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Annie Myers and Joy Taylor  
November 26, 2006  
New South and Slavery  
Dr. Nix

Interview Transcript:  
November 21, 2006  
Suann Myers and Ned Cosby

Interview held on November 21, 2006 at Southern High School in Harwood, Maryland. The interview was conducted by Joy Taylor and Annie Myers, and the interviewees were Suann Myers and Ned Cosby.

Abbreviations:

Q- Question

Suann Myers responds

Ned Cosby response

IA- Inaudible

Annie Myers

Joy Taylor

Joy- You can be blunt with us.

Ned- There's a lot of that. It's a word that has an awful lot of stuff with it, but anyway. I remember, definitely remember that part. And that thing on the telephone pole I felt like "Gosh where have I, where have my parents taken me?" Honestly.

Joy- Really?

Ned- I felt like I was in Mississippi.

Suann- When we were living in Davidsonville not so long ago maybe, well Annie when we lived in Chevelle, when was that?

Annie- Well I was 5 ... IA

Suann- So maybe about 15 years ago we had a racial "Join the KKK" thing in our mail box. I was appalled! I was shocked! It upset me to think that someone who thought like that was at the end of my driveway. It did, and I can remember I called Carl our minister. I was so upset I couldn't think of who to call or what to do, so I called him. He said, "Yeah Sue, those people are still around." I was just, ah, so angry.

Annie- OK, are you guys ready to go?

Suann- Are you going to ask us questions, or how is this going to work?

Joy- I think we're gonna... I think it's great how you guys are just going from memory. We'll just take...

Suann- OK, because mine are going to be way different than Ned's.

Joy- That's ok though, that's great.

Suann- Well, no, because I was raised on a farm too that's... right here.

Annie- You can answer and then you guys can go back and forth. Is that ok with you all?

Joy- Yeah. We have some questions that we had to write down, so I guess I'm just going to ask you, OK. How long have you lived near Baltimore, and I know your mom had you bussed in to Baltimore City, and I was really fascinated by that, by why did your mom have you bussed into the city?

Suann- (Laughs) Yeah, that was very different. In forth grade, I think, they were making a decision about where to send me to middle school because the middle school here just wasn't very good. We

were Protestants, we are, but the only school that was near by that they could find was in Baltimore City. And it was teeny tiny Catholic School that would accept us, and by us I mean my first cousin and then two other cousins who lived near by. So the four of us were sent into Baltimore to middle school together, because the public middle school here left so much to be desired. My older brother and sister are 8 and 10 years older than I am, so they did not, the school that they went to in Annapolis did not exist anymore, so by the time I came along the school had closed. So that's how that happened.

Joy- I don't know what your name is

Ned- Ned

Joy- What's your last name

Ned- Cosby, like in Bill

Suann- A lot like Bill

Joy- So Mr. Cosby you said that you moved down here in middle school?

Ned- Right, well it was Junior High.

Joy- Yeah, I went to Junior High too.

Ned- Anyway (IA) in 1967, probably May of 1967 we moved from Darien, CT to Severna Park, MD. And the reason we moved then was that my parents wanted me to meet some of the kids before the summer started. So I spent the last month and a half of school here in Severna Park, it was quite a culture shock. It was a shock in terms of what we were learning in school, and it was a shock in terms of we were in a very nice facility up in CT, and we were in a very ramshackle facility down here. I was not impressed.

Joy- When you say that the culture shock and what you were learning here, can you give us an example?

Ned- Well, for example I was taking a Spanish class up in CT, and when I came here they put me in a reading class. That seemed like I was coming down in the world.

Suann- I experienced a huge culture shock because I was raised on a farm and had never, I guess we had been into Baltimore to shop, but back then it took 20 minutes to get into Annapolis, so Baltimore was considered a big trip. So for me to go from country public school to this small Catholic school in the inner city, in what was not really a good neighborhood was a huge shock. I mean I went from farm houses and hundreds of acres to town houses- they weren't even town houses, they were row houses. So it was huge.

