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RYAN MIDDLE SCHOOL PROJECT

Interview with: Edith Holland Nealy, Bill Holland
Interviewed by: Anna Burke
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AB: Hello, this is Anna Burke. I am sitting with Bill Holland and Edith Holland Nealy, children of former Yates high school principal, William Holland, at the Center for Public History at the University of Houston. This interview is for the Ryan Middle School Project under the guidance of Dr. Carroll Parrott Blue. Thank you for speaking with me today. I would like to begin the interview with some general biographical information about both of you. Edith, let's start with you. Can you state your full name and tell me when and where were you born?

EHN: Edith Holland Nealy. I was born in Houston, Texas, July 22, 1942. I went to Ryan, as it is called today, Middle School. It was Jack Yates Middle and High School then up until the new school opened. I attended Indiana University in Bloomington, Indiana. I lived here and in Los Angeles. I was in Los Angeles for almost 4 years. For that 4 years, I worked for the County of Los Angeles and I was a laboratory manager for King Drew Medical Center.

AB: What about you, Bill? Can you state your full name and tell me where and when you were born?

BH: Sure. William Holland, and I was born in Houston. I am the youngest of Dad's 3 children. Where did I go to school? Well, Dotson Elementary, J. Will Jones Elementary, GBM Turner Elementary, Ryan Junior High School. In those days, they were junior

highs, not middle school. Hebron Academy in Hebron, Maine. Rice University. And that is it.

AB: What places have you lived?

BH: I have lived in Houston. I have lived in Wisconsin. I have lived in Maine and San Antonio. My profession. By education, I am an anthropologist and linguist. I have never worked in that field. I was a radio news reporter, news director of a radio station, general manager of a public radio station, owned a consulting firm putting financial packages together for cities and counties, and I have worked with many nonprofits, executive director of not-for-profits. For the last 10 years, I worked primarily with refugees. Presently, I am coordinating a refugee program at Houston Community College.

AB: I would just like to discuss your experiences with segregation in Houston. You told me of several instances like the rodeo and Playland Park and department stores where segregation had a major impact on your life.

EHN: Well, it was, I won't say a rule but the standard in our household was if you couldn't go the day you wanted to go, then you didn't go at all. And that applied to the rodeo, it applied to Playland Park, it applied to the department stores downtown where they made you change clothes, try on clothes in a broom closet. So, it was fairly limited as far as downtown went. There weren't any places I think that you could go. But as you were discussing, you were talking about within the black community, there were businesses that the blacks supported.

BH: During segregation, there was a thriving black business community and social community in Houston as in most cities and for many of us, until we ventured out of our

community, our life was with black folks. You know, white folks were people we didn't see. They existed maybe when you saw a picture in the newspaper or on TV but the people we interacted with on a daily basis were black people. We were raised with certain golden rules and one of those rules was why are you going to be stupid enough to give your money to someone who won't let you through the front door? Ala, we didn't spend our money with many stores here in Houston. We supported black business and there were lots of black businesses to support. Restaurants, grocery stores, dry goods stores, etc. Edith mentioned not going to the rodeo, not going to Playland Park. There are still things that I see that I have problems with today. For example, there is a March of Dimes drive going on and I remember when the March of Dimes drives were segregated. There was a black chairperson - Mom, for many years did that - and there was a white chairperson. I still have trouble giving to the March of Dimes. I remember before United Way, it was the Community Chest. Well, there was a black chairperson leading a drive and a white chairperson leading those drives. Every day, there are memories of things that used to be and basically, we were taught to support the black business. We were taught to support . . . people who treated us fairly, you support. People who put artificial boundaries in your face, you don't support. It is a simple as that.

AB: You spoke of the rodeo which is such a big cultural event here in Houston. Can you talk a little bit about that?

EHN: Well, I don't know very much about it. I never got to go to it. Only since I have come back to Houston in the last 5 years is the first time I ever went to a rodeo. We just didn't go. Now, we had friends . . . I don't know if the black rodeo was here then. No. O.K., so I supported the black rodeo in California. They had a black rodeo.

