THE ALEXANDRIA ORAL HISTORY CENTER
OFFICE OF HISTORIC ALEXANDRIA
CITY OF ALEXANDRIA

Oral History Interview

with

Veronica Yolanda Greene-Pace

Interviewer: *Kerry James Reed*

Narrator: *Veronica Yolanda Greene-Pace*

Location of Interview:
Charles Houston Recreation Center, 901 Wythe St, Alexandria, VA, 22314

Date of Interview: *10/31/2024*

Transcriber: *Kerry James Reed*

Summary:
Veronica Greene-Pace shares a remembrance concerning her upbring and memories of Colored Rosemont. She also discusses the stereotypes concerning Black neighborhoods that are perpetuated in American society, her father's role as a community leader, and her own experience with Activism and Education

Notes:

Table of Contents and Keywords

General	Childhood; Colored Rosemont; Family; Community; Black History; Eminent Domain; Gentrification; History; Museum; Education; Segregation; Integration; Civil Rights; Value Systems; Flora
People	Veronica Greene-Pace; Vanessa Greene; John Green; Tammy Greene; Robin Greene; Stanley Greene; John Henry Greene; Carrie Greene; Dr. Oswald Durant; Douglass

	Bass; Howard Bass; Daisy Cross; Janie Worthy; George Carter; Robert Greene; Eva Greene; Bertha McCreary; Oliver Burke; Robert Burke; Haywood Cross; Earl Lloyd; Audrey Davis; Parker Waterson; Maria Edwards; Deborah Turner; Alice Carter; Martha Miller; Howard Randolph Allen; Dr. James Nabrit
Places	Rosemont; Colored Rosemont; Wythe St; Madison St; N Payne St; Payne St; West St; N West St; Fayette St; Pendelton St; Oronoco St; Parker-Gray; Parker-Gray High School; Charles Houston Rec Center; Charles Houston Elementary School; Johnson Swimming Pool; Watson's Store; Santullo's; N Alfred St; Queen St; Regal Restaurant; Parker-Gray Elementary School; Black History Museum; Orange County, VA; Martha Miller's Kindergarten

Veronica Greene-Pace: *[00:00:01]* My name is Veronica Greene-Pace. Well, my full legal name is Veronica Yolanda Greene-Pace. I was born December 22nd, 1946. I am 77 years old today, which is the 12th of June 2024. *[00:00:25][23.9]*

Kerry James Reed: *[00:00:28]* And we are at the Charles Houston Rec Center. *[00:00:29][1.4]*

Veronica Greene-Pace: *[00:00:29]* At the Charles Houston Rec Center. Sorry. *[00:00:31][1.3]*

Kerry James Reed: *[00:00:31]* It's okay. So, it's been a pleasure getting to know you over these past several weeks and months Mrs. Greene-Pace. I know you have a remembrance prepared for us. Would you care to read it? *[00:00:42][10.5]*

Veronica Greene-Pace: *[00:00:42]* I would love to read it. *[00:00:43][1.0]*

Kerry James Reed: *[00:00:43]* Please. *[00:00:43][0.0]*

Veronica Greene-Pace: *[00:00:45]* As I stated, my name is Veronica Yolanda Greene-Pace. And growing up in Colored Rosemont, my nickname was "Landa." So, everyone that grew up with me knows me as Landa, which is an abbreviation or a shortened pronunciation of Yolanda. I was born at home at 1312 Wythe St, Alexandria, Virginia on December 22nd, 1946. Two of my cousins and my two brothers, Stanley and John Oswald, were also born there. Home births were not unusual then. Doctor Oswald Durant delivered all of us. Doctor Durant was one of the several

African American doctors in a strictly segregated Alexandria. Doctor Durant was of Haitian descent. His home/office still stands on Pendleton St. There were several African-American dentists, lawyers, barbers, hairstylists-- we called them beauticians back then-- taxicab company owners and a Black owned pharmacy, and it was commonly referred to as Miss Blues B-l-u-e-s. The pharmacy was located at N Alfred St and Queen St, as well as the other aforementioned professions were not located in Colored Rosemont but provided the services we needed. The Colored Rosemont I remember growing up there consisted mainly of home owners and a few rental properties. Most of the homes were brick construction with front and back yards. We were a close knit community; some with multi-generational households. Colored Rosemont boundaries for the residences were: the 1300 block of Wythe St, the 1300 block of Madison St, 600 and 700 blocks of N Payne St, 600 and 700 blocks of N West St. We were raised by dedicated working dads and stay at home moms, for the most part. Our dads worked for the federal government or held municipal jobs and whatever jobs that would support our families. Mr. Bass, our next door neighbor, worked for the city of Alexandria and owned and operated his own trash and hauling business. God, family, work, and education were the bedrock values of our community. As I observed the demolition of Colored Rosemont, I remembered the younger men gathering with the elders in the evening at a cement stump in front of the Cross residents at 1321 Wythe St, trading stories, imparting wisdom and discussing world and local events. Mrs. Daisy Cross had a beautiful Pink Rambling Rose bush in the corner of the front yard that bloomed profusely all summer long. The Morrisons on the corner of West St and Wythe St, had a majestic Crape Myrtle with vibrant blooms. The Carrie household across from 1312 Wythe St, my home, had beautiful Hydrangea shrubs. The Major home next door had Rose of Sharon Blooms. Mrs. Janie Worthy, who resided in the 600 block of N West St, was famous for her diverse collection of flowers and her substantial flower bed. She shared cuttings with my mother and my mother would plant them in our flower bed. My mother had great success with her roses that would bloom every year, amazingly blood red in color. I remember the glider on the Waterson's porch and their regal Great Dane named Fox and his deep bark. And the latest music emanating from the Carter's backyard. The Carters resided in the 600 block of N West St. In summertime, we always could hear the latest music, George Carter would always insist that he had the latest hits, and we enjoyed it on the weekends. So many, many memories. We had a grocery store, too. Watson's grocery store, located at the corner of N Payne St and Madison St. My parents would share stories about rationing after the war, World War II, and how they were able to get some provisions and credit at Watson's store. My parents,

