

**The David and Barbara Pryor Center  
for  
Arkansas Oral and Visual History**

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**Event Transcript**

Pioneering in the Professions: Integrating the  
University of Arkansas Schools of Law and Medicine  
University of Arkansas School of Law  
Fayetteville, Arkansas  
September 24, 2007

**Event Description**

As Arkansas marked the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Little Rock Central High School crisis, the University of Arkansas Libraries hosted "Before Little Rock: Successful School Integration," an event series commemorating the less publicized integration of schools including the University of Arkansas Schools of Law and Medicine. As part of the series, George Haley and Christopher Mercer, two of the Law School's Six Pioneers, along with Edith Irby Jones, the first African American to attend the University of Arkansas Medical School, took part in a panel discussion titled "Pioneering in the Professions: Integrating the University of Arkansas Schools of Law and Medicine." The event included the panelists' recollections of their time as students and subsequent careers along with audience questions.

**Transcript:**

[00:00:00]

[*Introductory music*]

Dean Carolyn Allen: Good afternoon. Can you hear me?

Audience: Yes.

[00:00:31] CA: We're very pleased to have you here today. The University Libraries and the Law School faculty have worked extremely hard to bring this program to you this afternoon. As many of you know, this month marks the 50th anniversary of the integration of Central High School in Little Rock, an event that is often called a "crisis." On this past Friday, the United States Senate passed a resolution honoring the Little Rock Nine recognizing their courage and bravery. We're here today to recognize the courage and bravery of other individuals, both Black and white, who worked together to peacefully integrate the University of Arkansas. The event today is one of three taking place this week that recognizes successful Arkansas public school integration before Little Rock. The events remind us that there is a different story to tell in Arkansas history. One that also took courage and bravery of doing what was right but one that is often overlooked or not properly acknowledged with a senate resolution. The faculty and staff of the University Libraries and

the Law School believe that it is worth recognizing and honoring. I'd like to encourage you to attend the two others events we're holding to acknowledge our public school integrations later this week. Tomorrow evening we will host a screening of the documentary films *Doing What Was Right* and *Hoxie: The First Stand* to present the integration of the Charleston Public Schools in 1954 and the Hox—sorry, the Charleston Public Schools in 1954 and the Hoxie Public Schools in 1955. Professor Gerald Jordan has agreed to present these films in the Giffels Auditorium in Old Main at 7:00. There will also be a reception that precedes it. And then on Saturday night—yes, we know what time the game is. [*Laughter*] But we will commemorate the integration of the Fayetteville High School in 1954 with a panel of seven individuals who were involved in that integration. I hope you will be able to attend these events. I'd like to acknowledge the assistance of Representative Lindsley Smith who offered a prop—an appropriation bill to obtain partial funding to underwrite these activities. Needless to say, her money has gone to good—been put to good use. We very much appreciate that. At this time, I would ask that you please silence your cell phones, so that we would have no interruptions during our panel presentation. And without further ado, I would like to

introduce my colleague whom is beautiful, smart, energetic, and she gives me a hard time, dean of the Law School, Cynthia Nance. [*Applause*]

[00:04:12] Cynthia Nance: Only in jest. Good afternoon, and let me add my welcome to that of Dean Allen. We are honored and excited to be cohosts for this particular program this afternoon here in the School of Law. Thank you, Dean Allen and Tom and the members of the planning committee for your work in developing this series of programs. We are proud that you included us in this memorable event. A very warm welcome to our honored guests: Dr. Calvin Smith, his wife Earline—and soror; Dr. Edith Irby Jones; her daughter, attorney Myra Romaine; Ambassador George Haley; wife, Doris; and Attorney Chris Mercer and his wife, Pam. To our pioneering alumni, Ambassador Haley and Attorney Mercer, welcome home. We're so glad you're here. You are a special part of the rich and vibrant heritage of this law school. And your presence here today, as well as your continued interest in and support of us, make this a better community. To the three of you, it's interesting to note that the noun pioneer has a number of distinct definitions. However, two seem particularly appropriate for you. One definition of a pioneer is "a person who was among

the first to enter or settle a place, thus opening it for occupation and development by others." The second is "one of a group of foot soldiers detailed to clear the way in advance of the main body." It is clear that by either definition you pioneered, that is, made the way easier for those of us who follow in your footsteps. To paraphrase Dolly Parton, if your actions create a legacy to inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more, and become more, then you are an excellent leader. Thanks so much to the three of you for your pioneering leadership. And again, welcome. I'd also like to acknowledge a very special guest this afternoon, and that is Secretary Rodney Slater. We're very pleased that you're able to join us. Thank you for being here. For all our guests there will be a reception in the Six Pioneer's Room immediately following the panel today. Please join us. And now it is my pleasure to introduce another pioneering leader who is, as we speak, creating his own legacy of diversity, excellence, and access. And that is Chancellor John White. [*Applause*]

[00:07:22] John White: Thank you so much, Dean Nance. It's great to be here and, particularly, on the occasion of this panel. Dean Allen, I thought for a moment that you were referring to me when you were talking about your friend who is beautiful and

smart. *[Laughter]* And then you said who gives you a hard time, and I knew it wasn't me. I never give you a hard time.

*[Laughter]* I am scared to death of that woman. I wouldn't give her a hard time for anything. *[Laughter]* Mr. Secretary, it's good to see you. Welcome back home. It's great to have you here. I look around in the room today, and I must say so many of you only know about this by having studied Arkansas history. There are a number of us who lived it, and this brings back special, special memories, and I particularly appreciate the chance to be a part of—of today's recognition of what has occurred, particularly, here at my alma mater at the University of Arkansas. So on behalf of the University of Arkansas, I want to welcome all of you to today's panel discussion. [00:08:39]

As you know from the remarks from Dean Allen that this—this month marks the 50th anniversary of the integration of Little Rock's Central High School. And as I noted, most of you, well, several of you, are too young to have experienced that moment. Those were tumultuous days in the history of our state. More than any other event, that probably set back University of Arkansas conservatively by 20 to 30 years. It had a huge impact on this institution. And those of us who were alive at the time and had Arkansas connections and roots remember exactly

where we were when we heard about the National Guard being mobilized to go to Central High School to ensure the safety of Little Rock Nine. We know exactly where we were on that moment. Now Central High School did get most of the press attention. And by far the most controversial example of integration in our state, our fair state, our fine state of Arkansas. But it wasn't the first public school to be integrated in Arkansas. [00:10:04] In fact that distinction actually goes to the University of Arkansas in its Schools of Law and Medicine. And with us today are two of the six students who attended the School of Law after integration. Of course, I'm referring to Ambassador Haley, and George, it's great to have you back on our campus. And Christopher Mercer, and Mr. Mercer, it's great having you back here. I'm sure in many ways for the two of you it seems like only yesterday. And yet it has been more than 50 years, and my, how they have flown by. And we're pleased to have with us Dr. Edith Irby Jones, the first African American to attend the School of Medicine in Little Rock in 1948. Of course, at that time, as Dr. Jones knows well, it was, in fact, the branch of this campus. It was the medical school of this campus that happened to be located in Little Rock, and it was subsequent to that time that we, in fact, then became separate entities within

University of Arkansas system. [*Exhales*] It's a—it's got to be a—a day that is filled with lots of thoughts and lots of remembrances for our panelists as it is for all of those who experienced it, albeit for some of us, from afar. [00:11:37] Today's panel, as was mentioned earlier by Dean Allen, is the first of a three part program titled "Before Little Rock, Successful Arkansas School Integration." We particularly appreciate the sponsorship of the University of Arkansas Libraries. And the program highlights less controversial instances of public school integration, preceding the events of 1957 at Central High School. But if these events are less controversial, they're no less ground breaking, particularly because of their lack of controversy. We're delighted to have with us today Dr. Calvin Smith, emeritus professor of history from Arkansas State University. He will be moderating the discussion, and he will give us a firmer grounding in the historical context of what our panel will be discussing. And thank you for being with us, Dr. Smith. As Dean Allen mentioned, the second part of our program will occur tomorrow night at Giffels. And that segment is titled "Right in the Sight of God," and, as she noted, will include the screening of two documentary films concerning peaceful integration of the Hoxie and Charleston Public Schools. And then, as she noted, on

