

Interviewee: Reed, Lakesha

Interview Date: June 6, 2013

UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON
ORAL HISTORY OF HOUSTON PROJECT
GULF COAST FOODWAYS

Lakesha Reed – Beaucoup Bar and Grill

Interviewed by: Aimee L. Bachari

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Transcribed by: Aimee L. Bachari

Location: Beaucoup Bar and Grill, Old Spanish Trail, Houston, Texas

AB: My name is Aimee Bachari and today is June 6, 2013 and we are at Beaucoup Bar and Grill. We can start just by having you introduce yourself, and tell me your age and where you were born, kind of some background.

LR: My name is Lakesha Reed. I was born in New Orleans, Louisiana, and I'm thirty-five years old.

AB: Did you grow up your whole life in New Orleans?

LR: Yes.

AB: What part?

LR: Holly Grove.

AB: I don't know where that is, but I thought it was important.

LR: Uptown New Orleans, yeah.

AB: And what are some of your earliest food memories?

LR: Well, I grew up in a house, I grew up with my grandparents, so I grew up with older people so I don't, I would think that it's a little different than, you know, my normal aged parents. Well, my dad was in the house, but he's more like my brother than my dad. So, we ate everything: vegetables, okra, pork, I don't eat pork now, but that's part of what I don't do in the restaurant, but everything, like succotash, I'm trying turtle to raccoon to, I don't

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eat any of that stuff though. No. Chitlins, I don't eat it. I never tried it. Anything that smells that bad shouldn't go in your mouth. I mean, I pretty much grew up eating a lot of everything. My grandfather was a principal so he, he kind of had a lot of different cultures, so he would bring stuff home to try from students and from parents of students in his house, and so I grew up eating a lot of everything. Yeah, didn't eat a lot of beef though. Louisiana's not a beefy, we don't eat a lot of beef. We don't, I didn't, I didn't start eating beef until I got to Texas. I probably, we had like, roast, but not like steaks or fajitas. We didn't do that.

AB: And so most of your food memories are just family gatherings?

LR: Yeah, we didn't, we didn't eat out very much. Our "eat out" may have been fast food, like Popeyes or Burger King, but other than that, it's home, like home meals. I love home cooked meals, even though I don't, I eat out now, like because I cook here, so when I'm home I eat out. I don't cook at home.

AB: I can understand that.

LR: Yeah. Once I leave here, it's it. It's over.

AB: So does your family identify as Creole?

LR: No, it's just plain old black. [laughs] But I mean, it's pretty much, Louisiana is a mish-mash of everything, but we, we, we have family in Lafayette. It's more your Lafayette, I call it backwoods, your backwoods country folk. We're city, country folk. Yeah, city, country folk.

AB: Ok, because I know there is a difference between Cajun and Creole, I don't know if maybe you can explain that for someone who might not know?

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LR: You know what, I know it, but I'm not going to go on, down in history, saying the wrong thing. So, the Creole and the Cajun came because of the region. So, that's basically the difference because they're all a mix-mash, I think they're **cayanas** [3:41] which are the Cajuns were the white people that were in the region. And then you have the Creole, which is the mix of the French and the so, there's a, it's more of the region than the origin, so I'm not, that's, I don't want to go. Like, "That girl, what's she talkin' about?" [laughs]

AB: Ok, so when you ate at home, was it a lot of Creole inspired food?

LR: It's just, yeah, I mean, when you say Creole, it's more of how people call eclectic. It's just a mish-mash. You have African, you have Jamaican, you have the French, and you have the Spanish. So, we definitely had, my word is mish-mash, we definitely had a mish-mash of everything. My grandmother would try anything. She'll be like, 'we're gonna try this.' So it will be like hamburger helper, you have some spaghetti sauce with some beef, you know, like some pork. So she just, she was not afraid to try things, and I think the Creole food comes from, I have this left over, we have tomatoes, we got a little okra, so we gonna put it all together. And that's definitely what we ate at my house. I mean it was heavy, heavy seafood, heavy seafood, heavy pork, heavy vegetables. We grew vegetables in the back yard, so a lot of the good, fresh stuff.

