother didn't. They just would come to her house and say, "I'm pregnant, going to have a baby, and I'd like to get you to deliver it for me," and that was it. Some doctors, when World War II was going on, they sent them to my mother.

Ortiz: The doctors did?

Lucas: Yeah. They would send them to her to deliver. I guess they didn't have any money and they wasn't going to be paying. And I had some to do me that same way here in Brinkley. They owed the doctor and the doctor said they wasn't going to wait on them because they owed them, they didn't pay them. And then they would call me and ask me if I wanted to wait on them. They didn't pay me; maybe they'll pay you. And I have some that still owe me. At that time, it wasn't but \$15.

Ortiz: Mrs. Lucas, did you deliver primarily for black mothers?

Lucas: Both black and white. I delivered quite a few white. But like I say, it was kind of the poor whites that didn't have much money, not rich whites. And the same way with the blacks. Not the rich blacks that could afford to pay. Well, they paid, and so did the whites. But I delivered a lot of white babies.

Ortiz: So if they were rich, they would probably go to a doctor.

Lucas: Go to a doctor somewhere.

Ortiz: Mrs. Lucas, did you or your mother feel like doctors were kind of intruding in the area, into childbirth, because midwives had always been, it seems like, doing that for years and years and years? Did you feel like, here comes the doctors?

Lucas: You mean nowadays?

Ortiz: Well, sure. But even back, say, in the forties.

Lucas: Repeat the whole question.

Ortiz: You talked about how your grandmother was a midwife and your mother was also a midwife. I'm sure back during your grandmother's day there really weren't that many doctors, especially who would deliver for black mothers. Did your mother or did you feel like at some point that doctors were kind of invading your turf, so to speak?

Lucas: I don't think so. Back then in mother's days when she was delivering babies, doing midwife work, I don't they had any

problem. The doctors, it looked like to me, was glad for them to get a midwife to deliver, because we just didn't have any money, in the first place. Just like I said, they'd pay with corn and hogs and whatever, cows, whatever they had, and she would take that for money. But see, the doctors, he didn't need that stuff, and he'd be glad for them to go to a midwife, get a midwife.

But I have people today saying they wished the midwives was still active, because they'd rather--but, see, you got so much stuff now. You got the hospital over there in Little Rock, University, where they take you if you don't have any money. You don't have anything, then you can go to the hospital and you don't have to pay anything. All you've got to do is just get there, you know. Then they got all this other stuff. You're on welfare and getting all that money and you can afford to go to Little Rock. So most of them now, the doctors will send them to University in Little Rock. That's supposed to be the free hospital, University Hospital in Little Rock. If you've got money, you have to pay. But if you don't have any, they take you anyway.

Ortiz: So that means there's less midwives.

Lucas: Yeah, less. They just stopped renewing the license. They wrote me a letter and they said they wouldn't renew my license because they have enough facilities to take care of the OB patients. But they don't deliver them here at the clinic, but they will send them to Little Rock. They'll take care of them. They get their prenatal care here. But then when it's time for them to deliver, they send them to Little Rock. We used to have a hospital here, but we haven't had one here now since about '60-something.

Ortiz: Mrs. Lucas, when you began your career, what kind of prenatal care was available to poor families?

Lucas: When I started midwifing, doing midwife work?

Ortiz: Yes.

Lucas: They'd have to go to the doctor, but, see, it just wasn't as expensive then as it is now. You walk in a doctor's office now, down here, Dr. Farm, it's \$18, plus whatever he does, the medicine or whatever. But to walk through the door,

you've got to pay like \$18. Now, that's cheap. That's here in Brinkley. But if you're somewhere else, like Little Rock or somewhere else, then it's much, much more. But poor families have Medicaid cards, and so all they have to do is show the Medicaid card and they don't have to pay anything to go. So they get their prenatal care for nothing.

Ortiz: Were there types of prenatal care during, say, the thirties and forties?

Lucas: No, not in the thirties there weren't. Now, I got married in '42. I don't know, I had a lot of pain in my sides, and other than that, I don't think my mother would have never taken me to a doctor. My husband was in the service. I never would have gone to a doctor if I hadn't had so much pain in my side, and that's just the way it was. If you didn't have any problem or anything, you didn't go to a doctor. But see, I was having a lot of trouble, and so she finally decided to take me to the doctor. Of course, with my second one, I didn't have any problem and I didn't go to a doctor.

When my third one came along, about eight years difference in his and my two girls, because he was born in '51 and my

daughter was born in '43. Of course, I fell out the back door, and when I fell, I guess I did some harm, and I ended up in the hospital. So I had to go to the hospital, and that's where they delivered my baby. The last one was in the hospital. But if I hadn't of fallen, I guess I wouldn't have even gone. But it was just, if you did all right, you didn't have to go. But if you had problems, then you'd have to go to the doctor. That was back in the forties.

Ortiz: What would have happen if, say, a mother just had maybe minor, maybe not necessarily complications, but maybe minor pains or other ailments? Back during those days, would she call the midwife and ask for advice?