Saturday night, for those of you who are not terribly concerned about some other event that she noted, which frankly had escaped my attention and thank you for bringing that to my attention, Dean Allen. The "Quick and Quiet: Integrating the Fayetteville Public Schools" will be at the Fayetteville High School auditorium. That begins with a reception at 6:00 PM and a panel discussion at 7:00. Dean Allen and I both know that the people in our audience are not real good at remembering dates and times, and so that's why we have intentionally repeated it for you, and we will ask you in unison to repeat after us that it's Saturday night with a reception at 6:00 and a panel discussion at 7:00. That discussion at Fayetteville High School will be hosted by historian Andrew Brill. And as she indicated earlier, six guests will be former students and teachers who experienced the time of integration at Fayetteville High School. It's going to be a fascinating program series. I hope you'll attend if your schedule permits. [00:14:04] Now as some of you may know, and I hope that all of you know, that increasing the diversity on our campus is the top goal of this administration. Now this isn't a forum for going into the specifics of why, but suffice it to say that I think today's discussion will give us a deeper appreciation for why we need to make sure that all of our students have

equal access to higher education. Now 50 years might seem like ancient history to some of our younger audience members, but I can assure you for some of us, it's just like yesterday. I think that what we will hear will give us a much greater appreciation for how far we've come. But importantly, it's also going to demonstrate how much further we have to go. We've come a long way, but we are not there, and we should not be declaring victory in any way. Much work remains to be done, and I hope all of you enjoy today's program. At this point let me invite back Dean Nance to add her comments, unless you've already done—or is that what I'm supposed to—is this when I do—you come up? It's—that's what I'm scripted to say, but it looks like it's someone else. [Laughter] [*Applause*]

[00:15:30] Tom Dillard: Welcome everybody. I'm Tom Dillard. I'm the head of the Special Collections Department at the University Libraries and am cochair, along with Molly Boyd, on the library staff of this—these commemorative events that we have planned this week. It is my real pleasure to introduce Dr. Calvin Smith, C. Calvin Smith, to you all. I've known Calvin a long time. We were in graduate school together here at the university longer ago than we care to think about. He is a resident of Jonesboro. Dr. Smith recently retired as Presidential

Distinguished Professor of Heritage Studies at Arkansas State University. He's the son of a Lee County farmer and Baptist preacher, and he considers Marianna as his childhood hometown. After graduating from one of the great high schools of eastern Arkansas, Robert Moton High School in Marianna, Calvin entered Arkansas Baptist College in Little Rock, but he finished his undergraduate degree at Arkansas AM&N College in Pine Bluff, now the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff. While teaching social studies and coaching football at his high school alma mater in Marianna, Calvin made time to begin graduate studies at Arkansas State University. Upon completing his master's degree in 1970, he joined the ASU faculty and soon began studying toward a Ph.D. at the University of Arkansas here in Fayetteville here in the history department. Dr. Smith was the first tenured African American faculty member at—in the ASU history department. Dr. Smith's doctoral dissertation is on the impact of World War II on Arkansas. It's a fine and original work. It was published by the University of Arkansas Press in 1986, and it's still the only book-length study on Arkansas during WWII. During his career of over 30 years on the ASU faculty Dr. Smith researched and published widely on topics such as biographical studies, the Black experience in Arkansas, the

relocation of Japanese Americans during WWII, and a host of other subjects. His original research and publications on L. C. Bates, the husband of civil rights leader Daisy Bates, was instrumental in bringing L. C. Bates from the shadows of his more prominent spouse. Please join me in welcoming Dr. C. Calvin Smith who will be moderating our panel today. Calvin, glad to have you here. [*Applause*]

[00:18:18] Calvin Smith: Good afternoon. It is my pleasure to be with you this afternoon. And when I was talking to Tom and he asked me to do this, I kind of readily agreed, especially when he told me who the panel would be. I feel a kind of kinship with these people. Although they were the pioneers, they also paved the way for me to come to the university and a number of other people. And so having said that, I told Dr. Haley that—that I'm in tall cotton this afternoon. Now for those of you who grew up in Arkansas, and I grew up in the Arkansas Delta. So when you're in tall cotton, you're in good company. You're in the best of company when you're in tall cotton. But to set this program in perspective, and we're talking about the desegregation of the University of Arkansas Law School and its medical school. And it's a personal thing I have, I used—I rarely use the term integration. I use the term desegregation because they're two

different meanings. Desegregation, you remove the legal barriers and so forth. Integration, and you merge them. See we're still in the process of trying to integrate our society. But we have desegregated it. But we're still in the process of trying to integrate it. Now I like to think in terms you make a—my wife makes a German chocolate cake. And I got a sweet tooth. And a lot of ingredients go into that cake. But it has one taste. And that's integration to me. And so we'll—we'll get there. World War II served as a—and we'll quick talk about a historical context—World War II served as a, somewhat of a spark plug toward the desegregation of American society as a whole. Although the process had begun somewhat earlier. [00:20:52] In the 1930s, the NAACP had launched a campaign to make "separate but equal" a reality or make it history. Get rid of it. And we all know what "separate but equal" meant. Separate and unequal. So they want to make this a reality. And along that road, some success. Some of the premier names in the civil rights movement, especially in the litigation for civil rights, like Thurgood Marshall, Charles Hamilton Houston, and a number of others were pioneers. And one of the first major cases was in 1936 in *Pearson v. Murray* case that comes out of Maryland. A case litigated by Thurgood Marshall, who wanted to go to the

University of Maryland law school but could not because of his particular tan, shall we say. And so he went to Howard University. And so he makes the first case. And in that case the court ruled that—and what Maryland did was provide scholarships for Black students to go out of state. And so what the court ruled was that a state's provision of scholarships to Black students for out-of-state graduate study was an inadequate compliance with a student's constitutional right to equal access. So if it's inadequate compliance, now you've got to make it adequate. So what you're doing here is starting a gradual but consistent attack on separate but equal. That case—1936. Nineteen thirty-eight case that we're all familiar with, case that played a major role when it came to the desegregation of the university here is the Missouri, or *Gaines v. Canada* or *Missouri v. Gaines*, however you want to put it. And in that particular case, again you're dealing with equal access. Lloyd Gaines had been denied admission to the University of Missouri law school. And the court ruled that that, too, was unequal access. And what the court said, and I will quote here, said—and I am quoting, "The basic consideration is not as to what sort of opportunities other states provide or whether they are as good as those opportunities in Missouri, but as to what

opportunities Missouri itself furnishes to white students and denies to negroes solely upon the grounds of color." End quote. So the basic issue is what are the opportunities? And if the opportunities are not equal, then something is wrong with the program. So gradually, you start the process. Another case—and our distinguished guests are familiar with this one. They're familiar with all of them. They're attorneys, but—Ada Sipuel. [00:24:49] Ada Sipuel was denied admission to the University of Oklahoma law school. And I mention Ada Sipuel because there is a connection here between the panel and myself. All these people here, with the exception of Dr. Irby, are—have a Pine Bluff connection, the AM&N College connection in Pine Bluff. I am a graduate of AM&N College. These people were—had a connection with Attorney Flowers out of Pine Bluff who was somewhat of a pioneer. Wiley Branton, who came here with these gentleman from Pine Bluff. So there's a Pine Bluff connection there. You might say there's an Arkansas Delta connection because some people consider Pine Bluff to be a part of the Arkansas Delta. But they—the *Sipuel v. Oklahoma* fight in [19]48, the court ruled that you had to offer the same quality of education. It didn't say you got to overturn *Plessy v. Ferguson*. But what the court said you have to provide the same quality.

