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[Begin Tape 4509. Begin Session III.]

HAKI VINCENT: So I got prostate cancer.

CHELSEA ARSENEAULT: Oh, no.

VINCENT: Behind that.

ARSENEAULT: I'm sorry to hear that.

VINCENT: Yeah. That's the way the government do us. Use us up throw us away.

ARSENEAULT: **[0:00:14]** Did you want to get that on tape?

VINCENT: Yeah, I'll put it on tape it's no problem.

ARSENEAULT: Okay. So . . .

KYLE TANGLAO: Whenever you're ready.

ARSENEAULT: Today is August twenty-seventh, 2015. This is Chelsea Arseneault with the T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History and I'm here again with Mr. Haki Vincent. This is our second session together at his home in Mossville where I . . .

VINCENT: Third.

ARSENEAULT: [0:00:37] Third. It is our third session together. But our second one at your house. Yes, you're right.

VINCENT: Yes.

ARSENEAULT: We've spoken three times. He is currently right now . . . What are you doing Mr. Haki? What are you doing right now?

VINCENT: I'm making some signs for fresh produce.

ARSENEAULT: Got you. Got you. He's got . . .

VINCENT: That's growing as we speak.

ARSENEAULT: Nice. And we spoke about a lot last week but you were just telling us about going to the VA hospital. Do you want to share that again?

VINCENT: [0:01:09] Yeah. I went to the VA hospital last week and it was explained to me that in nineteen . . . Between 1953 . . . Is that too loud?

TANGLAO: Could I lower it?

VINCENT: Yeah, you can cut it off. Just turn the key off.

ARSENEAULT: Be a nice background.

TANGLAO: Turn the key off?

VINCENT: Yeah. I was . . . Still on?

ARSENEAULT: Yeah. You're good.

VINCENT: [0:01:48] I was exposed to Agent Orange between 1953 is when I went in and 1955 I was exposed to Agent Orange. And as a result I have prostate cancer. Now the VA don't care. They demonstrate that by not doing anything.

ARSENEAULT: What is Agent Orange? Just for the record.

VINCENT: Agent Orange is a chemical that they use to kill vegetation . . . and people.

ARSENEAULT: You were exposed to it when you were overseas?

VINCENT: Yeah. Well, when I was in the military because we were . . . I was in the air force and they carried anything they want to carry on the planes with the people. So that's the four-one-one.

ARSENEAULT: [0:03:01] Got you. Where you exposed to it actually . . . Were they spraying it while you were there?

VINCENT: No. Well, I don't know whether they were. It was probably on the plane with us.

ARSENEAULT: Okay.

VINCENT: You know, because they carried bombs and everything. You know, dealing with warfare so that's the four-one-one.

ARSENEAULT: Yes. Well we did want to talk about your activism, because I don't think we've gotten a chance to really . . .

VINCENT: Talk about what?

ARSENEAULT: Your activism.

VINCENT: [03:38] [laughs] You [reading?].

ARSENEAULT: Yes. Could we talk about some of these?

VINCENT: Yeah. Let me . . .

ARSENEAULT: Yeah. Do you need to?

TANGLAO: You want to pause it?

ARSENEAULT: We wanted to talk about your activism because we know that was a big part of your life. And I wanted to ask you when you first became politically aware?

VINCENT: [04:00] When they attempted to draft me. So I didn't want to go into the army so I went into the air force instead. Which was no real difference. All of it's hazardous to your health.

ARSENEAULT: What age was that?

VINCENT: I put my age up to seventeen to go in and get it over with.

ARSENEAULT: When would you say you were . . . ?

VINCENT: I was really sixteen at the time.

ARSENEAULT: Okay. They allowed you to enlist?

VINCENT: [04:53] Well I put my age up so yeah.

ARSENEAULT: You just forged the papers?

VINCENT: [Laughs] Well you know they didn't care anyway.

ARSENEAULT: Yeah.

VINCENT: Because they wanted bodies you know. You could have been blind, crippled, and crazy, they would have took you at that time [laughs].

ARSENEAULT: Wow. So when would you say you became, you first became, politically active?

VINCENT: Then.

ARSENEAULT: [05:28] Got you.

VINCENT: When I was forced to go in the military. I was a mad camper so I started getting

active then.

ARSENEAULT: In what kind of ways?

VINCENT: By not really participating in the war. I was not cooperating. I make sure a lot of stuff didn't work that was supposed to be working. I just leave it like that.

ARSENEAULT: Anything else you remember about that time?

VINCENT: [06:23] I came from Chocolate City, Washington, D.C. They don't call it Chocolate City anymore because everything changed. They were moving the blacks out and the whites in Washington, D.C.

ARSENEAULT: What neighborhood did you grow up in?

VINCENT: Far northeast. Which is a historical area because the people who came there were, you know, ex-slaves and whatnot. So we actually built Deanwood. That's what it was called, Deanwood. [. . .?] [phone rings] Haki. Yes. [various phone noises] I'm not familiar with all this stuff. I think that's what . . .

ARSENEAULT: Are you trying to hang up?

VINCENT: That's Washington calling me now.

ARSENEAULT: Oh. Deanwood's calling?

VINCENT: Let me see. Whoever it is is busy now. What was your question again?

ARSENEAULT: [08:30] What you remember about your neighborhood. What you remember about your neighborhood in Washington. That was the question.

VINCENT: It was country. People had chickens, pigs, stuff like that. Had gardens and plenty of open space to enjoy nature. Back in those days we had outhouses. Most people had outhouses. We were a little better off than most people in that area because my father was a builder. So we had inside bathrooms and stuff like that. Everybody was friendly. There wasn't a whole lot of chaos, you know, everybody was neighbors. So we got along good. Wasn't no chaos going on. And every now and then they would have what they call an air raid. What they call it?

ARSENEAULT: Like a drill?

VINCENT: Yeah. Like they would ring the siren. Everybody had to go in at night, turn off their lights, and they had wardens walking around making sure everybody was inside. You know, all the lights were out. So if any aircraft come over they couldn't see, you know, where the city was and whatnot. So that was a kind of traumatic time then. But . . .

ARSENEAULT: I can only imagine.

VINCENT: [10:29] Yeah.

ARSENEAULT: Who were your . . . Do you remember anything about your neighbors in Deanwood? Who were your neighbors growing up?

VINCENT: You said who were they?

ARSENEAULT: Yeah.

VINCENT: Name-wise? [Laughs]

ARSENEAULT: Anything you remember about them.

VINCENT: [0:10:49] Well the guy next door to us . . . Who were their names . . . Henson. They didn't have running water in their house. And one thing I remember, we used to sell them water. Or they used to pay us for buckets of water. So each one of us be trying to be the first one home after school.

ARSENEAULT: To get the money?

VINCENT: Yeah. To take the water to them. To get the twenty-five cents or whatever it was for water, you know. And we had . . . We lived on Hayes Street, and the next block was Fiftieth Street. And it was a little club there. I remember one main thing about it Joe Louis was fighting. I

don't remember who he was fighting, but people didn't have . . . Everybody didn't have TVs. Only a few people around there had TVs and they were black and white. So this club or tavern had a TV in it and when Joe Louis was getting ready to fight the people were all around trying to see the TV.

ARSENEAULT: Was he a boxer?

VINCENT: Yeah. He was something like Muhammad Ali. Yeah, so people were hanging on the screen doors and everything trying to look inside the TV. So that's one thing I remember real well.

ARSENEAULT: Did y'all have a TV?

VINCENT: [12:44] No, we didn't have a TV. Matter of fact, the neighbor that we used to take water he had a TV. I don't know if y'all have seen it or not. The TV screen was about that big.