AB: I understand they opened up the rodeo only on certain days.

EHN: Yes, they opened up a lot of different places on Juneteenth which, I guess, was to just make us "yippee" happy that we got to go to these places but there again, we didn't go then either for this same reason - if you can't go any other day, then you are not going this day either. And, as a little kid, that was kind of hard to understand, you know, but as you grew older, you understood the reason why. One of my fondest memories was climbing the tree in our yard so I could see the top of the circus tents. That was the closest I got to the circus. We just didn't go.

BH: You know, Houston had its own unique view of segregation also. For example, here in Houston, the rodeo involved Hispanics but it did not involve blacks. For example, HISD, the public school system, classified Hispanics as white. So, segregation . . . and this is not to imply that Hispanics in Houston did not experience any problems but in terms of how the system structurally defined things, it was unique here in Houston. It was totally different, say, in San Antonio where you would find in San Antonio water fountains that said basically no Mexicans, which is the kind of discrimination you found here in Houston with the water fountains that said no colored. But again, we had our own unique flavor of things in those days.

AB: Now, Bill, you compared Houston with Chicago in our last interview. What made these two particular cities so different from one another?

EHN: Well, I think we started talking about Terre Haute when our uncle would take us . . . every summer, we went to Terre Haute. That is where my father was born. We would go to Terre Haute every summer. We could go to the fair. As a matter of fact, we went to the fair every day and we could do what we wanted to do. We could play. We could

do whatever. And we spent the entire day at the fair every day. And then, I think that you were talking about when in Chicago, he took you where?

BH: The Shad Aquarium.

AB: Chicago wasn't segregated?

BH: Yes, Chicago was segregated. In fact, you could argue that many northern cities are still segregated if you look at housing patterns but the segregation, the formal segregation, was different and that is probably why people from the North tend to think that it was some panacea in that you would not find water fountains that said no coloreds. But you found segregation just as divisive as you did here. It simply manifested itself in different ways. But for a kid 6 years old, I could go to the aquarium in Chicago. They had sharks and they had all kinds of neat things. And, you know, that was just heaven for me.

There is a difference in age between my brother and sister and I and when they would go to Chicago and Indiana at first, occasionally, they would drive. And this was before I was born. Or they would take the train. And the stories I heard, there was literally a change once you got a little north of the Mason Dixon Line. For example, driving where you would have to stop to eat, to get meals, etc., to use the restrooms in the South, you were circumspect. Once you reached a certain state, maybe it was St. Louis - I don't know . . .

EHN: It was St. Louis. That happened the first time I went to Indiana to school, to college, was on the train. It pulled into some little town somewhere and I was about to get off the train because I wanted something to drink and a snack. The porter told me, "Where are you going?" I said, "Well, I am going over there." He said, "No, you are

not." I said, "Well, why not?" He said, "Do you see that tree over there?" I said, "Yes." He said, "Well, they hang black people on that tree." I said, "Oh," and I took my seat. But once I got to St. Louis, I changed trains and then I got on another train and I went to Chicago to meet my aunt. It was just different. I mean, I didn't know anything about that . . . I mean, I knew it happened but that was the closest . . . I have been trying to remember the name of that . . . but anyway . . .

AB: Within the Third Ward, how close was the community and how was this shown?

EHN: Well, I think it was a very close-knit community and I think one of the ways that it was shown is the sports. Anything to do with the school, it was competitive between the Third Ward, the Fourth Ward and the Fifth Ward, and there was a great deal of pride in all 3 of those areas because of where you went to school. One of the things I remember is that wherever the boundaries are, you could not have a girlfriend or boyfriend over in the other area, you could not wear the school colors in the other area. It just sort of made you stay together. But it was because of pride, it was because of school and any time either of those schools did anything that was remarkable, that gave them bragging rights to say, well, ha, we did this and you didn't.

