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Theresa Guinn

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Bridges That Carried Us Over Project

Interview Summary

Interviewee:

Theresa Guinn

Interviewer:

Unknown

Interview Date:

February 24, 2023

Interview Location:

San Bernardino, CA

Length:

00:06:13

Interview Summary completed by:

M. Camacho Nuno, 2024

Description:

In this interview, San Bernardino native Theresa Guinn speaks with the interviewer. Guinn discusses how it was growing up and attending school during a time when segregation was prevalent. She mentions she hopes that politics, at the time the interview was recorded, will eventually level down and the country will become more understanding. Guinn goes on to speak about her career as a nurse and even about the time she was at the old San Bernardino County Hospital during the Whittier Earthquake. After that event, Guinn worked with nurses who had degrees in their field. The interview ends with her explaining that since Guinn did not have her degree, she returned to school and successfully obtained her degree.

Subject Topic:

- High School
- Segregation/Racism
- Politics
- Nursing
- The Whittier Earthquake
- Secondary Education

Spatial Coverage:

Name of Site (if relevant)	General Location/Address
California State University, San Bernardino	5500 University Pkwy, San Bernardino, CA 92407
San Gorgonio High School	2299 Pacific St, San Bernardino, CA 92404

The Old San Bernardino County Hospital	San Bernardino, CA (Defunct Location)
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Temporal Coverage:

1973 - 2023

Key Events:

- Guinn's memories of being in school during segregation.
- The political state at the time the interview took place.
- Guinn's feelings of watching segregation and comparing it to current politics.
- Working in a nursing position.
- The Whittier Earthquake and the change of hospital location.
- Guinn's returning to school to pursue a degree in medicine.

Key Organizations:

- San Geronio High School
- Warm Springs Elementary

Interview Index:

Media Format	Time (hh:mm:ss)	Topic Discussed
Digital Video	00:00:14 - 00:01:25	Guinn's stories of school in times of segregation, such as the race riots.
Digital Video	00:01:46 - 00:03:21	Guinn talks about the political state of the country at the time of the interview.
Digital Video	00:03:28 - 00:04:49	The interviewee's memories of working during the Whittier Earthquake.
Digital Video	00:04:57 - 00:05:54	Guinn and her journey towards her career in nursing and the medical career.

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: -- you want.

THERESA GUINN: Okay.

Q: You could do it all. (laughs)

THERESA GUINN: Okay.

Q: Your first and your last name, and then what years you went to high school, and what high school you went to.

THERESA GUINN: Okay.

Q: Okay? So you can start, and --

THERESA GUINN: Okay.

Q: -- your name.

THERESA GUINN: My name is Theresa [Sherman?] Guinn, and I actually started San G in 1973, graduated in 1975. The year I actually got to San G was the year that they were in turmoil over segregation, so one of the things that I remember is the race riots, the bus driver telling us we needed to make sure we were on the bus in a timely manner, and when the bell rang all the Black kids were supposed to walk out at exactly two o'clock, and all the chaos that took place. And the one thing I decided is, after I saw the things that were going on, better get on the bus, 'cause I am a child of segregation. Sixth grade, Warm Springs Elementary, we were bused from the West Side [00:01:00] over to the East Side, and were met with a lot of angry white parents that actually just did not want us in the school. However, as we started to integrate, kids started to understand. You know, we were different, but yet we were really not that different. So, needless to say, I made it through high school. I graduated. Everybody had their little cliques back then. I actually went on

to become an RN. I worked mental health. I worked ICU. I worked in interventional radiology. Right now, I work in a clinic as a employee health coordinator. I also have a job as a part-time learning coach for graduate students in the LVN program. So all of that to say, you know, my parents kind of were in that era of the Black Panther, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, and I kind of recall, with all of the vitriol we're seeing in politics today, [00:02:00] when Trump was in office one of the things that came up is Blacks having the voting rights, and that was before Elijah Cummings died. And when I realized that that happened in, what, 1967, '69? I was a child at that time. So thinking about our history, and thinking about where we are today, realizing the importance of voting, realizing the importance of segregation, integration, and people just standing up for their rights, understanding where we are today. So, as Kamala Harris said, I was that little girl, but I'm so proud of where I am, where I've come from, and praying that our country gets back on track, we find some peace and revolution -- I mean peace and resolution in the two parties, whether it's Republican or whether it's Democrat, that technically we are all Americans, and it doesn't matter what party you belong to; what matters is that the world is worth saving, the states are worth saving, and I am so happy [00:03:00] to be here tonight, looking at some of my fellow people that I grew up with, I mean, ever since kindergarten, from Alessandro to Ramona, to Highland Junior High, to Franklin Junior High, to San Geronimo, and looking back and thinking, my kids traveled some of those same paths. So, yay, class of '75.

(laughter)

Q: Beautiful. Thank --

THERESA GUINN: Thank you.

Q: And were you a native San Bernardino --

THERESA GUINN: I was born and raised. Matter of fact, if you know the history of San Bernardino, the old San Bernardino County Hospital was actually on Gilbert Street. They actually tore that hospital down because it act-- the San Andreas fault line actually ran under that hospital, and back when they had the Whittier earthquake, I was actually in the hospital that night, working a night shift, and I'll never forget seeing out the window the green [arks?] flying, and all of us nurses thinking, like, what are we going to do if something happens? We had patients on ventilators. [00:04:00] I wasn't an RN at the time, but just trying to figure out -- the ventilators were alarming. Going into the ICU once the lights came back on, seeing where the wall had separated. You could see the little tear separating the old part of the hospital from the new hospital. They ended up rebuilding San Bernardino County Hospital into Rialto, and it is now located on Pepper Avenue. They put it on rollers so that in the event we have an earthquake, that the hospital would be able to withstand up to an 8.0, but God has a final plan. And I can tell you that when they built the new San Bernardino County Hospital, which is now considered Arrowhead Regional, you got a chance to sign your name on a wall, and my name is actually in there somewhere. (laughter) But yeah, part of the history of San Bernardino. Born and raised. I did leave in 1978, moved to Seattle, but came back in 1984, and I've been here since.

Q: Was anything in high school -- was there anything [00:05:00] in high school that prepared you or made you want to become a nurse, or was that something you always wanted to do?

THERESA GUINN: It just happened. Actually, when I graduated, I really wanted to be a probation officer, and when I was in Seattle, I moved back here as a single parent, and ran into an old high school friend, [Shalonda Johnson?], and they were hiring in the burn unit. And at that time you didn't have to have a degree; they

trained you. So I walked in there, claiming that job, and she hired me. And what made me go into nursing is all of the nurses that I were working with were all younger than me. None of 'em were Black. And the only thing that made me different from them was they had a degree and I didn't, and one day the lightbulb went on, and I'm like, you know what? I'm going back to school and I'm going to become a nurse, too. So that's what started my nursing career, and I've just -- every time a door has opened -- and it opened, and it opened, and it opened.

Q: Beautiful.

THERESA GUINN: So I've just been fortunate. I have three sons, one who's a retired Marine, one is [00:06:00] retired Army, and one at home right now, and they're all doing well, and I'm really proud of all three of my boys. But I have four granddaughters. So, yeah, I've been blessed. I'm fortunate.

Q: Thank you so much.

End of Interview:

[00:06:13]