So you look at the economic impact of that, and that's an extremely heavy financial burden on most southern states. Could Arkansas in 1948, 1949 offer two law schools of equal quality, one for Blacks and one for whites? Or two medical schools of equal quality? So you indirectly apply a great deal of pressure on *Plessy v. Ferguson*. [00:26:55] The Supreme Court ruling in those cases was not lost upon the legal community here in Arkansas, not lost upon the scholars; it wasn't lost on the politicians who began to do two things. One was to try and circumvent those decisions by creating regional graduate schools. The courts had already said that was unconstitutional. And the other was to comply and, at the same time, maintain vestiges of segregation. And let me explain that. Arkansas's war-time governor was Homer Atkins. Now Homer Atkins had entered the political process as a candidate for the KKK, and that had influenced his political decisions. So during World War II, most of you are familiar with the internment of Japanese Americans. They were brought to Arkansas. He adamantly resisted and finally said, "I'll do it as a patriotic duty only if their kept under barbed wire and guard." My point, many of those Japanese Americans students were enrolled in colleges and universities on the west coast. And when Atkins was approached

about let them continue their education in Arkansas, he said no for two reasons. One he saw them as the enemy and secondly, and I'm using his words, "that would be a wedge by which Negroes will attempt to enter our schools" end quote. So he saw that if we let them in it, then we got to let Blacks enter. Atkins was followed by Ben Laney, who was the first post-World War II governor, and Laney was also a segregationist, adamantly opposed to the national civil rights program initiated by Harry Truman. Laney was a firm supporter of the formation of the Dixiecrat party, which ran Strom Thurman for president, 1948. So all of you are familiar with that. So in this atmosphere of resistance and desegregation on one hand, the Supreme Court, the NAACP was moving in another direction. [00:30:00] In the state's two premier graduate programs, the med school in Little Rock and the Law School here in Fayetteville, their deans were working undercover, maybe—or behind the scenes. I won't say undercover. That brings to mind Strom Thurmond. So we'll say they were working [*laughter*] behind the scenes, I'll put it that way, to achieve desegregation. Leflar talked—Robert A. Leflar of the Law School here and Henry Clay Chenault of the med school in Little Rock. They had talked with the governor about desegregation, and they had assured Laney if he went along with

the program, these students would be isolated. In other words, they would not be allowed to mix in with the general student body. And so Laney says, "Okay, I won't interfere with what the university's going to do if you do it that way." And that was the decision. So when Silas Hunt, the first, was admitted to the law school, it was segregated within a desegregated institution. He's isolated. In preparing for this program, and thanks to some information provided by Professor Chenault, I came across a story by Bill Penix. [00:31:44] Bill Penix was a young law student here at the time, and—who allowed Silas Hunt to use his apartment to eat lunch and get some rest. But when I first went to ASU in Jonesboro in 1970, I'm in Shoney's, and tall, middle-age attorney walks up, out the clear blue, and just took a seat. He said, "My name is Bill Penix." He says, "I'm an attorney, and if I can help you, let me know." That's in nine—I never paid any attention until I began to prepare for this program. And I did a little bit of research, and that's the same Bill Penix that offered some solitude, some assistance to Silas Hunt. So it's a small world. It's a small world. I could tell you what I read about what these pioneers experienced as the first. I have a little bit of that as being the first, as Tom pointed out, tenure-track, Black professor at ASU in 1970. And I can remember to this day

a young student coming into my office one day, and he said, "Man, I'm glad to see there's somebody here that look like us." And that—those words just kind of stayed with me. And as I worked at ASU for over 30 years, I'm the only Black guy in the department. And the words of that student rang very clear. "I wish there was somebody here who looked like me." So for those of you who are in the process of hiring, diversifying their faculties, one does not mean diversity. Having said that, I want to introduce our distinguished, and I do mean distinguished, guests. To the far left, and we're going to give each one of these about three minutes to say something, and then we're going to have, we're going to do this on a question-and-answer basis, and then we'll follow that particular format. To my far left is Dr. Edith Irby Jones. Pioneer. [*Applause*]

George Haley: You going to sit here?

CS: The med school.

Edith Irby Jones: No. No. He's going to introduce you.

GH: Is she coming up there?

[00:34:27] EIJ: No, he's going to introduce you. You're going to introduce me? Oh! [*Laughter*] Thank you. I guess I'm supposed to make a speech. [*Laughter*] I am so delighted to be here. When I first got the invitation to come to Fayetteville, I

remembered my previous experiences here. It has been so wonderful. The people are so kind. They are so intelligent. They talk, you know, this language of—in an academic environment. And the weather is beautiful. I really could stay here forever. They told me, though, I couldn't stay at this podium forever [*laughter*], that I had to say what I had to say in three minutes. And I'm going to try to do that, and that's going to be very, very difficult. [00:35:39] The reason I went to the University of Arkansas Medical School was simple. I wanted to be a doctor. I had wanted to be a doctor since I was approximately six years old. I saw a sister, at that time she was 12 years old, who died from rheumatic—from typhoid fever. It was a typhoid epidemic, and as I watched the children who developed typhoid fever and lived, and those who died, I thought that the reason my sister died was because she did not have adequate medical attention. And I decided when I was six years old that I was going to be a doctor and that I was going to be a special kind of doctor. I was going to be the kind that saw that every person regardless of their wealth, their poverty, their color, or whatever status they might be, that I would deliver to them good health care and that I would see that others would do the same. I have had the opportunity of doing that. Why did I

apply to the University of Arkansas School of Medicine? Because I was an Arkansan. And the tuition was \$500. And tuition elsewhere was \$10,000, \$15,000 and up. I wanted to be a doctor. I went to undergraduate school in Knoxville College in Knoxville Tennessee, a Presbyterian-oriented school where the faculty at that time was predominately white. Who told me that I was somebody, that I could do anything I wanted to do, that I could go anyplace I wanted to go. But it was up to me. So I did the best I could in college. In fact I had one B on my transcript. [00:38:02] I left Knoxville College with the idea of being a doctor. I applied to 12 medical schools. The University of Arkansas was one of the medical schools I applied to. I expected to get one, and the only reason I didn't apply to others is that my money ran out for application fees. One day as I was in Chicago working at the Aldens mail order, I got the call from *Time* magazine saying, "Are you Edith Mae Irby?" "Yes I am." "Are you going to go to the University of Arkansas Medical School?" "I don't know. Have I been accepted?" [*Laughter*] And that was my introduction that I was accepted at the University of Arkansas. The rest is history. Of course, I packed my little bag, and I ran home to Hot Springs, Arkansas, and said, "I'm going to medical school." I had been accepted in

several of the others. In fact, I didn't know anybody who did not accept me. I was—I later learned that I was 28th in the country on the MCAT examination. And so my little school of Knoxville College had prepared me to go into a medical school. They—I'll make this as brief as possible. I came home, and I didn't have that \$500. In fact I didn't have five dollars more than my transportation home. [00:39:51] But I announced to Hot Springs that I was going to medical school. I didn't have any money, and the mayor at that time started the gift giving. He gave his money. They passed the hat on Central Avenue. They took up money after church, and I had my \$500 to go to medical school. I was brought to medical school by one of the citizens in Hot Springs, and on arriving I had my \$500 in nickels, dimes, quarters, half dollars, and so forth. [Laughter] And I paid my money, enrolled, found that I needed to have \$50 more for laboratory and for microscope. I didn't have \$50. But I remembered that a friend of mine riding with me on the segregated train had said "If you need anything while you in Little Rock, go down to the state press and ask Daisy or L. C. Bates to help you. I remembered. I took a dime, got on the bus, went to the *State Press*, and walked in and says, "I'm Edith—I'm Edith Mae Irby. I need \$50." The lady behind the