John and Carrie Greene, and my aunt and uncle, Uncle Robert and Aunt Eva shared 1312 Wythe St for a brief period of time after the end of the war, when my father was honorably discharged from the US Navy and my Uncle Robert from the US Army. Regal's restaurant, located on the corner of N Henry and Madison Street, was also owned, and operated by the Watson family. We walked to the schools; Charles Houston Elementary School, previously named Parker-Gray [elementary school], in the 900 block of Wythe St and Parker-Gray High School in the 1200 block of Madison St across the street from Watson Store. Wythe St from N West St, and the 600 and 700 hundred block of N Payne St were not paved until about the middle of the 1950s. So, walking after a rainy day meant we had to walk around to Madison St to arrive at Charles Houston School without having mud on our shoes. After school, we would buy treats at Watson's store. For example, penny candy, pickles, peppermint sticks, sodas, etc. On the weekend, we redeemed empty soda bottles to buy more candy or cookies. We celebrated birthdays, new births, graduations, and the holidays. We mourned as a community when families experienced death. There were a few occasions when the wakes for the deceased were held in the home. Mr. Thompson, in the 1300 block of Wythe St and Ms. Bertha McCreary held their loved ones wake at home. Children were allowed to view the remains after all the adults. Funny story here, when we were allowed to view Mr. Thompson's body, Sunny Bass, our next door neighbor yelled, "he moved!" and we ran out in terror, nearly taking the gate off the hinges. We laughed today at that memory. Trick or treat for Halloween was a fun time in Colored Rosemont. The treats and the camaraderie, oh I spelled that wrong, were generous. Summertime in Colored Rosemont was a second best. Playing outside all day, endless rounds of game like red light-green light, Simon says, tag, dodgeball, touch football, and particularly softball on Parker-Gray's Athletic Field, skating (and we had metal roller skates), running to the ice cream truck. We loved walking along the railroad tracks on N Fayette Street to Johnson Swimming Pool. The swimming pool was named for the Johnsons brothers, who were drowned in the Potomac River because Black residents were barred from the other local pools. Nonetheless, we enjoyed summer days at the pool, just a quarter for admission back then. The summer pool days culminated in an extravagant water show featuring talented divers and syncopated [synchronized] water acts. Now, only the tower near Braddock Road Metro Station serves as a reminder of where the Johnson Pool was once located. The first step in eradicating Colored Rosemont came in the early 1960s. My dad, Oliver and Robert Burke and Haywood Cross and other members of our community attended City Council meetings to voice opposition to tearing down homes in Colored Rosemont to build public housing units. They waged a courageous battle, but

the city imposed eminent domain and gutted the majority of Colored Rosemont, Parker-Gray High School, Watson's Store and the Watson's beautiful home behind the store on N Payne Street. All the homes in the 1700 block of Payne St, most of the homes in the 1300 block of Madison St. And the majority of the odd number homes in the 1300 block of Wythe St were taken for that public housing project. So, now more of Colored Rosemont is being eradicated. Demolition of 1321, 1325 and 1327 Wythe Street, the 700 block of N West Street and the remainder of the 1300 block of Madison St has started. I have to wait a minute cause I'm getting emotional. *[00:10:51][605.5]*

Kerry James Reed: *[00:10:51]* Of course, take all the time you need. *[00:10:51][0.4]*

Veronica Greene-Pace: *[00:11:18]* The African American churches, Charles Houston Recreation Center and the Black History Museum are the only indications of a Black presence in this section of Alexandria. The Black History Museum expanded what was the library for Black residents formerly named the Robert Robinson Library remains. There's a statue of Earl Lloyd, the first African-American to play a game in the NBA. I don't know if that's correct or not, its in the lobby of the Charles Houston Recreation Center, and there is a wall at the center lined with notable African-Americans. But Colored Rosemont has gone. Maybe there will be a historical marker. A historical sign to indicate we were there. Soon the physical location will be eradicated thanks to swift demolition methodology. For the residents who are still alive, we only see each other at funerals now and discuss how we should have a reunion. It rings hollow now that the eradication of Colored Rosemount will be completed soon, and some new development in its place. The end. *[00:13:26][127.9]*

Kerry James Reed: *[00:13:28]* Thank you so much for that remembrance, Mrs. Green-Pace, that was extremely powerful. Thank you so much for sharing your memories. So, you're the only one of any interviewees that I've had that felt the need to write a remembrance. Why did you feel that it was important to do so? *[00:13:47][19.6]*

Veronica Greene-Pace: *[00:13:50]* I can't explain it, except that it, for me, it's spiritual. I think I owe it to my parents. And the rest of the residents, you know, the elders. It has to be recorded. It has to be somewhere. *[00:14:08][18.3]*

Kerry James Reed: *[00:14:09]* Yeah. *[00:14:09][0.0]*

Veronica Greene-Pace: *[00:14:09]* And, my brother Stanley and I talk about it a lot. It's just so painful that, we were already marginalized because of segregation. And then to see people who come into, you know, because of the gentrification, because, you know, this area is transitory because of the military presence here in this area and because of commerce, business. There's a lot of turnover in terms of residents, you know, new ones come all the time. And when we are in where we used to live or where we used to matriculate, we are viewed as interlopers, outsiders, and that's offensive. So, I guess I was offended. No, let me rephrase it. I am offended and I am hurt. When I look around our tight knit community. And, they just disregard it or resent it, if you will. That's how I interpret it. So, I had to put something down, I had to. And because Audrey Davis, the director of the museum, has done several outreaches in terms of asking the community to have something in the library, in the museum, that documents, you know, the African American presence here in Alexandria. And years ago I gave her my yearbook, and that's been digitized. And for this project I have also submitted a lot of photos and some relics. My father, I've shared this before, after World War II for the G.I. program, it was hard for the Black veterans to avail themselves of that. But my dad did, and another one of our neighbors, Mr. Oliver Burke, and both of them went to, I used to know the name, the watchmaking school. So my dad, under the G.I. Bill, went to watchmaking school for additional money to, you know, help raise the family. And just that we are full participants in this American experience and this American democracy, in this society and this culture, and to be marginalized and to live under American apartheid, if you will, which is segregation. It has to be well documented because it's been left out of the history books. It's been omitted or it's been glossed over or it's been, distorted, if you will. So, I guess I feel this is my contribution for that correction and to say that yes, we were here. *[00:17:12][183.1]*