ARSENEAULT: And the rest of the set was huge?

VINCENT: Yeah.

ARSENEAULT: A bunch of wooden stuff?

VINCENT: Yeah, and they had a big magnifying glass in front of the TV to make it look bigger. [laughs]

ARSENEAULT: That's really smart.

VINCENT: [13:15] Yeah. So that's one thing I really remember about TV. A little later on we got one.

ARSENEAULT: Did y'all have a favorite show?

VINCENT: Let me see. *Howdy Doody* was a, you know, children's show with little clowns and whatnot. But I didn't . . . I wasn't into TV too much. I was mostly outside or helping my father do stuff, you know.

ARSENEAULT: I'm just curious, what would y'all do with the twenty-five cents that you got for the water?

VINCENT: Sweets.

ARSENEAULT: Like candy?

VINCENT: Treats. Sure.

ARSENEAULT: [13:59] From where?

VINCENT: There was a store not far from us in the next block or so, was a store close by. So we'd go to the store and we had a movie called Strand Theater close by so we would save it and go to the movies. Movies probably just cost twenty-five cents to get in.

ARSENEAULT: It was twenty-five cents to see a movie?

VINCENT: About twenty-five cents to go to the movie. On Saturdays if we were good and did what we were supposed to do we get a chance to go to the movie. And we had a street car used to come through. They call it a trolley car. But it came from downtown Washington and it went to the Maryland line turned around, you know, that's the way it was run. So we had . . . I think I told y'all before we had built an amusement park because the amusement park in Virginia that people go to was racist, prejudice, whatever you want to call it and we couldn't go there.

ARSENEAULT: It was just . . . It was segregated or . . .?

VINCENT: [15:19] Yeah. So we built one in our community and then most people would come there. They would get to ride the street car to the . . . to our amusement park. Yeah. It was right across the street from us so . . .

ARSENEAULT: Is it still there?

VINCENT: [Pardon]?

ARSENEAULT: Is it still there?

VINCENT: No, it's been gone. But I remember one night we would . . .

ARSENEAULT: Those trucks keep going, don't they?

VINCENT: [15:53] Yeah. All day. All night. But we didn't lock doors and stuff, you know. Everybody was friends and whatnot so wasn't no a whole lot of locking stuff up. But one night a drunk man came in the house, laid down on the couch, and went to sleep. And my mother woke up and saw him and, "What you doing up in here?" [Laughs] Put him out. But . . .

ARSENEAULT: He probably didn't even know where he was.

VINCENT: No. Probably went to the amusement park and got drunk, you know. Yeah.

ARSENEAULT: That's funny. Wow.

VINCENT: So it was good time coming up then. Yeah.

ARSENEAULT: What . . . I think I've asked you this before but I forget. What would your parents tell you about Mossville growing up?

VINCENT: [17:01] They would tell us that we had a lot of land in Mossville from our grandfather who was Eli Vincent, Senior. And we need to go and experience it, you know. So that's how I got here. They brought me here when I was maybe about six months old and my mother was telling me about I was a big eater and drinker then. A lot of milk and . . .

ARSENEAULT: So you were a fat baby?

VINCENT: Yeah. And my . . . I was crying one day or whatever and my grandfather said, "Wait a minute, what's wrong with that boy?" "Oh, he wants some milk." So he brought a cow up by the house. Milk cow. Tied him up there so I got fatter. Plenty of cow milk.

ARSENEAULT: That'll do it.

VINCENT: Yeah, and he was a farmer and a carpenter. So he would share a lot of his vegetables with the community. Mossville community. People come, you know, didn't have no food and whatnot he would share the food with them. Because he was pretty well off.

ARSENEAULT: [18:50] Mr. Eli was?

VINCENT: Yeah.

ARSENEAULT: Did he live here?

VINCENT: Yes.

ARSENEAULT: In one of these houses?

VINCENT: Oh no, not here. He lived up on the bigger piece of land that we had.

ARSENEAULT: Oh, okay.

VINCENT: [19:04] Matter of fact they just start clearing it off. They actually stole it through the methods they use to take things from people.

ARSENEAULT: Who stole it?

VINCENT: Between the government and the white neighbor called Krause & Managan Lumber Company. So after they stole it they sold it to Sasol [oil refinery] who cleared it not long ago.

ARSENEAULT: Krause & Managan you say?

VINCENT: Yeah. Krause & Managan Lumber Company. But they were trying to get it from him way back in the day. But he wouldn't sell it.

ARSENEAULT: Did they want to clear it? Why did they want the land?

VINCENT: [20:11] I guess they wanted more land and he had . . . It was rich land. He had timber on it and clear land where he used to raise all his vegetables and stuff like that. So that's what happened to that. So they had been trying to get it for years. But they finally did what they had to do to get it.

ARSENEAULT: Who does it belong to now?

VINCENT: It still belong to us but it's a matter of a lot of litigation involved to reclaim it, you know.

ARSENEAULT: Do you think it'll all work out?

VINCENT: It depends on the youngsters in the family and whether they do what they need to do, you know. So it's really hard to say.

ARSENEAULT: Such a nice day for painting.

VINCENT: [21:49] Yes. It's a nice day to be outside, period.

ARSENEAULT: So did your parents ever tell you any stories about Mossville while you were growing up in D.C.?

VINCENT: Yeah. My father and my uncle used to tell me stories about, yeah.

ARSENEAULT: Did they tell you about like growing up here? Or did they both grow up here? Your father and your uncle?

VINCENT: Yes.

ARSENEAULT: They did?

VINCENT: Yes. My father went to school in D.C. and that's where he learned his trade as a builder. And we were taught to build.

ARSENEAULT: What kinds of stories would they tell you?

VINCENT: [23:08] Basically how hard it was because they had to work on the farm so they were doing farm work for their daddy. They would tell stories how they would sneak off to the swimming hole, go swimming and, you know. In other words little stuff they were doing that they wasn't supposed to do, you know. And my father was . . . He was very creative. I think I told y'all he built a roller coaster before he got into his . . . Before he got out of his teens.

ARSENEAULT: Oh, so he was a teenager when he built it?

VINCENT: Yeah.

ARSENEAULT: Okay. I didn't know that.

VINCENT: And he built a house before he . . . while he was a teenager too.

ARSENEAULT: Wow. So he was just naturally gifted...

VINCENT: Yeah.

ARSENEAULT: [24:13] ...like that?

VINCENT: Yes. Well most of my family were in the building business. Carpentry and whatnot. Yeah, the community was amazed and they still talk about that today, the older people. Did you talk to . . . ?

ARSENEAULT: You mean they're amazed by the roller coaster?

VINCENT: Yes.

ARSENEAULT: Where was it?

VINCENT: Up on the piece of land I was telling you about.

ARSENEAULT: Oh the Krause & Managan?

VINCENT: The big piece. Yeah.

ARSENEAULT: [24:44] What kind of roller coaster was it? What did it look like?

VINCENT: A wooden roller coaster.

ARSENEAULT: Okay. Did it go upside down?

VINCENT: Oh, no.

ARSENEAULT: Okay I'm just wondering. I don't know.

VINCENT: It was a wooden one.

ARSENEAULT: [24:54] Are there any pictures anywhere?

VINCENT: Not that I know of. I would like to see the pictures myself.

ARSENEAULT: That would be awesome.

VINCENT: So that was part of the history.

ARSENEAULT: Anything else they would tell y'all?

VINCENT: We had a cousin named Pete Moss. There's a picture of him somewhere. Did

anybody ever tell you about the Moss family?