desk said, "What?" [*Laughter*] I says," I'm in medical school, and I need to—I'm in a hurry. I have to be back in 30 minutes. I've got to have \$50." She went behind some books and in a can pulled out \$50. I later learned that was her last \$50. That was Daisy Bates. As I went into school—I don't have any of the stories that the—that the fellows tell. [00:41:31] Because as I walked in the students in my—in my school welcomed me, told me that they were glad I was there, wanted to work with me, and this is how it went for four years. There were no incidents. Maybe there could have been. There were three girls in the class, Betty, Mary, and Edith. And Mary lived in the same area as I lived, and we rode the bus to school. We knew that we could not sit together because they had signs then. Mary was blonde and blue-eyed, and I was a little darker with black hair. And it's—the sign says, "Colored back and white up." Well, Mary didn't think she was colored, and I didn't think I was white, so we didn't sit because we thought if we would sit, that we might be delayed in class. So we stood. And we stood all the way to school, and we talked, and nobody bothered us. Her father was a veterinarian for the state and purchased her a car. Well at that time students didn't have many cars. So we had the only car, so we carried the whole class everywhere they needed to

do—to study, to do the other things. So we were the envy of the class. To make it short, there were laws on the book that said white and colored could not eat in public places together. They could not use the public restrooms. Dr. Chenault called me and said, "This is the way it is. You're not here to break down segregation. You're here to get a medical-school education, and we'll do whatever's necessary. We'll give you allowance. If others come in there, we can't stop them. We'll give you a private bathroom. If others come in, we can't stop them." He said, "But we can't regulate what happens here." [00:43:48] I had a lunchroom that was in the library, one of the library study rooms. The class members found out that I had this class lunchroom, and we used it as a study. We got to know each other. And we—we cried together when we didn't do as well as we should do, and we rejoiced together when we overcame those things that were challenges to us. During the medical school days, I can't think of any adverse situations. I—I've tried hard to think of something that I could tell you here that was adverse for me. I just returned from my 55th year class reunion. It was wonderful to be with all those old men [laughter], and there were two of us girls who returned. We were still young and beautiful, we thought. [Laughter] But this

has been the story of what it has been for me. We studied together. We agonized together when things didn't go well. We had no incidents, absolutely no incidents. It was like they were my brothers, my sisters, and it was just no incidents. And now my closest friends are my classmates of my medical school class. Thank you so much for having me. [*Applause*]

[00:45:41] CS: You'll have your chance to answer questions. Next we're going to have Attorney Mercer. One of the six pioneers that—you guys have read these brief bio, so we going to let him have a few minutes, and we going to come back and you can get your shots at him. Attorney Mercer.

Christopher Mercer: Thank you Dr. Smith. [*Applause*] Paying homage to those who are responsible for all of these things. The deans—Dean Howard, Dean Nance, Chancellor White, and to all of you who are suffering through [*laughs*—through this afternoon to be here. I passed an old building over there. I'm—I'm a little—little envious of you law students now. This courtroom is named after one of our schoolmates at the time, E. J. Ball. But George—George and I passed by the old law school over there—It's not nearly as commodious as this—when we on our way from Carnall Hall over here this afternoon. It's an honor to be here today. They say all human effort can be reduced to

three questions. Where are we? How did we get here? And what are we going to do about it? Well, we're here, so the program says [*laughs*], to acknowledge peaceful integration in— in Arkansas. Central High did get all the accolades, all the headlines. But Central High happened in 1955, and that was—I mean, [19]57. That was three years after *Brown v. Board of Education*. The University of Arkansas School of Law and school of medicine had integrated almost nine years before that time, a long time. We didn't even know anything about this was going to happen. [00:47:59] University of Arkansas School of Law integrated in February of 1948, Silas Hunt being the first student. In September of 1948, Dr. Jones entered the medical school. Silas was the first. Jackie Shropshire came in September—came to the Law School in September [19]48. Edith Irby Jones, or Edith Irby at that time, went to med school in September of 1948, but Silas Hunt had been here in February of 1948. Depending on who you ask, if I'm telling the story I was number three, but if George tell the story he was number three. [*Laughter*] We were the third and fourth. We came here in September of 1949. There's a beautiful room downstairs they call the Pioneer Room. And of the six Blacks who first came here from February of 1948 through September of 1950, they're

dubbed the six pioneers. George, it's getting a little lonesome here. We the only two left of—of the six pioneers. So the university, very kindly, and the library system, very kindly, put on a program to let people know that Central High School is—was not the masthead for Arkansas. The law school in September of [19]48, the med school in—I mean, the law school in February of [19]48—the law school of September in [19]48 had taken place a long time. In fact, my law licenses are dated May 17, 1954. That's the same day of the Supreme Court's decision on desegregation before Central High School. I had been to Fayetteville, and Dr. Jones, you talking about not having any money. *[Laughter]* I know that fellow well. *[Laughter]* George and I entered both in—in September of 1949, and you see on the program how he graduated in 1952, and I graduated in 1955. I don't know that I was that much dumber than George. *[Laughter]* I was just that much poorer than George. *[Laughter]* I went one year and dropped out a year and come back a year and dropped out a year. I don't know whether any of you know anything about that why how hard it is to go to school. Where you have to pay money to go to school. But I empathize with you, Dr. Jones. I know that fellow well.

[00:50:50] How did we get here? That's the second question.

We got here not only by hard work, but there were a lot of people of good will. As Dr. Smith said, some people were working behind the scenes to make this happen. It took a lot of courage, sure, to apply and go to—into what would be a hostile situation. But there were a lot of white people of good will, too. The Blacks didn't do it by themselves. And Arkansas is to be commended. There was nowhere in the south—there was nowhere else in the south where this was taking place. Arkansas was first. And ironically, most Blacks don't live up here [*laughs*], you know. When—when we were in school here there were 5,500 students reportedly on the campus. And at the peak, there were just five of us here. There never was six. The six was here—there were—at one time there were five of us here because Silas died in August of 1948. So he didn't get a chance to matriculate that long. You have—according to the latest publications put out by the university, you have a little over 1,000 Black students here now. You have 20,000 here now instead of 5,000. But there's a greater—greater proportion, and things are a whole lot better than they were when—when we were here. So we know where we are, and we know how we got here. Chancellor White, things have improved since we were here at the school. I'm happy to say I come back pretty often. I

get—I'm not as far away as Rodney and George. They up in DC. I'm just down in Little Rock. So I get a chance to come back. I was here last September when we dedicated the atrium down there and the Pioneer Room. [00:53:03] Where do we go from here, or what can we do about it? Well, the first thing, we can continue to do what we've been doing. Somebody must have been doing something right. You don't put on these kinds of programs unless somebody's got something good in their hearts. And I think it's important that people that people we're calling dean [*laughs*], not only are they people of color, but they are female. I don't remember when—I know when we were in law school there were no female professors were there George? No there were no—there were no female professors.

GH: [*Unclear words*]

CM: That's probably so. Yeah, that's probably so. [*Laughter*] And she's still practicing down in Little Rock, George with me. Ginger. Talking about Ginger Atkinson. Yeah, Ginger's—Ginger's still raising sand like she always did. I won't say what else she raises but [*laughter*—the university has graciously—they started the 40 year reunion when George and I came back in 1988. There were two more pioneers that came here. One didn't—didn't choose to come, but Wylie Branton came with us

and Jackie Shropshire came. We came back, George, you and I came back for the 50 year reunion. It's almost 60 years now. They talk about the 50-year celebration of Little Rock Central High. It's almost 60 years. In February of next year, it will be 60 years since the university integrated. I don't know—I don't know that it will ever be like it was before we came here. I can't conceive of us going backwards. That—we only have one way to go, and that's forward. When I come back, I'll tell you how best you can do that as a individual, whether you a law student or whether you here as an interested person. Whether you an official at the university, I'll have a solution for you. I promise you that. [*Applause*]

[00:55:42] CS: Our last panelist, and again you'll have a chance to ask questions and so forth. Attorney Haley—rather interesting, both of these attorneys—this which was a desegregation took place after World War II. It kind of speeded it up. And one of the slogans in the Black communities was a double V during World War II, victory overseas and victory for democracy at home. So these guys were fighting for victory on two fronts. So we have two pioneers in a lot of different ways. So we'll—  
Attorney Haley. [*Applause*]

