

MGOHP Series: The Great Migration of African-Americans in the USA

INTERVIEW INDEX—ANDREW JOHNSON

Interviewee: ANDREW JOHNSON

Interviewer: LeAndre Johnson (his son)
Interview Date: February 26, 2006
Location: West side of Detroit Michigan
Tape No.: 02.26.06-AJ (audio digital file)
(35:00)

Topic:

Subject life in the south and how its different in the north but u made it!

Headings:

Comments: Only italicized text in is verbatim; all other text is paraphrased, including the interviewer's questions. Counter index corresponds to track times when loaded into RealPlayer.

TAPE INDEX

Counter Index Topic

[Audio File Track minutes -- No. 02.26.06-AJ]

Note: Counter index corresponds to track times when loaded into RealPlayer

- 0:00 Greetings. Migration from the south to the north. Came to Detroit from Arkansas in 1962 with his two sisters and two brothers when he was ten years old. Mother was looking for a better job. "I thought the jobs back home was ok." Got first job at age ten in the lumber mill. everyone was migrating from the south to the north for better jobs. Plants were hiring and everyone was moving out.
- 2:14 What was in store for you when you arrived in Detroit? His mother found a job; it was different adjusting to different people and a different place to live. The biggest difference, being a kid was not knowing anybody. There were different school times (instead of September to May it was August to June. Due to kids working in the south) Stayed in the really rural part of Arkansas—school bus picked us up and took us home. Educational curriculum was a little more enhanced in the north. Missed his family, cousins (clock chimes) and friends back in Arkansas. One of the biggest adjustments was snow. Never saw snow before. It was exciting to a 9-10 year old. (Wearing boots gloves and heavy coats)
- 5:50 First job at Ford Motor Company. At the time Ford was hiring, and Chrysler, because the Vietnam War was going on. Plenty of work in the city. At 18 years old he met his wife and got married and started a family. He changed jobs a few times from Ford to Chrysler. Would work and get laid off. After the Vietnam war

- was over the work field started to decline in the north. Jobs started back up in the south. The people down there were starting to live good, buying new cars and homes. Detroit was just starting to feel the crunch of unemployment. *But I made it.*
- 8:00 | Joined the military. has been married 33 years and has three wonderful kids the he devotes his life to. Sometimes he thinks about going back to the south because the job situation here in the north has declined. Big industries are moving to the south, cost of living is much lower in the south. Discussion of property taxes in north and south
- 10:20 | Confronted with situation were he couldn't go to certain places and eat in certain restaurants in the south because he was black. At this time life was really confusing being a child—couldn't understand why I couldn't do a lot of things. Got along with the white kids but their parents didn't want them to play with us, we couldn't do that. *Why was I so much different that them and what made them so much different than me?* These things were minor compared to my parents going through them on an adult level. Still faced racism in Detroit. Racism was reason for exodus from the South. Wanted same respect as anyone else. *Parent may have accepted because they had to, but I didn't have to.*
- 15:30 | Martin Luther King, hearing him and he was right. Was one of first members in African-American Museum; Was a member of the Black Panther party. Backed off later because, King had a better view on the situation. For the safety of himself and his family. Didn't want to *end up dead or in jail because had everything against you.* Dealing with a predominantly white police force, so didn't have a voice.
- 18:40 | Believes there were better opportunities in the north for his family than in the south. if you're not an extraordinary athlete, a lot of opportunities in the south were not there Unless you wanted to be a general laborer. (Clock chimes)
- 20:33 | His wife's parent's reason for migrating to the north was the same (jobs/opportunities. *My wife was my first love, my soul mate* and best friend. Determined to make a go of it in the city; we raised each other. If he'd stayed in the south he wouldn't have married that early because it would have been harder to support a family with the given job situations there. Was 18 and making the money of a 30,40 year old at Ford. Wouldn't change anything if he could go back, Other than some financial decisions.
- 24:00 | Goes back to Arkansas and visit. The majority of family is still there. Goes back to visit every two to three years. Sometimes he misses home. People in the south are doing good Have brand new homes, two or three cars. Depending on your level of education, the jobs are good in the south now as well. *I still made it because I had a dream for my family.* Early 60's we were part of that big exodus *but past thirty years things kind of went in reversal.*
- 27:15 | Wants to move back home after a few more years in Detroit. Has had enough with the city; too much hustle and bustle, the crime rate is on the rise and it's much less his hometown of Wilton Arkansas. Now the town has came up, there are stores and strip malls in many different areas—along a five mile stretch where used to be farmland.

- 30:00 If he moved back home he doesn't feel he would have a hard time finding a job since he is a professional truck driver. It's a question if his wife wants to move back to his hometown. She wouldn't want to move to his hometown, but she does want to move back to the south. We both migrated without our parents, raised our kids--*After a while you just want to take life easy.*
Believes he and his wife did a good job raising their children and now its time to relax and enjoy life.
- 33:00 All the blacks were moving from the south to the north in the 1950' and 60's. Now they are moving from the north to the south as of the 1990's. They are moving back for better living. There are now better job opportunities in the south from what it was years ago. Many people are doing good for themselves and are bringing it back home
- 33:52 End of tape
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