ARSENEAULT: [25:28] I've heard some things.

VINCENT: But he had a horse and buggy and somebody got a picture of him . . . Oh no, it was in the newspaper . . . Going across that bridge with the horse and buggy. That old bridge that y'all come across.

ARSENEAULT: Yeah.

VINCENT: Can you imagine that?

ARSENEAULT: No. Cannot.

VINCENT: Yeah.

ARSENEAULT: Think I would feel like I was in a dream if I saw a horse and buggy on . . .

VINCENT: Yeah that was amazing, too, to hear that story. But the people lived just simple here, you know. Simple living. So he was one of my good friends. His brother came to Washington. My father encouraged him to come there. He got a job at the Bureau of Engraving making money. And he used to come back and visit and had a pocket full of change he would give the children. They thought he was rich. He was dressed nice. Suit and all that stuff, you

know. So when he came in they were looking forward to seeing him.

ARSENEAULT: They were probably getting some money.

VINCENT: [26:53] Yeah.

ARSENEAULT: They probably thought he made money.

VINCENT: Yeah. They though the made money. He told them, "I work at the Bureau of Engraving. We make money." You know so, oh, they were all excited about that.

ARSENEAULT: That's funny.

VINCENT: So let me see. Anything else? Main thing, they did a lot of hard work and most of them did carpentry work. And farm work. But they helped a lot of people here. Everybody knew them. Everybody respected them. And I think I told y'all this too, he used to ride. He was a big man. Big and tall.

ARSENEAULT: Mr. Eli?

VINCENT: [27:47] Yeah, and he used to ride a white horse and he carried a whip with him everywhere he'd go.

ARSENEAULT: Who was he whipping?

VINCENT: Anybody that got out of order with him. Messed with him, you know, or whatever. Didn't matter whether he was black or white. Seemed like I kind of took after him because when I came here I rode a bicycle a lot and I always had a machete with me on the bike. And the children were scared of me. Run in the house say, "Mama the man out there passing by with a machete." [Laughter] So they were amused with me when I came here, because I was doing a lot of farm bush working and whatnot, you know. But mostly work. My father was a no nonsense man, you know. So . . .

ARSENEAULT: What kind of values did he instill in you?

VINCENT: [29:07] Morals and principles. He was a religious type man. He was a Baptist so we had to go to church on Sunday mornings. Necktie, suit and I hated that. So we had to go to church.

ARSENEAULT: Every Sunday?

VINCENT: Every Sunday. Every Sunday morning. Especially the Sunday school and whatnot you know. So he was a . . . He had very great morals and principles about him. He was fair. I was amazed that what he paid us as children for working. He paid us good. He used to put the cash in our envelope. Had an envelope for everybody that worked. Name on it. Nice . . .

ARSENEAULT: Treated y'all like adults.

VINCENT: So he was very good.

ARSENEAULT: How many siblings?

VINCENT: [30:27] It was eight of us all together. A half-brother and we didn't know him until later on though. We didn't know he was creeping.

ARSENEAULT: He was what?

VINCENT: Creeping. [Laughs]

ARSENEAULT: He was creeping? He creeped on y'all?

VINCENT: On our mother.

ARSENEAULT: Oh y'all didn't know your father was creeping on your mama? I see. I thought you meant your step brother.

VINCENT: Yeah he . . . So he had a son a little maybe about two months older than my oldest sister.

ARSENEAULT: [31:14] [Laughs] Family drama.

VINCENT: Yeah.

ARSENEAULT: It's always interesting.

VINCENT: Yeah. And when I first met him, it wasn't until I moved here. Only one that knew him was my oldest brother. We didn't know anything about it. But when I moved here I came home one day and he was standing outside the gate. At that time now, the gate was across where the street is. So when I was driving up I saw him. When I got close to him blew my mind. I thought it was my daddy. That's how much he looked like my daddy.

ARSENEAULT: Wow.

VINCENT: Same size. Same features and everything. We became best friends because he looked so much like my father. And I was my father's supervisor over there once I got up to about maybe sixteen. He put me in charge of jobs and making sure everybody was doing what they were supposed to do while he was gone. He may have been giving estimates on more jobs you know. So he had to leave and he put me in charge of making sure the work got done.

ARSENEAULT: [32:58] Wow that's a lot of responsibility for a . . .

VINCENT: Yeah I was . . .

ARSENEAULT: ...a sixteen year-old.

VINCENT: Yeah. But I was . . . He knew I was dependable. I was more dependable than my brothers because I was interested in what I was learning, you know. So I was the supervisor on the job and I had my cousin working for us. He was painting. He was a painter. And I had to fire him.

ARSENEAULT: You fired him when you were sixteen?

VINCENT: Yeah, because he was goofing off and I told him get busy and he didn't like the idea that I was sixteen and in charge and he probably was maybe in his thirties or forties, you know. So he figured he didn't have to listen to me. So I had to fire him.

ARSENEAULT: Did he tell your dad?

VINCENT: [34:26] Yeah. But I was in charge so I was doing what I was instructed to do, you know. If they don't do what they supposed to do, let them go. So that's what I did with him. But I think, I don't really remember, I think he got back on. He learned how to follow instructions and stuff from a youngster. [phone rings] Excuse me, I got a call from Washington. [Laughs]

ARSENEAULT: Yes, sir. You ready? Okay. I forget what we were talking about before your daughter called. Oh my goodness. We were talking about Mr. Eli for a little while and then

I don't remember. Do you mind if I ask another question and then we can . . . ?

VINCENT: No, go ahead.

ARSENEAULT: Okay. I was going to ask you when you got involved with the Black Panther Party?

VINCENT: In the sixties. Around sixty . . . About sixty-seven. Sixty-six. Somewhere around in there.

ARSENEAULT: And why? Do you remember why you got involved?

VINCENT: [36:09] Yeah, because of the need to right all the wrongs that was going on at that time. And from my experience in the military and how I was treated in there. So that's the main reason. Because a lot was going on then, as you see in those articles there. So . . .

ARSENEAULT: Definitely. Is this you in this article?

VINCENT: Yeah that's me coming out the house after that three-hour . . .

ARSENEAULT: Which one is you?

VINCENT: The one with the towel over the face.

ARSENEAULT: Right here?

VINCENT: Yes. And these two are my brothers.

ARSENEAULT: Okay.

VINCENT: [37:06] When we . . . When I came out we got in the police car. This is a lawyer. I think his name was [Dicasso Mason?]. He was in the front seat with the cop that was driving the car. I was in the back seat and . . .

ARSENEAULT: This was in 1968?

VINCENT: Yes.

ARSENEAULT: 1968.

VINCENT: No, no that was nineteen . . .

ARSENEAULT: That's seventy.

VINCENT: Seventy, yes. And then we went downtown to court and they were charging me with I think nine . . . It was nine . . . What was it? I don't remember the number. But anyway, it was about five cops at my door. Something like that. And they were charging me with account of

assault on each cop that was at my door.

ARSENEAULT: [38:10] I think you have a call coming in. So you were talking about your memories of being in the Black Panther Party.

VINCENT: I think . . . Okay. We were teaching people . . . Well what our job was to teach people to defend their selves. So we were teaching people how to shoot. And that's why they did what they did there. That's why they broke in on me, you know, because of the work we were doing with the community and the people in the community. They didn't want them to have knowledge of self and how to protect their selves and what their rights are and stuff. So were teaching them that kind of stuff. That's what was happening. And that's one reason they came to my house the way they did. And they had a warrant for drugs. They claimed it was a drug raid. But as you see one of the articles say they came in looking for drugs but all they got was slugs. [laughs]

ARSENEAULT: Oh as in like shooting?