GH: Good afternoon everybody. To the chancellor, the deans, Law School and others, distinguished guests, ladies and gentleman. We've had your other two panelists talking, and there's just so much on my mind and in my heart that I'd like to say. But I promise you, Mr. Moderator, I won't do that right now. I'll wait until the questions and answers come. I am—have been thinking of course, as C. C. has said, about the other law school [*laughs*], the differences the—in—in the institutions. They're just wonderful to think of the progress and pride that we have here. I want in a very few minutes to tell you a little bit about the experiences which we hadn't had, and there are some young people here, and I find—I want you to know that, I mean not only some who are as old as we are. Incidentally I just [*laughs*] celebrated my 82nd birthday. [*Applause*] I guess I can't say that without saying to you that my wife celebrated her birthday, too, who is in the audience. We have the same birthday. She hastens to add when she's talking that it's the same day but not the same year, Chancellor. [*Laughter*] But we're August 28, both of us have that birthday. Doctor, I married a very young lady. [*Laughter*] [00:58:47] But I wanted to just very briefly talk to you about the—the law school when C. C. and I came and just a little bit before that. Some of you don't really know that

when Silas Hunt came and was mentioned in 1948, he was stationed, if you please, in the basement of the law school. White instructors would come down to teach him, and that was about it. I mean, in his second semester he got ill and, of course, had to—to leave. Jackie Shropshire, the second person, African American, admitted was admitted under the same circumstances, separate study room, the white instructors would come down to teach him. And we are told that some of the students complained that he was getting better treatment than they, private tutorage and what not. So they moved him up to the regular classroom and—and put a chair—now all of you are white students there—and put a chair right over here in this area where, of course, he could see the instructor and they him, and built a partition or rail between him and them, so that, of course, they could all see each other. But that, again, was the kind of thing that was done. Wiley Davis, the Criminal Law instructor of some renown that was here, of course, when we came, was one who said, "We have to move this." So they did in fact move the partition. And he remained in that chair. Well, certainly when we came—when we came, C. C., two other chairs were moved on the side where Jackie was. Now don't let me say to you that there were not many, many kinds of real frustrations, Mr.

Chancellor, that we had. Dean Leflar was a very, very good dean who had the responsibilities that challenged the—of dealing with the then three students when C. C. and I came. We had all kinds of things happen. We had a separate study room. We could not sit down in the library. We could stand up, use the books, but we'd have to bring them out. The white students complained about our using the—the student restroom. So what happened then was we were used—we used the dean's private quarters, private restroom. That meant having to ask the—go in to his office, get the key from his secretary, and then unlock his restroom. That created some disturbance that we were doing that. So it was then thought that we would use the faculty restroom, which meant that we would go through the regular student restroom to go into the faculty restroom. And now, and I'm serious, all of us lived in the city at that time—in the town—in the city, and we decided that we would not go to the restroom during the day. And you could see us sometimes running to get home [*laughter*] to go to the restroom. It's true. Isn't that right, C. C.? [*Laughter*] Since he's—but that's true, I mean we got so disturbed about some of the things like that that were going on. Now there's a lot more to it. There's no doubt but that walking into—walking into a room, and I can almost see it

now, when you—in the law school and others, but certainly in the law school, there's a, as you know, a chitter-chitter-chatter going on before the instructor gets there. But one of us would step in to go to our chair, and all of a sudden, all the chitter-chatter was gone. It was just—it was just quiet. Here he comes or here they come again. It was just that quiet in the early stages when we were first in law school. Certainly we talked about it. We did as much as we could to get ourselves lined up not only to be good students but to let the white students know that we were there. And we were there to do two or three things. Certainly to be good law students, but to have them know that we didn't rub off, that we had abilities too. Now I could jump into a lot of other things. Things did, of course, improve. There's no doubt about it. And I have tell the doctor here, I'm—we are here to learn, too. I didn't realize that things were as nice as they were where you are concerned. They were not where we were concerned, but we were growing into it. And in the question/answer, I'll try to—between C. C. and me, we can tell you some other things that did happen in the law school. Things did—did change. For instance, in my own case, in my second and third year, I became a member of the—of the *Law Review* staff. Dean Leflar who was, as you know, an artist—he

did the *Conflict of Laws* law, which among other places, was a text at Harvard, among other places—was very proud of any law student who was, you know, on *Law Review* staff. So I—he and I got to be very good friends. [01:05:37] But I want to back up and tell you a little bit about things that did happen. In—we're talking about the—the restroom facilities. In 1950s the two cases which were—came before the Supreme Court, the *Sweatt* case and the *McLaurin* case in Oklahoma, which, of course, determined the business, pretty much of then of the separate but equal. When those cases, particularly *McLaurin* case came, C. C. and I went to the restroom [*laughs*]. And—and nobody complained. We now then got out of the faculty restroom, and we were able to go to the student restroom. So those are the kinds of things that—that were happening. And we maintained some—we developed some very, very good relationships. Doctor, I won't say that all of them were like yours at the medical school. But between C. C., myself, Jackie—all of us, really got to develop some good friendships. I will share more of that later, hopefully in the question and answer. But right now, I'd like you to know—one of the questions that was suggested, and I want to try to answer now is if this experience were—ask you again today whether or not you would go to law school as a

pioneer and what not, or would you go to one of the others that was [*laughs*] much better school as such—I'm talking about more integrated. My answer would be I would go to the University of Arkansas if it happened again. I would go because it was a challenge, an opportunity, a responsibility, to make things better. I look, and to be able to see some of my—some of our other people, as you mentioned the Honorable Rodney Slater. And there's Leon Jones back there. They're just two of the people who've come forth from the university, and—and we're just proud of them. We're proud that we've been able to do something that has been meaningful. We're proud, certainly, to have the dean here now and the other deans. We're proud of those kinds of activities. It's because there have been people like us and others who have been in position to make things a lot better. Not only for Blacks. It's for whites. It's for all of us. America needs this diversity. It needs it. It needs it now more than before. And so we extend our—our pride, again, to—to those who've been pioneers here and other places. But to all of you. And we certainly hope that these United States will be a better place for all of us. I end this part by saying one of my supports from church—I mean, Churchill would say what is the use in living unless it is to make the world better for those who

come after you? I would hope that my living is meaningful and our living will be meaningful and significant for the betterment of this country, certainly the African Americans, of the country as a whole and as the world. Thank you. [*Applause*]

[01:09:49] CS: I'd like to thank our panelists for those comments before we get to our question-and-answer session. And I'd like to just say this to the audience. When you talk about the desegregation of higher ed, look beyond the physical presence of someone in the classroom. You got a classroom of whites, and there's one Black. So look beyond that physical presence. How does that person learn in that environment? Or reverse the situation. Put yourself in that environment, one white in a class of all Blacks. So how do you respond? How do you learn in that situation? So you have to look beyond the physical presence and look at the mental toughness and the psychological aspects of these things. And these are truly pioneers. And I got to expedite time here. So I have some questions I'd like to pose to our panelists rather quickly, and then we'll have questions from the audience. So for each of our panelists, when did you first—when did you first start to think about attending an all-white institution? What did that thought—when did you first start thinking about doing it? To each of you.

[01:11:41] EIJ: I was not concerned whether the medical school I attended was white, Black, or whatever. I wanted to go to medical school. And the University of Arkansas just happened to be, at that time, white. And it was the one that I could not financially afford, but at least I could dream that I might get that money. And my hometown supplied me with that money. And even though I was accepted in 12 other medical schools, I went because I had \$500 that paid my tuition.

GH: [Unclear words] My first feeling about going to, say the University of Arkansas, was when I was a senior at Morehouse College in Atlanta. And my father . . .

Scott Lunsford: Here we go.