Kerry James Reed: *[00:17:13]* Yeah, absolutely. So, how long ago did you give Audrey Davis the yearbook to be to be digitized? *[00:17:22][8.9]*

Veronica Greene-Pace: *[00:17:22]* Oh, gosh. 4 or 5 years ago. *[00:17:24][1.9]*

Kerry James Reed: *[00:17:24]* 4 or 5 years ago. Ok. *[00:17:24][0.0]*

Veronica Greene-Pace: *[00:17:26]* At least. If not longer. *[00:17:26][0.2]*

Kerry James Reed: *[00:17:27]* So, how long, then, have you been advocating for some sort of, you know, recognition that Colored Rosemont was here and was thriving? *[00:17:34][7.2]*

Veronica Greene-Pace: *[00:17:36]* Long time because, I can't give you a date, put it that way. But it's always it's in my DNA, you know? So, every opportunity that we have, we try to say, 'hey, we are here, we were here and know you're getting rid of us again,' you know? So that is, what has happened to Colored Rosemont, as you probably already know this, it's happened wherever there has been a Black settlement and or community. I just recently found out about 4 or 5 years ago that, I kind of knew it, but I didn't know the name of it; where the Dulles airport is, that was a black settlement also. It was called Dillard community or... Anyway, the name was Dillard. Black people own property there. They lived there, they thrived there. But again, they wanted to build the airport. And, you know, it goes on and on. I remember when Southwest, Washington, D.C. was a black community, and then it was redeveloped because some of the houses were dilapidated. They were, you know, substandard, many of them did not have indoor plumbing. So, you know, this whole thing about, urban development, urban renewal, and it always seems to be, it is documented, it does happen predominantly in communities of Black people. Georgetown [Washington D.C.] was another one. And, you know, we can go on and on. Seneca Village, which is now Central Park, and on and on. *[00:19:00][84.1]*

Kerry James Reed: *[00:19:01]* Absolutely. So, you mentioned during the remembrance that your father and I think you said your Uncle Robert as well as Oliver Burke attended... *[00:19:11][9.8]*

Veronica Greene-Pace: *[00:19:12]* No, no, Oliver Burke and daddy went to watchmaking school. *[00:19:15][3.9]*

Kerry James Reed: *[00:19:16]* Ok. *[00:19:16][0.0]*

Veronica Greene-Pace: *[00:19:16]* Uncle Robert went to tailoring school. So that's how he took advantage of the G.I. Bill, for further education. *[00:19:22][6.2]*

Kerry James Reed: *[00:19:23]* So, it was your father and who else then went to the meetings at city council, I presume to try and protest? *[00:19:28][4.7]*

Veronica Greene-Pace: *[00:19:29]* Ok, I have submitted this. It's my dad, John Henry Green, Hayward Cross, Oliver Burke and Robert nicknamed "Tip" Burke. They were brothers, and they lived the a 700 block of N West Street. *[00:19:48][19.2]*

Kerry James Reed: *[00:19:49]* Ok. So, when your father was attending these meetings to try to prevent the eminent domain that was going on. Did he talk to you about that, what was happening? *[00:19:59][10.5]*

Veronica Greene-Pace: *[00:20:00]* Oh, yeah. Well, he didn't talk to us, you know? We knew it was going on because, they claimed they don't have any record, but you know like I know that whenever there is any project, you have to do a public notice. There's a public notice process. So, they probably got public notice and probably got individual letters about what was going to be proposed for, you know, eminent domain, you know, they wanted to take the whole Colored Rosemont, but they substantially just gouged it out. So, in that respect, as children you hear what's going on. And these things were discussed in our household, and we could see, you know, the distress that our parents were under. You know, 'why our neighborhood? Why pick our neighborhood? We are fine.' And they had a false predicate that our neighborhood was dilapidated or diminished, and that was a lie. And they went ahead anyway. So, it was a great defeat for my dad and the men in our neighborhood. *[00:21:05][65.0]*

Kerry James Reed: *[00:21:06]* Yeah, absolutely. So, you've mentioned to me previously how you believe Colored Rosemont defied both contemporary and, you know, current stereotypes about Black neighborhoods. Could you speak a little bit more to that? *[00:21:19][12.8]*

Veronica Greene-Pace: *[00:21:20]* Absolutely. All over this country, Blacks have been able to carve out an existence, despite what I call American apartheid. And the white supremacy narrative is that, and I heard this growing up: we were less smart, we were dirty, and you got to watch them because they're criminals. Some of the narrative that we're hearing today, they're dirty. They're the criminals. And it's a lie. All over this country there have been Black neighborhoods, in Washington, D.C. it's called Ivory Coast. And that's where Black professionals live, you know, the doctors and lawyers. And then, I don't know a lot about the history, but I know it was some battle then too, to find a place where, you know, we could have community. And the media is responsible, in my opinion. And it's

documented now that the narrative of us being less than is promulgated by the media. And that is so untrue. You can go to any state in this country and there have been substantial Black communities, tightknit, some more affluent than others. But we've always had that sense of community, and the narrative is always trying to push the stereotype or the tropes that, no disrespect to you, that some whites are just comfortable with. Because that's the purpose of the narrative of white supremacy. *[00:23:06][106.3]*

Kerry James Reed: *[00:23:07]* Absolutely. So, speaking of like defying the stereotypes of being dirty, uneducated, and things like that, one of the things I thought was very interesting in your remembrance was all the vegetation and all the fauna that was present in the Rosemont. You mentioned, you know, Hyperneas and it seemed like everybody had their own garden with different types of flowers. *[00:23:30][23.2]*