Ned- Just one other thing I think about in that time, was that my father was big on trying to expose us to things. For example when we were living up in CT he would drive us up to Harlem every now and then because he wanted us to know what people in poverty, or people in hardships, what their living conditions were like. So when we moved to Baltimore my father wanted to give us a sense of what the community was like, so he took us to what is now the Inner Harbor, but the Inner Harbor had not been built. I thought he had taken me to the armpit of the universe. I mean it was awful it was where McCormick had their spice factory, I mean guys it was like something out of... What was that book?

Joy- *The Concrete Jungle*?

Ned- *The Jungle* was it Upton Sinclair, I was like why am I here? Someone pinch me!

Joy- OK, What were you guys doing when Dr. King was shot?

Suann- I think, I didn't know about it till the next day, because I remember my mother said something that morning when I left from school, and I remember talking about it at school.

Joy- Was it important?

Suann- It was important because we had a lady, being on a farm and in a farm community we had a lot of African Americans who worked on the farm with my mom and dad, and they were there all the time, we were there together all of the time. There was one woman named Annie Duckett who worked as a domestic for us, but she was so much more than that. She was a mother to me and my brother and sister, and my mother's best friend. They actually looked alike. Although one was black and one was white they looked alike to me. I knew how much Annie loved Dr. King and what he meant to her, and

how sad she was going to be and that's what I kept thinking about, was how sad she was going to be because we didn't talk a lot but we did talk about that a lot, and it was a great lesson for me to learn. She was a great teacher.

Joy- Wow. What about you Mr. Cosby?

Ned- I don't remember. I mean I can vividly remember where when Kennedy was shot, but when Dr. King was shot what I do remember vividly was the news that night. I remember the picture of the balcony, the picture of where they thought the shots had come from, I guess it was in Memphis. And the other thing I remember is that they had a train that was taking Dr. King's body I guess from Washington to NY, and it went along that rail line from Washington to NY and it went through Odenton. My family, my father and I we went and got on a spot where we could see the train go by, and it was kind of an old style, the last car was an old style where they had the coffin, like a railing where you could step out on the back of it, and we saw a lot of the celebrities I guess that were there. I mean it was huge, people were definitely disturbed and moved by it. I don't know when the riots began after that, I think it was pretty quickly, after that that all of the trouble began. But I do remember watching the train go by and feeling you could just...The sadness of the people on the train was palpable enough that you could feel it.

Joy- What about the overall crowd, can you remember?

Ned- A lot of people! Lot of people. You know it was ahh...

Joy- Your Dad's extraordinary.

Ned- (laughs) Uhhh

Joy- He was just so progressive... wow

Ned- (laughs) uhhhh not really, but um... there was a respect. I mean if you talk about tha... My father... My father was afraid that Dr. King wanted to be President.

Joy- That's interesting

Ned- Yeah! My father was afraid that Dr. King wanted to be President. My father uhh I think there was a grudging respect of Dr. King. But my father was a southerner and was not excited about the Civil Rights changes of the 60's and that sort of thing. So it's kind of complicated isn't it? I mean he...

Joy- It is complicated...

Ned- yeah.

Suann- I remember the train going though Odenton as well, my parents talked about taking the three of us to go see it, and decided not to because it was just too sad. That was what my mom said, it was just too sad. So they were going to protect me from that, which I think they did too much protecting of me but I can definitely remember that train going though Odenton that was a very big deal in the community. It was a very small community.

Ned- Yeah I think it really went pretty slow, out of respect, you know the trip wasn't about getting from one place to another place quickly it was about...

Suann- It was like his body was in state on the train.

Ned- I mean what it reminds me of is after Lincoln was shot they took his body very slowly back to Springfield IL. Through a lot of different towns and it was slow, so people could say goodbye who wouldn't have had the chance to do so otherwise.

Joy- Do you remember... you mention that the riots broke out... you think that the riots broke out not too long after, do you remember anything about the riots, like what you saw? Mrs. Myers were you in school when the riots broke out? What were your feelings about it, were you afraid, were you just like ok I'm going to go home?

Ned- Can I make a comment about this? This was not something I learned immediately, but it was something I learned later working in Washington, D.C. Both at Crinshaw's and later as an officer in the Coast Guard. One of the things that I had not heard at the time, but had heard later was that there were machine gun nests on buildings in Washington D.C. I mean it was there was an awareness. Who was President then? Nixon I guess it would have been.