GH: [*Laughter*] Okay, thank you. My—my father was on the faculty at AM&N College in Pine Bluff, now, of course, the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff. And—and that made me an Arkansas citizen. So I could, of course, claim my citizenship. I had really hoped to—had thought of going to law school, and it had not been the university because, at that point, I was not aware that it was integrated—about to be integrated. But Dad and the president of Morehouse, Benjamin Elijah Mayes, many of you don't know him but he was—he was a quite an educator, philosopher, and certainly the father of all of the men of

Morehouse and others. Encouraged my doing—becoming to become a pioneer here, between him and dad caused me to think about coming home to Arkansas and going to school. And as I said earlier, my feeling now is it was a challenge, and it was a good challenge. Thank you.

[01:14:14] CM: Now I'm a Pine Bluff boy as has been noted. And Pine Bluff has been the Athens in the Black community for many, many years. And so growing up in Pine Bluff where the only land-grant—well the only college, in essence, for Blacks at the particular time. You had an atmosphere of where people were concerned about education. When I finished college in 1946, there was a movement on in the Black community of trying to quote "integrate" some of the schools in Arkansas. And several of us, me included, offered ourselves as guinea pigs to—to go. But the movement didn't really take root at that particular time. That was when I first thought about it. It continued to fester in Pine Bluff and eventually Silas and Wiley Branton came to make application to the university. [01:15:24] They were trying to integrate at both levels, the undergraduate level and the graduate level. What they had done when they were in the smoke-filled rooms waiting for—when I—everybody knew that there was going to be an effort to integrate. It was common

knowledge. It was—it was no hidden secret. And everybody knew that they were going to make an assault on the University of Arkansas. So when Wylie Branton and Silas Hunt came in 1948, they came with a photographer and an attorney, not anticipating that they were going to be accepted. They were going to be turned down. And, of course, Silas was accepted to graduate level. Wiley was not accepted at the undergraduate level, but they told him that if you be patient—he was applying in business administration. This was separate but equal. They didn't have a separate business administration major course at AM&N. They said, "We will provide that course at AM&N by September." In all fairness—wouldn't tell this on a dead man—Wiley wasn't really prepared to come to the University if they had admitted him because he had just married. And Lucille, his wife, was waiting on him to go on a honeymoon. So he [laughter]—so if they had admitted Wiley, [laughs] he would have had to decline because he [laughter]—but some of you will see the classic picture down in the Pioneer Room where Silas Hunt is pointing at the University of Arkansas. Geleve Grice took those pictures. I was informed that the Grice—all the series of Geleve's pictures are here. So I had had this idea in 1946. Silas came in 1948. I guess I couldn't have waited any longer. I

came in 1949. So I didn't—I didn't have any thought of going—going anywhere else. At the time before that, you could apply to the state since they didn't offer these graduate courses. And if you applied and went to school outside the state they would pay your tuition. But they didn't pay any room and board, you know. [Laughs] So paying the tuition didn't get you anywhere. So—but I had started in [19]46.

[01:18:01] CS: I want to ask another question then. It's obvious, now this is for the whole panel—it's—the NAACP was involved in a number of these early cases. Did any of you that receive assistance, advice, from NAACP attorneys?

EIJ: I did not.

CM: I did not.

GH: I did not. [Laughter] We were aware, of course, of their interest.

CS: Homegrown.

GH: But we didn't—didn't receive any funds or . . .

CS: And you know I appreciate, because this is homegrown. Homegrown.

CM: Course, people—in talking about the NAACP, basically all the NAACP provided was legal assistance to sue if you got turned down.

CS: Okay.

CM: I think that would have been the case if—if Silas had been turned down. Harold Flowers came along, and the NAACP might have funded that lawsuit. But the deal was made, and of course, everybody surprised, in all fairness. The deal was made, and they accepted Silas. And wasn't any need to sue. You all—in order to sue you must first make a—make a effort to enter and be refused.

CS: Yes.

CM: That's a legal principle not only for desegregating schools but—you must have a refusal. Make a demand and refuse it before you can sue. Isn't that—where are the law students?  
[*Laughter*] That's an old [*unclear*].

[01:19:37] CS: Well, did—did—did any of you receive any kind of guidance as to what to expect from anybody?

EIJ: No.

CM: No.

CS: You were totally on your own?

EIJ: Yes.

GH: Well, when you say that, after—you mean after we got here? Or before?

CS: Yeah. Uh-huh.

GH: When I—when I came, I had—my dad drove me up here. And we had, in the summer, we had a good meeting, really, with Dean Leflar. Dean Leflar, Jackie Shropshire, of course, having been now a second year student, told me and my dad some of the things that—that would be expected of him and what Jackie was doing. And, as I said, some of them I mentioned already. For instance, they had provided the private study room as such. The library—he told me about that. We didn't discuss the restroom facilities at all, but he was saying that this is, of course, something that's very much in the pioneering stage. So he not only instructed me then, but as we went along, we had instructions pretty much from the dean, not others of the faculty. Some of whom weren't that friendly now.

CS: Right.

[01:21:19] CM: Talking about being unprepared, when I was—had been accepted and—made an application and been accepted, and I was in Harold Flowers's office talking with him, and they were couple of lawyers there, and they were telling me what courses I would take as a freshman. And they say, "You'll be taking Criminal Law, and you be taking Agency and Partnership, and you be taking Torts. I said, "What? Hold up there a minute. Torts? I had never heard the word torts in my life. [*Laughter*] I

had graduated from—now this was in 1949. I was—I had been out of college three years, and I thought I was at least reasonably half smart. But I had never heard the word torts, and I had nightmares. I mean, I've had nightmares thinking about that—that fellow telling me [*laughs*]. Till I got here to register, I didn't have anybody to tell me what torts was. I didn't realize how important it was in—in the study of law. But you talking about being prepared, I don't know anybody could be more unprepared to come to law school. I'd never—I didn't know what—I didn't know anything about the courses. There was no pre-law or anything like that.

CS: Doctor?

CM: But I don't think we were—we were too scared, were we, George?

[01:22:30] EIJ: Well, my assistance mainly came in my preparation for medical school—for any medical school. Because I had gone to a small, private, medical school where 90% of our faculty was volunteer faculty, and 80% of those were Caucasians who were volunteering their efforts to have us to be the best that we could be. They made me think that I could go and pull down the mountain, and the mountain would fall. They instilled in me a kind of self-confidence that the world was mine, and it was up to

me to conquer it. And I don't know that sometimes I don't revert to that even now. That academically they expected us to achieve, but after having done that and met all the other requirements, they told me that nothing was off limit. And you know, I sort of believe that. And even now I tend to think that if I put forth the effort, that if I go to get it, that there's no law, there's no person, there's no group that can keep me from getting it.

[01:22:54] CS: Okay. It's interesting that you would note your experience at Knoxville. And I'm from Lee County. And one of my high school principals was Anna Paschal Strong, well-known Black educator. And when I graduated high school, Lee County was the tenth poorest county in the nation. Not just Arkansas, in the nation. What I like to think of the county is kind of like an oasis out in the middle of a desert. Because out of that county, out of my graduating class of [19]61 came five Ph.D.s, three M.D.s—out of that graduating class. So, and our teachers instilled the same thing in us. Those poor Black teachers who had to buy stuff, teaching material out of their own pockets. And they instilled the same thing in us, to achieve. Well, now we could spend the rest of the time, but I want to give the audience an opportunity to participate. So if anyone in the

audience have questions you would like to direct to the panel,  
here's the mic. Please. Feel free.

Unknown Speaker #1: [*Unclear words*] seniority, may I? Because I've  
got to find that restroom [*unclear words*]. [*Laughter*] I was  
born June 13, 1924, so I've got seniority on most of you.  
And . . .

CM: Not me.

[01:25:32] US1: I'm a World War II veteran. I came here in 1954.  
And that was the year, you know, that the great decision was  
handed down. And I taught Old South and New South and  
eventually taught Arkansas History. And I taught the first  
course—we called it Black History, and the textbook was  
American negro history that I used. We couldn't decide what we  
wanted to call—and the Blacks had a hard time, too, deciding  
what they wanted. We ended up now with African American,  
right? Is that—is that what it is now?