Veronica Greene-Pace: *[00:23:31]* And that's, I won't say it's a southern thing, but we, the country as a whole, until, you know, up until about, what, the early 19th century was agrarian, you know. And some of our neighbors had chickens when I was little and everybody had a garden. So, people who migrated to this area from the South, they brought those skills and that, what do you call it, value system with them. You grow your own. And with African-American women and men, having a beautiful flower garden and being able to grow stuff is just a badge of honor. And, you know, what they call it? Bragging rights. Well, you know, but everybody shared that, you know. My mother had a cousin in Washington, DC, and they both, and I can't do it, could grow the most beautiful Begonias, these house plants. So, it just wasn't outside, it was house plants also. So, you know, that was just how we grew up you know, you're going to have flowers, you're going to have vegetables, you know. *[00:24:43][72.0]*

Kerry James Reed: *[00:24:45]* That's so fascinating. So, where did your parents, come from? Did they, how long were they in Colored Rosemont before you were born? *[00:24:54][9.0]*

Veronica Greene-Pace: *[00:24:55]* Not long. My father had a sister that lived at 1312 first. And then after the war, they were building what they called then the War Department. They were building it up. And the Pentagon was a place that you could find employment. And it was not only blacks. A lot of people migrated here because they were building up this great War Department, which later became the Department of Defense. And when my father and my uncle started there, they started as GS-1

[General Schedule] messengers. And daddy said that when they started working there, they were still building it out. And I worked for the Department of the Army for 35, almost 36 years myself, and most of it was at the Pentagon. And the Pentagon, if you ever been there, of course it's five sided and it has five rings. A, B, C, and the, you know, the further that you go out the wider the ring becomes, and daddy said you could stand at the A ring and see all the way to the E ring because they were building it as, you know, they were working there. So, that was the attraction for a lot of people because of jobs. And, because it was Defense Department, they were hoping that they would get a fair chance of getting a good job. So, the war ended. Aunt Mariam was already here. They migrated here for jobs. So, I was born in '46, my parents got married in '41, and daddy was still in the Navy or had just, I'm getting my dates mixed up, but I know they were here in the early, right after the war. I would say right after the war. Because I was born in 46. *[00:26:49][113.8]*

Kerry James Reed: *[00:26:50]* Ok. So, before they migrated to Rosemont for the jobs in the War Department, where were your parents from? *[00:26:59][9.3]*

Veronica Greene-Pace: *[00:27:00]* Orange County, Virginia. *[00:27:00][0.7]*

Kerry James Reed: *[00:27:03]* Orange County, Virginia. *[00:27:03][0.8]*

Veronica Greene-Pace: *[00:27:04]* And that's Charlottesville to the west, Fredericksburg to the east. And it's like right, kind of like in the middle, sort of like equidistant. So, if you're in Orange County, and my mother was closer to what they would call the limits, the city limits. And I think Orange County is divided into five districts, and I think my mom was in the Raleigh district of Orange County. My dad was in Barboursville County. Barboursville district, excuse me, of Orange County, and he grew up with my great grandfather. And his descendants all had property that is called route 20, the old Constitution Route. And it's, you know, lots of Civil War markers, and matter of fact, on the way to Route 20, Route 3, is the Chancellorsville Battlefield. So, it's a very historic area where they grew up and where they were from. *[00:28:13][69.2]*

Kerry James Reed: *[00:28:14]* So, did your father and mother pick up a lot of the, you know, gardening and outdoorsman skills from their parents in Barboursville or Raleigh? *[00:28:23][9.2]*

Veronica Greene-Pace: *[00:28:24]* Yeah. Orange County is the overall, and again it's five districts. And my father was west of where my mother grew up. On the western end of Orange County. *[00:28:35][11.4]*

Kerry James Reed: *[00:28:37]* Absolutely. So, you mentioned that, fairly early on that god, family, education, and hard work were values that your parents tried to instill in you. *[00:28:45][7.9]*

Veronica Greene-Pace: *[00:28:45]* That was the community. *[00:28:46][1.4]*

Kerry James Reed: *[00:28:47]* That was the community. Where did you all go to church? *[00:28:50][3.0]*

Veronica Greene-Pace: *[00:28:51]* Right at 507 North Alfred Street, Russell Temple Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, CME. The Methodist Church, of course you know, John Wesley is the founder and then, Richard Allen, because Blacks although we were enslaved, they would allow us to attend church, but we would have to sit separate, of course. Richard Allen and 17... I want to say 1786, founded the A.M.E. church, African Methodist Episcopal Church. Then there's the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church and then there is the ME church, Methodist Episcopal. The Christian Methodist Episcopal Church was founded in 1870 in Jacksonville, Tennessee. And it was initially known as the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church. But after the 1954 Brown v. Board of Education decision by the Supreme Court, it changed from colored to Christian Methodist Episcopal Church. *[00:30:04][73.1]*

Kerry James Reed: *[00:30:07]* Do you have any memories of practices that your family would have every Sunday related to the church, like did you attend Bible school every Sunday? *[00:30:17][9.8]*

Veronica Greene-Pace: *[00:30:18]* Sunday school every Sunday, you were not going to be at home. Sunday school, church, afternoon programs, if there were any. And we would celebrate church anniversaries, homecoming choir anniversaries and just celebrations and the meals afterwards, the great meals that we would have at church. And then we'd have, my mother cooked every day, three meals a day, seven days a week. And the big meals were on the weekend because daddy had more time, because he wasn't rushing to another third or fourth job. And Sunday meals were just the absolute best. *[00:31:07][49.5]*

Kerry James Reed: *[00:31:09]* Absolutely. So, a recurring theme that gets brought up in interviews with yourself and your siblings is your mother's cooking, and it's reached almost mythical status in my mind. *[00:31:18][9.8]*