Lucas: Oh, yeah, they'd come to you and ask, "What must I do? I'm hurting here. I have aches." But most of the time, she still didn't give any medication or anything. She would refer them to the doctor, tell them to go to the doctor, because you were never allowed to not even be giving aspirin. You weren't even supposed to give anything. They just had normal childbirth, nothing.

Ortiz: Was that the same or different during your grandmother's time?

Lucas: They weren't allowed to give anything. If they did, they gave it on their own. But they weren't never allowed to give anything. And up until '72, I wasn't allowed to give anything. I couldn't give an aspirin or anything for pain. Therefore, a lot of them, that's why they went to the hospital if they could afford it, because they thought when they got there they were going to get something for pain. And then when they come out, they'd had the first one over there and they come back home, and the next time they say, "They didn't do anything for me there. I might as well have a midwife." And so I'd get a chance at them the second or third or something like that because of that. They thought they were going to get some help to stop those pains, but they didn't.

Ortiz: Mrs. Lucas, during the forties and fifties, what kinds of medical facilities did black people have access to in Phillips?

Lucas: Well, I didn't know of any no more than you just had a

doctor and you just go to the doctor and that's it. They didn't have any clinics or anything you could go to. That was just all. You get sick, you just go to the doctor. If they had a hospital somewhere, if you were that sick they would send you to the hospital, recommend you go to the hospital. But other than that, that was all the facilities they had. Well, it was for the black and white. That's all they had back in the forties. They didn't start these clinics and things until in the sixties, start all these health clinics and stuff.

See, back there the doctors would come to your house. They'd make house calls. But see now, no house calls. Call the paramedic and they come. If you're not doing right, they'll put you in the ambulance and take you on to the hospital. But no house calls. Doctors make no house calls. My husband had a stroke. I mean, he couldn't do anything at the house. We had to call the paramedics, and they came and got him and took him to the hospital.

Ortiz: What were race relations like during those days in Phillips County?

Lucas: Well, they were all right as long as you didn't try to

attend any of their functions or their schools or anything else.

You were supposed to be considered a good person if you just tend to your own business, and you "Yes, sir" and "No, sir" you was all right. But if you tried to attend any of their functions or socialize with them or anything, you might come up killed or anything, whipped, caught and whipped and this, that, and the other.

I never will forget, my mother farmed on Mr. Clapworthy's [phonetic] farm down at Marvell. They never gave anybody any trouble, and he would always come down and he'd talk to my mother and grandmama and granddaddy and all. And when he died, he left it as, "I want you all to make a room (they had his funeral at his house) for all my black neighbors so they can come to my funeral." And they did. They had a special little old room there for them to sit. But you had to sit off to yourself. You couldn't sit in the crowd. You sat off to yourself in that little room, but you could go, because he thought a lot of them and he thought they were good people and he wanted them there, and so therefore they could go. But other than that, you just didn't go.

When we moved here, it wasn't integration here. We had two kids, and we had to send out to clear across town to school,

when we had a school right here. You could stand on your porch and talk to them over there on the steps. It wasn't until my son--he graduated in '69. He went over there the last two years of high school.

Ortiz: Brinkley High School?

Lucas: To Brinkley High School. He went the last two years over there. And we had all kinds of threats that, if we sent our children over there to school, we might as well dig our grave and stuff like that we had years before they made them integrate. And then they did it two grades at a time, so by the time they got around to my son, he only had two years. He was in eleventh grade. But my daughters, they had already graduated from high school, and they didn't know anything about integration, because they went over here to the school called [unclear], which was all black. Now everything seems to be going smoothly.

Ortiz: Back when things were not going as smoothly, back during, say, the forties and fifties, you mentioned earlier that there were a lot of things that black people could not do, and

you mentioned also the physical threats to your life. What were some things that--

Lucas: Well, the only physical thing--I mean, the only thing they said, like if you send them to their school or something, you're going to either come up killed or they'll come up missing or something like that.

Take my husband went in World War II, and he was a mail clerk. When he got out of service, he came here and he took the exam. They had open exam at the post office. He went down and he took the exam. Veterans supposed to have had first preference. He made the highest mark of anybody who took the exam, and they didn't hire him because he was black. The man right across the street worked at the post office, and he spoke up for him, and they got on him, so he lost his mind.

Ortiz: Lost his mind?

Lucas: Lost his mind. They sent him down Florida somewhere. Staggs [phonetic], his name was, lived right across the street in the brick house. He's the one came over here and told us that Lucas, he wanted to know what did they tell him about the

job, he said because he made the highest score of anybody. Because see, he did that when he was in the service, and then he was a college graduate. Then his college and everything, so he just knew all about it. But they didn't give him the job carrying mail.

And today, they don't have a black mail carrier down there in that post office. They don't have one now. They've got a black post master. Of course, I don't know how long he'll be here, but they got one now.

They had some boycotts and all that stuff to get things integrated, and that's how it got started.

Ortiz: Mrs. Lucas, was there organized violence against black people in Phillips County, like the Klan?

Lucas: Well, not that I know of. They said there was some KKKs here in Brinkley, but as far as being able to identify them and know about it or anything, we didn't.

