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# Oral History Interview

With

# Lou Whiting

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**Interviewer:** Kerry James Reed

**Narrator:** Lou Whiting

**Location of Interview:**

The Lloyd House

**Date of Interview:** 06/25/2024

**Transcriber:** Sadiya Quetti-Goodson

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**Summary:**

*Lou Whiting reflects upon growing up in D.C. and Virginia, the development of the Social Responsibility Group, and journey to Christianity.*

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General	Childhood; Family; Education; African American cemeteries; Gentrification; Public housing; Christianity; Harlem Globetrotters
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<p>People</p>	<p>Whiting, Lou Glen; Ruby Whiting; J.D. Davidson; Auerbach, Red; Shelton, Craig; David Whiting; Katherine Hayes; Marie Hayes; Minnie Hayes; Callie Hayes; Sheila Whiting; Ethel Stubbelfield; Johnson, Michael; Bulova, Gretchen; Chapman, John; Douglass, Frederick</p>
<p>Places</p>	<p>Washington, D.C.; Northeast D.C.; Alexandria; Palisades; Joy Park; Watts Branch Recreation Center; Eastern Avenue; 61st Street; Dunbar High School; Service and Quart Projects; New York; Pennsylvania; D.C. Armory; DeMatha Catholic High School; Cole Field House; Georgia; Florida; Crystal City; Charles Houston Recreation Center; Canal 8 Club; Youngstown, Ohio; Old Town, Alexandria; Richmond; Lawton Detention Center; Maryland; Springfield, Virginia; Clinton, Maryland; 1005 Wythe Street; Atkins Projects; National of God Church; Beulah Baptist Church; 58th and Dix Street, D.C.; My Father's House Christian Church; Eisenhower Avenue, Alexandria; Alfred Street; Queen Street; Frederick Douglass Memorial Cemetery; Wilkes Street; Vietnam Memorial; City Hall</p>

**Lou Whiting** [00:00:01] Pastor Louis Glen Whiting. I am 66 years old. Today's date is June the 25th, 2024, and the location is the Lloyd House.

**Kerry Reed** [00:00:16] My name is Kerry James Reed. I am 27 years of age. It is the 25th of June, 2024, and we are at the Lloyd House. So Pastor Lou, thank you so much for agreeing to do this interview. It's been a pleasure getting to know you, seeing you at the meetings these past couple of months. I guess we can start from the very beginning. Where were you born?

**Lou Whiting** [00:00:34] I was born in Washington, D.C., the nation's capital.

**Kerry Reed** [00:00:37] Washington, D.C., nation's capital. Where specifically in D.C.?

**Lou Whiting** [00:00:44] A couple of different places.

**Kerry Reed** [00:00:46] Okay.

**Lou Whiting** [00:00:48] [Laughing] You remember that old song, "Papa Was A Rolling Stone?".

**Kerry Reed** [00:00:50] Yeah.

**Lou Whiting** [00:00:50] Well, I never knew mine. And as a result of it, you know, put my mom in a position where we had to relocate from time to time. Whatever situation allowed us to have a place to stay.

**Kerry Reed** [00:01:03] Yeah.

**Lou Whiting** [00:01:03] So I lived in different areas of Washington, D.C., northwest, northeast, southwest, and just a lot of different places.

**Kerry Reed** [00:01:11] So what are some of your first memories from growing up in the district?

**Lou Whiting** [00:01:20] I guess some of my initial memories was you had to be aggressive. And by aggressive, I mean, you couldn't be afraid. You couldn't back down from any challenges. And if you were afraid you couldn't really get too far in the city. You probably wouldn't be able to come out the house.

**Kerry Reed** [00:01:42] Absolutely. So when did you come to that awareness that you had to have a certain amount of bravery to live where you did?

**Lou Whiting** [00:01:51] Probably the second location I can remember is when we moved to northeast D.C. that was our last stop, as a matter of fact. I think I was then like maybe 7 or 8 years old, and I don't remember an exact age, I just know I was a young kid. And it was a new neighborhood and it was public housing because prior to that we didn't live in a public housing development, we kind of lived in basements, if somebody had some room and stuff like that. But I would say this is the first actual dwelling that I can remember. I was about 7 or 8 years old and I know I was in elementary