Joy- Johnson.

Ned- '68 it would have been Nixon. I think.... No no no, you're right. It would have been the end of Johnson. But the point I'm trying to make is that there would have been a fear that not so much Baltimore as Washington was going to turn on fire.

Joy- And it did.

Ned- Well certainly sections of it did, but what I'm talking about was the Federal enclave, I don't know what the borders of it are, but they were very, very concerned. About it really getting out of hand. Kind of like the French Revolution in a way.

Joy- Kind of like an overthrow?

Ned- I don't know if overthrow is the right word, but just you know getting very, very, very serious. And it was, it was very serious.

Joy- You think similar to the feeling after 9-11 maybe?

Ned- Pretty close.

Joy- Ms. Myers were you at school or were you at home?

M- I'm not sure where I was when the riots were when they began, but I remember watching the riots on TV I was terrified. I didn't really understand what was going on, but it seemed to me that they were burning up their own communities, and I didn't really understand why anyone would burn up their own community. I do now, but when I was, I guess I was in 6<sup>th</sup> grade, I couldn't really figure that out, I couldn't put it all together. And I didn't like the feeling of unrest, and it was a very strong feeling of unrest. And even where we lived, in our community, where everybody had always gotten along pretty well there was a feeling of unrest. You know mum, mistrust almost. People who normally didn't have any ill will towards each other at all sort of had a raised eyebrow, just to check to be sure... What do you think?.. Well, what do **you** think kind of thing. And maybe black people being very careful around their white employers about what they said more than they ever where before, and the white employers begin very careful about what they said. Where before it was pretty much ok, anything went. One man was mad at another man and they said so, you know race didn't matter so much. After the riots and during the riots it was intense. I would imagine school must have been close. I can't imagine we would have been able to go into the city at that time. It was scary. It was really dangerous. The people were just so angry, and that was when Annie, who my daughter is named after, sat me down and we had a talk, because she could see how scared I was, and she didn't want me to feel that afraid, because she was a super person.

Joy- What did she tell you, do you remember?

Suann- Yeah. She tried to explain Martin Luther King to me and how peaceful he was and how that's the way we should all be, and nonviolent, and that that's where I needed to put my trust. And that the other people who were so mad and so angry had just had a very difficult and hard life and that it was their time to not have to live like that anymore, but they weren't mad at me, it wasn't me they were angry at, and unless I got in the way of it I was not going to be hurt. It was not like they were going to attack me, as a person living on a farm out in the middle of nowhere, and just because I was white, I was going to be killed or something. Which was a fear I had. I was going into the city with no background or education about what it was like, and how to behave.

Annie- Tell us about the school mom, the neighborhood where the school was.

Suann- Oh the neighborhood was horrible, and it was very mixed racially. When I think back on it I can't imagine that my parents would have sent me there because it was a real slum. The school had marble steps when you walked in and a marble floor. It was two stories high. I think it was two grades on each floor. And then when you went out to recess you went down in to a basement, and then there a brick wall about 6 feet high, so you couldn't see up to street level. If you, we would step into each other's hands and then you could see out.... then there was a chain link fence, and then there was barbed wire on top of that. You know there were rats, and there were ally ways. By the time I was in eighth grade they would let us go down to the sub shop to get subs, and we had to go in twos and we

would see, there were people doing all kinds of things in those alleyways. It was horrible.

Joy- And where was it located again?

Suann- It was on Wolfe Street in Baltimore. I don't know what that neighborhood is like anymore... I don't know if it's all wonderful or not.

Joy- How close to UB is it?

Suann- I have no idea.

Joy- I think we talked about what you guys' life was like before the riots, a little bit during the riots, but how about after? What was your life like after the riots?

Joy- Did things go back to normal?

