

The University of Baltimore is launching a two-year investigation called "Baltimore '68: Riots and Rebirth," a project centered around the events that followed the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and their effects on the development of our city. UB administration and faculty members in the law school and in the undergraduate departments of history and community studies are planning a series of projects and events to commemorate the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this pivotal event. We are currently working with the Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African American History, The Jewish Museum of Maryland, Maryland Public Television and the Enoch Pratt Free Libraries to pursue funding for projects that may include conferences, a website and a library traveling exhibit.

Your potential participation in an oral history project would contribute to the very foundation of this project – the memories of Baltimoreans who lived through the riots and saw the changes that came about in response to them. Your life story can fill in the limited knowledge we learn from newspaper accounts and the television footage.

If you choose to participate in the project you would be interviewed by students from the University of Baltimore. They will ask you questions, but your memories will determine the direction of the interviews.

If you agree to serve as an oral history informant in this project, you will meet with a team of undergraduate students. The students will take a still photograph of you. In addition, if you have a photo of yourself in or around 1968, we would greatly appreciate it if we could borrow it, scan it, and return it. We would reserve the rights to reproduce those photos and use them on the website, conferences, exhibit or publications.

The students may conduct the interviews at a location of your choice, or you may meet them at the University of Baltimore Langsdale Library for your interviews. During the interviews, your recollections will be recorded in two forms: audio and video. The students will be responsible for operating the equipment. You can expect the interviews to last for a minimum of 30 minutes each.

Sometimes talking about events that occurred decades ago will unearth forgotten memories. Undoubtedly, some of those remembrances will be negative. We greatly appreciate your willingness to take the risk of exploring a potentially painful past so that your life experiences will be recorded.

After the interviews the students will transcribe your oral history. They will provide you with a copy of the transcription for your review before the transcription is published. The transcription, video and audio records will be archived in the Langsdale Library Special Collections and will be accessible to the public. Your name will be attached to these documents. The University of Baltimore may use your image and/or your words in any future documentaries, exhibits, conferences or publications. Participants in the oral history project agree to waive their confidentiality.

If at any time you are uncomfortable with participation in the study, you are free to drop out. Participation is strictly voluntary. While your participation is requested and highly valued, you are free to decide whether or not to continue participation at all times. You may decline to have your name published with your reminiscences

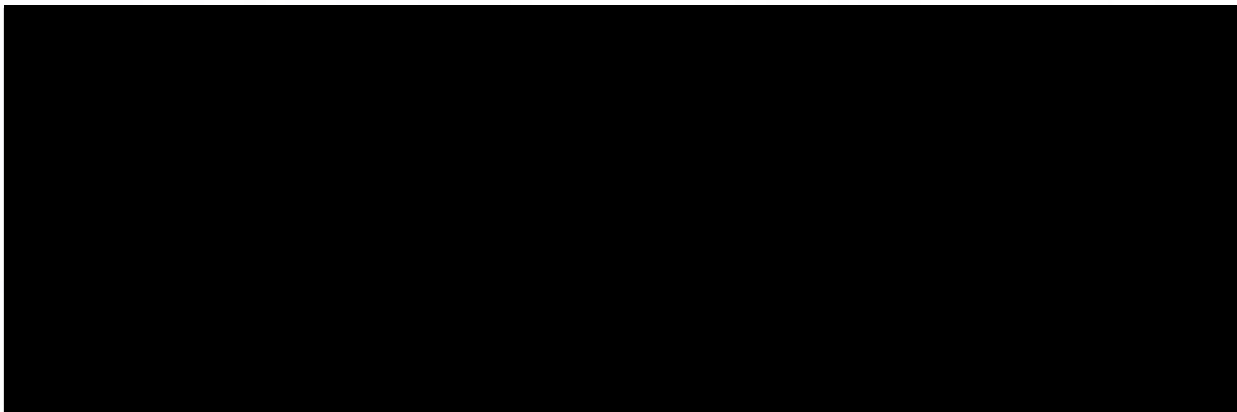
If you have any questions about this project, please feel free to contact me at 410-837-5296. Thank you for your participation.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth M. Nix, Ph.D.  
Visiting Assistant Professor  
History and Community Studies  
The University of Baltimore

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I have read and understand the information provided above, and consent to participate in the study. I have also been given a copy of the informed consent for my records.