school. And I remember the first day I went outside a guy came up to me and pushed me around all that kind of stuff, you know. So it frightened me, you know, so I ran in the house, you know. 'Cause at that time I wasn't really aggressive or a fighter or anything like that. So I ran in the house and my moms was, her personality was totally different, you know, she's like, "Why you ain't going outside?" You know, I didn't tell her for a while, but I was afraid of the guy that rolled up on me like that. And what happened was to kind of become friends with him, I gave him all the little toys that we had in the house at that time, even ones that didn't belong to me. I gave my brother's toys away, I gave everybody's, so one day I just ran out of toys to give him, you know. And they weren't real expensive toys, or anything like that, you know, Hot Wheels and all that kind of stuff. Just tryna to see if I could make friends with him and he would leave me alone. But one day I got up and wanted to go outside, and I didn't have any more toys to give him, you know. And I was a kid with a short attention span, so I thought about it and then I forgot about it. And then I went outside and I saw him and I realized, I don't have a toy to give him, you know. And he came up to me and went to pushing me around, and I'm like, okay, I can't take this anymore, you know. I had nothing else to give him and so I fought him back that day. And that's when I realized I said, "Hey, I could fight pretty good," you know. [Laughing] And I actually beat him up.

**Kerry Reed** [00:04:20] Wow.

**Lou Whiting** [00:04:20] Yeah and I was like, oh, I can do this. And I guess I had 5 siblings at that time, and all we did was just fight and jostle and wrestle all the time, and I didn't know that I could use that same skill out in the neighborhood, you know. And I was like the 2nd oldest son so I'd wrestle around with my siblings and fought them like it was like every day, you know. So my 1st fight outside was that day and that guy never bothered me again. As a matter of fact, I ended up taking most of my toys back from him. And I'm like, hey, taking stuff, this is pretty good, no wonder he was doing that. So it really, I think that moment kind of created like a little monster, you know. So that was my coming out party. So hope that answered the question.

**Kerry Reed** [00:05:18] Yeah it did. So you mentioned that you had 5 siblings growing up. What was it like growing up in northeast D.C. with such a big family?

**Lou Whiting** [00:05:32] Well, we had like an unwritten rule between my siblings. It was 6 guys. We actually had one sister, but we ran her away a long time, way before. Yeah, she couldn't live with us, you know, we were knuckleheads, put it that way. But we had an unwritten rule that we knew between each other that if somebody got into something like give us a heads up. Let me know, you got a fight right here with the Browns or the Whims or whatever, just let me know, because I don't want to be walking through the neighborhood and I get jumped and I don't know why I'm getting jumped and stuff like that. So that's how we communicated. It's not like even though it was 6 of us, like we hung together, we actually literally never hung together. Never. Even as family, we never hung out with each other. We all went out. We were just different personality wise. But that's the one thing we had an understanding, that if somebody got into something, a tussle or whatever it may be, you know, give us a heads up, or we all had to get together and go rectify the situation. We would do that.

**Kerry Reed** [00:06:41] Can you describe what your neighborhood looked like in Northeast?

**Lou Whiting** [00:06:47] Oh, I should have brought you a picture. Of course, the whole neighborhood look the same.

**Kerry Reed** [00:06:53] Yeah.

**Lou Whiting** [00:06:56] No grass. It wasn't like anybody out there had a green thumb, you know, anything like that. It's typical public housing, brick housing. Then the one thing that stood out with me about my neighborhood was that all of the windows on the 1st floor had bars on. Yeah, that's what stood out. And yeah, it was just on every house had bars on the 1st floor. So I guess they wanted to make it difficult if anybody wanted to break in or something like that. So that was what was unique about my neighborhood.

**Kerry Reed** [00:07:39] Do you remember, you know, thinking about the bars on the windows as a kid, trying to like rationalize it or anything like that?

**Lou Whiting** [00:07:45] No, because it was normal, you know, the whole environment. And that's hard to kind of communicate sometimes, especially when I was talking to my wife about it. And I came over to Alexandria. They had public housing, but it just didn't look the same as it did in D.C., so I didn't call it public housing, you know. When they were in D.C., the bars on the window, it is not like I sat down and said, "Oh wow, why are we living like this?" you know, because the whole environment of growing up in public housing was kind of hostile anyway. So it was just normal. It was something that I saw every day, all day long. So it's not like I stop and say hey why did they do that?