Veronica Greene-Pace: *[00:31:19]* It is throughout the family and, you know, my cousins and other people, Aunt Carrie this and that. And my mother can make the best biscuits, the best rolls, and I mean the fried chicken. My mother was an excellent cook and she also canned, and she just knew how to do it. And my father was a great provider. And he provided and my mother made sure, my dad made sure we had plenty, and my mother fixed it. *[00:31:45][26.4]*

Kerry James Reed: *[00:31:45]* Absolutely. Do you have a favorite dish or meal that your mother prepared growing up? *[00:31:51][5.4]*

Veronica Greene-Pace: *[00:31:51]* I think my favorite is the Sunday meal. And they always make fun of, you know, Blacks and fried chicken, but her fried chicken, her hot rolls, particularly on Sundays. Fried chicken, hot rolls, candied yams, macaroni and cheese. And when it got really hot, we had homemade ice cream. And Father's Day is coming up and Father's Day, it's hard for me. And my dad's favorite ice cream was peach. And my mother's, favorite homemade ice cream was banana. And my memories in the summertime, the girls would start, I don't know if you know anything about making home churned ice cream. It's, when you first start, because it's a wood container, and then you put a stainless steel inside the container, and you put ice and rock salt around that, and then the batter would go inside the stainless steel container, and it's an instrument. I can't think of the name right now. And you would turn it. And the harder it got to turn meant that the ice cream was hardening. So, that was kind of a fun thing. The girls would start out and then my brothers would take over and when they were younger, if it got too hard for them, then daddy would take over. And that was the best summer, you know, getting that homemade ice cream. *[00:33:16][84.9]*

Kerry James Reed: *[00:33:16]* Absolutely. So, throughout our conversation, there's been a recurring idea of self-sufficiency, I guess you could say. Was that idea taught in the home, or was it just something you naturally observed and just felt within the community? *[00:33:36][19.4]*

Veronica Greene-Pace: *[00:33:36]* No, that was taught. You stand on your own. You work hard for what you get. There was only one incident that I can remember, and, Stanley and others can back me up. If the police ever come into our neighborhood, it was a domestic incident. And everybody went to work. Most of the moms stayed home to raise the children. And the value system was there. You work, and that's how you get what you need. And if you had any left over, you could get what you want. So, that, you know, it was concrete. I mean, to us, any other value is foreign. *[00:34:16][40.3]*

Kerry James Reed: *[00:34:19]* Absolutely. So, your father seemed like he was a leader within the community of Colored Rosemont. *[00:34:26][7.6]*

Veronica Greene-Pace: *[00:34:27]* Yes, he was. And then our older neighbor, who was very generous, because when we were really little my dad didn't have a good running car. And Mr. Parker Waterson worked for, it was Norton's Rendering Plant that used to be down on the river. I don't know if anybody has bought that up in previous conversations. And one time, my dad took us down there and we saw them take this, it was a horse or a mule, and it had these giant vats, and they would put these big animals in it, and it was a rendering plant. And the byproducts would be, you know, for whatever, dog food, whatever the other products were. And Mr. Parker Waterson worked there, and he always had a car because he had steady income and he could apply for a loan and get a car. He always kept the car. And my father looked up to him because that was like having Grioles [?] or elders in your neighborhood. And Mr. Robert Cross, who was a neighbor to Mr. Waterson and that masculine leadership role was what we grew up with. And my father had grown up with it, with his father. So, it was just natural for us that these men were going to take care of their families. And they also took care of the neighborhood. And it used to be another store where the Braddock Road Metro is, before they reconfigured, it was just a corner store there. And it was, we called him Roy, I don't know what his real name was, older white guy. He had a store there, and in summertime he would sell melons, cantaloupe, watermelon. And some of the older Black guys would come in the middle of the night and steal them. And then, if you could hear them, the men in the neighborhood would, you know, yell at them. So, one night, I'll never forget this, my father was a huntsmen, I mean, sportsman. He loved all hunting, fishing, he liked all of that. So, this had been going on all summer. So, my father stayed up, and then he saw them running up the street, running up Wythe st with the melons. And my father took the shotgun and just shot

into the air and watermelons and melons went everywhere. And of course, the neighbors had to clean it up, but never had a problem after that. So, I bring that up to say that our neighborhoods were protected also by the men. So, they were leaders and protectors. *[00:37:21][174.3]*

Kerry James Reed: *[00:37:23]* So, I think you said it was, Mr. Douglas Bass who owned the hauling and trucking, was it? Or? *[00:37:29][5.7]*

Veronica Greene-Pace: *[00:37:30]* Trash collection and hauling *[00:37:31][0.8]*

Kerry James Reed: *[00:37:32]* Trash collection and hauling business. *[00:37:32][0.0]*

Veronica Greene-Pace: *[00:37:35]* He had two trucks. *[00:37:35][0.3]*

Kerry James Reed: *[00:37:35]* Were there lots of Black business owners in the neighborhood of Colored Rosemont. *[00:37:38][2.9]*

Veronica Greene-Pace: *[00:37:39]* He was the only one that I remember having. *[00:37:42][2.8]*

Kerry James Reed: *[00:37:43]* Ok. *[00:37:43][0.0]*

Veronica Greene-Pace: *[00:37:45]* But it was one lady, Ms. Alice Carter, she sold dinners. That house is still there, it's been modified, in the 600 block of N West St. She sold dinners just about every day. Chicken, fish, chitlins. So, you know, you could always go to Ms. Alice for, I forgot, I don't know how much she charged for her dinners. My mother cooked every day and she didn't think anybody's cooking could match hers. So, nobody was going to buy a dinner from Ms. Alice. Absolutely. So, she had like, I guess that would be her side hustle, if you will. *[00:38:19][34.0]*

Kerry James Reed: *[00:38:19]* Absolutely. I bring it up because I remember in my conversation with Mr. Stanley, he said that working for Mr. Bass was, I believe, his first job during or after high school. And I was curious about the, you know, community dynamic, like how neighbors would help each other, I suppose. Could you speak more of that? Any memories you have? *[00:38:39][20.2]*