Ned- I just, I think that the death of, the assassination of, the killing of Dr. King sort of, at least, I was just a kid then... It seemed like it kind of radicalized things for a while. And what do I mean by that? It seems to me that you heard about the Black Panthers about the same time, you heard about the Weathermen about the same time. You had the '68 Olympics and all of the black athletes were holding up a power sign and bowing their heads when the National Anthem played in protest to the situation in America at that particular time. So it was kind of a... corner turning time for the culture because you couldn't, it seems to me after the riots, you couldn't ignore the trouble in the cities anymore. It was kind of in your lap. So I don't know... you know things I think things were kind of real and ugly. And this was also the time of the Vietnam War protests. You know just before Dr. King was shot he had started to speak out against the war in Vietnam and there was a lot of resentment. You know people were telling him talk about civil rights, but you have no right talking about the war. And he said, I don't see it like that. I have eyes and I can see what's going on and I'm going to say what I feel about it. I think these things were all kind of coming together. It wasn't too long after that that Bobby Kennedy was killed. <DISCUSSION> That was in May or maybe June of the same year, so you know those two things in quick succession... I don't mean to minimize what happened to Dr. King it was just...

Joy- Right... Everything was happening at the same time...

Ned- It was just there were several things going on at once.

Joy- What about in school for you?

Ned- I'm sorry?

Joy- In school?

Ned- In school?

Joy- Did things go back to normal? Did kids keep coming up to you asking if you were an N lover?

Ned- You know the only thing I remember about school was it seems to me that there were some attempts at my school... I don't know if it was an assembly or if it was some stuff that my teachers gave me, but it seems that there was some attempt to deal with it on some level. I don't remember what it was, but there was some attempt to not ignore it and say, hey something's going on here. This is...

NA

<Discussion>

Ned- When Dr. King was shot I was in 8<sup>th</sup> grade. But it was a you know... It's interesting you asking all of these questions about this because it's things I haven't thought about in a long time. Bu I really think that with the killing of Dr. King and Robert Kennedy. All of a sudden the whole tenor of our society changed.

Suann- I agree with you. I think the whole society changed dramatically. I remember when we went back to school, we went back to school and we used to get, I think it was called the Weekly Reader and there were always top news stories in that. So I think even at school we discussed racial issues a lot, and we certainly talked about when Kennedy was shot that was huge at that little Catholic school I was attending, and certainly also Dr. King's death was huge there. We talked about it a lot, I think it was the inner city kids' ticket out was the way the nuns saw it. So we had lots and lots of discussions about that. And then I came home and like I said I didn't have much exposure, but Annie talked to me about that and that was really good and healthy it showed me a point of view I didn't really think about.

Because you know when you are raised a certain way you don't question it, and then you do and it's good. And heaven knows, my mother played an important role in that, but I didn't know until after her death. I remember one time after my mother died, I was in a 7-11 and someone came up to me and asked if she was my mother and I said yes, and she said that my mother had taken her baby to the hospital and wouldn't leave until the hospital had given the baby services because the baby was black obviously and they wouldn't take the baby for this African American mother. But my mother sat in the hospital with the baby in her arms you know and I guess she sat there for what was a long time and raised a little stink.

Joy- Is that where she gets it from?

Suann- It could be, so you hear stories like that about your family that you didn't even know happened. So I guess things like that enters together in how you look at life now. When Dr. King was killed and Kennedy died, it was a huge change.

Joy- Well how do you feel Baltimore has changed since the riots?

Suann- Well I when I... I was only here though the end of 9<sup>th</sup> grade, so that was probably only about 2 years. I only stayed in Baltimore through the end of 9<sup>th</sup> grade. I can say there was a lot of unrest that year. We started having to go to all of the funerals, I'm not sure why, but they made all of the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders go to all of the funerals for the church that we were associated with. And after that we could only go out in groups. So you would have a group of kids walking two by two with a nun behind us. They actually had clickers, like the ones you use for dogs, and they would click to tell us to cross the street, to stop, to kneel. We were well trained. So that was one big difference we couldn't leave the school alone anymore, and the priest at that time would get on the bus and we would pray for a safe drive in and out. And we didn't used to do that before so I think that wasn't about the travel, but what we were going through.

Joy- What was the school called?

Suann- St. Michael's

Joy- And that's the name of the church too?

Suann- Yes... yeah I never knew it then, but I guess it was quite an experience.

Ned- One thing I would like to say about your question and that was how was Baltimore changed since the death?