Katherine Voss  
Dr. Nix  
Exploring the Past  
November 12<sup>th</sup>, 2007

### **Portfolio Part II-Oral History Transcription**

Donna Baust ("DB"): Subject  
Katherine Voss ("KV"): Interviewer  
Date of Interview: November 8<sup>th</sup>, 2007  
Time Started: 9:14 a.m.

KV: "Can you please state your full name?"

DB: "Donna Baust."

KV: "Can you spell your last name?"

DB: "B as in boy, a, u, s as in Sam, t as in Tom."

KV: "Thank you."

KV: "How was your situation in the 1960's?"

DB: "I was young and dumb."

KV: "Do you want to expand on that?"

DB: "I was eight yrs old, um... I had four brothers and two sisters, and a mom and a dad, and a pretty normal upbringing for a middle class white family."

KV: "Ok. Well, where did you live?"

DB: "I lived in Parkville, Maryland."

KV: "And where's that?"

DB: "It's in Parkville." (laughs)

KV: "Is it in Baltimore?"

DB: "Yes, it's in Baltimore."

KV: "Is it a neighborhood?"

DB: "Yes, um hum."

KV: "Ok, is that on the East, West, North, or South side?"

DB: "I would say East."

KV: "East. Ok."

DB: "East Baltimore."

KV: "And where did you go to school?"

DB: "Um... my elementary school was Villa Cresta Elementary, within walking distance, and my junior high was Lockraven Junior High and my senior high school was Parkville Senior High."

KV: "Ok, and were all the schools public or private?"

DB: "Yes."

KV: "They were all public?"

DB: "Yes."

KV: "What was the student body like, uh, in terms of race and gender?"

DB: "Basically we were... it was an all white school. I don't remember any other races but Caucasian."

KV: "And was that typical of your neighborhood as well?"

DB: "Yes, very much."

KV: "Do you remember where you shopped when you were eight?"

DB: "I remember Korvettes was around back then, which I don't think it's around anymore."

KV: "Well, what was that?"

DB: "It was almost like a K-Mart."

KV: "Oh yeah?"

DB: "Yeah, yeah, it was pretty cool and then there were strip centers, not really malls back then."

KV: "Interesting... and what kind of grocery store did you go to, like a mom and pop, or a big chain?"

DB: "Um... it was a chain, it was an A&P I believe."

KV: "Ahhh."

DB: "Or General...?"

KV: "I don't think they're around anymore."

DB: "Oh, I've outlasted them also!"

KV: (laughs) "All right. Well, before the riots, which were in 1968, what kind of interactions did you have with people of other races?"

DB: "Absolutely none."

KV: "Really?"

DB: "Yeah. I think my first recollection of having a friend that was African American was when I was about thirteen years old."

KV: "Wow!"

DB: "They lived in the city, they lived in Baltimore city."

KV: "You want to talk about that interaction, like what were the circumstances?"

DB: "Um... I was actually spending the summer with some friends of my parents and they have a jewelry store, uh Ellicott City area, and when I get bored being in the store I would go out back there was a parking lot with a basketball court on it and I ended up playing basketball everyday with this other thirteen year old guy, I honestly don't remember his name, but I can remember that uh, their names were Herb and Shirley, came outside to find me and they were rather surprised." (laughs)

KV: "Was it a negative reaction? Interesting."

DB: "Yes, yes not so much I think on their part, I think more so on that I was a thirteen year old girl playing basketball with a boy that was African American."

KV: "Yeah?"

DB: "Yeah. That could have been a... so it was like a double whammy I believe, so..."

KV: "Wow! But your interaction was, on the whole, a positive with that person?...obviously because you still wanted to..."

DB: "Oh, yeah, oh yeah,...nice guy."