BH: It was more than Third Ward. Third Ward was a close-knit community, as was Fourth Ward, as was Fifth Ward, as was the black community. Usually when you have artificial bounds placed upon a group of people, it tends to bring them together. Third Ward was Yates and Ryan, and everyone knows Yates was the best high school. Period. Sorry, Wheatley! But there was camaraderie between everyone. When someone did something, there was a sense of pride felt among all people whether you lived in Third Ward or Fourth Ward or Fifth Ward. Now, when Yates beat Wheatley every year,

obviously people in Third Ward were happy but, you know, people in Fourth Ward were always mad because Washington lost every year.

EHN: These games, by the way, were played in your stadium.

BH: That's right. Here.

EHN: Which is now your stadium.

BH: Which is now Robertson Stadium. That originally was Jeppesen Stadium. And, in fact, that stadium hosted the Yates Wheatley Thanksgiving football game which, for many, many years, held the highest attendance of high school football games in the U.S., and when it was played on Thanksgiving, it also was the largest money making event each year, revenue generator for HISD.

AB: Why don't we turn the conversation towards your father. Can you tell me a little bit about where he was from?

EHN: He was born in Terre Haute, Indiana. He went to school at Indiana State. He ran track.

BH: Baseball. Basketball. He did not last too long playing football. He competed in the decathlon in track. Great stories of growing up in high school and in college and this is an example of racism in the north. A decathlon is 10 events and what would happen is the white athletes from the other high schools or colleges would get together and they would pick 1 or 2 people to throw points to, to keep Dad from winning an event. So, he was taught early on that there are things that you overcome. You either give in or you overcome. And, by the way, he was taught that in that panacea of the North.

AB: Are there any other specific instances of segregation or dealing with segregation in Indiana?

BH: None that I would put on tape.

AB: O.K. When did he first come to Houston?

BH: In the late 1920s, early 1930s?

EHN: I thought it was 1921. I will have to look that up.

BH: It couldn't have been. It would have been the late 1920s.

EHN: O.K.

AB: And what did he do when he came to Houston?

BH: He had a letter of introduction from friends in Indiana. Basically, it was from the Baye family. The senator of Indiana gave him a letter of introduction to a gentleman here in Houston who was the superintendent of HISD and the president of University of Houston, a guy named Robert Oberholtzer. And it turned out that they both went to the same college. And Oberholtzer employed him in HISD as a teacher.

AB: And who wrote him the letter of introduction?

BH: Birch Baye.

EHN: There is still a Baye in Indiana politics.

BHN: Yes, one in Congress.

AB: Did he immediately start his job as principal of Yates High School upon hire by HISD or did he work elsewhere?

EHN: He was at Ryan. He wasn't the principal. He was a teacher.

BH: Yes, but it was Yates.

EHN: I am sorry, it was Yates.

AB: Do you remember what year he started his job as principal?

BH: I wasn't born. I am not expected to know these things!

EHN: Neither was I!

BH: When he retired, he ended up having the longest . . . he was a principal in HISD longer than any other person in the history of the school district.

AB: At Yates, what was his personal philosophy for education?

EHN: Do your best. You were as good as anybody else. You were expected to achieve no matter what. As a matter of fact, you were supposed to be better than anybody else.

AB: How did the community react to this educational philosophy?

EHN: They loved it.

AB: They loved it? Can you give me some examples?

EHN: Well, most of the students, and I am sure you have talked to some of them, they were motivated to achieve. They were motivated to learn. They were motivated to go beyond what they thought that they could do.

AB: How involved was he in the students' lives?

EHN: As far as at school?

AB: Yes.

EHN: Well, everybody, shall I say, "marched to the same drum." If you were having problems other than just being mentally off the pace, then you had a visit with him in the office to discuss your underachievement. It was just expected. There wasn't a choice. You did it. It wasn't just him. It was all of the teachers. All of the teachers expected you to achieve. They expected you to do your . . . not expected, demanded, that you do your best. So, it wasn't like you had a choice. It was a forced march. You did it. The parents were, I think, very happy to see that their children were being educated that way, that somebody really cared about their children. And, in a lot of ways, that has been lost in

education today. I mean, I don't feel that there are a lot of people out there who really care about teaching your children and care about having them achieve. It is just not there anymore. That is anybody's children today.