VINCENT: Yeah so . . .

ARSENEAULT: You shot at them?

VINCENT: [40:08] I shot one of them. So I went . . . I think we were talking about . . . I went to court . . . That's pictures when they were taking me to the court house after the shootout.

You didn't see that article. But so they were charging me with, I think it was nine counts of assault on however many cops there was. How many cops it say was at the door? I believe it was five. Something like that. But I went before this judge called Harry T. Alexander. A black man. And they was telling that story. The D. A. [District Attorney] was telling, "Oh, he shot a cop. He's a threat to the community." This, that and the other. The judge is sitting up there listening to him. The judge knew that they had shot me. [terrible noise interference]

ARSENEAULT: So two years previous you had been shot by cops?

VINCENT: Yeah, but I filed a suit against them for two and a half million dollars after they shot me. Because I was gainfully employed and whatnot. Working two jobs. I worked as a carpenter in the government which was National Capital Housing. They call it the projects. Like when they . . .

ARSENEAULT: They already knew who you were? The judge already knew who you were?

VINCENT: Yeah. So the judge let me out on personal bond and they were really pissed off then because the judge knew that they were out of order. So and I think y'all can do the research yourself but I think I'm probably the only one here in this country shot a cop and got out on personal bond. And when I came back to the community the whole community, I mean the whole house, was surrounded by people in the community.

ARSENEAULT: In Washington?

VINCENT: [42:29] Yeah. And when I came home and got out the car saluted, everybody cheered.

ARSENEAULT: Bet that was a good feeling.

VINCENT: Yeah. So that was part of the history.

ARSENEAULT: So what were some of your responsibilities in the Black Panther Party?

VINCENT: Teaching people self-awareness. Consciousness. And teaching them how to handle firearms. Same types of things the military teaches people. How to defend yourself. What your rights are and . . .

ARSENEAULT: How did you get into the Black Panther Party?

VINCENT: [43:29] It's kind of deep. You have to be willing . . . Well one thing my history, being in the military.

ARSENEAULT: Was that hard for them? Was that helpful to get in?

VINCENT: Yeah, because and your level of consciousness, you know. So that's basically it.

And your willingness to raise the consciousness of the people of the community, you know, because a lot of people are not aware of what's happening to them, because they got nine to five jobs.

ARSENEAULT: Kids. Mortgage.

VINCENT: Yeah. So that's the way it went.

ARSENEAULT: Were there any kind of like initiation? To get in or anything like that?

VINCENT: [44:26] Well the initiation was your level of awareness and your experience, you know. That was mainly it, you know. So the other offspring that I had, the three big bellies when I went in the military, was a boy.

ARSENEAULT: So you have two daughters and a son?

VINCENT: Yeah.

ARSENEAULT: So it's Stephanie, Shella . . .

VINCENT: And the other one's named Marvin.

ARSENEAULT: After your slave name?

VINCENT: Slave name. Yeah. His mother named him that so . . . He couldn't leave the drugs alone so he died at forty-seven.

ARSENEAULT: [45:33] I'm so sorry to hear that. Did he ever live here?

VINCENT: No. His whole life was Washington, D.C. and drugs. Yeah, so where were we talking about . . . I came . . . They couldn't search my house until I went to court and came back. They went and searched my house, they didn't find no drugs. But they did . . . I had a police special thirty-eight stole. They stole some stuff out of my house, too. And I had a picture in the house. Y'all remember . . . Y'all might remember the history of this . . . I can't remember just where it was. These three brothers went in . . . What was . . . I don't know what baseball, basketball, or what. But anyway, they won the game and you know how they get on the podium. I'm trying to remember what they were doing.

ARSENEAULT: Like the Olympics or something?

VINCENT: It may have been the Olympics but anyway they had on black gloves. Y'all remember that picture?

ARSENEAULT: I've seen that picture.

VINCENT: [47:28] You've seen it?

ARSENEAULT: I'm pretty sure I've seen it yeah.

VINCENT: Yeah. Well that was on my wall when they shot at me in my house. Like I was in the hallway and the picture was on this wall and I was standing over here. And when they first shot they shot, hit that picture. Yeah.

ARSENEAULT: You still have it?

VINCENT: I don't know what happened to it. But that was a historical picture because they were mad at those brothers for having black gloves on and saluting you know, the struggle.

ARSENEAULT: Was that black power? The . . .

VINCENT: [48:01] Yeah. That's the salute, you know. So they were really mad about that at the Olympics or whatever it was I can't remember just what it was. But that was a historical picture, too. You want to finish this?

KYLE TANGLAO: Can I move this or . . .?

VINCENT: It'll be . . .

ARSENEAULT: You want me to scoot back so you can . . .?

VINCENT: It'll be difficult to move. You can move back some.

ARSENEAULT: That way you can sit. Oh, I'm sweating. I sweated all over your chair.

VINCENT: Don't worry about it.

ARSENEAULT: [48:45] I'm just going to sit right here. Okay. So do you maybe want to talk a little bit about how the Black Panther Party has changed throughout the years?

VINCENT: Yeah it got a little more mellow. You remember Angela Davis?

ARSENEAULT: I remember you talking about her.

VINCENT: Oh, but you don't know nothing about her history?

ARSENEAULT: A little bit.

VINCENT: Okay.

ARSENEAULT: Did you meet her?

VINCENT: [49:32] No, I didn't meet her. I really wanted to meet her. I was in love with that sister there. She was bad. Did you remember how her history went?

ARSENEAULT: Was she the one who got arrested in California? Yeah? And she was very vocal about . . .

VINCENT: She had a big old afro.

ARSENEAULT: She did?

VINCENT: Yeah.

ARSENEAULT: I remember that.

VINCENT: [50:02] Yeah.

ARSENEAULT: What do you remember about her?

VINCENT: How vocal she was, how fine she was, and how active she was. She was in college at that time. And then she end up in the courthouse shootout where they killed the judge. Y'all remember that? That was in California, too. You remember it? What happened, they were getting ready . . . They were breaking Jonathan Jackson out. That was her man. And they bust up in the courtroom, took the judge hostage. They taped a shotgun to his head. And the shotgun tape . . . So he couldn't move or get away. They took him out and ended up killing him. But a few others got killed, too. They had him in a car, taking him somewhere. And they had a shootout. Killed the judge. So it was a lot of activity going on back then. People was resisting that

exploitation and oppression, you know.

ARSENEAULT: Yeah, that was a very busy time.

VINCENT: Very. Yeah. Yeah, very, very.

ARSENEAULT: Where was the movement the strongest?

VINCENT: [51:58] I don't know. It was about the same all over. The east coast and the west coast. You know? And a few places in between, you know. But everybody was active. They had black party panther chapters in a whole lot of different places. But the most active was the east coast and the west coast. You want to try your hand?

TANGLAO: Sure.

ARSENEAULT: So . . .

VINCENT: The other side is already laid out if you want to do the other side. I'll finish this side. You can do the other side.

ARSENEAULT: What do you remember about Martin Luther King?

VINCENT: [52:47] Well we were supporting Martin Luther King, but our major freedom

fighter was Malcolm X. We didn't have whole lot of interest in Martin Luther King because he was selected by the system. He was . . . In actuality he was a traitor to the struggle because he was following the orders of the system, you know. So but we wasn't going to let them do nothing to him. But we didn't follow that turn the other cheek. That wasn't what we were about. We were about defending ourselves and our rights. He was on the other side. [Ralph David] Abernathy, you remember Abernathy?

ARSENEAULT: That name sounds really familiar.