KV: "Were you still allowed to play with him?"

DB: "Yeah, but I noticed they came outside a lot to check on me." (laughs)

KV: "How would you describe the racial mood in Baltimore before the riots so before 1968? I know you were young but..."

DB: "You know, without having the interaction at that point in time at eight years old and don't really... I couldn't talk about personal experience. I remember things on the news all the time... that was like the way you spent your time, you know, the evenings were spent around the television, but I remember the country pretty much divided on just black and white issues and the stereotypes, you know, that uh... that black teenagers hung in packs, and uh... you know, weren't safe... you were always looking over your shoulder I remember uh... just situations where it was a very uncomfortable feeling because I hadn't had any exposure to it so I didn't really understand what was going on."

KV: "Ok, and you touched on this a little bit, but how did you hear about the riots starting?"

DB: "Uh... on television. I remember the scenes from Baltimore City and the looting going on and I remember being really scared and seeing like trashcans thrown through the store windows and uh... like trash in the middle of the street being lit on fire and uh I can remember being really upset and not really recognizing where Baltimore City was in relation to where we lived, you know, 'cause it was just a totally foreign atmosphere."

KV: "And what did your parents do at the time, were they store owners? Or..."

DB: "No. Uh... my mom was a stay at home mom with seven kids. That was pretty much her only option, and my dad worked for the government doing radar and sonar work, um... so I, you know, I don't even remember them talking about it very much. I remember them telling us, you know, it would be ok um... that we weren't near it, and that we were safe, but I don't really remember a lot of discussion going on about it."

KV: "Ok. What do you remember about the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.?"

DB: "Well, I didn't know it was a big deal 'cause I didn't know who he was. Uh... I remember uh... people talking about it, I remember it being front page coverage in the newspapers and asking questions, but you know at eight that wasn't like really a focus of mine. As long as I was ok, I wasn't really concerned."

KV: "During the riots, what information did you get and where did it come from?"

DB: "Yeah, it was pretty much just ah.. television.. and uh, um... things uh... articles in the newspaper, which I really didn't read, but I remember the pictures afterwards and I remember the funeral... like the procession of it... being shown on television, but it didn't really like play a part in my life at that point you know you're so wrapped up in yourself when you're a kid... you know. You're not really aware of what's going on around you."

KV: "All right, so I know it would be hard as an eight year old, but how do you think the national news portrayed the situation in Baltimore?"

DB: "Uhh... I think the media really played up on people's fears and I remember it running over and over and over again um... and I think and I'm not sure, but I think I remember that, you know, that people reporting the news were always white and that it wasn't, you know, in a good light, you know, it wasn't... it was just sensationalism I think."

KV: "And what was your impression of the neighborhoods that were affected?"

DB: "That they were destroying the area in where they lived, which doesn't make a lot of sense looking back on it, but I remember it being poor neighborhoods and it was like an excuse to break into stores and rob things, you know, it seemed like a strange way to make a statement about somebody who represents you... and called for unity and calmness... for them to react like that."

KV: "And do you remember anything about violence arrests or National Guard troops being called?"

DB: "No. Not at all."

KV: "So that wasn't in your neighborhood?"

DB: "No. Not at all."

KV: "Ok, and then the mood in your area during the riots, um... like with your neighborhood, do you remember any you know fellow teachers or your friends or your friend's parents anyone talking about it or any kind of comments?..."

DB: "No, not really and a lot, I think, too back then parents kept a lot of things from their kids... like they wouldn't openly have an argument or anything in front of us growing up, you know, it would always be behind closed doors so I don't think I heard a lot of personal comments."

KV: "So how did your life and the activities change during the days of the riots and afterwards, was there any impact for you?"

DB: "Personally? No, no because it was much later, no five years later, that, you know, that I actually had contact with a different race so... no, it didn't really affect me."

KV: "And then, I guess, did your interactions with people of other races change?"

DB: "Like later on when I went and met them?"

KV: "Yeah, yeah why don't you talk about that... because I know you said you didn't have contact until you were thirteen so?..."

