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The Civil Rights Struggle in Lexington: An Interview with Audrey L. Grevious

Arthur Graham

This is edited from an unrehearsed interview with Audrey Louise Grevious for the University of Kentucky Libraries Ethnicity in Lexington Oral History Project. The interview was conducted by Arthur Graham on 26 February 1985.

Ms. GREVIOUS: My name is Audrey Louise Ross Grevious. I was born in Lexington on September the 3rd, 1930. I had my elementary schooling at Constitution School. My junior high and high school education was at Dunbar High School on Upper Street. Have lived in Lexington all of my life and have mixed feelings about childhood in Lexington as a black, or as a Negro, as we were called then. Felt many, many times that educational opportunities could have been better in that more subjects could have been offered to the Negro students during their time. We were fortunate enough to have super, super, super, superb teachers who were in the field because they loved it, were definitely qualified, and had the disadvantage of having no other area to go in to show the world what they were capable of doing. So they took as their task preparing Negro students for life later.

As Negro school students, we were often concerned that we had, supposedly, separate but equal facilities, and we always felt like this was a joke simply because I cannot recall getting a new book at all, ever. The books that we would get would be the books that came from the white schools where they had changed or had been torn or written into or what have you. But, even with this handicap, we had made up our mind that we were somebody, and that we were going to show the world that we were, and we were going to absorb as much knowledge as we possibly could and benefit from the guidance that we received from these superb teachers—black teachers—that we had.

I even now have difficulty switching from "Negro" to "black," because I remember in my day, to be called "black" was a provocation. It was only in the sixties that "black" became

beautiful and acceptable by the majority of the Negroes. We resented "colored." It was always a joke to us that when anyone called us "colored." We wanted to know whether we were purple, green, yellow, or what have you. And we made a point of telling them that we were not "colored," but that we were Negroes, because we were very proud of it. We had difficulty accepting the whites who would write "negro" with a small letter, and we let them know, in no uncertain terms, that this was unacceptable.

Even as a high school student, the only vocational subjects that were available to us were typing, some home ec; no auto mechanics for the young men. We always wanted to work on a newspaper; this was not available simply because we did not really have a Negro teacher who had the material. They had the qualifications *per se* to do it, but we did not have the materials that were necessary to really put out a good paper. We took quite a bit of pride in our football and basketball teams as, traditionally, blacks have been good. So we felt if this was a means of breaking out of the maze that we were forced to be in because we were black, we used this as a means of so doing. It was only when I went to school at Kentucky State and began to meet other students, that I became more aware of the shortcomings here in Lexington.

I remember as a young child going to the movies and having to go down Short Street, up the back steps at the Ben Ali Theater, going down the side of the State Theater and going up the steps, sitting in the balcony. The same thing at the Opera House. This was accepted. It was expected. And if we intended to see a movie, this was what we had to do. We were not allowed to eat at any of the restaurants downtown, and this did not seemingly bother us for a long time, because there were these little counters that we could stop and get a sandwich. And during the forties and the fifties, people were a little complacent.

We were aware that things were not as bad in Lexington as they were further south, but they were not as good as further north. We were just comfortable. And this was a bad state to be in, I think, growing up, in that you were aware there were many, many things that could be better. You did not know how to go about making these changes. We would read about people not being able to sit on the buses. We had always been able to sit on the buses, even as a small child riding the streetcar. The track went right around our section from Chestnut Street to

Georgetown. And that was a Sunday afternoon fun thing, in that we would get on the streetcar and take the trip all the way around, and maybe even stop at Douglass Park and play for awhile and come back home. This was a good outing. Clean fun for black children.

We did not really have the money to go to the restaurants, so it was not too much of a problem. Each black community had its own restaurants where, if you wanted to go out and eat, they did serve food for a small amount of money. There was some music. Eventually the video machines came out, and we could actually see some of the great artists on those for putting in a dime in the machine and having it to run for about five or ten minutes. Exciting things to enjoy during those times. It did not take much to make us happy, because we did not have very much. Jobs were scarce, as they always have been for blacks—except during slavery times. Lexington was no different. Most black women worked as domestics. We were never hungry as we hear of people being hungry now, because as part of the payment, they could always bring home whatever was left from supper that night. I remember my mother going out and working for a dollar a day, hard, from early morning until late at night.