AB: So who taught you how to cook?

LR: I'm gonna say, I was taught by sight because my gran, all I was allowed to do, which is crazy, people don't believe me, it's like 'You own a restaurant.' I didn't cook until I got to college. I was allowed to peel shrimp. I was allowed to chop celery, onions, and bell pepper, which we call the trinity, and anything else you're not allowed in the kitchen. 'Get outta the

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kitchen!' So when my grandmother did try to show you, of course you move too slow. She'd be like, 'Girl, get out the way. I got it.' Because they're old, they've been doing it for years and then like when you get to do it, you take forever so then their nerves get back so then they sent you away. So, I just looked. I'm a, I just looked at what she was doing over the years, and just was there. You know, I asked questions, but I didn't cook growing up. Like eggs, but not cook cook. So, it was more or less until I got to college, when I kind of did stuff on my own. Then I was the popular person because everybody wanted to come to my room to eat. But, in college, I worked restaurants. So, it was the natural thing to do. So, I really didn't start cooking until then.

AB: So you sort of just watched her and eating ...

LR: Just watched and eating. Eating everything. My whole family cooks. My grandfather cooks, my uncles cook. They come from, they they come from a different time where they had trades. They knew how to sew. Mechanics. They knew, we didn't, growing up we I could never remember like the air conditioning man or you know, anyone that fixed anything. The only time we got anything fixed was like the septic tank in the yard because the city made you, but they, all of them cook. My grandpa bakes, they all, everyone cooks, so it was just a natural progression, I guess.

AB: I was wondering if you could talk a little bit about what it was like leaving New Orleans because of the hurricane and sort of what it was like coming to Houston?

LR: Well, I went to U of H, so I was already, I was here. I'm very familiar with Houston, so it was just a natural to do for the hurricane. Leading up to Hurricane Katrina there was like maybe two or three hurricanes, so I didn't, I didn't evacuate. And then with Hurricane

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Katrina I was just like, 'man, I don't know. I'm not feelin' it.' And so it was me and my best friend at the time, she lived, it's called across the river, which would be the West Banks. So I was on the phone with her, she was like 'whatchu gonna do?' 'I'm just gonna lay down. I'm not going anywhere, it's just too much.' So, I think, I went to lay down, I looked out the door, and the sky was like a bright purple and orange and red. And I was like, 'ok, yeah.' Let me get something together. And so I called her and we decided to leave. It was me, her, her sister, her dog, my two cats. And I took maybe like four changes of clothes and my laptop. So, we thought we were just coming for the weekend, so by the time we decided to leave, we had to go, they blocked off anything going eastbound, so we had to go westbound. We had to drive to Mississippi and then up and over, it took us twenty-five hours to drive here to Houston. And then, after that, you know, I'm still here. You know, we thought we were just coming for the weekend. I lost everything in my house, everything, minus what I had. So, yeah.

AB: That's hard.

LR: Yeah, so that's pretty much ...

AB: Did your friends go back or did they end up staying?

LR: No, she's still here. I have family. Mostly everybody, they went back, that I know. But a lot of people, a lot of people my age and younger they, they haven't gone back. It's just not, everything, if you owned a house, everything's expensive, the insurance jacked up because you have to jack up your house so many feet and a lot of people can't afford it. And like, real estate is high, expensive. The jobs weren't there unless you were like kind of manual labor,

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like construction. A lot of things were gone, so a lot of people just decided to stay where they were. That's about it.

AB: So you were already familiar with Houston, so where did you stay when you came?

LR: My friend has family. She's from here, so we stayed with some of her family for a couple of days. Then, I think it was the Monday after the hurricane when the levies broke, I was like, 'ok, well maybe we're here for longer than four days.' So, then after that, I think, we kind of decided, I'm trying to remember, I think we went to, me and her moved together, we rented a house and did that for a while and just kind of, after that is when I started the restaurant so now I'm just here. And she's a flight attendant now, so she flies.

AB: Can you talk a little bit about why you came to U of H? And what you studied?