Joy- No it was since the riots, but you can answer on that too.

Ned- I have never seen any statistics on this and it was probably not something you would get from the City Hall or the Chamber of Commerce, but I would guess that white flight out of Baltimore picked up around that time.

Suann- I would agree... the school I went to closed, and that would support what you were saying.

Ned- Yeah, I would think that that kicked that into high gear.

Joy- So the city was predominantly white?

Ned- No, but I think at that time you had a pretty serious, and what I'm talking about would be families, white families.

Suann- Now see where I went to school most of the kids were white, but they were very poor. I mean real poverty. I mean they got their meals at school. These were not rich white kids, they were kids who were lucky enough that their parents could scrape up enough money for them to go to school, and the more kids you had in the school the less you had to pay... I mean they had all kinds of plans worked out in the school, but eventually I guess the church and community couldn't support it anymore. I guess it may have had something to do with what you were saying about white people leaving. But it seemed like there were pockets, one street would, two streets would be white and another black, but it was cultural too. I don't mean like Little Italy, that's still there and big, but little. Then I moved to Massachusetts, and didn't come back to MD until about 18 years ago.

Joy- Well here's a nice question for you guys; did you participate in the riots?

Suann- Oh no, like I said I was in 8<sup>th</sup> grade.

Ned- You said did I participate in the riots? I don't remember that. I remember being fascinated by it, because if I remember correctly Detroit, Baltimore, Washington, and Watts in LA maybe Chicago... I don't remember Chicago... well actually Mayor Daley was in Chicago and that's when they had the '68 convention and the mess around that. So.. you know it's so interesting to see how all of those streams were coming together. It was really a lot of stuff.

Suann- I didn't remember all of that... It was really turmoil. I remember the Baltimore-Washington and we were right in the middle of it...

Joy- Did any of it spill over into where you were?

Suann- No, not at all. We were in the middle of nowhere. It was farmland big time. I mean I had uncles who had farms who touched ours... So no. I can't say that it ever affected my personal life much at all, but as far as opening your eyes and watching it on TV, as far as all that is concerned it really did.

Joy- Did you know anyone who participated in the riot? Did your parents ever talk about anyone who may have participated?

Suann- No, I even talked to my sister about this. She was in college then, she's about 8 years older than me, and she went to work and talked to people there and they were joking about it, because I didn't make any sense because people were burning up their own neighborhoods. But that just goes to show you the conditions they were living in, what they were going through, how they had no way out, you know we didn't think about any of that at that time. As we grew up, got older, of course we knew. But then I just found it terrifying.

Ned- Yeah, did I know anybody... no. I think I talked later on I talked to a guy who was National Guard in DC, and he's the one who told me about the machine gun nests. And just how everybody was scared. Everybody was scared, you know didn't know what was going to happen. I think that there were a few days when they say when.. one of the fears when the first A bomb was tested one of the fears was they didn't know if it would set the atmosphere on fire, it was kind of that feeling that this could never stop.

Suann- You didn't know if it was going to end, and how to stop or control any of it... there was not controlling it, it was out of control.

Ned- It was sort of like Dr. King represented peaceful change and when the peaceful guy was killed it was like, peace was taken off the table. So people were scared.

Annie- How did race relations change after the riots?

Suann- The only thing I can remember was people being more cautious around each other whereas before it was a pretty free exchange. I remember Annie's brother John was a pretty good friend of my father, and every Christmas he would come over and he and my father would put toys together in the hatchery on the farm and some of that stopped and didn't start again until that really rough time was over. I think people had to learn to trust each other again because it was really tough.

Annie- How, I know we're not very far south, but it still exists around here, how much did Klan activity increase and decrease around that time, and not just the Klan but white supremacy groups and just sort of people's behavior in general?

Suann- I didn't even know about the Klan being around until I was teaching here in South County as an adult because I think I was just so protected from that kind of ignorance. So then when I found out about it I was shocked.

Ned- I think I was telling you all about that sign that was stapled on the telephone poll that said "Don't be half a man join the Klan." I think that was posted the day after Dr. King was killed. I think the hope of those people was this experience was going to be a lightning rod that was going to draw people to the Klan and I didn't see any of that happening. I just remember looking at that thing and just wanting to wash my hands.