Our family was very, very close. We had very little. There was not a father in the family. And we would spend hours around the little table—open crate—that we had, working puzzles, playing cards, and just enjoying one another. Things that I really feel that children nowadays are missing. There was a closeness there. There was a closeness in most black families because the only entertainment you had was the radio. And there was usually just one radio, so everybody was around this one radio, not like nowadays when children have their own TVs. They can go in, close the door, and there's no closeness. You were aware that the neighbors were part of your family. There has always been a closeness with black neighbors and black children in that those few females who were at home during the day seemed to feel that they had the responsibility to watch out for other black children who came in. You could always go into one of the homes and work on homework, or out on the porch when it was warm, report to them, and go back to your own home. There was just a looking out for one another that is missing nowadays that was so very, very prevalent during the early thirties. Not only that, but you had to mind these neighbors. If they said, "Come," you came fast

or your parents heard about it, and you were in trouble, serious trouble, for a long, long time.

There were very few men in most of the families, as I remember the children in my classes at school. And, I guess, even during that time, it's as it is now, the one-parent family and the female being the one there. And for that reason, the few men who were around oftentimes were not necessarily married to the women. And those who had mothers who did not have the male in there—that was not a family, they kind of stood out and were special people. Even though it was an accepted thing, those of us who had mothers who withstood that practice were very, very proud of them. I know I was of my mother and I still am. I tell her today that one of the things that makes me love her even more than I could and should was the fact that she did not have men in the house. No one moved in. We had a hard time. There were times when I would look at her and say, "Um-um. I wish you'd have somebody in here so we wouldn't have such a hard time." But as I got older and I saw things happening to other young girls, I was relieved, pleased, and very proud that my mother was able to raise two children without someone moving in and becoming one of a string of fathers that many of the black children were subjected to during that time. As I grew older, I saw the need for it. I felt envious at times, especially when they got some new things that I did not get. It made me aware of better things. I remember one time being concerned and almost fussing with my mother—one of the few times that I was brave enough to try to do that—because I didn't get a new coat for Christmas. And I had a friend who got a new coat every year. And I would get one, and it had to last for a long time. And she told me to look at the coat that my friend had, brand new, and it did not look even as nice as mine that was two years old. It was cheap, and she had saved quite a bit to buy mine, and it made me realize that a lot of cheap things are not as nice as one good thing that's going to last for a long time. And being a poor family, things had to last for a long, long time. And you began to appreciate and take care of those few things that you did have.

Lexington was beginning to change. The only job that I could look forward to as a teenager was to work in someone's home. And I did. I baby-sat, house-cleaned, washed, cooked, and made very little money, but enough to help and make ends meet. I wanted to go to school. I was not sure that I would be able to.

Being a bright student, I knew that there was every possibility for scholarships, but at that time scholarships did not cover everything for the black student. And it would do me no good to get one way away from Kentucky, because my mother still would not be able to send me money to pay the other bills.

When I was in my early teens we had always lived at east Race Street. I remember in the late thirties, early forties maybe, there was a great fire where Aspendale is now. There used to be a race track there. And they began to make plans to build public housing. And all I could think of at the time was, "Good." I would get to live someplace where there was indoor plumbing and a bathtub. The rent was going to be according to what was going to be made. And surprisingly enough, these facilities were to have been built for the poor, really poor, of Lexington. They were not the ones who went in. I was not aware until this particular time that my mother had an awful lot of what I now call "false pride," in that she felt that somebody was giving her something that she really did not want. And we did not go to Aspendale. And I cried many a day, because I had always dreamed of living in a place where there was—as I mentioned before—an indoor bath and heat where I did not have to make a fire. I cannot say cleaner facilities, because you could almost eat off of the floors in my house. And I think this is the reason I am not a very good housekeeper now. We had to work so hard keeping it clean that I said when I got older, if I did not want to clean up, I would not clean up, and I do not clean up unless I want to now.

But most of the middle class—if we had a middle class during that time—were the ones who moved into Aspendale, such as many of the teachers who taught in the schools and the few other professional people that we had. And I think that this made the other poor people in the community angry because they were really the first ones who got the apartments. And then, seemingly, the other apartments in the back part of Aspendale were offered to the rest of the community. And it was if they decided, "Well, if it was going to be built for us and we were not given first choice, we weren't going in at all." And many of them did not go and still have not gone. I remember moving into Aspendale during my first marriage. And as far as needing it for money's sake, it was not the case. They were just nice facilities that were there, and we took advantage of them.