Veronica Greene-Pace: *[00:38:40]* Yeah. Particularly when it came to, loss in the family, like a death. Everybody would, you know, come together to prepare meals for the family. Of course, you know, sit with them. And if it was a graduation or birth, whatever, we celebrated and we supported each other. So, in that regard, you know, it was that camaraderie in the community, you know. If you more we mourn with you. If you're celebrating we celebrate with you. So, it was that way in Colored Rosemont. Now I'm not saying that it was all, you know, the Cleavers, because there was dysfunction. Everybody's family has dysfunction. But it when it came to a community, we were a community. And we just supported each other, you know, you could borrow a cup of sugar or couple of eggs or whatever. It was just that way. *[00:39:39][59.3]*

Kerry James Reed: *[00:39:40]* Absolutely. So, what schools did you go to in Alexandria? *[00:39:45][4.3]*

Veronica Greene-Pace: *[00:39:46]* I went to Charles Houston Elementary School right here. Oh, before that it was Ms. Martha Miller's Kindergarten for Colored Children. It was in the, let's see, between Henry St and Patrick St. So, what would that be, the 1000 block of Oronoco Street. *[00:40:12][26.0]*

Kerry James Reed: *[00:40:12]* Ok. *[00:40:12][0.0]*

Veronica Greene-Pace: *[00:40:14]* I guess that's it. Because this is the 900, yeah. Anyway, it was on Oronoco Street. Started there, then I attended Charles Houston Elementary School right at this site. From the first grade to the seventh grade. And then eighth grade, I went to Parker-Gray [High School] and that was eighth grade to twelfth. And I graduated from Parker-Gray High School in June of 1964. And then I went to Howard University. From 1964 to 1966. *[00:40:51][37.4]*

Kerry James Reed: *[00:40:54]* Was it important to you to go to a HBCU? *[00:40:56][2.6]*

Veronica Greene-Pace: *[00:40:57]* Absolutely. *[00:40:57][0.0]*

Kerry James Reed: *[00:40:59]* Why? *[00:40:59][0.0]*

Veronica Greene-Pace: *[00:41:00]* My mother had a son when she married my my father, my oldest brother, Howard Randolph Allen. They called him "flat," or "flattop." He went to Howard. And Howard University is everybody knows, you know, "H-U, you know," that's the school, you know, for Blacks and and, you know, at

that time there were very few schools that were accepting, you know, Black applicants. And it was either going to be Howard University or it was going to be Virginia State College. Virginia State College, now Virginia State University, where my father attended and his twin brother attended. *[00:41:41][40.3]*

Kerry James Reed: *[00:41:43]* What did you major in while you were at Howard? *[00:41:45][1.4]*

Veronica Greene-Pace: *[00:41:45]* Sociology. I think it was going to change to political science. But that was my major. *[00:41:54][9.4]*

Kerry James Reed: *[00:41:56]* What drew you to that? *[00:41:57][0.7]*

Veronica Greene-Pace: *[00:41:59]* I always wanted to know why things are structured and why they work the way they do. What is the science behind that. So, that's what I was drawn to. *[00:42:14][14.5]*

Kerry James Reed: *[00:42:14]* Absolutely. So, was there a lot of black activism at Howard while you were attending there? *[00:42:21][6.6]*

Veronica Greene-Pace: *[00:42:21]* It was kicking up, when I first started at Howard. When my brother John got there in 1968, I always tease him, "y'all went buckwild," because when I went to Howard University, we could not wear pants to class. *[00:42:37][15.4]*

Kerry James Reed: *[00:42:38]* Oh, really? *[00:42:38][0.3]*

Veronica Greene-Pace: *[00:42:39]* Absolutely. And then subsequently, it started loosening up. And, Doctor James Nabrit was the president of Howard when I started. And Doctor Nabrit was a contemporary of Thurgood Marshall. And we were aware of his involvement and the key role he played in that legal team that argued before the Supreme Court in Brown v. the Kansas Board of Education. So, we were aware, it was just beginning to bubble up even more. And, see, in September 1963, the four little girls were bombed in Birmingham, Alabama. So, we were still kind of reeling from that. And 'we've got to do more and we got to do some more things.' Then Bloody Sunday 1964. And I remember my parents were afraid for us because we were having protests on the campus with, you know, the voting rights issue was really big then. So, my parents are saying, "don't get

involved in that. You'll get hurt or you might get in trouble." So, one of my classmate, Pat Gold, we had gone to kindergarten, elementary school, high school, and Howard University together. They were having a supportive march down at the White House because of Bloody Sunday. And we snuck off campus, rode the bus, and we participated in that march in front of the White House after Bloody Sunday. So, that was my part in the civil rights movement. *[00:44:31][112.0]*

Kerry James Reed: *[00:44:33]* So, I bring up your education because you're clearly well versed in both the history of Alexandria and the history of African-Americans in the U.S. I was curious, was that history something that was taught in the home, or did you have to? *[00:44:48][15.2]*

Veronica Greene-Pace: *[00:44:49]* It was in the home and, see, home, school, and church was a continuum. I mean, it was the same value system. Because some of the same, you met some of the same people in all places. So my parents, my mother not so much because there was so many difficult and hurtful things that they experienced, you know, under segregation, you know. My dad talked about it a little bit more than my mother did. He grew up with his grandfather. My father's mother's grandfather. And he had remembrance from slavery and two stories that stick with me that daddy told was that Grandpa Jack remembered that a woman was trying to nurse a baby, and they were being pushed, you know, to get the work done. And the baby was snatched from her. And then another time he said that it was so cold because slaves did not wear shoes. And what they would do would wait until the cow had a bowel movement and they were standing cow manure to keep their feet warm. So, these are the kinds of things that they were teaching us about how far we had come. And to understand what our struggle is. And then my dad said that, he and Uncle Robert, they're twins, fraternal. My grandfather had gone into town to the bank, I guess, to transact some business. My grandfather likes cigars. And the white person would not deal with them. He said, "you got to take a cigar out of here." So my grandfather had to leave the bank, come out of the bank, go down the street, throw away the cigar because that was too much agency, you know, the audacity of a Black man to smoke a cigar. And then my father and his twin brother, they would work anywhere, you know, to get extra money. Because my grandfather worked for a Southern Railroad. He was, in charge of the food service for the railroad. And my dad and Uncle Robert had worked for this guy, a Black guy, Edward Stuart, also a church member of their church. And I think they were either pulling hay or picking corn and Edward Stuart never paid my dad and Uncle