DB: "Um..."

KV: "Do you think any of that contact was affected by what you saw at age eight?"

DB: "No, no I think when you're that young... fear is not in your nature, you're more accepting... you're more open... you say what's on your mind, you don't have the social graces to edit, you know, everything that you say- it just comes out of your mouth, and I think that I learned certain fears as I grew older but... I uh... not then, it didn't play a part like I thought it would come back on me, you know, or that all black people pick up trashcans and throw them through the windows... it just didn't have an affect."

KV: "Why don't you talk about then, like later in life, kinda' you said... later in life, then you know, that you didn't aquire fear until later. Do you want to talk about that at all? Some experiences or impressions?"

DB: "I just uh... I can remember having to take a bus to go to my dentists office, and I had to switch buses to get there, and I can remember like, just groups of people, black

teenagers, hanging out and the comments that were made and the feeling of intimidation... but I'm not sure that wasn't just the sheer numbers... and it being different and not something I was normally exposed to so fear of the unknown, fear of... and its uh... an uncomfortable feeling, especially when you're a female, I think."

KV: "And how old were you, like, at this time?"

DB: "That point I was probably like fourteen, fifteen years old, and uh... my mom had gone out and started working part-time, so after school is when I had the dental appointments so it was a first for me because she had always, you know, taken me before... never thought about it, never worried about it, and I can remember my brother, my oldest brother, was in the service and when he would come in on leave I remember he took me into Baltimore city and we walked around and it was such, such a difference from what I was used to, and what I had grown up with, and... and there I was, out of place, you know, I was... he and I actually, were the minority and um... I just remember thinking it was you know run down and just poor, just desolate, and I guess it makes a little bit more of an impact because when you don't have anything you have no fear of what you can lose so..."

KV: "And what part of, you said you went into the city, what part, like downtown?"

DB: "Yeah! Oh, downtown Baltimore, oh yeah!"

KV: "How do you remember that? You said it was uh... rundown... are there any other ways to describe that at that time?"

DB: "It was just so different, like I was used to homes, individual homes, with big yards with a lot of play equipment in the yards, and these were, like, row houses... but I remember the marble steps on the row houses in Baltimore city, there were, no matter you know, how trashy or anything, for some reason, people kept their marble steps really, really clean... and I moved out of Maryland when I was nineteen and when I came back, I had the opportunity to go tour the Orioles Stadium and when we went down Eastern Avenue, right down the middle of Baltimore City, and they were doing a lot of work to um... build it back up, and to uh... clean it up, and it was just amazing those same marble steps were still there! So it was just kinda' like, wow, I remember this!"

KV: "Is there anything well, uh... when your mom took a part-time job, you said when you were fourteen, what, what kind of work was that?"

DB: "Um... she went to work for a dentist as a dental assistant um... she didn't have any training in it, you know, she was just a stay at home mom, but um... this uh dentist gave her an opportunity, gave her a chance and...you know I do remember something! I can't believe I've forgotten this all this time! We actually, when she went to work, we actually had a maid... I remember that! Gosh! And she actually became part of the family... her name was Matilda so, uh... yeah, so. But again, it was after, I was thirteen, so..."

KV: "Well, what race was your maid?"

DB: "Oh, she was she was African American and uh... heart as big as Texas. I mean wonderful lady! Single mom, lotta' kids, working a lot of jobs to feed her family, but she was... she became actually our second mom! She was with us for a long time... I can't believe I forgot that!"

KV: "Wow!"

DB: "But, you know..."

KV: "Now, how do you think your mom, looking back, found Matilda? Did she place an ad? Was it word of mouth? How would you acquire a housekeeper, a maid, like that?"

DB: "I don't know she just was uh... there one day she just kinda' like came in kinda' like the Mary Poppins syndrome... set us straight, you know, to be able to control seven kids!"

KV: "And how many boys and how many girls out of those seven?"

DB: "Four boys, three girls, and I'm the youngest girl... second to the youngest child."