GH: I think so. [*Laughter*]

US1: [*Unclear words*] I want especially—Mr. Haley, I met you once  
before when you were with Wiley Branton, and I guess it—Alex  
Haley wasn't here for that thing. Wylie Branton spoke over in  
the old Men's Gym on a Saturday.

GH: Yes.

US1: And I walked from there with you, and I was trying to get Wylie Branton to give his papers to the University of Arkansas. He had other plans for them at Howard. [Laughter] Well, anyway, I wrote a friend of mine, Brad Waddle, who taught agronomy here, and I was trying to find out what the soil was where he lived, and he said it was black waxy. That was black soil. And I'm talking about central Texas where I grew up. He said that he got a letter from your brother, Alex Haley, who was riding the tramp steamer and writing, and he enjoyed the cocktail hour on this ship every afternoon, and they got to talking about peanuts and how—and Arkansas peanuts. He wrote and said, "Would you please verify to me that peanuts do grow in the ground because these people don't know that peanuts grow in the ground. Well, Brad wrote this awful letter back, you know, we—I guess he had read the Vance Randolph book *We Always Lie to Strangers*, and he said, "Well, they use steam shovels to dig them, and they're very large." So Alex Haley wrote a letter back, and I persuaded Brad to give those letters. He lives in Harrison. And he was the "old-timer" professor of cotton. He was called Mr. Cotton, he's a close friend of mine, and so I got them to give—I thought maybe you might be interested in seeing those. Tom Dillard could dig them out. They're in his

collection somewhere. I gave them to the university. [*Unclear*]  
because it had his autograph.

CS: And what's the question?

US1: Alex Haley.

GH: Okay, Well thank you, I'd like to see them, yes.

CS: Other questions? Yes.

[01:28:20] CN: What would you all say to the students who are here today? What is it you want them to take away from your struggles and accomplishments?

EIJ: I would say to any student that—let nothing deter you from whatever ambitions you have. Prepare yourself and then move towards whatever you desire for yourself. That there is this, let's call it, entity. You can call it anything you want to. But when you unite yourself with that, when you would have given what you need in terms of preparation, and when you aim steadfastly moving in that direction, there's absolutely nothing that can keep you from attaining your desired goal.

CS: Thank you.

GH: I mentioned earlier—before I came to the university I had gone to Morehouse College. And I mentioned Dr. Benjamin— Benjamin Mays. And he had developed through some of us the philosophy of reaching—reaching. And one of his statements to

Morehouse men and others, men and women, began this way: "It must be born in mind that the tragedy in life does not lie in not reaching your goal. The tragedy lies in having no goal to reach." There's more to it, but that first sentence is one that I feel is as important from the standpoint of philosophy, as well as students, as well as some of us who have come past student age, but to have a goal in life. And certainly a part of my goal, and I would encourage that being the goal of others, is to make your life good, as I said, and to make life better for your fellows, for everybody you can. If you do that then, of course, you've accomplished quite a lot. Thank you.

[01:31:03] CM: Very simply my suggestion would be don't underestimate yourself. I don't think I was the smartest fellow in my circle. A lot of people think, well, you all are the smart ones. I wasn't near about the smartest fellow that come along in my circle. But if you make a sacrifice of time—the law is jealous mistress. You can't study law or any of the other professions or any—you can't through college unless you make a sacrifice of time. So you going to have to make a sacrifice of time. That's basically all I did. I wasn't—but making any sacrifice of time. And, of course, I think most people have the basic native intelligence to be successful. I just believe that.

I'm [*laughs*—I was able to pass law exams. In fact, I was lucky enough to make the high score when I took the exam the second time. They say I flunked it the first time. I don't believe that.

[*Laughter*] But just persevere, that's all.

[01:32:16] Unknown Speaker 2: I can talk loud enough. Trust me.

I can talk loud enough.

SL: We have [*unclear words*] hands.

US2: Oh. Oh, I'm sorry. Clearly you all are pioneers in your studies.

I wonder if you could talk about being pioneers in your professions, as well. We have a number of people here from different disciplines and also some budding attorneys, I'm sure. So if you could talk a little bit about that, please. Thank you.

[01:32:47] EIJ: Well, since I'm accustomed to being female first, I'll talk first. I have done some things that I have been acclaimed to have been the first. I was the first woman to be elected as president of the National Medical Association. I am the first to have received the MACP, the Master of American College of Physician. I will be the first, as of November 3, to get the laureate medical—that is the highest degree that they can give a physician—on November 3 in Texas. I guess I—I'm so much older than most of my counterparts I am first. I have been the first of number of things, and I think it's because women didn't

try. And sometimes I think men don't try as hard as we, as women, now try. So I've had a number of firsts, but there should have been some before who should have been achieving the same things that I have achieved. I've given my whole soul and effort to the one thing and that healthcare is a right of all. That poverty should not be, racial connections should not be, or any other should be, as a result of denial. And so I have been fortunate enough to be placed in positions that I would be first in the United States and in some countries abroad to take in care at a level in which all could get regardless of money, prestige, or otherwise.

[01:35:14] CS: Okay. Thank you. Let me rephrase that question again. She wants you to comment about your experiences as you started your profession. You got out of school, so what's it like to start your professions now? Go ahead.

GH: At the University of—of Arkansas, and I have said this on many occasions when I've been either talking or making speeches. I felt very good, very good about the education, the law school, dean, that we got here. And we've experienced it against many of the supposed, I mean—not supposed—the big schools, Harvard, Stanford, many of the big schools. And I have never felt that the education that we got here was one that caused me

to step back at all because I've been able to do a lot of things and sometimes in the—the top capacities. When I—when I left the university, I went to Kansas. I was invited to a law firm in Kansas with the intention, C. C., of coming back to Arkansas. I never got back here to practice law. But I practiced law in Kansas. I was an assistant city attorney for ten years in Kansas City, Kansas. I was elected to the state senate in Kansas. Still practicing law there. Then appointed to the Nixon Administration as chief counsel to UMTA, Urban Mass Transportation Administration where later, of course, Secretary Slater became the pres—the—the secretary of the total Department of Transportation. From there I went to USIA. Some of you perhaps don't know about USIA. It's the United States Information Agency, which tells many countries around the world what this country is like. Unfortunately, it has merged itself, or they merged it in the State Department. We still need that institution. I was general counsel and congressional liaison for that. Practiced law in Washington, DC, had my own firm after being with the law firm for a while of Philadelphia and Washington. President Bush Sr. then appointed me chairman of the postal rate commission, and then lastly from a standpoint of appointments, President Clinton appointed me ambassador to

the Gambia, which is the country from which some of you who know Kunta Kinte. That was the country that he came from. My wife, who's there, and I were there for three and a half years. And we have certain businesses that we have done. And we are into some other things. Now the law itself, when people ask me about, "Should I go to law school?" I never, doctor [*laughs*], say to them, "No." I think that the law has such a good foundation for doing, certainly, some of the things that I've been able to do in my life. In the practice of the law and certainly in business, in politics, in all of those areas, the law is a good foundation. When I was in the senate, for instance, in Kansas, there were 21 lawyers out of the 40 senators. And that's true in many instances. But I like the law. And I encourage people to—to stay with the law.

[01:39:19] CM: Trying to be as brief as I can. I went back home to Pine Bluff after I got out of law school, but this was on the wake of school desegregation. The Supreme Court issued its decision on May 17, 1954, same day my license were dated. And so it was understood that lawyers would try to take the forefront in trying to help implement this Supreme Court decision on desegregation. As a result of that, I got involved with the entity in Little Rock, and so I went there supposedly for three years, I

thought, and was going to go back to Pine Bluff. I've ended up not—not ever getting back to Pine Bluff. Just like you didn't get back to Little Rock. But when I got to Little Rock I did a number of things that—worked with Daisy Bates. I was right in the middle of the Central High Crisis. But before the Central High Crisis, I was involved in the Hoxie crisis. I got Bill Penix to represent the Hoxie School Board. It's a long story about how I knew Bill, but that's—that's another thing. But I worked as field secretary for the NAACP. I'd like to reiterate what George said. And I—most graduates—University of Arkansas is a good law school. I'm not ashamed of what I learned in law school here. I've tried cases all over the country. I've been up against Philadelphia lawyers. I've been up against New York lawyers. I've been up against Kentucky lawyers, Florida lawyers. I'm just—I'm an old country lawyer, but I think my law that I learned here at the University of Arkansas, and course, you don't—I still study. I'm still in private practice. My wife sitting back there, she doesn't want me to practice, and she don't want me to drive, and—but [*laughs*]*—*but the—the education that we received here at the University—I'm not worried about what they did to me back there then because what you get up here can't nobody take it from you, you know.