Robert for the work they'd done. My grandfather beat him up. Edward Stuart took out a warrant for my grandfather. White sheriff comes up on the property to serve the warrant. And the story goes, my grandfather told him, "get off my porch and get off my property. You're not going to serve a warrant in front of my wife and kids." That took a lot of guts, you know, to do that. So, the point of them passing down those stories was stand up for yourself. The dignity. Because you always are going to be, if you let them, they're going to treat you less than or try to walk on you. Stand up for your rights and stand up for yourself because you're no better than anyone, but you're no less than anyone. *[00:48:16][207.6]*

Kerry James Reed: *[00:48:17]* Absolutely. *[00:48:17][0.0]*

Veronica Greene-Pace: *[00:48:18]* So, you know, that is the value system we grew up with. *[00:48:20][2.9]*

Kerry James Reed: *[00:48:22]* So, do you have a favorite memory of your father? *[00:48:26][4.3]*

Veronica Greene-Pace: *[00:48:27]* So many. There's just so many. One of my favorites is him, when he was home, when he wasn't working, he was always working around the house. And before we had a chain link fence, my father built our own white picket fence. Him singing while he's working. He would sing hymns and then in the summertime, when they graduated from high school, they worked on the railroad. So, he had a lot of those railroad songs. And I don't know if you're familiar with that, when you're working, and this is the African-American thing, and it's all, you know, all that's part of African culture, that you would sing a song in the cadence of your work. So, if you were, you know, a hammer and you had a song or a ditty that you would sing. And I used to enjoy hearing him sing that. And just, how he was just happy to be with his family and how much he loved his family. How much, I mean, it was nothing that we wanted because we didn't think we were poor, because we didn't want anything. We always had plenty to eat. We were well dressed. You know, my father actually worked himself to death. So, my favorite memory of just my father's joy and love of being with family. And our summer trips and vacations. We pile in the station wagon, and we would start at the farthest point. My mother's family migrated to Norwalk, Connecticut, and my dad's oldest sister, was is in another part of Connecticut, Middleton, Connecticut, and, visiting them. And then on the way back, we stopped in Philadelphia, where most of his sisters and brothers had migrated to. And family gatherings, the family meals and

just traveling in the car with my parents. And, how at everybody toll my father, my father spoke to everybody. His saying was 'its good and evil in everybody, always look for the good.' And he always going through the toll booth, which no longer exist now because just about everything is EZ pass, he would always say to the toll collector, "how you do's?" Just his pleasantness, you know, to everyone. So, it's just a whole ball of memories, about daddy. And, after I left Howard, I got me a job at the Pentagon. I had 98 on the civil service test, the written part, but I got nervous, I jammed up when it was time for the typing. So I had gotten a mail clerk position, and daddy said, and at that time it was true, if you were a clerk typist, you could get a better grade and more salary. So, I used to practice. I would ride to work with daddy in the morning and he said, "practice before it's time for you to go to your job," right? So one morning, a lot of people would come to my dad for counseling and, you know, whatever. And daddy said, "practice," and this guy, Mr. Bill, what was Mr. Bill's last name? So, he would come by and he and daddy would have a conversation, and I'm practicing. And so after that practice session, Bill Abel, Mr. Abel said, "you just passed your test." So, my daddy greased the skids for me. So, those kind of things, not only for his family but for other people. My father was, like, it was two guys in the neighborhood, well, at least one guy. I remember one of the Watersons, Parker Waterson. And he was the only son of the Watersons, he got Parker a job at the at the Pentagon, you know, through his connections. So, those kinds of things, my dad would help anybody. And that was the neighborhood value system. We, you know, that's what you did, and it was automatic. You didn't even think about it. Of course I'll help, of course you know, I'll be there, you know, of course I'll do it. So, you know that's the value system that we just grew up with. So, you didn't think about it. It was just like, reflex, if you will. *[00:52:59][271.8]*

Kerry James Reed: *[00:53:02]* So, could you describe the history of colored Rosemont broadly for those who aren't familiar with it? *[00:53:09][6.4]*

Veronica Greene-Pace: *[00:53:10]* That it was a insular Black community of Black homeowners, Black home and property owners. And it was insular, it was generally a very comfortable community. And as children, I'll speak for myself, maybe the others didn't, I felt just safe. I mean, what was I missing? We had everything there. *[00:53:39][28.6]*

Kerry James Reed: *[00:53:41]* Absolutely. Did you ever meet Ms. Virginia Wheat Thomas? By any chance? *[00:53:45][3.9]*

Veronica Greene-Pace: *[00:53:46]* I vaguely remember her coming to collect the mortgage. *[00:53:49][2.9]*

Kerry James Reed: *[00:53:49]* Ok. *[00:53:49][0.0]*

Veronica Greene-Pace: *[00:53:51]* The image is: she wore a hat, she had white hair. And that's all I can really remember, because, I mean, I was so young. And then you didn't get in grown folk's business, right? *[00:54:03][12.1]*

Kerry James Reed: *[00:54:04]* Yeah. Separate spheres and whatnot, absolutely. Ok. Well, we've been talking for about 55 minutes now, Mrs. Greene-Pace and I certainly don't want to get in the way of the kids coming in here. *[00:54:16][12.1]*

Veronica Greene-Pace: *[00:54:16]* Yeah. *[00:54:16][0.0]*

Kerry James Reed: *[00:54:17]* So, I just have a, couple more questions about Colored Rosemont today and then some closing questions, if that's all right. So, we'll start with Colored Rosemont today. What does Colored Rosemont look like today? *[00:54:30][12.3]*