We also were aware that very, very few blacks in the

community had automobiles. If you happened to have a car, you were something special during this particular time. As young students, we had only one young man who had an old T-Model Ford. And we really did stay friends with him. Being part of this group of ten, when you saw one of us, you usually saw all ten of us. And we would all pile into this T-Model Ford and go wherever we wanted to. And I remember one time taking a ride, oh, about nine o'clock, and we went way out Old Frankfort Pike. And they started teasing him and saying, "You certainly are silly to let Audrey use you like this. I'd go ahead and take a kiss if you want to." And got him all aroused, and all he wanted me to do was to kiss him. And since I did not like him, there was no way. And they kept saying, "Well, if she doesn't kiss you, put her out!" Would you believe he put me out on the road, and they just laughed? And left me on that dark road! Now, as I said before, there were very few cars in Lexington during this time, and you are out on a dark road. They went way down the road. I could not see the light and I started crying. I hated everyone of my friends that were in this car. Finally they turned around to come back, and I recognized the car. If you've ever seen a T-Model Ford, you know how far away the lights are, so you cannot miss them when they're coming. Big, brave me! When they got there, well, I wiped all the tears away and became the big, bad bully that I wanted to be since I wouldn't kiss him, which was stupid now that I think of it. I could have pecked him on the jaw, and he would have been satisfied. But I wouldn't get in the car, and I told them, "No way! I walked all the way back almost home in front of the car, because they wouldn't dare leave me. I walked slow, and the poor car would just choke, you know, and die. Finally I got tired and got back in it. I did not speak to my friends for two months. But these are just some of the crazy, stupid things that black children did at that time, because we had very little to do. And a car was an exciting thing.

I went away to school and became familiar with a number of students from the North, and they began to talk about many of the things they were able to do, some of the cultural things that they were exposed to that we were not exposed to here in Lexington. They were here, but they were not open to Negro students and Negro adults. And we had to read about many of the things that we wondered about that were going on in the world. We were exposed in high school, as I said before. Our teachers

exposed us to just about everything that was possible, so that if the change ever did come about we would be ready for it. I began to say, you know, there needs to be a change. Things cannot go on like they were. Went to school in '48, with my mother working two jobs trying to keep me in school. Unfortunately for me, the freshman year was just a repeat of my senior year, and I spent very little time studying, getting B's instead of the A's that I should have gotten.

Prof. GRAHAM: Excuse me. This is at Kentucky State?

Ms. GREVIOUS: Kentucky State. Coming home on the weekend, helping my mother and seeing how tired she was working on two jobs, trying to keep me in school. I decided I cannot waste her money like this, and came out to work. I was lucky enough to get a job with a new printing shop that opened with a Negro in charge. He was a minister who came to Lexington, and also started a newspaper called *The Town Crier*. And this was a black newspaper that gave black news. Up until this time, the only news that was in the paper was in a little column called "The Colored Notes." And anything that you wanted the rest of Lexington to know, you would send this note down to the paper and there was a Negro lady who was in charge of it, and she would put it in this little column. And this is how black news was presented to black Lexington. I did not work as a reporter *per se* for the newspaper. I was the secretary. But I did learn to operate every piece of equipment there. Did do some reporting. Did do some advertising, getting advertisements. I learned all I possibly could about it. It also made me aware of how limited black America was within Lexington's society, Lexington's everyday working, just a part of Lexington. I still did not know in which direction I was going to go to try to make a change or try to even get involved. Still was just concerned, unhappy, wanting a change and not knowing how to go about getting the change. It was only in 1955, when my brother came back to Lexington from the service. He had married. And he and his wife decided that they were going to go to school on the G.I. Bill. I was working at one of the department stores at that particular time and decided that, "Hey, that's a sensible thing. I wasted my time. Why not go back to school with them?"

During the time that I was working at the department store, I started out being in charge of the stock room. And, as I mentioned to you before, that any job that I happen to go on, I try to learn as much as I possibly can about this job. I did watch

the buyer. She and I became very good friends. She was very helpful to the point that I did go to New York a number of times with her on buying trips. And when she chose to leave the department store and go to another one, there was an opening for a buyer. I was the most qualified for it, but could not get it because they did not have blacks working anywhere in any of the department stores except in the stock rooms, as maids, and elevator operators. The lady from the second floor decided that she would take over the first floor, which was lingerie and sportswear *et cetera*. And they wanted me to teach her what to do. I readily agreed to do this but with a title, even if it were a title that they could not make known, and more pay. And so I became the assistant buyer, and no one knew it but the manager, the buyer, and myself. But at least I had the feeling of knowing that I was qualified to get it and could do the job. I was able to help her to become a very good buyer on the floor.