LR: Marketing was my major, Spanish was my minor. I thought that's what I wanted to do. I did an internship and I figured out I was not the nine to five desk type. So, that was a good thing that I found that out. While I was in school, I've always working in restaurants, waited tables, and once I graduated, they asked me to be a manager and it was kind of just the progression of what I was doing. And then, I have family here. My mother's side is here. So, I got an academic scholarship to U of H. So out of the schools that I got accepted to, it was just, I guess, the easier, more, because I have some family here, it's still close to New Orleans, and I had a scholarship. So that just pretty much made sense. And then, that's it, right. That was your question?

AB: Yeah. Do you still stay connected with U of H at all?

LR: Yeah, I mean, I get business from U of H. I go to the football games. Most of my friend that went to college here, all the, you know, our grown selves now, we still talk. They come

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into the restaurant and they still go to games and that's just you know, being alumni, going to the games. That's pretty much it, other than that.

AB: I was wondering because I know your first location was really close to UH, did that have anything to do with you going to U of H as an undergrad?

LR: Mostly, I'm gonna tell you why it was started. I started the restaurant because while I was in school I wanted good food, good food from home. There is none. Not to say anything about Houston, but for me there is none. I used to get gumbo from Jason's Deli, which Jason's Deli's gumbo is good, but it's still not the same so that's more, just because Louisiana and Texas are so close, you have so many people like myself who are here, so I just figured if I want it, somebody else wants it. And so, that's kind of where the restaurant started from.

AB: I guess you already talked about how you ended up in the restaurant business, but how did you choose that location?

LR: Well, the location was more happenstance than, you know, like a choice choice. It was available and it was moderately priced [laughs]. And it made sense because it's basically on campus, it's not really on campus, but it's basically on campus, yeah. So, it just kind of made sense.

AB: What did you have to learn on the job?

LR: Well, I've always worked in restaurants so I've had, I wouldn't say I had everything I needed to start, it wasn't really a surprise. The things that you learn is the choices. Am I gonna pay, starting out, am I gonna pay my bill at home or am I gonna pay my stuff at work? Do I want a new stove or do I want new shoes? Those are the things, the choices that

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you have and then people, I think the hardest thing is people, because everybody wants everything now, everybody's reasons, wants, needs, they think they're first. So, it's more about managing the people that make it hard versus, I think, the business. And it's people on both sides, the customers are people, your employees are people, and then it's just all those things and everybody wants everything now. Yeah, that's the hardest thing. As far as the food and everything, I've always eaten big. My grandmother doesn't know how to cook for one or two people. It's like, she cooks for like thirty people! But you're eating the same thing for like four days. I don't mind leftovers, because I grew up eating leftovers. There are some people that don't like, like I have a partner, he doesn't like leftovers. Like, 'oh well, that's you. I'm eating leftovers.' [laughs] I love 'em. Yeah.

AB: Me too. That's how we ate. You've got some really good reviews from people like Alison Cook and I was just wondering why you think sort of the whole New Orleans food works so well in Houston?

LR: Well, I don't really think it's just Houston. New Orleans itself has an international, like New Orleans is New Orleans, no other place like it in the world. It is an international destination. So, with that, and then the state lines being so close, like I said before, you have so many Louisiana people here and if you're not first descendants, you're second and third descendants, somebody's uncle, brother, cousin, everybody's grandma, that knows how to cook gumbo, is here. So, it makes it, it's just like a no-brainer. It's like a niche that you have if your food is good. We make everything from scratch here, so it costs a little bit more, but it you know, makes us who we are. Like we make the dressings, we make the gumbo, we

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make everything from scratch. So, that makes, I think, the biggest difference, but New Orleans just has it's own, I guess, mystique for everybody. So, it's just a natural attraction.

AB: I've heard somebody say, no matter what kind of gumbo they have, their grandmother makes the best gumbo. Do you get that?