VINCENT: He was with Martin Luther King, but he was more active than Martin Luther King. More vocal in everything than Martin Luther King. So they wouldn't let him come to the forefront, you know, they kept him in the background. I guess that their little organization didn't want radicalness in it. They wanted to turn the other cheek, turn the other cheek, let them kick you in the butt and all that stuff.

ARSENEAULT: That's not how the Panther Party . . . ?

VINCENT: No.

ARSENEAULT: . . . worked at all?

VINCENT: [54:24] No.

ARSENEAULT: What were some of the other things that the party did?

VINCENT: Fed the people. Taught them how to stand up for their rights. Helped them in any way they needed help. Protected them, you know. You know they had a breakfast program for the children.

ARSENEAULT: Do they still do that?

VINCENT: I don't believe. But you know, the government came in and they got the provocateurs come in and disrupt you, so. In other words, they don't want to see no active organization. You know, they didn't want that. They wanted everybody to be passive and go along with slavery, basically. So we were about standing up, fighting for our rights, whatever was necessary to be who we are. They wanted us to be who they wanted us to be and what they wanted us to be. And that's basically working on some plantation for them. For the government.

ARSENEAULT: [56:00] Do you have a most vivid memory from your time when you were active in the party? Or are you still active? I don't want to say that you're not still active.

VINCENT: Yeah.

ARSENEAULT: Or I guess the sixties were such an interesting time in our history. I was just wondering if you had a most vivid memory. You have so many like experiences but maybe one that sticks out more.

VINCENT: One of them was we, I think it was in Philly, we went to Philadelphia because they were exploiting the people up there real bad. They took the active brothers. I don't remember how many of them there were. Maybe about six or eight of them. Made them strip buck naked up against the wall and they had a picture of them, you know. So at that time it was a picture out of who's the president then?

ARSENEAULT: Kennedy?

VINCENT: Ronald Reagan?

ARSENEAULT: Johnson?

VINCENT: [57:09] No. Dick. Tricky Dick.

ARSENEAULT: Oh, Richard Nixon?

VINCENT: Yeah.

ARSENEAULT: I don't know my dates too well.

VINCENT: I think . . .

ARSENEAULT: I know Kennedy and Johnson are in there somewhere.

VINCENT: Yeah, but I think it was Tricky Dick. But anyway, whichever one it was they had his . . . They had a picture of either Huey Newton or Bobby Seal in the electric chair, you know. In the electric chair, and they had his picture on the picture. Where they had him in the picture. But what we did we cut the face, his face off and put Tricky Dick's face on there. We made some big posters. We made about a hundred of them because we used to do silkscreen work. You know silkscreen?

ARSENEAULT: Like t-shirts?

VINCENT: [58:11] Yeah. You know, by hand. So we made about a hundred of those and went to Philly or wherever it was that happened. It was Philadelphia, I think. And to a rally. And when we pulled those pictures out they went like hotcakes. People bought them up like mad. I guess some people still got them. I don't know what happened to the one I had. [Laughs] But that was one of my most interesting engagements there. Yeah.

ARSENEAULT: Who did you work with, in the party?

VINCENT: Oh, I don't remember names. But the major players were in California. You know, like Huey Newton and Bobby Seal and whatnot. I was one of the major players in Washington and we had some players in New York and all around, you know. But I don't remember all of their names. So many activities were in all that. We had meetings, and rallies, and everything all the time. Plus we were going to demonstrations. Just about every demonstration they had in Washington, D.C. I was there. When Martin Luther King made his

speech at the . . . What building is that where they got a monument inside sitting on a chair?
Who was that?

ARSENEAULT: Oh, Abraham Lincoln.

VINCENT: Must have been Lincoln. Or one of them critters [Laughs].

ARSENEAULT: Yeah.

VINCENT: [1:00:21] But anyway I was . . . Martin Luther King spoke there. But I was right up front at that one. Most times you couldn't get close to the front, you know. But it was so many of those, you know. Everybody wanted to . . . Everybody was involved. That was one of the biggest ones. I think that may have been the one when he said, "I had a dream." Yeah. He was a good speaker.

ARSENEAULT: I thought there are a lot of good speakers at that time.

VINCENT: Yeah.

ARSENEAULT: A lot of good orators.

VINCENT: Yeah.

ARSENEAULT: [1:01:11] People spoke a little differently.

VINCENT: Yeah. So it was so active then, see because I was always being approached when I had that suit against them for two and a half mil [dollars] they were always harassing me.

ARSENEAULT: Who was?

VINCENT: Police. The government. I had a dog that I got from a friend of mine because he was moving out of his house into an apartment and he couldn't take the dog with him. It was a white German Shepard. And he was about that big. So he gave him to me and he said, "I got to tell you one thing about this dog. He don't like white people." I laughed at him. I said, "Yeah, right. How he know white from black?" He said, "He don't like white people." So one day I walked him around the corner to the Safeway to do a little shopping and I tied him up outside the Safeway. Now this is a black community so only blacks coming in the Safeway mostly. And here come the bread man delivering bread to the Safeway. White man. I heard . . . I was in there shopping and I heard the dog [barking noises] sounding like he was trying to kill somebody. Went outside. White bread man . . .

ARSENEAULT: White bread?

VINCENT: Wouldn't let him come in the store. I said, that's when I found out he was telling the truth about the dog.

ARSENEAULT: [1:02:54] That's funny.

VINCENT: Yeah, that was amazing to me. So from then on I said, okay. So when the police come around in the neighborhood I would bring him out on my front yard. Because one time they wanted to talk to me or something and I say, "Don't come on the property." I had him on a leash and whatnot. He was raising hell with the cop because the cop was white. So I realized brother didn't lie to me. So we had all kind of experiences like that. And it always us against them. One time some youngsters that we were teaching about the struggle, they were mad with the cops so one night the cops rode by, they shot up the car. And first thing they looked at was me because I lived in the community, you know, and it was about a block from where I lived.

ARSENEAULT: The kids shot up the car?

VINCENT: [1:04:08] Shot up the police car, yeah. So they wanted to charge me with being involved with that, you know. But they couldn't make the charge stick. But it was always something like that going on. Yes, it was so much I had to really study to remember a lot of the stuff that went on, you know. So finally they framed me up with . . . I think I may have told y'all about this but they framed me up with an armed robbery charge of some children that had walkie-talkies. Some youngsters maybe a little bit older than . . . Because my daughter you just talked to Stephanie, she can tell you about that better than I can because they call them . . . What do they call them? I forgot what they call that little group. It may have been about eight or ten of them. They gave walkie-talkies. I'm trying to think of the name of it.

ARSENEAULT: Was it for like a neighborhood group?

VINCENT: Yeah, little neighborhood group that they supposed to be helping elders cross the street and walking them home and stuff like that. What they really were, informers telling the police what's going on in the community.

ARSENEAULT: The kids were?

VINCENT: [1:05:48] Yeah. That was their job, because the police gave them walkie-talkies and whatnot and said, "Y'all walk people across the street and y'all report anything you see in the community, you know." So that happened and the cops knew me. And when they found out that she was working there, they charged me with robbing them. Just called it armed robbery. It wasn't a bank or anything like that. It was these children with walkie-talkies. And the way it happened is, they just took the stuff from them, you know. Because they were young children. My daughter may have been maybe twelve, thirteen, something like that. And she was one of them working with the . . . I can't remember the name of it. But they, you know, I guess they were interviewing all of them about who took the walkie-talkies and whatnot. So they found out that that was my daughter working there. So they put the charge on me. But when they gave the information to the cops, the ones that took the radios from them was about a little bit older than they were. Maybe seventeen. Sixteen, seventeen, like that. But when they found out my daughter was working there they said, "This is a chance to get him." So they charged me with armed robbery of these children with these walkie-talkies. That's how I got four to twelve years in the . . . locked up in Loudoun, Virginia. And the major reason for that was because I had filed

that suit against for two and a half million dollars and they didn't want me to come to court clean like I was. No juvenile record. No adult record. You know, I was clean. So they said, "We got to dirty him up because he might win this two and a half million dollars." So that's the way the government do. Set you up shoot you down you know.