BH: It is more than his personal philosophy - it was the community philosophy. It was a group philosophy. It is the way black folks thought and how they valued education. Edith had talked about the other teachers and the community. What people forget about segregation, in the days of segregation, the public schools had the best and brightest in the black community as teachers because basically, the jobs that black folks could get, good jobs, were post office, public school system, and a handful of doctors and lawyers. So, your teachers may have a master's degree or Ph.D. in physics or chemistry or mathematics. You had really smart people teaching you. You also had an understanding during segregation that the future generation, the generation being educated, the student, was the future of the race. And that meant something. People were expected to take responsibility for their actions for what they did to achieve. Those beliefs were not only within the school administration, it is what parents wanted for their children because this was a day and time when parents scarified for their children. The sacrifice a parent made would mean the family would achieve more from generation to generation. It was a different time. A totally different time.

EHN: Think about it. I mean, you quite possibly saw your teachers in church, in the grocery store, at the movies, wherever you went. I mean, it wasn't like they were distanced from you. They were always there and it was the type of thing where back then, if somebody saw you doing something wrong, several phone calls were made -- your mother, your father, your teachers. I mean, everybody knew. It wasn't a big secret.

It was a community taking care of the community. I mean, that is why I said - that is just not the case anymore. Well, I haven't seen a lot of it.

BH: And there was a trust that parents had for teachers that you don't have today and it is because of integration. My son went to integrated schools in HISD and I was involved, and a number of black parents with children my son's age, we were all heavily involved, and we all had something that we looked for to make sure that our child received a fair shake. We simply wanted to make sure that there was no problem of racism in how the child was being treated. So, you are involved to kind of keep an eye on things. And if the child fails, we wanted to make sure that the failure was because of what the child did or did not do as opposed to other factors. In these days during Yates and during segregation, that was not on the table. You see, if you didn't do your homework or if you made a D on a test or, let's say, a test like English which is very subjective grading, well, we know that it is because you did not read Macbeth, not because of the teacher. And, in fact, if you look at a lot of parents involved with their children today in public schools, you will see black folks involved and folks might not say it aloud but that is one of the reasons. They are just making sure that their kid gets a fair shake.

AB: Many students I have spoken with fondly remember your father's announcements or inspirational messages over the PA system. Do you remember any of those?

EHN: I don't. I do know that they always related to doing your best. They were inspiring. They were the reason that you did read Macbeth or did go that extra mile. He also used it . . . I won't say climbed upon his soap box but there was one instance with the little store across the street, there was an incident with a student, and they hurt the student. His announcement might have been that week but his announcement was very

clear that why would you go give those people your money if they hurt one of your classmates? Well, it didn't take long - after that, they closed and they changed hands. But any time he was on the PA system was to inspire, to more or less keep you motivated to do well in school, do well outside of school.

BH: There were no excuses. It was obstacles can be overcome, figure out a way to overcome them. Take responsibility. It is in your hands. And basically, it was as simple as that. And, you know, those are lessons 50 years ago, 100 years ago today, that are still valuable. The entire Civil Rights Movement basically people don't talk about anymore but there was the same where grass will grow, greens will go, meaning you can take a little plot of land and you can plant some mustard greens and you can survive. We don't read about that in our history today when we look at the Civil Rights Movement but it was a period of taking responsibility for what you do and what you become.

AB: How did that trickle down to the students as far as language, personal appearance, hygiene, etc.?

EHN: Well, everything was held to a higher standard. You looked the part, you talked the part. It was not tolerated that you didn't do those things. Back then, when students went to TSU, they went in heels and stockings. You were dressed wherever you went. Now, we didn't have to wear heels and stockings in high school but you did have to dress.

BH: You did not wear short pants. Girls did not wear . . . except on certain occasions, you wore dresses. I mean, it was different.

AB: How conscious was your father of the media's perception of the high school? Do you think you have some funny stories?