Ortiz: You mentioned the boycotts to open things up. When did they occur and who organized them?

Lucas: Some of the black ministers were really the leaders of it. You know, like we had dress stores downtown. Well, they didn't hire blacks or anything, so they boycotted that store because they didn't hire black people, and that's when they really started putting a black here, there, and yonder. And they didn't have any blacks in the banks or things like that. When they started that, then it opened up the way for them. They started hiring. Now all the three banks in Brinkley, they have black tellers in the banks. But up until then, they didn't have any. So right now everything seems to be on the up-and-up side in Brinkley. Well, people with their own businesses and everything here in Brinkley now.

Ortiz: Mrs. Lucas, during the boycotts, were those in the sixties?

Lucas: Yeah, it was in the late sixties. It was in the sixties.

Ortiz: Was there NAACP here?

Lucas: Yeah. We still have an NAACP chapter here in Brinkley.

Ortiz: Was that already organized when you came here?

Lucas: No.

Ortiz: So you helped to organize it?

Lucas: It was organized after we moved here, because, see, I moved here in '45. I've been here since '45. My husband had been here all his life.

[Begin Tape 1, Side 2]

Ortiz: Mrs. Lucas, you were mentioning black businesses now. Were there black businesses in Brinkley back when you moved here?

Lucas: The only black businesses they had when I moved here in '45 was undertakers. They had black undertakers.

Ortiz: Where would you and your husband do your shopping at during those days?

Lucas: Where did we shop?

Ortiz: Yes.

Lucas: Here in Brinkley. They had all kind of dress shops and shoe shops and things like that here. You could go in there and buy whatever you wanted. They didn't bother you buying anything you needed. There just weren't any black grocery stores and all. But now they have black grocery stores. They have one right up here, Booker Thompson, and one or two more around. We have our own shopping mall, blacks. Well, it's not really a shopping mall. They have a laundromat, cleaners, and offices and things. We have black contractors now, black upholstery shops. There's quite a few black businesses now.

Ortiz: What have been the biggest changes that you've seen in Brinkley from 1945 to present and what have been the things that haven't changed in terms of the black community?

Lucas: Well, the things that haven't changed, we still have things that the blacks can't go to. For instance, we have a

golf course and things, swimming pool and all that stuff out here that's for white only. Black can't go to it, the clubhouse where they go in class, say, of 1995 graduating senior. Well, the blacks can't go out there to that club. They have little entertainment and stuff for the white seniors out there, and the blacks can't go out there. That hasn't changed. So they have that separately and all.

But other than that, you can go to their churches if you want to. They have things come in. You can go to the church, and they have funerals there. You can go to the church to the funeral if you want to or you can go there to a wedding or things that you used to couldn't do and all. But other than that, they welcome you now to anything just about they have. They have jaycees, and you can join that. You used to couldn't join anything like that. They have Little League ball teams. Black and white play together, and it used to be just all white, all black, one or the other.

So we've had a big turnaround in the living conditions and associations here in Brinkley. It's real nice. They look after each other if you go somewhere. Like the gentleman who lives across the street. If we're not here, he just check over here and see about our house. If anything gone or he sees somebody

come over here he thinks shouldn't be over here, he'll come over and see what they want, and, of course, he's white. Of course, we do the same thing and all. It's just so much better. We kind of live as a family now, looking after each other, seeing something we think going on, or we think they're sick or something, check on them. That's real nice. You enjoy living in Brinkley. No more than that school thing, we've never had any problem. There hadn't been but three black families on this street in years and years way back, probably 1916 or somewhere along there, because my husband's family, they cut down trees and built that house next door in the woods, and he carried water for them when they was putting down the highway out there. He's been here that long.

Ortiz: Mrs. Lucas, throughout your life, what have been the things that have inspired you the most to keep striving to reach and attain your goals?

Lucas: Just like I say, I believe in education, and when I could send my children to school and they got an education and got out and graduated on their own, it looked like I had accomplished what I set out to accomplish, and haven't had any

problems since. As I say, we believe in education. We got an education, and we saw that our children had an education. And so after they got that, we were satisfied. We worked until we got retirement age.

My mother, I married before I finished school and she went down to Pine Bluff, and she said, "If I had gone to this school, they would have had to put me out. I never would have left." And that hurt me so badly. That caused me to go back to college and finish my college degree. I finished one year, and I went back to school and got my college degree, because that just hurt me when she said it. So after that, I just went on. But that's what I was striving for. And I wanted to graduate before my daughters did, and sure enough, I graduated in '63 and my daughter graduated in '64. So I finished.

Ortiz: Were there any other experiences or stories that you wanted to share that we haven't touched on?

Lucas: No. I believe that's about it. I told you all about my family and education and married life and all. That's about all I know.

I don't know if my husband has anything he wanted to add or

not. His daddy believed in education. His mother passed when he was about four, and as soon as he got old enough to take care of himself, he was just from one school to another. He went to school at Fargo. He went to the academy in Cotton Plant. He went to Shorter College and he went to Pine Bluff and then he went to Philander Smith, all those schools over there. So that's about it.

[End of Interview]