At the time when we decided to go back to school, of course, I had to give up the job, and I have not regretted it, not one time. During this time, I decided, also, I would get involved with the NAACP here in Lexington. I knew about it all along, but I also knew that they were not doing anything to solve any of the many problems. And my sister-in-law and brother had their first baby during this time. And here was a new body going to grow up with the same limitations that I did, that their father did. And their mother, who came from South Carolina, was more involved with discrimination than even we here in Lexington. And I decided that there was no way I was going to sit still and let my nephew grow up under the same conditions and circumstances that I did.

I became a member of the organization and came right in wanting to do something. This took an awful long time because they were an organization that met, talked about situations, but really were not doing anything to make a change. And I think this was because they were not quite sure how they could go about making a change. As I mentioned to you before, that Lexington was not as bad as the far South, and not as good as the far North. So we were rather complacent. It was only after I had attended one of the national conventions that I was aware that something could be done.

I volunteered for a project to drive from New York back to Kentucky through Washington and Virginia, and try to stop at the various restaurants and hotels to be served. Now, when we talk

about Lexington not having open facilities, Lexington was not by itself. The whole United States was faced with this same problem. And my job was to stop and see if I could eat and be served, and all along the way I was refused. A number of places we were offered an opportunity to have a paper bag given to us through a side window or a back door and, of course, we refused them and left. There was another young lady and a gentleman with us. And we reported this. Then we were to fly back to New York. And this time when I came through I was to be in a fancy big car with a chauffeur, dressed in silk and furs and diamonds, and with something around my head that kind of represented the African look. And would you believe that every place we stopped we were served, simply because they thought they were denying service to an ambassador's wife or something. And this made me so angry that when I came back I decided, "No way am I going to sit still and let this go on. If the same person can change a look and get service, then I refuse to be denied service any longer because I happen to be black." And this is when I declared war on all segregation in Lexington, Kentucky. And they were very sorry that I so did this. I was elected president of the Lexington NAACP right after the convention, and . . .

Prof. GRAHAM: What year would that be?

Ms. GREVIOUS: It was 1957. At the same time that I was elected, I was coming out of college looking for a job. When I was a member in '55 or '56, I was on a negotiating team with the Fayette County School System for integrating the system. And it was even before they combined the two systems, the Fayette County and the city system, and they wanted to know the best way to integrate the school systems. And I had an opportunity to really see what the thinking was. Surprisingly enough, Lexington's educational bodies were not aware of the fantastic teachers they had in the black faculty. I had to point out to them that when they got a black teacher, especially during that time, they got the cream of the black society, of the black race, simply because there were no other jobs available for them. So your most qualified, your brightest black people, went into teaching. And this was not the case for other people, simply because there were other jobs open for them, and they chose the ones that were going to pay the most or give them an opportunity for more advancement. Also made the teachers realize that they were pretty special, because they had become complacent. The only thing that bothered me during this

whole time was that we did not have the support of other teachers or any other professional people in Lexington. And I guess I was aware that if you became too militant you could lose your job, and if this was your livelihood you had to think twice before you jumped in and tried to make a change, even if you were unhappy about what was going on. The negotiations went well, and many of the changes that we suggested were followed. And the schools did integrate smoothly, with a few teachers going into the white schools. Of course, there were no whites that came into the black schools during that time. They were really not quite ready for that.

We decided that the first thing that we needed to try to change in Lexington was job opportunities. We began to meet with the grocery stores. The grocery stores that were in the black communities, their whole livelihood depended on the black population. And, as we talked to these men, we were told by them that they were doing all that they could for the blacks. They had someone who was cleaning the floors and washing the food and stacking the boxes and what have you. And that was all they intended to do. And I remember telling them that if that was all they intended to do, they might as well plan to move, because we were going to see to it if they were going to make their living from the blacks, then they were going to have to offer some opportunities for black people to have jobs. Many, many meetings were held with these people without them making any change. And so we decided in October that we were going to boycott two of the grocery stores in the black community, one on Third Street that covered Aspendale, and the one on Georgetown Street that covered the western end of town.

Prof. GRAHAM: Excuse me. Were these national chains?

Ms. GREVIOUS: Neither of them was. We felt that we would wait and tackle A & P and Kroger's later, because even though they did get quite a bit of business from the blacks, these groceries that were in the black neighborhoods had to depend entirely upon black customers. And so this was the reason we chose them. We decided to boycott with picket lines on one Saturday in October. That Saturday morning when we woke up, it was raining cats and dogs. And I decided, "Well, we'll just call it off." And I began to call some of the people who were on the first shift of picketing, and they informed me that they were not fair-weather workers, that if it was raining and I wanted them out there, we would be

out there. And we walked in the rain for the longest time. All the signs, naturally, were ruined with the rain hitting them, because we didn't have cellophane to put over them.

