

Novak Digital Interview Collection: Detroit Immigration Series

INTERVIEW INDEX— SAM MOORE

Interviewee: SAM MOORE

DOB: April 1, 1932

POB: small town near Texarkana, Texas

Interviewer: Keena Arrington

Interview Date: March 6, 2008

Location: Mt. Sinai House of Prayer in Detroit, MI; Sam Moore's church

Tape No.: 03- 06-2008-SM (audio digital file)

(approximate total length in minutes 59:04)

Topic: Sam Moore was born April 1, 1932. He was raised in a small town outside of Texarkana, TX. In this interview, Sam Moore revisits living in poverty during his childhood which led to his migration to Detroit. He also recounts living in poverty in Detroit as a result of migrating to the region during "the turn over" (when automotive plants lay workers off for two weeks).

Subject

Headings: Migration to Detroit; Texarkana, TX

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 iTunes.

INTERVIEW INDEX

Counter Index

Topic

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

0:00 Where were you born? Mr. Moore was born in a suburb in Texarkana, TX.

How many siblings do you have? 8 siblings.

Tell me what you remember about your childhood? Mr. Moore recounts he was called various names. At age 3 he was called a *nigger*. Ten years later he was called a *colored* boy. Ten to Fifteen years after that he was called black people which led into him being called a *Negro*. After that he learned that he was called an *African America*. Mr. Moore's father died from an accident early in his life and his mother raised him. His mother was a hard worker His mother worked at the *white peoples* house and they ate left over food from the *white peoples* table. Mr. Moore did not realize he was poor at that time, but thought this was the way of life.

5:04 Continuing about his childhood: At ages 7- 10 Mr. Moore recalls learning to survive as a *colored* person. His mother got married and they moved in with her husband. They lived on a farm. He noticed that there were different places for colored and whites, but thought that this was life. His step father trained them to work on the farm. They learned to raise their food by hunting, and fishing. They were taught how to survive. They ate whatever they could catch in the winter months. His family increased to 6 members

during this time. As their family increased they switched masters, because they would get more from sharecropping (as a result of masters looking for larger families).

11:04 School: Mr. Moore learned that he needed to go to school. They enrolled in Sept. and took their books home. They could not get back to school because they had to pick cotton during the fall and garden during the spring. However, they passed to the next grade after going only 3 times a year. Mr. Moore's family sharecropped with a farm owner. Sharecropping was when you work on a farm and your pay is a portion of what you pick (vegetables, cotton, fruits). They sold their share of the cotton to get money for items such as food and clothes. Mr. Moore does not remember having any shoes until he turned 11-12 years old. *Looking back I realize that we were very poor.*

14:04 Moving to the city: Mr. Moore's step-father got a part time job in the city. They moved from under a master into a *shot gun house*. This house had no running water and the bathroom was outside for everyone in the neighborhood. Mr. Moore was not used to the city. His family did not know how to survive in the city because they were not able to raise crops or livestock. They were often very hungry. They would eat a pot of beans and bread for 2 days. When he got older he began to get food out of the city dump. Everybody was in the dump; *birds, dogs, we were in there too.*

19:04 First and second jobs: Mr. Moore pay was \$8 at his first job which was *good money*. He walked 5 miles to work. When he received his pay checks, he would bring his money home to his mother so that she could take care of the family (he learn this from his step- father). He quit his first job for a restaurant job that was paying 50 cents more. At this job he was able to bring money and food home. White and colored people could eat at this restaurant. Whites ate in the front and coloreds ate in the back. *We were only allowed to eat the left over food that the whites did not want.*

22:04 Moving again: The next house that they moved in had lights. *We never had lights in a house*. He also never had his own pair of shoes: *I don't know who gave me the shoes, but I had to keep cardboard or paper in them*. Mr. Moore took a side job that paid him 25 cents a day to buy a bike he *desired* for transportation. After getting the bike out of layaway, he would pick people up on the side of the road and they would ride into town.

25:04 Moving up in the world: At age 16- 17 Mr. Moore went from a bike to a motor bike so that he could get around better. While riding he stumbled across this factory job that paid \$28 a week. Although you had to be 18, Mr. Moore was hired because of his height. Since he *was moving up in the world* he wanted a car. He put the car in the layaway. He did not know how to drive, so the car caught on fire on his first day of having it.

28:04 Why Detroit: While making \$32 a week, Mr. Moore started thinking about migrating. He thought about other cities and states, but decided to migrate to Detroit due to his cousin writing him and telling him that job were plentiful in Detroit.

29:04 Entrance into Detroit: When Mr. Moore got off the bus he saw cars, buses, trains, and plenty food: *I wrote my mom and told her that Detroit was a big city*. In the Woodward and Jefferson area he started to look around to relocate: *I had plenty of money, I had \$16!* When got to the Black Bottom he felt comfortable because he saw a bunch of negros, but it wasn't until then that he found out that blacks killed and stole from each other. *In the south blacks looked out for one another.*

34:04 A job: *When entering into Detroit all blacks went to Black Bottom*. Mr. Moore walked around Detroit for a month looking for a job until he ran out of money. As a

result of Mr. Moore arriving in Detroit during the change over (when plants lay people off), a job was hard to find. He became homeless. He lived and ate (food that people threw away) on the streets of Detroit. His first job, located outside of Detroit, was at a bowling alley as a pin setter. He worked and lived in the bowling alley. He did not have to pay rent, so he would send money to his mother. He was 19 to 20 years of age at that time.

39:04 His second job in Detroit: Mr. Moore quit pin setting and started landscaping. He worked for a white man that paid him 75 cents an hour. This was the first time he was treated well by a white man: *I never had a white man treat me so good, he treated me like I was his son.* After working at the landscaping company for 1 year, he was able to buy him a car.

42:04 Being a man: Things that happened during Mr. Moore's employment at the landscaping company. He got married. He went and got his sweetheart from Texas and brought her back to Detroit. He did not have a place for them to live, so they slept in the car. After being offered someone's room, he was able to rent his own (after saving up a couple of pay checks). Within his 9 years of employment they had 3 children, his pay had increased to \$38 a week, he had benefits, he rented a home, and then bought a home. Mr. Moore decided to leave the company to own his own company: *My company was gone be bigger than his company.*

48:04 Business owner: During his tenure at the landscaping company Mr. Moore was favored by the choice accounts (this was the president of Ford Motor Company, General Motors, the Fishers, doctors, and lawyers). John Dexter (the president of Ford) gave him some money to start his own business: *Mo money than I ever had in my whole life.* Mr. Dexter's was Mr. Moore's first customer. This gave others in Mr. Dexter's neighborhood a chance to see Mr. Moore's work. This led to him doing landscaping for Mr. Dexter's whole village: *I could park my truck and be there all day.* After Mr. Moore realized he could make more money if he had Moore equipment, he went back and asked Mr. Dexter for some more money. Mr. Dexter said no.

52:04 A call on his life: After doing so well in Detroit, he forgot where he came from. He started to remember that he used to have nothing. He wanted to help others, so he had begun to teach others. He was a deacon, teacher, minister, elder, assistant pastor, pastor, overseer, district elder, and then a bishop (this is his current title).

59:04 End