**Kerry Reed** [00:08:30] So what places in the neighborhood or in the city did you hang out or play in as a child?

**Lou Whiting** [00:08:40] See how I want to put this? Until I became interested in sports, I kind of, I wasn't one of them kids that stayed at home or in the neighborhood. I was more like a thrill seeker or an explorer. So the bus route ended in my neighborhood, and I learned how to sneak on a bus without paying. And so that's what I used to do every day. I would get on the bus and ride the bus and get off anywhere in Washington D.C.. It didn't matter. And we'd get off anywhere, and that's how I learned D.C.. That's what I spent a lot of time doing in different neighborhoods, you know, stuff like that. I was just exploring. Of course some of them, I didn't have any business being in, so I ended running out of them, you know, stuff like that. But it never stopped me from just getting on the bus. It was easy, you know, and I would get off and hey, this a great neighborhood, let me walk around and see. But that's the kind of kid I was, you know, I never thought about, okay somebody might grab me, kidnap me, blah blah blah. That wasn't something that was prevalent back when I was growing up. I'm not saying it didn't happen, but that wasn't a concern of mine. From that standpoint, I didn't have any barriers. I was just, I was just wide open.

**Kerry Reed** [00:10:09] Absolutely. So how did you sneak on the bus?

**Lou Whiting** [00:10:14] Well you know, the metro busses, even today, I think they have a front and a rear door.

**Kerry Reed** [00:10:19] Yeah, right.

**Lou Whiting** [00:10:20] So I would wait for the bus to pull up and the bus driver would get off, you know, smoke a cigarette or whatever.

**Kerry Reed** [00:10:29] It's the last stop.

**Lou Whiting** [00:10:29] Yeah, last stop. Or he would talk to some of the ladies in the neighborhood, you know, they were always scheming too. And then once he turned his back, I would just open the door and get up and I was sit right where the steps were where the back door was so he couldn't see me when he got on from the rearview mirror. And when people got on the bus, I would get up and blend in with them. How I figured that out, I don't know. But in any he could have saw me, you know, and he was just like I ain't worried about that little knucklehead. But that's how I used to get on the bus. I did that all over the city. I didn't have any money. It wasn't like I was going to be able to pay the bus fare or anything like that. And then I learned another strategy was, wherever I get off it, I made sure I got off with routes crossed each other. And so I learned that if I got off, I would walk down to the front like I actually paid to get on and I would ask the bus driver for a transfer. And so when I get off, I can catch one at a crossroads and keep going because I had a transfer. Now I don't know if they still do that today, but you know, you get on another bus route and you have a transfer and I guess they recognize, okay, this is not the same route that he's on and they would stamp and give it back to me, blah, blah, blah. I think you could transfer like 2 times or something.

**Kerry Reed** [00:11:55] Yeah, yeah.

**Lou Whiting** [00:11:55] Yeah. So all I need was one transfer and if I didn't manage to get one, I would stand at the bus stop. When somebody got off, I would ask them if I could have their transfer. So I was always able to move. [Laughing].

**Kerry Reed** [00:12:09] Absolutely.

**Lou Whiting** [00:12:10] I mean, it was just a skill that I had. I'm sure I wasn't the only one who did that.

**Kerry Reed** [00:12:15] Right.

**Lou Whiting** [00:12:16] You know, but that's what I learned, you know, 8, 9, years old, you know. Transfers is how I got all around D.C., you know when I didn't need any money.

**Kerry Reed** [00:12:25] Absolutely. So when you were riding the bus around the city, did you have a favorite area? Did you love to go to the Palisades or the Joy Park or anything?

**Lou Whiting** [00:12:33] No I went everywhere. Yeah, I had no specific destination.

**Kerry Reed** [00:12:38] Okay.

**Lou Whiting** [00:12:39] I didn't know the city. So that was my goal to explore the city.

**Kerry Reed** [00:12:48] So you said you did this before you became interested in sports. When did you become interested in sports?

**Lou Whiting** [00:12:54] I think I was about probably 10 or 11 years.

**Kerry Reed** [00:12:59] 10 or 11.

**Lou Whiting** [00:12:59] Yeah.

**Kerry Reed** [00:13:04] Did you have a favorite aspect of your neighborhood in northeast or just the city in general while you were growing up? Something that sticks out in your mind now?

**Lou Whiting** [00:13:17] Okay. Ask me that again. I want to make sure I'll understand it.

**Kerry Reed** [00:13:19] Do you have a favorite...

**Lou Whiting** [00:13:21] You talking about like a location?

**Kerry Reed** [00:13:23] Yeah, location, a memory. Just anything like that.

**Lou Whiting** [00:13:25] The biggest memory I had or location where I spent most of my time once I became interested in sports was Watts Branch. Yes, it was a recreation center.