LR: Yeah, that's why I would never franchise Beaucoup, because people would change the recipe and it would lose their business. I would take it back. So, it's too many people, like I say, it's too many people that have an aunt, a grandma, that cooks in the family and everybody thinks they're the best cook. So, we definitely get it, like this old lady came in one time, I just had to, I said, 'ok.' She's like, 'um, baby. Are you the owner?' 'Yes, ma'am.' 'Well, this gumbo, it's too spicy.' I said, 'Well, it's not spicy, it's seasoned.' 'Well, it's spicy to me.' I said, 'Do you want something else?' 'No, I'm gonna take it home and work on it. You see because I've been making gumbo...' 'Ok, yes ma'am.' [laughs] So, I mean, everybody has their own opinion about what it should be. But you also have to realize you're cooking for the masses and not, like how I cook at home is not how I cook exactly here. Because you have to do the moderate. You can't do the extra spice or the extra, you have to do the moderation. And I think we do a good job at the moderation, you know, to please most, the majority. We'll say majority because there is always some you can't please.

AB: [laughs] So, in one of the articles that I read, I think it was the CNN, it said you're grandma trained, not classically trained. We talked about this a little bit earlier, but are these recipes your grandmother's recipes?

LR: Yeah, I mean, most of it is just stuff I ate growing up, just kind of refined. Like I told you, I don't, I haven't eaten pork since many like '91, so I don't, a lot of Louisiana stuff is full

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of pork. So, people being health conscious, me not eating pork, we just choose not to, you know, we choose to freshen up the recipes by omitting that. We choose to freshen up the recipes, I say, updated New Orleans. It's just fresher, you know, cleaner, more palatable, not as heavy. So, that's kind of what we do.

AB: You talked about everything being homemade and I've heard a lot about the lemonade that you guys do. What inspired the lemonade?

LR: Well, the lemonade is kind of, the lemonade was kind of how things come about, like I said, like Creole. You're at home and you have stuff left over. It was just one day, it's Texas, it's Houston, and it was hot. And, I had a partner at the time at the other location, we had, I think we had a catering thing we had some blueberries left over. So, I was like, 'Man, it's so hot. Let's make some lemonade.' And then we had the blueberries, so we were like ok we're going to make blueberry lemonade. And so we blended it up and mixed it up and it was good. And then there was some customers there and we let them try it and they, they loved it and so we just tried it out and then it went from there. So blueberry was the, blueberry lemonade was the original and then there's regular, there's raspberry, strawberry passion, peach amaretto, and mango. So those kind of come from, it came from that, just leftovers and then it's just, people liked it, and so we just kept going.

AB: I guess the lemonade isn't really a New Orleans beverage, but do you guys have any sort of New Orleans beverages that you do?

LR: Well, we have Hurricanes, we have frozen Hurricanes of course those are New Orleans. We call ours Hurricane Katrina. So that's like our signature drink. It's probably the

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most popular. We do café au laits, which is like half milk, half coffee for brunch. And that's pretty much our main sellers that we do as far as New Orleans drinks.

AB: Ok, can you talk a little bit about the process of opening the restaurant, what that was like?

LR: Originally, the restaurant, which was, it was called Wings-n-Wings on the campus, and it was after the hurricane. I didn't grow up poor, I didn't grow up rich. I grew up in a medium-income family, I didn't want for anything, but after the hurricane, I pretty much lost all of the stuff that I had. The most, I guess the hardest part was like pictures, stuff that I couldn't get back, pictures, and like my high school photo album. Actually, I have to send this girl, she sent me, I finally got my high school, '95, Class of '95, high school, what do you call it, yearbook. And I have to copy it and send hers back. I've been having it a couple of months. So, I finally got it back, but I don't have, you know, like all the signatures and all the fun stuff so, that probably was the hardest for me. But then afterwards, like when me and my friend moved into the house, the hardest part was like, ok I'm going to go make some spaghetti. Oh, no. You don't have anything to make spaghetti. You don't have pots. You know, just buying stuff over. Or your favorite jeans. Like, those are the things that when it started happening enough, then it was like, ok. Well, yeah, this is real. So, after that, I just decided that, you know, I wasn't, that's when the restaurant came about. You know, the reason was, you know, good food but it also was I have nothing to lose. I don't have kids, I don't, I feel like I do a great job when I work, so this is probably the time to start something on my own. There's just no time better than now and I had money saved from working so, I thought about it and I decided to do it. So, I had a friend, who was my partner at the time,