KV: "Wow!"

DB: "Yeah."

KV: "And what were the interactions like between Matilda and your mother and father... you talked about you know the way she was with the children but?..."

DB: "Yeah, she always left, you know, before my dad got home, came home, my dad would travel for like months at a time, but she would leave um... like in the afternoons um... she and my mom, I remember, they used to laugh a lot... they used to, you know, be out in the kitchen and stuff and because uh Matilda did NOT cook!" (laughs)

KV: "Oh, no?"

DB: "No!"

KV: "So her duties then were... looking after the kids? Dusting? Sweeping? And some cleaning?"

DB: "And cleaning... vacuuming."

KV: "Dusting?"

DB: "Sweeping."

KV: "Sweeping?"

DB: "Yeah, changing the beds..."

KV: "Did she do laundry?"

DB: "Yeah, oh yeah, laundry."

DB: "My brothers used to... like, she was like real jumpy..."

KV: "Yeah?"

DB: "And my brothers used to like, uh, scaring her... this was like a big woman, not a very smart idea! I remember we had this thing called an Og, it was like a little robot bug that ran on batteries and was motion activated and they set it up under the dresser so that when she vacuumed, he came out with lights flashing making this terrible noise and freaked her out! I remember she picked up the end of the vacuum cleaner and smacked them."

KV: "Smacked the bog, or your brother?"

DB: "The Og!"

KV: "Oh, that's right... I'm sorry the Og!"

DB: "No, she should have smacked my brothers! But no, so uh... yeah...she was a neat lady."

KV: "How would she discipline you guys then? You said she wouldn't have smacked your brother but..."

DB: "Oh no! She wasn't allowed to, like, smack us or anything! Um... it was always "wait until I tell miss's!" "

KV: "Oh. Is that how she referred to your mother then? The miss's?"



DB: "Yeah. I don't remember calling her Mrs. Baust, or you know Char, or anything like that...it was always "miss's, wait until I tell the miss's", you know? And you knew she was going to!" (laughs)

KV: "And did you know at all what... uh where uh...neighborhood she lived in/"

DB: "No. No concept."

KV: "She just came in and uh, left?"

DB: "Yeah, never met her kids..."

KV: "Did she ever talk about her life or was it pretty?..."

DB: "Not really, not really, we could ask her questions about homework... I remember that, but she was always... there was always so much to do with all of us, and, and she uh... I don't know I really don't remember... and her kids never came with her and once she walked out the door, I mean, I don't even know if she drove a car or took the bus?"

KV: "I was just going to ask you yeah you know if you even knew how she got to your house?"

DB: "Cause I don't even know... because there wasn't like, public transportation, within a block it... was you know you would have to go down to the main drag which was like Taylor Avenue and I think there was, I think there was a bus stop there but I don't even know I don't even know how she got!" (laughs)

KV: "Did your parents take uh, cars, to their jobs or did they take buses?"

DB: "They took cars."

KV: "Cars."

DB: "Yeah, yeah...Huh. It's funny... having this conversation makes me think of things that, yeah, that I haven't thought about in a long time so that's pretty cool."

KV: "Yeah, well it's a good memory though."

DB: "Yeah, yeah."

KV: "It's a very good memory. Well what kind of clothes did she wear?"

DB: "Housedresses, um. I think they call them housecoats, but it was uh, basically just a real uh, simple dress short sleeved I think most of them were normally flowered and they kinda' like snapped all the way down the front and she was never in heels...it was almost kinda' like waitress shoes, you know, where they're really padded on the bottom and really like heavy stockings... she always had stockings on too. And...I mean she was, like, well kept... but you know you knew she was like, looking back on it, you knew there wasn't a lot of money."

KV: "And, I mean, her hair and her age would be?..."

DB: "She was probably... I would say late thirties and always well kept."

KV: "Would her hair be pulled back or down?"