**Kerry Reed** [00:13:38] Where was that?

**Lou Whiting** [00:13:39] Northeast D.C.? Right. It actually was just outside of my neighborhood.

**Kerry Reed** [00:13:46] Okay.

**Lou Whiting** [00:13:49] Was that Eastern Avenue, 61st Street, right around in the area. And it was a very, very popular playground. If you were athlete as far as a basketball player, you played on that playground. So it was always crowded. But I would have to say that the first sport I was interested in was football. So I went out for the football team and then let me backup a little bit. The only reason I started playing sports is because I wanted to escape my environment, and I figured that was the only way, my only opportunity to get out of that environment. So I started out and I said, hey, let me try football, you know, maybe I can get out of this neighborhood if I play football. And the only thing I didn't contemplate was I didn't quite understand the strategy of playing football. My thought was, if somebody hits you that hard, then you should be able to hit them back. So needless to say, I didn't last long. So I got in a lot of fights. Couldn't understand why the referees was throwing these flags and stuff because I didn't understand the concept of football. I'm just like, if I go out and somebody hit me, I'm getting a fight. I was just used to that now, you know, you're not taking anything from me.



I realize if you gonna try to take something it comes with a price, you know. So I didn't understand that concept. And so I remember my last football game, I went out for a pass, and I forgot to tell you that, I could run pretty good because I was all over D.C. running. [Laughing]. So I knew how to run. I knew how to regulate my breathing and all of that if I had to run. I mean, sometimes I had to run for like 30, 45 minutes running from people, you know. But anyway, went out for a pass and according to pass, and it seemed like the whole team just hit me and piled on top of me. And I got up swinging and they called, you know, flag penalize a team and stuff like that. And I was so furious that I quit, because I couldn't stop fighting at all. And I walked up to the coach, threw my uniform down at his feet and said, "I don't want to no more. And I went home that day and I didn't realize, oh like, man, we're kind of far from the house too. So of course I had to rely on my other skill, sneaking on the bus to get back to. But anyway, I remember sitting down that same day at night on my front porch. And I saw somebody get stabbed. Is it stabbed or shot, you know, I was 12 now. I was about 12 years old. Sitting on the front. It was always something going on and it was never quiet. But I saw something jump off and I think I'm gonna say he got shot. I'm sitting there like I got to get out of here, you know. And so I said, I know what I'm gonna do, I'm gonna play basketball. We tried that. And so the next day I got up, went down to the basketball court, and most of the guys that played a sport started at 5, 6, something like that. I'm 12. So I'm way behind the learning curve. But one thing I had was a lot of heart, and I could run.

**Kerry Reed** [00:17:12] Yeah.

**Lou Whiting** [00:17:14] You know, so I went down to Watts, and I realized that there were, it was levels to basketball.

**Kerry Reed** [00:17:21] Yeah.

**Lou Whiting** [00:17:23] And the level I was on, nobody wanted me to play with them. Because I couldn't play, I was sorry, you know, and I admit that. But what I did was, I went down to the playground every day, I started working out. I think I was in the 7th grade when I started playing basketball and time I rolled around to the 8th grade, I decided to go out for the basketball team. And I still didn't have any skill, but I could run. That's all I could do was just run. I could run all day long, you know. And make a long story short, that's how I made the team. I think at that time, it might have been 3[00] or 400 people that went out for the basketball team. And plus they had players that were returning, so they didn't have a lot of spots. And what the coach did is I guess this was his plan of attrition. He would have everybody that was trying out for the basketball team to be up at the school at 6 a.m. in the morning. And he would make us run, I don't know, 10 miles, something like that, through various neighborhoods, you know, that a lot of people wouldn't go in, you know. And then we would end back up at the same gym, you know. And then he would make us run suicides. We never touched the basketball. Never touched one, just ran every day for like a month. And I watch people fall off. And I always probably finished in the first 2 or 3 every single day and never let anybody beat me, you know. But I told you I could run, I couldn't do anything else. I could outrun you or keep up with you. So I was always back. We would leave, start out like 4 or 500 people would leave. I would be one of the 1st, 2nd or 3rd people coming back every single day. And I believed that the coach saw that. And so even when we ran the suicides, I don't know if you know what that is, but I never finished

last in a suicide. So even after coming in and still running, I wasn't tired because I could run, you know. And maybe that was a gift God gave me or something like that where I could keep running. And so finally we got to the point where, okay, he's started letting us, you know, play with the basketball stuff, like that. And it was funny, because I had no skill, I was absolutely sorry. Okay, hear what I'm saying. I couldn't catch the ball and run at the same time. Okay, I had no coordination and I said that for a reason because when we're in a layup line or we started playing 5 on 5, because I could run, I would always get out in front of everybody on a fast break. And the guard who had the ball, he had to throw me the ball because I was in the front. But he got mad at me because if he threw it to me I couldn't figure out how to catch the ball and run and all of that. So the ball, it would beat me up every time he threw it to me. It was just, it was the funniest thing. Now think about it, I was always at least 90% of the time, I was down the court first.