Veronica Greene-Pace: *[00:54:37]* It looks like nothing to me because the remaining houses that were owned by Black people are gone except for 1312 [Wythe St] and two houses on the in the 600 block of N West Street. The public housing is there, and it's just, for me, a painful reminder of the eminent domain that they pulled or executed, if you will. It's just painful to look at now. And I'm glad that we have, you know, memories and some photos of what it used to be. *[00:55:21][44.8]*

Kerry James Reed: *[00:55:24]* So, throughout all of our meetings, you've been very adamant about the correct use of language, "eminent domain," to describe what happened to Colored Rosemont. How do you think that, you know, that use of language and being so adamant about that impacts how we remember and interpret what happened to Colored Rosemont? *[00:55:43][19.3]*

Veronica Greene-Pace: *[00:55:44]* Because it's facts and we've got to counter, for me, we've got to counter this narrative that it was dilapidated, it was declining. That's not true. Historical exactitude means everything to me because there's so much misinformation, distortion. And in my opinion, they do it

purposefully to, justify, you know, their decision to expropriate or use eminent domain to take property from Black people. *[00:56:29][44.1]*

Kerry James Reed: *[00:56:30]* Absolutely. So, we've talked about the Adkins developments a little bit in passing, but when you started to see the more recent developments, well it hasn't happened yet, but along N West st, what were your opinions on that when you heard about it? *[00:56:49][19.3]*

Veronica Greene-Pace: *[00:56:54]* That it was going to be inevitable. Because, you know, what my father and the other men found out was that the city had a 10, 20, 30, 40 year plan. That metro was in the making and other developments was in the making. So, it was, to my way of thinking, it was just a matter of time because developers have money. And I don't really fault the people who finally did sell because they had been approached several times. And after a while it got, I guess it got to a point where, 'ok, let's take the money and just be done with it.' So, I just felt it was going to be inevitable because the City had other plans. They didn't have plans for Colored Rosemont. They had plans that the developers who are very influential and if you ask me, probably contribute to campaigns, and they will get what they want, eventually. *[00:58:01][66.9]*

Kerry James Reed: *[00:58:05]* What would you like current residents of the area known as Colored Rosemont to know about the history of the area? *[00:58:10][5.1]*

Veronica Greene-Pace: *[00:58:11]* That we were there. That we thrived. We were not a community in decline and that most of us would probably still be there if it had not been for the eminent domain, and that the city decided to develop it. And, you've been in the meetings with Deborah, right? And that's been her motivation. 'What happened to my grandmother's house?' And they were, the Watersons were at 1315 Wythe St. And Maria, she has few memories because her grandparents had moved shortly after she was born. I think she said she was about 18 months old when she moved. And people want to know where they came from, you know. And for our children: my daughter, Vanessa's daughter, John's son, and my sister Robin has two children. And, would you like to interview her? I'm sure she would like to do. *[00:59:24][73.1]*

Kerry James Reed: *[00:59:24]* I would love to. Yeah. *[00:59:25][0.8]*

Veronica Greene-Pace: *[00:59:26]* And her two children have memories of being at 1312 [Wythe St]. *[00:59:29][3.0]*

Kerry James Reed: *[00:59:30]* Ok. *[00:59:30][0.0]*

Veronica Greene-Pace: *[00:59:30]* Because my mother, when she was able, while they were young, she used, you know, babysit them. And that we were a community, and we wanted to be in a community, we enjoyed our community. *[00:59:45][15.0]*

Kerry James Reed: *[00:59:50]* Absolutely. *[00:59:50][0.0]*

Veronica Greene-Pace: *[00:59:52]* And, you know, there's a meme that goes around that, it shows you the huts and some of the deprivation in Africa. And they said, "this is the Africa they want you to believe." But, you know, Johannesburg, Accra, all of the larger, Morocco, you know, anywhere, you know. Not southern Africa and West Africa and Cairo, you know, and Kenya, there are metropolitan areas in Africa too, but people are comfortable with the huts in the deprivation. So that's how I feel. The majority are comfortable with declining Black neighborhoods and you know, but that was not Colored Rosemont. Colored Rosemont was a stable community. Most of the houses were brick. Summertime, we had beautiful flora there, you know. Everybody spoke to everybody, everybody knew everybody. It was a community. And I want to combat that negative stereotype. This was a thriving community that's now gone. *[01:01:06][74.0]*

Kerry James Reed: *[01:01:06]* Absolutely. Then just a couple more questions. If there is one specific memory about colored Rosemont that you could hold on to forever, what would it be? *[01:01:18][11.4]*

Veronica Greene-Pace: *[01:01:21]* Summertime with the flowers and those of us with the porches sitting on our porches. And the cookouts that my parents used to have for the holidays. *[01:01:33][12.1]*

Kerry James Reed: *[01:01:37]* What do you hope for the future of the area known as Colored Rosemont? *[01:01:41][3.4]*

Veronica Greene-Pace: *[01:01:42]* That will get a decent plaque, some decent signage to let anybody who's interested or who will read it know that this was a thriving Black community. *[01:01:52][9.7]*

Kerry James Reed: *[01:01:54]* So then lastly, if you could hold onto one memory forever, any particular memory, what would it be? *[01:02:00][6.9]*

Veronica Greene-Pace: *[01:02:03]* All of us at home at 1312 on a Sunday, or particularly since Father's Day is coming up, all of us are there celebrating daddy and my mother making daddy's favorite dishes. That's my favorite. *[01:02:16][13.2]*

Kerry James Reed: *[01:02:17]* Absolutely. That's beautiful. Well, thank you so much Mrs. Greene-Pace, t's been absolute pleasure talking with you today. *[01:02:22][4.7]*

Veronica Greene-Pace: *[01:02:22]* Thank you for the opportunity. *[01:02:22][0.0]*

[3568.8]