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and I asked her to come aboard. And we kind of looked for spots and then the one at U of H came up and he was like 'well it's going to be this amount of money.' And we're like, 'ok.' So, we paid it and then he's like, 'well, next week, in two week, you'll start.' So, I showed up. She still had a job. So, I showed up. They maybe had like two employees, they stayed for a week. And that was it. We started with the menu that they had. That's how we got the wings on the menu. Like people love our wings. We changed everything, but that's how we got wings. And then we just slowly changed everything. We kept up with their menu and then just slowly changed and put our stuff into it.

AB: That's crazy, so you had two weeks.

LR: Yeah, we had two weeks. It was just like, we get this from here, we got this from here. This is the menu, they'll help you and then they're going to leave. And that was it.

AB: So how did you find people to hire after those people left?

LR: Actually, my uncle that lives here, he helped me until we found other people. He had, he was in the military. He had done like short order cook and a friend of his, which was the same, they, he had done cooking in the military so they helped just for the first couple of months until we got it going and found other people. [laughs] It's funny.

AB: It is funny. Look at you know. It's totally different.

LR: Totally different.

AB: Another question about the early days, what do you think went right and then what kind of went wrong?

LR: Right, I would say because there was no major sales, right was having enough time to perfect things. There was no overwhelming, anything, it was more or less we had some

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customers and we built, it allowed us to talk to people. It allowed us to explain our story. It allowed us to explain our food. It allowed us to let people try stuff. It's more or less like at home and, and, I would say it allowed us to be authentic. And what went wrong was I would say having a partner went wrong. Just business choices went wrong. Just not knowing things, not having enough money, in the beginning for operations like summertime, there, at that particular location, killed us because the students leave. We weren't prepared for that. And that happened two years in a row. You don't know that until you put yourself in that place. And it was more or less like we had big ideas but you weren't all the way prepared to do those things. I mean, for the most part, it was a great experience though.

AB: So what made you move to the new location?

LR: Well, that, the seasonal aspect of it and the first partner was not a good partnership, so it had to break off, so we decided to go separate ways and then I decided to keep going and look for another location. That's kind of, and this location is great because you get the Medical Center, I still get the students, I get the neighborhood, and it's a lot of traffic on Old Spanish Trail so it's much much better, and way bigger.

AB: Did you pick it for those reasons or was it sort of another happenstance type ... ?

LR: We were looking for those things, but it was more or less what was available, like in the price range. Again, like all those things that play bigger factors. We pretty much built up the traffic in this area. Like, this wasn't really a hot area, but we really have a following and we really built up traffic over here.

AB: And so that would explain the change of the name, the split up of the partnership?

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LR: Well, I'm gonna tell you, let me tell you the real reason. Beaucoup Wings-n-Wings was the original name. And it was that way because what was there before was called Wings-n-Wings. I mean, people want to think there is a great story about it, but its not. It was called Wings-n-Wings, so we knew our original name was Beaucoup Café, we knew that, but we did not have money to buy a new sign. So, my thoughts were, if we call it Beaucoup Wings-n-Wings, eventually when we get the money to change the sign people won't be lost. But we never got the money. And then it stuck with Beaucoup Wings-n-Wings, and that's what we were known as so Beaucoup was the original name, and Beaucoup you know in French means much or a lot and we just were always doing a lot, our food was a lot, we were catering with it, so that's the basis of the name. That's why.

AB: So when you moved, did you guys have alcohol at the previous location?

LR: No.

AB: No, ok so that explains the bar aspect.

LR: Yeah.

AB: Ok cool. I read in the *Houston Press* that you guys have a lot of vegetarian options?

LR: I mean, I wouldn't say it's a lot, but it's more than you would expect at a place like this.

AB: So is there a lot of people that order them?