BH: The media's perception of black people and black high schools. There was a year when there was a fight on campus or something and a reporter from the Houston Post came in to cover the fight and basically dad picked him up by the seat of his pants and the nap of his neck and kicked him out of Yates and told him that when he was ready to cover a positive story, he was welcome back.

AB: Any other instances where the media reported on something at Yates that he did not like or were there positive reports?

BH: Well, yes, because there also was a black press in Houston.

EHN: It is where most of your positive reports came from.

BH: You had The Houston Informer and The Forward Times. So, of course, there were positive reports within the black community in terms of the two leading newspapers, the Jones family paper, the Chronicle and the Hobby family paper, The Post, on occasion, but for the most part, things were not covered.

AB: Did your father encourage or support civil disobedience or public protest from any of the students?

EHN: Well, that was the example I gave you, the one that I remember, boycotting the store across the street.

BH: I mean, one of the basic philosophies that Edith mentioned early on in this interview is you don't spend your money with people who don't treat you correctly. During the days of the 1950s, the sit-ins at Weingartens and the drug store, the lunch counters, many of the students from Yates and Wheatley and the other high schools, TSU, were involved in that. There is a fine line between openly encouraging as principal

of the school but encouraging, yes, he encouraged and, in fact, our brother was a student at Yates and he was heavily involved in those sit-ins.

AB: What was your brother's name?

EHN: George.

AB: George Holland? In what other ways did your father publicly fight segregation in Houston? You had mentioned a story about the rodeo parade.

BH: The Houston Rodeo parade downtown, the white high schools marched in front of the animals. The black high schools marched behind. So, basically, one year, he called up the principals of Wheatley and Washington, the black high schools and said, "Hey, we are not going to march unless we march in front of the animals." They so informed the District and the rodeo organizers and they ended up marching in front of the animals.

There was a time the minor league baseball team, it was an American Association team, the Houston Buffs; in fact, right near here . . . the stadium was right at Cullen and 45. The seating was segregated. Dad's nickname growing up was Babe as in Babe Ruth. He loved baseball. Evidently, once he went to a game and he got tired of sitting in the segregated seating, he kind of cut the ropes and said, "Hey ya'll, let's go over here," and the stadium became integrated.

EHN: Threatening not to have the Yates Wheatley game.

BH: As I mentioned earlier, that football game was the largest revenue generator in HISD, and the way the District handled the money was that the lion's share of revenue generated by school events went to those schools with a pittance going to the District, but with the black schools, in that event, it was just the opposite - most of the money was going to the District and little of the money was going directly to the schools. So

basically, he and the principal of Wheatley got together and it was a situation where either the ratios would come around to the same as the white high schools or we won't play this game anymore. So, the District relented and the two schools started getting their fair share of the revenue from that game. [End of Side 1]

EHN: We are talking about the things that he did. I remember that for whatever reason . . . well, he was always in trouble with HISD. Always. Somebody was always coming. Somebody was always writing a letter and protesting about how he ran the school, what he did for his students which he wasn't supposed to be doing because they were black. They weren't supposed to have that type of education. It was just things that they weren't supposed to do. This one particular time, he was having a meeting in his office and someone from downtown burst in his office and started telling him that he didn't do whatever they told him to do and they were going to get him fired and yada yada and he just stood there. He just let the man rant and rave and go up one side and down the other. And when the man left, he told everybody in the room, "Now take out a piece of paper and write down everything you heard," and he took it downtown and that was the end of the guy.

AB: Any other encounters with HISD?

EHN: Well, that is something that I actually put in practice myself.

AB: How so?

EHN: The same deal. If somebody comes in your office and rants and raves and screams and tells you you didn't do this and you didn't do that and they are going to fire you and whoever - there were 2 people in the office at that time - and after they left, I said, "O.K., take out a piece of paper, write down everything you heard." And I turned it

in, too. So, he was sort of a nonviolent person. He always felt that you didn't think well when you were angry or you couldn't think at all when you were angry. So that you were supposed to win by thinking, not so much by physical force; that you had to use your head.

AB: How did your father's standards of excellence translate into the home when you were growing up?