We were disturbed later on during the day when the manager came out and told me, "I thought you all weren't supposed to be here." Of course, I wanted to know where he received the information. It seems that one of the ministers had told him that he would see to it that we were not on the picket line. I told him that they did not have the power to tell us whether we were going to come or not. And so we walked more. I did find out later that this had been promised to him. I went to the ministerial meeting on a Monday. I was teaching at Kentucky Village at the time. I asked if I could have off to come in during their meeting. They met every Monday. At that particular time they were meeting at Pleasant Green. I went to the meeting and asked them just why this was being done? I told them that we needed their cooperation. In all of the other cities throughout the South and most in the North, that the ministers were leading the movement, but that they were not. I had assumed the responsibility because no one else did. I did not feel that they needed to undermine us; that until they came to the meeting and made themselves known, they did not have the authority to speak for us. We would be on the picket line. But to soothe them, I also thanked them for their announcements, because this is the way you reached your black community, through your churches, and we needed them to give our announcements. There were a few ministers who were sympathetic, who were willing to help, and were shocked that a particular minister had promised the manager that we would not be there.

We picketed for about a month without any change. He did not give in and neither did we. Unfortunately, there was still a number of the blacks who shopped and crossed our picket lines, but there were hundreds of them that did not. The managers, in order to put us on the spot, tried to get us to send them someone for the job. And I had to inform them that we were not in the employment business, that we wanted the opportunities to be available, and it was their responsibility to find their help. And I was aware exactly of what was going on, that if we had sent someone in there and it did not work out, then, of course, we could always be blamed for the failure. And I told the group that if they chose the wrong one, then they had to live with the fact

that they had chosen the wrong person.

After many weeks we were able to get the managers to agree to hire a black for the cashier, because this was the main job we were after. And we found it so very, very amusing that each one of the two groceries chose people who were unqualified. Even we could see that they were unqualified. But they were people who had crossed our picket line continuously. This did not matter to us. All we wanted was that the job be open and someone be given the job. Of course, as the months went on, they did hire them in other neighborhoods that had groceries in predominantly black neighborhoods, and we began to feel good about ourselves.

Then we decided that we needed to branch out, and we spent an awful lot of money downtown. We needed to have some people working in the department stores, selling. We met with the managers of every department store on Main Street. And every one of them gave us the same story, with the exception of a few, that they would like to do it, but they didn't want to be the first one to do it. And if the other managers would do it, then they would be willing to do it. Which was really a cop-out. The only exception that we had was Graves, Cox. Graves, Cox did have a black man who was selling on the floor every now and then. He was not a regular sales person, but he did have the authority to sell when some of his friends came in.

We decided one Christmas that we were not going to buy anything downtown, that we were going to call a city-wide boycott of all of the stores on Main Street. At this time, CORE had organized in Lexington, and the two organizations joined together for manpower. The president of CORE was the vice-president of the NAACP, and I was the vice-president of CORE. So it was a two-way organization where we had the manpower for both. And we walked the picket line in the snow.

Prof. GRAHAM: Excuse me. In the future someone may not know what CORE is.

Ms. GREVIOUS: Congress of Racial Equality. An organization that was started in New York and was basically responsible for many of the sit-ins that went across the country and down South. We walked the picket lines, we met with the managers. It was quite successful with the exception that many of the blacks were slipping in the back door on Vine Street, so that we could not see them. No one was going past our picket line, but they were coming in. And sometimes when I'd walk though the store I'd see

them and wonder, "How in the heck did they get past?" Because nobody was telling me that someone had crossed the picket line.

The manager of a department store one day called me in and he wished us luck, because he was one of those that wanted to do it, but definitely did not want to be the first one. And he says, "But Mrs. Grevious, the only thing that bothers me is the fact that there are still blacks coming in my back door." And he said, "Even though I want their money, I'm going to take their money, I do not appreciate them crossing your picket line. That I would feel much better if the pressure was put on me one hundred percent and none of them came in." So we made this known through the churches the following Sunday, and were able to get the ministers to talk about it, with the exception of a few ministers who were responsible for going in the back door. And those ministers who were behind us, seventy-five percent, made mention of the fact at their ministerial meeting that this was going on. So the next time we did have the picket line, and we started it right after Thanksgiving with the intention of going all the way up through Christmas, we did not have anyone going in the back door. So it was one hundred percent this one Saturday that no blacks bought anything on Main Street. That Monday the managers called me, and we began to sit down and talk. We told them the very same thing we had told the grocery stores, that they had to find their own help, and they began to do this. Before Christmas was over you saw a sprinkling of blacks in the department stores. This was the beginning of the breakdown of discrimination in hiring policies in the stores.