LR: We, we have a lot of vegetarians. We also have a lot of Muslims that come. We have, you know, a lot of people looking to eat healthy but just want to eat good food. And that's pretty much, we had that following at the other location, so it just carried on. We're going to actually make some more additions pretty soon, more choices.

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AB: What are some of your most popular dishes? I know the crawfish bread.

LR: The crawfish bread is the most popular, most popular by far. The lemonades are by far, after that our wings, Beaucoup, the Beaucoup seasoned wings, a seasoning that we came up with. Those are very, very popular and the po'boys are always great. So those are probably the most, the Beaucoup wings, the crawfish bread, and the po'boys.

AB: So how did the crawfish bread idea come up? Is that ...

LR: It's just something we ate growing up in New Orleans. It's a traditional ...

AB: So it's common in New Orleans of just in your family?

LR: It was, well it's common more or less seasonal time, like festival time. You don't really make it a lot at home. It's more like a seasonal thing, like crawfish is seasonal, or holiday time. Like stuffed bell peppers, people make them all the time, but we ate them, those are pretty popular too, my grandmother, she makes them, but more or less how you'll get a lot of it. Like Christmas, Thanksgiving type of thing.

AB: Do you have any favorites that aren't so popular?

LR: My favorite thing to eat is smothered okra. It's smothered okra with shrimp, smoked sausage, and it's tomato sauce and corn. It's my favorite, favorite thing to eat, but I want to put it on the menu, but I don't know how, it's one of those things you have to build up to. I don't know how people will receive it. A lot of people aren't okra fans. So I don't know, but that's my favorite thing and my grandma makes it. That by far is my favorite.

AB: My next question is what do you think of Houston as a food city?

LR: Well, I think it's great. I mean, I'm gonna say this because it goes with it. Houston is so separated. I feel like it doesn't have a real, real culture because it's so, so separated and

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you have like Northside, Southside, you have the Asians over here, you have the Indian community over here, the Africans, because it's so big, it doesn't make it mingle. It doesn't make it where you have to do anything. Like, New Orleans is a jumble and its crazy like you have a high Asian populations. Most people don't know that. But, like I love Asian food, I grew up eating Asian food. But Houston, it's so separate, you don't have to mingle. And I think, it doesn't make for a, this is my opinion, it doesn't make for a real culture here. But as far as food, I think it's amazing because you do have all those things. You can go to Southside, you can go to Midtown, you can go to Chinatown, you can, you know they have all these restaurants and different things, so I think it's great for food, but as far as culture, I think it makes it have something missing, to me.

AB: I mean, it's true. It is pretty separated.

LR: You don't have to mix.

AB: But people that want food know where to go, they'll go seek it out.

LR: Right, right. I mean, it's amazing for that. There's a million places to eat. Millions.

AB: That's why we're the fattest city. [Laughs] So where are some of your favorite places to eat in Houston?

LR: Well, one of my favorite places recently closed down. Jamaica House, there were a small restaurant and I think they had been open maybe a year or two they're really good. But since they closed down, I started going to Cool Runnings. I just tried them last week, it's Jamaican food, and they're really good. I did not know about them. I knew about them, but I just, I'm an inside the loop girl. I live inside the loop, work inside the loop, and if I don't have to travel, I don't like to. Oxtails is my favorite, I go for the soul food but, Just Oxtails

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[Soul Food]. I used to be a big P. F. Chang's fan but they sold it, they changed, it's different.

By far, I don't have a favorite, favorite place. Brasil is a café. I love their goat cheese and sausage pizza. And Mai's. I go there all the time. And Grand Lux. I go there all the time, but I go there for their beignets. Their food is not ...

AB: Really?

LR: Yeah, they have this, it's so good. They're not like regular, traditional New Orleans beignets, they are like little donuts but better and they're so good, they serve them with this like Jack Daniel sauce. Those are so yummy! [laughs] You have to go there!

AB: I didn't even know they had beignets.

LR: But you have to order them like when you order your food, because it takes, they do it, it takes like twenty minutes. They have the best beignets and they have the best chocolate chip cookies, best! Those are like my go to spots. P. F., I don't to P. F. Chang's as much, but Cleburne's [Cafeteria]. I like Cleburne's. You know what Cleburne's is?