Suann- I remember the Klan being on TV and I was very aware of that, and believe me that scared me just as much if not more than the riots. I mean the whole thing, it wasn't just the riots that were scary the way these fools were acting were scary too. It was horrible, just the whole thing scared me to death. You didn't know where you were going to end up, I mean I wasn't black living in the inner city and I

wasn't a member of the Klan, I never even thought about that.

Joy- How about segregation in MD, Was there segregation do you remember the time before Dr. King died was it understood segregation?

Suann- It was understood, I don't remember seeing signs a friend I taught with in Florida, he remembers seeing the signs but it was absolutely understood. We had a black elementary school and a white elementary school. Right about that time was when integration happened in that area. Carver was the black school, and Millersville was the white school. Then when I was a senior in high school in Florida that was the first year that school was integrated. It happened very smoothly in Florida. We were all ready for it.

Joy- So it was just an inevitable situation?

Suann- Everyone was happy about it, it didn't matter.

Ned- I have two little episodes to tell you, but they don't have anything to do with Baltimore. I was taken to dinner one night with my father who was a defense contractor, and a bunch of officers at the Navel Academy, this was for a Red Skins pre-season game. After the game we went to dinner I would have been 14 or 15 years old. There were a lot of things these guys discussed, but one of the things I remember I can't validate this, but they told me the first black midshipmen who was likely to graduate from the Academy, they told me he was murdered by his classmates. As I said I have never been able to confirm that. I actually wrote to my Congressmen and the Academy because I was so bothered by that. So that's one thing I thought was pretty wild, but that would have been earlier. Then in 1972 I went to University of Richmond in Richmond, VA. I got a job there, there are two parts of the college, There is Richmond College and Westhampton college, and I got a job washing dishes at Westhampton College. I was as a college student I was asked to be the supervisor of some black kids who were hired to also wash dishes, and they came in from the city. Well they resented me immediately and this was in the same general time frame, I remember one day I asked these guys where do you change, because there was a place and they came in and put on these white uniforms and they said downstairs, and it's not like they invited me downstairs but I went down there and stenciled on the door was "For Coloreds Only." And it I mean it was like a locker room and it had a bathroom, and that time it was like I was really stepping back in to the '40's or '30's. So that was quite an education for me to see that.

Joy- Do you think it was left over, or was it just there?

Ned- Well let's just say this- it wasn't important enough for them to change it. I mean I'm sure that had been there for quite a while. But that was just bizarre. You know, I mean you hear stuff, but this was, What have you seen? That was OH! One other thing. At UR there was a basketball player Adrien something.... from Long Island, and at they had just built a brand new Coliseum at Richmond for all their athletics, but it must have been a 10,000 seat basketball arena. It's my freshmen year, it's the inauguration of this thing and there was a lot of fanfare, so I went in and they played the National Anthem and you would have thought we were at a wake. I mean people were just sort of standing like this... for the playing of the National Anthem and about 5 minutes later they played Dixie and you would have thought the roof had come off of the place. I mean flags waving everywhere... So this guy Adrien he went to his coach and said you know what. You play that song ever again I'm not playing. And they didn't play it anymore, but what they did do was play Dueling Banjos from *Deliverance*. So this guy he put his foot down and they wanted him to play because he was scoring like 30 -40 points a game I was very impressed. So their comeback was to play Dueling Banjos.

Suann- I have one other story, and this was from when I was in 10<sup>th</sup> grade in Massachusetts, and this was told to me. My parents went out with some friends from the neighborhood this was north of Boston, and Dixie came on and my mother, this is kind of embarrassing, but she stood up. And everyone with her, all of the northerners looked at her like... and then she sheepishly sat back down. They were just playing, I never even knew that Dixie mattered at that point, and there was my mother on generation away who knew what it meant.

Ned- The irony is that a northerner wrote the melody.

Joy- A northerner wrote Dixie and a southerner wrote Yankee Doodle Dandy.

Ned- The world is held together by irony.

Suann- And there was my mother who had done so much to help the other race... I don't think she knew... I probably shouldn't have told that. (laughs)