ARSENEAULT: [1:08:15] So you got four years for . . . ?

VINCENT: I got four to twelve years right off the top. They wouldn't let me out on . . . In other words you know, usually when a person . . . They lock a person up and they don't have no record they don't lock them up they just give them . . .

ARSENEAULT: They dismissed? It'll get dismissed or something or . . . ?

VINCENT: Maybe not dismissed but they'll put them on probation or something like that, you know. But they put me straight in the penitentiary for four to twelve years. Judge found me guilty of that bogus charge. It was a female judge and you know, and they saw my involvement with the Panther Party so they said, "We got to lock him up because he's a threat to us." But when I went in there, they saluted me just like they did in the community when I shot the cop. Anything I wanted in there, all I had to do was ask for it. Because the guards were all walking around telling everybody, "Yeah this is the guy that like to shoot cops." You know?

ARSENEAULT: I'm sure they loved that.

VINCENT: [1:09:41] You know that. I was a hero in there. Yeah. So I did five years in there and I walked out the front gate because I told my lawyer I said, "I ain't going back to court." Usually they take you to court and release you there. But I said, "I want to walk out this gate." So I set it up with my honey. She picked me up at the gate and that was the end of that.

ARSENEAULT: What had changed?

VINCENT: Oh, yeah. Come out to a whole different world, almost. You scared to mess with any female because at that time, what was it, the herpes, I think, was a thing then. You know? The people had changed and got mild, you know. It was a lot of change. Once you get locked up and come back out it's a whole lot of change involved.

ARSENEAULT: What was it like adjusting?

VINCENT: [1:11:07] Adjusting back outside? It wasn't hard for me. But let me see, I got out in . . . I got out, I believe, in seventy-five or somewhere around there, and about I don't know how long it was, but then we went to court for the suit I had against them.

ARSENEAULT: The two million dollar one?

VINCENT: Yeah, two and a half million. And the two and a half million was never brought up in court how much I was suing for. I had a traitor lawyer named Peter Wolf and he crossed me because he didn't press the amount that we were suing for. So I end up getting a hundred and

thirty thousand. But they had this woman in there who, I guess she took charge of the jury and she convinced them that I didn't need that kind of money.

ARSENEAULT: Do you remember what the jury was made up of?

VINCENT: I don't remember, but I do know that one of them was a black sister and after the trial and whatnot she came to my house and told me what happened. So that was a . . .

ARSENEAULT: What had happened?

VINCENT: [1:12:57] This woman who was the wife of Garfinkel or one of those big stores. She was the wife of the owner of the store. So she convinced them that I didn't need that kind of money. So the sister came and told me what had happened in the jury room. Why they were debating on what we were going to do how much and all that stuff. Then that woman convinced everybody on the jury that I didn't need that kind of money. She came and told me that. That just got me really pissed off more, you know, because number one, they didn't bring up how much it was for and you know so . . .

ARSENEAULT: The lawyer?

VINCENT: Lawyer. He was a traitor. Matter of fact, when he got the check he was calling me telling me the check was in and I could come pick it up and I was mad. I didn't go and pick it up. I left, he had the check for a couple of months. He was calling my family and everybody.

"Tell him the check is in, come get you." Because he want his money. So when I did go in there, what I had do, I went to the judge that let me out on personal bond and told him what was happening.

ARSENEAULT: Mr. Alexander?

VINCENT: Yeah. I went and told him that the lawyer was trying to beat me because he wanted to charge me the amount he was going to charge for appeal, too. But there wasn't no appeal involved. But he had that on his list of, you know, you know how they itemize.

ARSENEAULT: Charges.

VINCENT: [1:14:52] Yeah. He had that on. I said, "Oh, hell no." That's why I didn't mess with the check, you know. So I went to Harry T. Alexander and told him, "Hey man, this lawyer trying to beat me even worse." So he got on the phone and called him. He said, "I got Mr. Vincent up in here." He said, "Oh tell him we got that straight. Tell him come get his check."

ARSENEAULT: He got scared. The judge was talking to him.

VINCENT: Yeah. So they straightened that out. I went to get my check. So he gave me the check and I say, "I'll go to the bank and cash it and I can pay you." Snatched the check out of my hand, went to the file cabinet threw it in the file cabinet and slammed it shut and locked it. He wanted me to sign the check and let him cash it and he going to give me my money. What that

sound like to you?

ARSENEAULT: A trap.

VINCENT: Yeah. I mean, if somebody do some work for you, do you pay them or they pay you? I have work. I don't know. You see what I'm talking about?

ARSENEAULT: Right.

VINCENT: [1:16:13] And then they wonder why people get so damn mad. And that's why that guy did what he did yesterday morning. In Virginia. You saw, I know you say that news. You didn't see that news?

ARSENEAULT: Wait what happened?

VINCENT: They killed two news reporters! Y'all didn't see that news?

ARSENEAULT: I didn't see that.

VINCENT: Did you see it?

TANGLAO: Yeah, last night.

VINCENT: Hell, yeah. Live. They were filming.

ARSENEAULT: I did not see that.

VINCENT: He got behind the photographer. I guess you know, the photographer probably thought he was just somebody looking on.

ARSENEAULT: Yeah.

VINCENT: [1:16:53] He used to work at the company that they reporting for and they fired him. He was mad. Young white girl. She was twenty-four and the dude was twenty-seven, right?

TANGLAO: Yeah.

VINCENT: He shot both of them dead yesterday morning.

ARSENEAULT: You want to pause it? Are you . . .

VINCENT: Keep on, if you got more questions. I'm going to see how my help are doing over here.

ARSENEAULT: Oh, you're looking at his painting?

VINCENT: You good, man.

ARSENEAULT: Did he do a good job?

VINCENT: [1:17:25] Yeah.

ARSENEAULT: Are you going to . . .

VINCENT: You can make them a little bit thicker.

ARSENEAULT: Is he fired? You going to fire him?

VINCENT: Yeah right. Yeah.

ARSENEAULT: I know you like to fire people.

VINCENT: [1:17:37] [laughs] No.

ARSENEAULT: I'm just kidding.

VINCENT: But yeah, that happened yesterday morning. I was amazed with that. But . . .

ARSENEAULT: Do you remember anything about . . . or people talking about voter

registration in Mossville?

VINCENT: That's another thing we were teaching them, too about that voter. In Mossville?

ARSENEAULT: Yeah.

VINCENT: [1:18:02] What about the voter registration?

ARSENEAULT: Do you know anything about it? If people drove somebody to vote? Do they get people involved here?

VINCENT: I don't know because I don't mess with that voting thing. But I think they got people that they sent to get people and take them to vote.

ARSENEAULT: Did anyone . . . Has anyone talked about it? Like any of the people who grew up in that time?

VINCENT: Well you mean back in the day?

ARSENEAULT: Yeah, like in the sixties.

VINCENT: No. Not about here. Washington.

ARSENEAULT: Well, here, too. Like did any community leaders here get the community involved in voter registration?

VINCENT: I don't know about back then. I think they do now. But I don't know about then. So what other questions you have?