In 1985, I go into the department stores and it looks like the beginning of 1960. I see very few blacks in the employment. Which means to me, that they have begun to go back the way they were. They have a token number of blacks working, hoping that this is going to keep everybody off of them. I hope that those young people who are officers of the NAACP and of CORE now, would do what needs to be done to make the managers realize that if they are thinking percentage-wise, they do not have the right percentage of blacks working, and that the change will take place.

After we had success there, the two groups decided, "Now, we're tired of eating at the little short lunch counters. We need to be able to spend our money wherever we want to spend it." We chose the ten-cent stores because this is where we spent most of

our money. And each one of the ten-cent stores had a little lunch counter on the side where blacks were supposed to either stand, or maybe they had one or two little benches there where you could sit. But you could not sit at the nice, long, clean counters where the white customers could. And this is where there was an advantage of working with CORE, because it had more white members than the NAACP. We used this format, where a black and a white would go into this ten-cent store and sit down. The black would order and, of course, they would be refused. The white would order something where the sandwich would come in two pieces. Most of the time they had ordered a club sandwich. And they would share their sandwich with their black partner right next to them. This blew the manager's mind. He went stark raving mad the first Saturday this was done. But nothing they could do about it at the time. They began to recognize our white partners, and so they stopped serving them, and we just sat there. Now this meant that while we were sitting there, they could not even serve other customers. And it was cutting down on their business. We had an arrangement with the police department, Chief E. Carroll Hale, that the only time he would arrest us would be when a manager took out a warrant, and none of them did. He had instructed his policemen that unless we became disorderly or caused problems, they were to leave us alone. It was a hands-off policy, and we really appreciated it. It kept Lexington from having many of the problems that the other cities had with the police brutality, with the hose, with the dogs, or what have you. Even though the times were hard, we did not get what we wanted without struggling for it. We still were not faced with many, many of the problems that they were faced with deeper South.

Prof. GRAHAM: Excuse me. Can you tell me what year, about?

Mrs. GREVIOUS: This was in 1960-'61-'62, along in that time '58-'59, right along in that time. Dates are very fuzzy for me. So much went on at that time, but it was in that wide range of time.

The only time that we had problems was one Saturday when we had an awful lot of young ladies at Woolworth's sitting along the counter. And there was a group of white youths that came in that tried to set fire to the hair of the girls sitting there. Our policy was that there would always be someone walking along behind as a customer, to observe what was going on, so that if we spotted anything that might cause problems, we would pull them out immediately. Fortunately for us there happened to be a

policeman in the place at the time, and I immediately got him, and he ushered them out, which kept some young lady, or a lot of young ladies, from having permanent damage in the head.

The only other thing was one time we were at another business, and we had been fortunate enough the week before to get inside of the lunch counter before he was aware we were there. And the waitress turned over a whole thing of grape soda all over us and got our clothes—they were ruined. The next week, when we got there, he had put a chain around the front entrance of the lunch counter. He sat on a stool, and he would open the chain and let the white customers go in. Of course, when we got ready to go in the chain was closed. We were standing there. It was my turn to be in front of the line. He had the chain. He took the chain. He just kept swinging it and hitting me on the leg. The men in the group were terribly upset about it. They were beginning to lose their composure, and they said, "No way," you know. So we had to send them off of the picket line because I think that would have been our first fatality. That they were just angry enough to have lynched him at that particular time. My legs were getting sore, and I was getting angry, and I stood there and looked at him and sang *Yield Not to Temptation* for three hours. I did not know that I knew every verse of *Yield Not to Temptation*, and some I made up. The only thing about it was I was not aware of the damage that was being done to the nerve of my leg, and for about three years after that I did have to wear Ace bandages on my legs to control the pain as a result of the chain hitting it so long. But we were able to get them to open up the lunch counter. Would you believe that after going through all of this, that it took quite some time for the blacks to go to eat? I think one reason was that we were disappointed in the quality of the food! It looked good, but it certainly didn't taste good after we got down there and began to eat it!