AB: No.

LR: It's like a Luby's. I think they're Greek or they might be a Jewish family. They've been around for like forty years. They don't even have, they take cash and checks.

AB: Wow!

LR: Checks. It's a whole bunch of old people. It's just like Luby's except they have the best like desserts and they have the best vegetables. It's not like highly seasoned, but if you just want good food, it's just like Luby's but it's better than Luby's. And I like them, so what else? Those are like my go to places.

AB: What neighborhood do you live in?

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LR: I live down the street.

AB: Oh wow, that's convenient.

LR: Yeah, I live down, actually I live in the apartments, actually I'm walking distance. I live in the Equinox apartments and that's by choice, but I'm getting ready to move hopefully if everything goes smoothly and it's still right down the street, it's off of 10-West, it's a neighborhood like right behind here, they're building new houses.

AB: Have you always lived in this neighborhood?

LR: I always live close to where I work because I'm an inside the loop girl. I do not like to get in traffic. Like before when I had the restaurant I lived in Hiram Clarke and I was so tired. I almost killed myself like a couple of times, I was like, 'I can't do this.' I'm going to kill myself, so after that, the one, that was the original house we lived in after Katrina, after that, I just, you know, I moved in closer. It wasn't far from here. But I don't like to drive. And that comes from New Orleans. You don't drive far for much of anything. So I don't like to drive.

AB: Yeah, Houston is so spread out.

LR: Yeah, so if don't have to drive I won't.

AB: So do you have any favorite places to eat in New Orleans?

LR: I like the Cheesecake Bistro, for their bananas foster French toast. I kind of stole that from them, we have it on the menu for brunch. And more or less you have this place doesn't even have a name, there was this place like down the street from my house, I don't even know the name of it. And, it's just like a corner store. But, other than that, my house! [laughs] Yeah, my house. Like other than that, yeah. And just like seafood, like boiled

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seafood in those corner stores, they don't, they don't, it's that, I don't have, fancy places I like Emerald's. Emerald's is good. Before I go to my go to places, I try to make my grandma cook for me when I go home.

AB: Does she still cook?

LR: She still cooks. She's up there now, she doesn't cook as much and not quite the same because they kind of have to watch, they're like in their eighties so she, she, they can't use as much salt and stuff so it's a little different, but she still cooks. She still cooks, she cooks like every week. She'll cook more on the weekend, but not that much because there's not that many people there now, so ...

AB: So do you get to go home and visit a lot?

LR: Not very often. I went home for, when was that? I just went home like maybe a couple of weeks ago. She has knee surgery, it wasn't anything. She had knee replacement surgery, so that was like, maybe like last month. Not much, but it should be more.

AB: Well, I bet this place keeps you busy.

LR: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, so. That's that.

AB: Well those were all the questions that I had for you, but is there anything else you wanted to talk about? Any other restaurant things that I missed?

LR: Well, I mean, the main reason that I also started the restaurant, food makes people happy. It's just like the, like my grandma would say that, 'I'm not gonna give you money, but I'll feed you.' She'll feed anybody. 'But I'm not gonna give you no money, I'm not gonna lend you nothin', but I'll feed you.' So, it's just, New Orleans is based around food. Like, I remember, I had a best friend, we had the same name, her name was Kesha, everyday in

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Junior High, 'whatcha momma cook?' 'whatchu had for lunch?' That was the conversation. 'Whatchu gonna eat? What we gonna eat for lunch? Where you goin' this weekend?' Like, that was the conversation. Like, I don't think I'm a fat girl, no offense. But we like, like that's the conversation, what did you have to eat? Everything is around the food. And you know, that's just, food is like basically, they say math is a common, food is a common denominator for people. So that's what I love about having this. And I love food. Like I like to try everything. So, that's pretty much the only thing. Food is just, I guess, you could call it the common denominator. Or the equalizer. Other than that, I think that's it. I really don't have anything ...

AB: Ok, well thank you so much. I really appreciate it.

LR: No problem.

[End of Interview.]