ARSENEAULT: [1:19:02] Alright. I was going to ask you about the protests? Your memories of any of the protests.

VINCENT: So much been going on in those protests, man. You ever been to a protest?

ARSENEAULT: No. What's it like?

VINCENT: Well one thing, all the protestors are on the same page. They all get together and raising hell about whatever the issue is at that time, you know. And as usual they got plenty of cops around to try to lock up everybody they can. Break everybody's spirits they can, you know. A lot of passing out flyers. A lot of people networking. Getting together even more and making plans where they going to get together, what they going to do, who's going to be involved. Lot of organizing, basically.

ARSENEAULT: So it sounds like it's a chance for people who have the same ideals to kind of organize?

VINCENT: Yes.

ARSENEAULT: [1:20:32] Do you remember any protests in particular?

VINCENT: Any one in particular? That one that Martin Luther King was at was, I remember that particular. For one reason that I was right up front and it was a whole lot of people there. They were all the way from the monument to the . . . I can't even think of the name of that where the boy's sitting up in the chair.

ARSENEAULT: Lincoln Memorial?

VINCENT: Yeah. Lincoln Memorial, yeah. That was the main one I remember, but a lot of them broke out in disturbances and whatnot. Had them shooting tear gas at us and stuff like that, you know. Because I went to protest in a lot of different states, too, like New York, Philly [Philadelphia] and Virginia. We went to Virginia one time because they were messing with these brothers over there and did you see that truck that I had? The truck in the picture? We drove that. That's the master truck that we used to drive.

ARSENEAULT: Oh, was it a Panther Party truck?

VINCENT: [1:22:10] Yeah. It's in the background on one of those pictures. Looked like a paddy wagon.

ARSENEAULT: Y'all drove a paddy wagon?

VINCENT: Yeah we drove that to Virginia because they were having trouble over there and
. . . Must be this one right here.

ARSENEAULT: It's this one?

VINCENT: There it is.

ARSENEAULT: Oh wow.

VINCENT: [1:22:47] That's up on Evergreen as we speak.

ARSENEAULT: Evergreen Road?

VINCENT: It's yellow now, yeah, but it had . . .

ARSENEAULT: It's still there?

VINCENT: . . . Malcolm X on the side of it. You can't really see it.

ARSENEAULT: Is that your motorcycle?

VINCENT: [1:22:57] Yeah. It had a Malcolm X on the side and it had loudspeakers on each side of it.

ARSENEAULT: What would you say on the speakers?

VINCENT: Telling people, you know, about what's happening. What to do. How to stand up. You know.

ARSENEAULT: Did you ever get pulled over?

VINCENT: No, we'd be in the community. We never got pulled over. But we had seats in the back. We had maybe about eight or ten people back there.

ARSENEAULT: So this is on Evergreen Road right now?

VINCENT: [1:23:32] Yeah. It's painted yellow now. It's for sale, if you'd like to have it.

ARSENEAULT: I would.

VINCENT: [Laughs]

ARSENEAULT: I would like it.

VINCENT: Yeah, so we went over to Virginia to support the people over there. They locked me up over there, because I was the so-called ringleader. But they didn't hold me long because people started gathering around the police station.

ARSENEAULT: So they locked you up in Virginia?

VINCENT: Yeah.

ARSENEAULT: Did you see it coming?

VINCENT: [1:24:12] Not really. They charged me with being, you know . . .

ARSENEAULT: Instigator.

VINCENT: Instigator, right. That's the word. They don't want us to come together and support each other. Because they know there's strength in numbers. But they just, they didn't hold me long. They just locked me up for maybe about a couple of hours or something like that. [. . .?] I guess they said, "Well we better let him out." And they instructed us, "Y'all better get out of town. We don't want you all around."

ARSENEAULT: So this is on Evergreen Road. Have you heard any stories about Evergreen Road being haunted?

VINCENT: Yeah, they used to tell . . . Now that you mention that, they used to tell me . . . My uncle used to tell me that there was a light that you could see off in the distance at night. And you walked towards that light, you'd never get any closer to it. [Laughs] You know? Stories like that. And you know, here, then there wasn't no lights. No streetlights and stuff. So that was . . . That sounded weird to me. What's happening with that light?

ARSENEAULT: Any other ghost stories?

VINCENT: Let me see. That was the main one I remember. I don't remember any others. Seem like maybe . . . I'm trying to remember. That's the major one I remember at this time. I don't know if they had a name for that light or not but . . .

ARSENEAULT: [1:26:20] We've heard some stories about Evergreen Road being haunted.

VINCENT: What stories you heard?

ARSENEAULT: There's a man with no face who'll show up. And a haunted sycamore tree at the end of Evergreen Road.

VINCENT: A haunted . . . ?

ARSENEAULT: A haunted sycamore tree.

VINCENT: Oh yeah.

ARSENEAULT: Or a cypress tree, I don't remember which. But the tree itself is haunted.

VINCENT: [1:26:41] Oh yeah. So what kind of action would happen around the tree for it to be haunted, you know?

ARSENEAULT: I don't know.

VINCENT: Okay.

ARSENEAULT: But kids were scared to go trick or treating on Evergreen Road.

VINCENT: Yeah, I don't know much about haunted stuff.

ARSENEAULT: You'll have to ask Ms. Julia. She'll tell you.

VINCENT: Okay.

ARSENEAULT: [1:27:10] Do you know anything about any healers in the area? Was there ever anybody who was a healer in Mossville?

VINCENT: Oh yeah, let me see. What was his name? I think his name was Mamou. He was

a healer. I met him once or twice. But he used to . . . He'd pick up herbs. He'd know different herbs that grow around and he used to heal people with that. Can't remember the herb. But my significant other is a healer. Pull off the tip of that and taste it. That's an herb.

ARSENEAULT: Just eat it?

VINCENT: Tell me what it tastes like?

ARSENEAULT: Like a pickle. That's dill.

VINCENT: You want to taste this? Pull the top of it off and taste it.

ARSENEAULT: [1:28:17] Is that what that is?

VINCENT: I don't know if it's dill or not, but it's got a nice little taste to it though.

ARSENEAULT: Like a pickle, huh?

VINCENT: Yeah, but it's an herb.

ARSENEAULT: Fresh. It's good.

VINCENT: What it taste like?

TANGLAO: Almost like mint. Almost.

ARSENEAULT: It is kind of minty.

TANGLAO: [1:28:37] Like minty.

VINCENT: Kind of. That's one right there beside you. They grow real tall, too.

ARSENEAULT: What does she do with it?

VINCENT: I don't know. It's got a nice little mellow taste to it, though.

ARSENEAULT: It's nice.

VINCENT: Maybe y'all can check it out. I haven't really did research on it. But it grow wild around here. Just like [Saphira?] she knew a lot about herbs and whatnot. We got some stuff going around here called callaloo. It's like first cousins to spinach. Matter of fact, that's what she's using on me now for my prostate.

ARSENEAULT: She making something out of it or you just eating it?

VINCENT: [1:29:25] We eating it raw. She fixed a drink for me this morning. Green drink.

ARSENEAULT: She blend it up?

VINCENT: Yeah. She's pretty good. She's Indian. So she knows quite a bit about herbs and stuff.

ARSENEAULT: Is she from the area?

VINCENT: No. She's from another state. But she live here now. Matter of fact, what time is it?

ARSENEAULT: Time to go?

VINCENT: No, she should be coming up.

ARSENEAULT: Oh, okay.

VINCENT: Pretty soon.

ARSENEAULT: Well I can start wrapping it up. Some final questions.

VINCENT: Alright. True. You saved me a little time now.

