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Zetty Epps

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Bridges That Carried Us Over Project

Interview Summary

Interviewee:

Zetty Epps

Interviewer:

Unknown

Interview Date:

February 24, 2023

Interview Location:

San Bernardino, CA

Length:

00:05:26

Interview Summary completed by:

M. Camacho Nuno, 2024

Description:

In this interview, Zetty Epps answers the interviewer's questions regarding her time in school and the racism she faced. After discussing the origins of her name, she talks about the attitudes as well as the speech used to demean Black students at the time. Epps then speaks of Mr. Troy and Mr. Edingburgh, two people who influenced the BSU in the high school. After the discussion of further information about Epps's time in high school, the interview ends with the topic of nursing courses in high school. Epps explains how those courses, as they were in many high schools at the time, affected her future.

Subject Topic:

- Name Origin
- Helping Those without Homes
- School
- Racism and Slurs
- School Authority
- Field Trips
- Education
- Future careers

Spatial Coverage:

Name of Site (if relevant)	General Location/Address
California State University, San Bernardino	5500 University Pkwy, San Bernardino, CA 92407
Pacific High School	1020 Pacific St, San Bernardino, CA 92404

Temporal Coverage:

1968 - 2023

Key Events:

- The original of Epps's name.
- History in high school during racial prejudice.
- A counselor and a teacher who both influenced the BSU.
- Fieldtrips that Epps would remember.
- Changes in schools due to open enrollment.
- Learning for future careers.

Key Organizations:

- BSU

Interview Index:

Media Format	Time (hh:mm:ss)	Topic Discussed
Digital Video	00:00:00 - 00:01:00	Epps talks about her name and where it comes from.
Digital Video	00:01:00 - 00:02:26	Epps discusses her time in Pacific High School and the racist speech she had to endure.
Digital Video	00:03:58 - 00:04:48	The change that open enrollment had in schools.
Digital Video	00:04:48 - 00:05:23	How the classes in high school helped prepare Epps for her future.

Related Materials

Additional oral history interviews are available from the Bridges That Carried Us Over Project at CSUSB, <https://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/bridges/>

Full interview transcript can be found below.

Interview Transcript

Start of Interview:

[00:00:00]

Q: First your first name and your last name?

ZETTY EPPS: My name is Zetty Epps.

Q: [Zedia?]?

ZETTY EPPS: Zetty.

Q: Oh, [Zay?]?

ZETTY EPPS: Zetty. Like Betty. Zetty.

Q: Oh. I'm sorry.

ZETTY EPPS: Zetty Epps.

Q: Zetty Epps. Oh, that's -- I love your name. Zetty. That is sassy.

ZETTY EPPS: Oh, okay. Country.

Q: Oh, country.

ZETTY EPPS: Yeah. My grandma named me that, it's such an old Southern name.

Q: Oh, is it?

ZETTY EPPS: Yeah.

Q: That's my first time hearing it, that's why I stumbled over it, I'd never heard it and I love it.

ZETTY EPPS: Yeah, I met a girl last night, I mean today, when we was passing out backpacks to the homeless, and I met this young lady, and she -- this meeting her family, doing -- what is it? What is it where you meet, where you find out your history? Whatever it is, I can't think. But she found out she had an aunt named Zetty. I said, "Oh wow, look at that." [00:01:00]

Q: So we're talking about BSU, what high school did you --

ZETTY EPPS: I went to Pacific High School in San Bernardino.

Q: And what memories did -- what years did you go, from what year to what year?

ZETTY EPPS: I went from 1968 to 1971. And BSU was formed, I don't know when it was formed but --

Q: It was already there.

ZETTY EPPS: It was already there.

Q: Was it an easy time there?

ZETTY EPPS: No, I mean as far as the European people.

Q: Yes, yes.

ZETTY EPPS: Well, no, because they didn't really -- they'd rather have their own space, and us out of their space. They didn't want to be together. And I didn't want to be together neither. But I didn't have a choice because of the open enrollment my mom had me in.

Q: So you had to bus? Were you bused over there?

ZETTY EPPS: Yes.

Q: Did you ever encounter anything on the bus or at school from their --

ZETTY EPPS: Oh yeah, this racial [00:02:00] tension, oh yeah.

Q: Did the BSU get involved with that in any way or what do you remember about the tensions?

ZETTY EPPS: Just name-calling, N-word, they liked to sling that N-word so much. And that makes you angry and makes you want to fight. But as you grow older and you mature you don't act like that. But then boy.

Q: That was the trigger word. Yeah, so did you guys talk about it at the BSU? Did you have an adviser?

ZETTY EPPS: Yeah, I think Mr. [Troy?], he was the supervisor over the BSU,

he was really a -- Mr. Troy was -- he wasn't a teacher, he was a counselor is what he was. And he was over the BSU.

Q: Was he white or Black?

ZETTY EPPS: No, he was Black. And then we had Mr. [Edinburgh?], he was influencing the BSU because he was a Black history teacher at Pacific High School.

[00:03:00]

Q: Did you guys go on field trips?

ZETTY EPPS: Well, what we did, I remember we had maybe some car washes to raise money, we had dances. That's about all I can think of, the things that we did. I don't know anything we did profound for the BSU.

Q: Sometimes the basic things that you do that you just enjoy or that strike a memory for you doesn't have to be profound, just something that was meaningful for you.

ZETTY EPPS: Yeah, there you go, I really don't have -- I really don't because I was the treasurer of the BSU. And --

Q: Where are you from originally before you came to San Bernardino?

ZETTY EPPS: I was in San Bernardino, I was born in San Bernardino.

Q: Oh, you were born in San Bernardino. And were your parents --

ZETTY EPPS: Yeah, my parents, they're from Louisiana. But we've been here. I mean I was born there. And then I went to [00:04:00] schools in my neighborhood which were predominantly African American. And then bam, that open enrollment. Then I was in an all-Black school, majority Black school, and then bam, I had to go to open enrollment, go to the junior high school, with the --

Q: Question, do you feel like it made a difference in your education?

ZETTY EPPS: No, I really don't.

Q: Would you have preferred for it to continue?

ZETTY EPPS: I wish I could have stayed. I did. My mom, she didn't understand, she just thought it was going to be better. But maybe in the -- I don't know where. Maybe in the South or something you had that. Maybe it was better. But it didn't seem, I don't think it made a difference. No.

Q: Do you feel like your high school experience prepared you for your future career, in what way might it have?

ZETTY EPPS: Well, maybe because -- well, yeah, because I took a [00:05:00] nursing course for nurse's aide, you could do that. So I took that nurse's aide course because I wanted to be a nurse, so I took that nurse's aide course in high school. Yeah.

Q: So it did have --

ZETTY EPPS: Well, yeah. They had that for every -- I mean all schools had that. So it wasn't.

Q: But for you it made an impact so that's okay. So that's our five minutes.

ZETTY EPPS: Oh, okay.

End of Interview:

[00:05:26]