EIJ: Right.

[01:41:44] CM: What you get up here, if you study and get an understanding and get information, can't nobody take that from you. You can take it a long ways. And so it has stood in good stead to me. I even remember some of the things that I first learned here in law school. And that's been more than 50 years ago, but . . .

GH: Doctor, may I saw just one thing? About my experiences— happened from the standpoint of the University of Arkansas. We talked about the Brown case, 1954. I'd come to Kansas just after law school. I worked quite a lot as a young lawyer, having graduated in 1952 on the Brown case. The firm that I was with was the major firm on the Kansas scene. And myself being of great importance because I had—I had been on the *Law Review*, and I was in position to do a lot of the things between there and the interviews between Kansas City and Topeka. So that, of course, came from my experiences here as a law student.

[01:42:57] Unknown Speaker #3: When you ran home to the bathroom. Where was home?

CM: All the way across town. All the way—over in what they call the holler, colored part of town. It's about three miles.

US3: Did you live in [*unclear*] there?

GH: Is Caroline gone?

Unknown Speaker #4: She just left.

US3: Did you have rooms with fam—host families?

GH: Yes.

CM Yes, George's host family's is here, isn't it?

GH: Yes, and she just left. I'm so sorry. I—my family here were the Cashmere Funkhouser family. And the daughter was just here whose son, incidentally, was one of the major basketball stars here at the university later. But they became kind of like my family. I stayed with them for the three years that I was here. And they were just really, really close to me and me to them, yes.

CS: Two more questions and then [*unclear*]. Young lady in the back.

[01:44:09] Unknown Speaker #5: With the knowledge and experience that you all have as pioneers, looking back would you have done anything differently?

GH: One can always look back and say, "I might not have done that." But when I look back, [*laughs*] I think that my own experiences were such that I feel pretty good about them because, as I said, there have been good things that have come. We've developed good friendships. For instance, again, some of the white students who became lawyers, my being in Arkansas, they in

Kansas, we would exchange clients. We would exchange friendships. Those are the kind of things that are very meaningful and significant. Okay.

EIJ: I would not have done anything different. My closest friend is a class member for me. The fellows have continued to remain in close contact with me. I don't think I could have accomplished some of the things that I have been able to accomplish if I had gone to a school that had previously—had not been the kind that people expected me to experience in Arkansas. I don't think that if I had not had the perceived challenges, and they were perceived because I didn't have them, that I probably would have been more laid back and would not have pushed as hard as I did to accomplish the classwork, to achieve, to know what it was like to be able to produce in spite of what others may have expected me to do, and that was to fail in a previously thought to be unaccepting environment.

[01:46:39] CM: I don't think any of us thought that what we were doing when we were doing it. You asked would we do it again. I'm sure we would. But I don't think any of us thought when we were doing what we were doing that it was going to create the heritage that it has created. I don't know that any of us were thinking in terms of being quote "pioneers" end of quote, you

know. We were just normal people who had aspirations and desires and sought a way to satisfy those aspirations and desires. As it has turned out though, I—I'm especially proud of my heritage, whatever sacrifice that I made to try to better myself that not only improved my circumstances but laid a—laid groundwork and created a path for others. I want to admonish you in—when we came here for the 50th reunion, and my wife can tell me how much it was. We started a little scholarship fund. Hasn't much been done about it. I'd like to see that revived. I—I'd like to see that revived. And I told you, and I'll be through, doctor, I told you when we were talking, that I was going to give you a formula for everybody to solve all of our problems. [*Laughs*] My admonition contains the six greatest words that were ever uttered by three of the greatest men that ever lived. Cicero said, "Know thyself." Socrates says, "Control thyself." Christ says, "Give thyself." Know thyself, control thyself, give thyself. Whatever you do you need to give back to the community. That's what basically I think we're doing here today. We made the sacrifice to come from far and near to give encouragement to you. And we encourage you to do whatever's necessary to improve yourself. You won't help me to buy a loaf of bread, and that's not the purpose that we're here for. The

purpose we're here for is to give you encouragement for you to do whatever's necessary for you to succeed on your own. I'm talking to the students here. The faculty's already done that. But I'm talking to the students here.

CS: One last question.

[01:49:28] Unknown Speaker #6: Good afternoon. First I'd like to say I'm a proud graduate of UAPB. I'm glad to see the representation. And now I'm a second year law student here. In the time that you all came through, you were definite pioneers in the era that was going on. Looking at the state, especially the African American community as it is now, how do you feel that we can be pioneers for our generation?

CM: There's an old adage that democracy is born anew with each generation. And education is the midwife. So the things that we did, it's—it's not completed. So you have—you have the opportunity to be a pioneer for those who come after you if you just persist.

EIJ: My answer to your question would be look around you, see what needs to be done, do it. It's not about being acclaimed. It's not about riches or worldly goods. It's not about us at all. It's about what are we doing each day to make a better world? One day everybody's going to pass off scene, I guess, except me.

[*Laughter*] But have it said that we have lived our life of leaving the world better than we found it. It doesn't have to be something which is spectacular or acclaimed, but do something which causes you to feel good that you have lived that day the best that you could. Sometimes we do not reach the goal that we have aimed for that day. But don't stop. Keep trying.

There's no absolutely nothing off limit that's good if one would be persistent about pursuing whatever that goal is. If I had one message it would be that when one unites oneself with the wholesome of the world—and maybe I'm on a state-supported institution ground, and maybe I should sort of play it down. But there is an entity, and you can call it anything you want to call it, that when you unite yourself with that entity, when you can become one with the oneness of all, that absolutely nothing can stop you from achieving. Be it riches, acclaim, health, it is entirely up to each of us to decide what each of us will have and what each of us will be. But remember we are part of all of us.

[01:53:26] GH: Well, I would just say when I reflect on young people like you are, your older people are here to be of great—hopefully great assistance, but to help. There's no doubt about that. You have the benefit of the use of all of us and more to in—to help, surely, and with the kinds of things that you and others are able

to do now, they all—they amaze us, you understand. I really mean that. But we are here to be helpful, to make things better for all of us and basically on what they've said and certainly what I'm saying now. We are here. One of the things that I like, really, that I've been able to do is to help encourage young men, in particular, and I've got a lot of sons that have come from various areas of life. But they come, and they seek advice, and I'm really, really [*unclear*] respected, honored, and pleased to do it. More sons than daughters, but I'll take some daughters, too.  
[*Laughter*]

[01:54:50] CS: Okay and thank you. And we're going to close on— on that note. And I want to say one thing about Attorney Haley. We call this pioneers. And he is the brother of the late Alex Haley, and the great-great-great-great grandson to Kunta Kinte, captured in Gambia in 1767 and brought to this country. So you're talking about a pioneer, a history, a legacy that came to partial fulfillment here at the University of Arkansas law school. With that, Tom.

CN: Once again, thank you so much for being here. We know that Carolyn, and I, and the rest of us who are here wouldn't be here without your early efforts. And whether you think you're a pioneer, we know you are. And we're so grateful to you. Please

let's applaud our pioneers once more. [*Applause*] And with that we'll adjourn downstairs to our Six Pioneers room where you'll find the pictures of both our pioneers here today featured as well as the other four original pioneers. So we'll see you downstairs in a few minutes. Thank you.

[01:56:53]

End of recording.

[Transcribed and edited by Pryor Center staff]