ARSENEAULT: [1:30:17] So your fondest memory of Mossville?

VINCENT: Fondest memory is when I moved here. No, when I was about to move here. After I got the check from the lawyer. No, before I got the check. My honey at that time, the one that picked me up from the penitentiary. I borrowed some money from her and her car to come down here to see, you know, what I was coming to. Because I hadn't been there in a while. I came down, let me see, must have been in the seventies after I got out, I believe. I was bringing a friend . . . I was going to Arizona to see my children. And this friend of my aunt was a Mexican brother who worked with my aunt. And he was going back to Mexico. So she introduced us and he wanted to ride with me, you know, because he was going back home. So I had a Volkswagen at the time and we drove that and I went to Mexico with him. I went to Juarez, Mexico and stayed at his place. And then I went to visit my children. And let me see, I think I'm getting off. But anyway, I borrowed some money from her and borrowed her car and we came here. Me and my brother. And when I went on that piece of land up there that they stole, there's a big old tree. Have you seen that tree in Lake Charles at the historical museum?

ARSENEAULT: I don't think so.

VINCENT: [1:32:28] But anyway, it's a big old tree. Limbs come down to the ground.

ARSENEAULT: Like a live oak?

VINCENT: You need to see that tree. Yeah.

ARSENEAULT: Alright.

VINCENT: Live oak. Old live oak. But our tree was like that. You could step like you stepping up on some steps or something and walk all the way up in the tree. But when I came down here me and my brother went on the old land and when we went up and saw that tree, man, I could feel the vibrations of this is where I was supposed to be. Because all of the history was coming back, you know. All the memories that I had from my daddy and my uncle telling me about it. It was really deep. It was like really inspiring. That was one of my main memories. Was all that history I was told was coming back to me when I came down here. It was really inspiring.

So I went back and decided on packing up and going back home. So I packed up all my stuff in a station wagon and I was pulling the Volkswagen. We went to Wisconsin and my sister's husband gave me a jeep and a tractor. That old tractor that's down in the field down there. I don't know if y'all saw it when you was coming up the street. This old farm tractor, he gave me that and a jeep. And I bought a big truck. Put the tractor in the truck and towed the jeep. So I had a little caravan coming down here. [Laughs] Came down here and this house, that little house over there, was, the lights were on, the water was on. I said, "This is a blessing." You know? But that was one of my most fondest memories.

ARSENEAULT: It was ready to move in?

VINCENT: [1:34:52] It was all ready to move in. But what's happening, my uncle had passed away. And his girlfriend was trying to homestead it. You know, she was trying to get it.

ARSENEAULT: Trying to live there for so long to where it . . .

VINCENT: Yeah.

ARSENEAULT: ...automatically became hers.

VINCENT: Right. So I blocked that when I moved in.

ARSENEAULT: [1:35:14] How did she react to that?

VINCENT: Oh, she was fighting against it. And she had a man in the water company that she was messing around with. She had the water in her name. I think she had the lights in her name, too. But I changed the lights and he didn't want to change the water out of her name. So we got into a little altercation about that. But . . .

ARSENEAULT: It got resolved?

VINCENT: Yeah. So she didn't achieve what she was trying to achieve. So she was having the road and everything [unclear]. And they got people coming in offering me money for this piece of land. But they ain't offering enough. Because as you see, you put a business right here, right now? You go it going on. Money passing by every day. So that's why I'm putting this out there. Y'all come and get some fresh vegetables. [Laughs]

ARSENEAULT: Make some money.

VINCENT: Yeah. But I'm willing to lease it. But see Sasol, they, I don't know what they up to, I'm sure they trying to, same thing that the government did with this piece. What do they call it? Eminent domain. So they trying to improve the area. So they try to get me to give them this land. I said, "Do I look like I'm in a position to give you some land? [Laughs] Do I look crazy or what?" So . . .

ARSENEAULT: I'm curious how when you moved here . . . How did the community react to you?

VINCENT: [1:37:10] I told you how the youngsters reacted because I stopped . . . Well they didn't accept me because I'm a Yankee from the east. You know? We all black, but I'm a Yankee from the east. So they never really did accept me because I wasn't raised with them and I'm different from them, you know. So . . .

ARSENEAULT: What did that feel like to be an outsider?

VINCENT: It didn't feel good, but I didn't care. Because I know that I'm part of the roots, you know. Whether they knew or cared or not. It didn't make no difference to me because I'm working on something that belong to us. In other words, it's handing on and I'm doing my part. Since it's handed to me now, I'm doing my part to pass it on to my daughters and them, you know. Because the paperwork on it is patented. Did I tell you about patent? Patent is when . . . There you go, you can see a patent.

ARSENEAULT: So that's the original document or . . . ?

VINCENT: [1:38:40] Yes. This is . . .

ARSENEAULT: Wow. Okay.

VINCENT: Land patents.

TANGLAO: You want me to take a picture?

ARSENEAULT: Sure. What . . .

VINCENT: Read it to me. I can't read. [Laughs]

ARSENEAULT: I can hardly see this.

VINCENT: Can you see it, young man?

ARSENEAULT: "Whereas there has been deposited in the general land office of the United States a certificate of the register of the land office at New Orleans, Louisiana. Whereby it appears that pursuant to the act of congress approves twentieth of May, 1862 to secure homesteads to actual settlers on the public domain and to acts supplemental thereto the claim of Eli Vincent, Junior has been established and duly consummated in conformity to the law for the

south half of the northeast quarter and the west half of the southeast quarter of section twenty in township nine south of range nine west." I guess those were coordinates. "Of Louisiana. Meridian in Louisiana claiming?" Something. "One hundred."

TANGLAO: [1:40:06] Containing.

ARSENEAULT: Containing one hundred and sixty two acres and forty-four hundredths of an acre." Wow. That's from 1862. "According to the official plat of the survey of the said land returned to the general land office by the surveyor general. Now know ye that there is therefore granted by the United States unto the said Eli Vincent, Junior a tract of land above described to have and hold the said tract of land fifth . . ." Something. "The . . ." I don't know what that word is. "[Opportunances?] thereof, unto the said Eli Vincent, Junior and to his heirs and assigns forever."

VINCENT: Forever means what?

ARSENEAULT: [1:41:00] Forever. You're his heir.

VINCENT: What does forever mean?

ARSENEAULT: It means never ending. "Testimony whereof I Grover Cleveland president of the United States of America have . . ."

VINCENT: Let me interrupt you there for one second. Y'all know Grover Cleveland?

ARSENEAULT: Just by name.

VINCENT: [1:41:19] You know he's the only president in existence that was voted into office twice? Only one.

ARSENEAULT: Oh, because he was president and then he wasn't and then he got voted on again. That's right. I did know that.

VINCENT: Yes.

ARSENEAULT: Interesting.

VINCENT: Yeah and see that's why I don't see how Krause & Managan got this goddamn land.

ARSENEAULT: So this is not the land that . . .

VINCENT: Finish reading.

ARSENEAULT: Okay.

VINCENT: Yeah it's not this piece here but the ones Krause & Managan got.

ARSENEUALT: [1:42:02] "President of the United States of America have caused these letters to be made patent, and the seal of the general land office to be here unto affixed. Given under my hand at the city of Washington, the twenty-third day of October in the year of our Lord, one thousand eight hundred and ninety-five. And of the independence of the United States, the one hundred and twentieth . . ." Something. "By the president, Grover Cleveland." Wow.

VINCENT: That's junior there. I got to go to the bathroom here.

ARSENEAULT: Okay.

[1:42:45]

[End Tape 4509. End Session III.]