EHN: Well, as one would expect, no less than what they were at school and probably even a little more than they were at school. I was telling you before she got here that, you know, how much fun could it be going to the school that your father is the principal of? What could you do? What could you say? I mean, if you did it outside, somebody would tell him. You didn't want to cause an embarrassment to the family. So, the standards were high. Some of us followed those and some of us didn't.

BH: And they started young. For example, when I was probably 3-1/2, my good, dear sister would sit me every evening on the piano bench with flash cards and I would start learning my addition, subtraction, multiplication, etc., and then they would place before you Encyclopedia Britannica - O.K., start reading. What the heck? And so, the standards were high and they started early on.

EHN: Yes, only one of us read that Encyclopedia Britannica.

AB: Any other instances that you can think of?

EHN: No. Those were the fond memories.

AB: Any not so fond memories?

EHN: Well, did we have not so fond memories? Except for me whining to go to Playland Park and the rodeo and the circus.

BH: There was a time when a friend and I almost said his name. We were playing in the backyard, playing baseball. The ball went into these bushes. He threw it in there and told me to go get it. Well, he knew there was a wasp nest in the bushes so I stuck my hand in, came out with a wasp nest and we started fighting. The kid beat the heck out of me, whatever. He got the best of me. I ran inside, "Daddy, daddy, daddy," so and so, yada yada . . . and he looked at me and he said, "Well, basically you should take care of it. Why are you coming to me?" So, I thought about it. Oh, O.K. I went back out and we took care of it. Personal responsibility. If you are going to behave like this, take care of it.

AB: How did your father react when he was replaced as principal of Yates when the school moved to its new location in 1958? You had an excellent story, Bill, about that.

EHN: I am trying to prompt you. The community was very, very upset. The students were upset.

AB: Didn't they want to bomb the new school?

EHN: Yes, they wanted to bomb . . . well, to add insult to injury, they brought the principal from Wheatley to take his place and that was just like the last straw. So, I think he went downtown.

BH: It is probably genetic within the family. People see lines. And in his world, he thought that the school board had the right to reassign him - it was in their purview - but they did not have the right to fire him. So basically, he told them that, that you can assign me to another school, etc., it is within your right but if you try to fire me and I can't support my family, I'll kill you. And he said it with a straight face.

AB: In front of the school board?

BH: Yes.

EHN: So basically they left him at what is now called Ryan.

BH: Some of the students wanted to burn the new building down and he basically told them that, you know, they can't do stuff like that and that he would take care of it. And historically, this is 1957, 1958 when all of this is happening and if you look at the Civil Rights Movement in the country at that time, and the country was on a teeter-totter, so to speak, in terms of which way it was going to go. That is what happened.

AB: How long did he stay at, well, what is now Ryan?

BH: He retired in 1976, 1977.

EHN: He was there quite a while.

BH: He was my junior high school principal, so I had to perform, yes.

AB: Any stories about that at Ryan?

BH: No, we had a much better student body than they did at Yates so, you know, we were O.K.

AB: When Houston was finally desegregated, what impact do you feel this had for the black community?

EHN: I have always felt that desegregation did not help the schools. It might have gotten you into the rodeo and it might have gotten you into the circus but the education I thought went downhill for black students. You didn't have the dedicated teachers that you had before, you didn't have the sense of community that you had before. It tore it apart. I just didn't think it was the same.

BH: You know, it is interesting . . . if you go back and you look at Brown v. The Board of Education and if you look at the relief that the plaintiffs were asking in that

lawsuit, they were not asking for integration. What they were asking for was equality - separation but equality. And the Supreme Court, in its wisdom, took it a step farther. And in the wisdom of that decision and in ensuing integration of school districts across the country, education for black folks changed and it went down. For example, we are told that athletes can only maintain a C- or C average. In Texas, there is some average that athletes have to maintain to continue their eligibility. And we are told that black folks can't score on SATs because it is culturally biased and all of these things but, you know, you can look back at Yates when it was segregated and Wheatley when it was segregated and you can look at the scores of those kids and you can say, now wait a minute, how is it back in these segregated schools, these suckers could score 1300, 1400, and they can't now? And everybody sitting in the classroom for 12 years. So, integration is not the panacea that it was supposed to be.