DB: "Yeah, yeah she up she always had um...like a bandanna or a scarf over it um... and she I uh, she always had lipstick on, which I thought was funny, cleaning house, but uh yeah... so she always cared about her appearance but yeah, you knew there wasn't a lot of money or a lot of things I'm sure knowing her like I you know like I did for like an eight year or uh... fourteen year how old was I uh... yeah fourteen fifteen yeah that uh... I don't really think about those things."

KV: "So this is probably around like uh '73, so 1973?"

DB: "Oh, ouch! Yeah. (laughs) uh seventy three, seventy four, yeah 'cause I was like born in like the middle of the year in like uh sixty. Ok ..."

KV: "And now, lastly, I just uh... since we were talking about clothes, and it seems so, you know, so interesting. What do you remember when you were eight, and then maybe again when you were fourteen, what kind of clothes, did girls wear, what did you wear what was typical?"

DB: (laughs) "In my family you wore hand me downs, or you wore what my mother made! She was a seamstress... she sewed... really good at it. I used to hate that she used to stick my sister and I in the same kind of dresses!"

KV: "Was it always dresses, or did you ever wear pants?"

DB: (laughs) "Oh no, never pants! You never wore pants. No pants, no makeup. Um... My grandmother on my mom's side is Quaker... so a lot of those beliefs filtered down... so even in the winter, when I would walk to elementary school, I had to wear a dress, but I was allowed to put pants on under it because, obviously, if I wore a skirt and a shirt, I would take the skirt off and leave the pants on... so it was all, you know, orchestrated so uh yeah I always had to wear dresses and a lot of it was like the um...jumpers where you wore the shirt underneath it, and the uh... flat shoes and the little woopie socks!"(laughs)

KV: "The woopies socks? Do you wanna' describe those?"

DB: (laughs) "Yeah, they are, are like, the little, you know, like white socks... that are just barely above your ankle and you folded them over and, you know, and real... you know... useful clothing. Like we would have things for holidays, or something like a special dress or something like that, but basically we had school clothes and play clothes and uh... I think a lot of kids back then, you know, I remember guys were always, like, in jeans and stuff and the girls... it was just like uh, jumpers... I think... were the thing then, but most other kids could wear pants where I couldn't so... but, yeah, a lot of hand me downs 'cause there were so many people."

KV: "And then what do you think you were talking about the uh... Quaker point of view, kinda' seeping down into the generations of your family? How do you think that affected, or did it affect, uh... a woman's role... in terms of your mother... and, you know, her ability to work, or go to school, or what your family's views were on that when you were young like?..."

DB: "I think, because there were so many of us, the only way you could afford it was for the mom to stay at home. I don't think it was a uh... thing about um, she wasn't supposed to work, because of, you know the era, or my father's viewpoints, or anything but basically, it was a way to save money, you know, you're there watching the kids- you're not paying somebody else to do it... and, but, it was definitely his and her roles, you know, ...female jobs and the male jobs and like dad fixed everything around the house and my mother had dinner on the table when he walked in the door and jumped up and down from the table when there was something he wanted that wasn't there... and uh... I don't think she ever had a hot meal, you know, because by the time she actually she actually settled down I know her food had to of been cold."

KV: "Umm."

DB: "You know...but it was the um, the female role of the caretaker, you know, of everybody there... uh."

KV: "And was that uh... do you think that was emphasized to you as a young girl, or were you given many options?"

DB: "No, no. It was..yeah,yeah .. I mean I remember the roles around the house were that way you know the girls did the cleaning on Saturdays, before we had Matilda, and

the guys had to do the yard work, and guys could get their drivers licenses at sixteen, but the girls in the family couldn't um...but, we were always told you can be whatever you want to be you just have to decide, and go after it, so not like this is not like this is uh... a suitable role for a woman, or your only lot in life is to get married and have kids, ...that was never a thing in my family... thank goodness!" (laughs)

KV: "Well, great...thank you so much!"

DB: "Oh! I actually enjoyed it! I uh... it, it brought back a lot of memories!"

KV: "I know it was very interesting! Some very interesting points! So, uh, thank you and we will conclude this interview."

DB: "Thank you!" (laughs)