EHN: It worked for some things. I mean, it got you in the big buildings. It got you . . .

AB: You could eat lunch anywhere you wanted.

EHN: You could eat lunch anywhere you wanted. Yes, it got you that but education, I think, suffered. So, you made some gains but, you know, you had some losses, too. And it is true - we have black people now who are CEOs, who are anything they want to be but starting at the beginning, if you look at it today in the first grade going forward, schools today, to me, are not really geared towards education. I think that that is something that the President has talked about, that there needs to be more emphasis on math and science. There was a time when . . . it is not just black people anymore . . . I mean, this country used to be number one in education, and we are not anymore.

BH: Here in Houston . . . I am willing to bet if you looked at most school districts in the country as they integrated, I think Houston integrated . . .

AB: In the 1970s. Late 1960s. Early 1970s.

BH: HISD started integrating its sports schedule in 1966 and it was a timetable because if I am not mistaken, the NEA was going to have their convention here in, I don't know, 1967, 1968, somewhere in there, and, you know, they didn't want NEA coming in in a segregated system. But my point is you look at what was done to the black schools, the best black teachers were taken and put in white schools and they were replaced with inexperienced young white teachers in the black schools. Now, what the hell?

EHN: Who didn't want to be there.

BH: Right. So, what do you expect to happen but education in black schools, traditionally black schools, is going to go down. It makes you want to believe in the conspiracy theory sometimes.

EHN: A master plan.

AB: Why do you think it took Houston so long to integrate?

BH: It is a complex question, and I made a few cracks earlier about the North and the South, etc. In the South, in Houston, while there was segregation - whites only fountains, drinking fountains, that kind of stuff - there was in the South much more personal interaction among black people and white people, i.e., the maid, the people working for the guy who owned his own company, etc., even though they may have been janitors, etc., they were black, there was interaction on a closer basis. In the North, you did not have that interaction. There was segregation among people. So, when it did integrate . . .

the pressures from other things you did not have here as you did in places like Detroit or Chicago. I don't know. I have no idea.

AB: Do you think that today's younger African American generation is reaping the benefits of your father's work?

EHN: I think what their parents learned has been passed on to a lot of them and in any society, history always plays a major part. If you don't know your history, then you are going to be a lost person. You have to know your history and the background of where you came from -- it is the responsibility of all of us to keep that history alive and I think you have found with the Yates students that it is alive and well; that the lessons taught have been passed on to the children and that they are demanding that they perform. So, the same things that we were taught in school, they are likewise teaching their children, too.

BH: I think there is a giant con job with kids today and they don't know nor do they appreciate what people went through for them to have the freedoms they have now.

EHN: But it is hard for you to tell a kid. They can't relate to it because their world is not like that, so that is why it is incumbent upon the grandparents and, if they have them, great-grandparents, to tell them what it was like back in the day. As I have told you before, there are places in Houston I am just seeing for the first time and I am almost 70 years old, to say, whoopee, I finally saw Lamar High School or I finally went to the circus here. I have been to the circus in California. And when somebody says well why are you so happy about . . . what is the big deal? Well, the big deal was I did not get to go. I did not get to see it. I could not go. So, that is the thing that I think we have to

keep reminding. So, we as grandparents, we must embed these stories in our children so that they can embed them in their children. I see that as our job.

BH: The black community, the black family, to a large extent, the cohesiveness has been destroyed. The issue of personal responsibility, you talk to too many folks nowadays and it is what is the government going to do, or it is not their responsibility, it is someone else's or something else's. And that is different now. And, in fact, 50 years ago within the black community, if somebody needed help, black folks helped them. It is just different. Totally different. You look at the number of kids . . . like, if you look at GED programs in Houston, you look at too, too many black kids, mid 20s, late 20s, that quit school, etc. High school dropout rates. I just think it is totally different and is a giant failure now.

AB: Is there anything else you would like to add to this interview? All right, well, thank you so much.