**Kerry Reed** [00:20:47] Yeah.

**Lou Whiting** [00:20:48] So he had to throw me the ball, but I always lost it. And what would happen, he would fuss at me and yell at me and cuss at me. And of course, a fight broke out, you know, because I had a bad attitude by then man. And so I think that 1st year I probably fought everybody on the basketball team. Every single person, it didn't matter. This one guy was 6'6". It didn't matter to me. I got littery and eventually they stopped cussing at me. Really. I mean, I fought literally, there's about 15 people on a team, I fought 14 of em. And it wasn't just once. And I believe the coach saw that I had heart. And he gave me that last spot on the team. I was number 15. And that season we played like maybe 30 games. I never took my warmup off. That's how sorry I was. Never took my warmup off. The team would be up by 20, 30 points, I never got in the game. Never took my warmup off. But I was committed. I continue to work every single day. Every day. I couldn't hit the free throw line. I couldn't hit the basket from the free throw line. That's how sorry I was. And the coach came up to me, said, "Listen," said, "Louis, if you shoot another airball, you're gonna have to do 5 push ups." Well, at the end of practice, I would have to do like about 75 to 100 pushups. Every single day. So what happened was, I got stronger.

**Kerry Reed** [00:22:29] Yeah.

**Lou Whiting** [00:22:29] And I already could run, and then I got stronger. I'm like oh I can hit the rim now, you know. But what people didn't see was school was out at 3. I was down at Watts Branch playground by 3:30. And I was staying on the court from 3:30 in the afternoon, to probably 2 or 3:00 in the morning. Every single night. If it rain, if it snow, it didn't matter. I was down here every single day. And every time you saw me I had a basketball in my hand. Every single day. Dribbling to the court, dribbling back to court. I would get in the house, dribble through the house, dribble up the steps, all that kind of stuff. It drove my mom mad. Boy she was like, "Stop dribbling that ball." Of course I ain't stop dribbling, but that was how I got better. So the following year, I still didn't play that much, but I was getting better. And I remember I changed my routine. Not only did I work at night, but I started going outside to the court when nobody was there, which meant that it was like 12 noon. It would be 100 degrees outside, but I'm still out there with a plastic sweat suit on, ankle weights, running wind sprints, running around the field. And I didn't know that I was being watched by this

high school coach. He drove past the playground every single day and he watched me work out for hours, for hours. So what I was doing, Kerry, I was closing a gap and I didn't even know it.

**Kerry Reed** [00:24:07] Yeah.

**Lou Whiting** [00:24:07] My goal was to get out of the neighborhood and that's what drove me. And I just got better and better. And so I got recruited from a 9th grade to high school. And what was interesting about that is I didn't go to my neighborhood high school. I went to a high school all the way across town, which I was familiar with because I was hitting the back door on the bus, traveling all over the city, you know. I say, wow, this works out. But he recruited me to come up to Dunbar [High School] and a lot of the guys that I play with, I developed a relationship with, that grew up in a neighborhood, they couldn't understand why I was leaving our community and going to another school which was in the worst area in Washington, D.C. at that time. And the basketball team was absolutely miserable. Now, I was coming from a team for 3 years that only lost one game. Even though I ain't play, you know, Red Auerbach came to one of our games.

**Kerry Reed** [00:25:13] Okay.

**Lou Whiting** [00:25:13] And the games were always packed. And we won, my 8th and 9th grade year we won the city championship. Okay, so the team was very popular. A lot of scouts would come and watch us even in, you know, what they call now middle school, you know. But I decided to go to Dunbar, and my friends were laughing at me, man, they sorry, they only won one game last year and all of that kind of stuff. Why are you going up there? It was right smack in the middle of an open air drug market, and you're probably not familiar with that. But that's back when crack was dominating, heroin was dominating all of that. It was just everywhere. An open air drug market meant that they were selling drugs and the police couldn't do anything about it, at all. Dunbar was sitting right smack in the middle of that and was surrounded by public housing. One of the oldest schools in the city, if not the oldest school in the city. Am I talking too much?

**Kerry Reed** [00:26:08] No.

**Lou Whiting** [00:26:09] Okay and I'm not making this up. Okay, at all. But yeah, I decided to go to school there. And I remember, I'll never forget my first day of school. Headed up to Dunbar. It was relatively unknown. A lot of the other players on the team went to different schools, and the talent was so great on that team that whatever school that the players went to became one of the top schools in the area, okay. That's how good the players were. It's just that I was still learning, you know. And I remember the first day of school. I'll never forget this, I tell people this all the time, I get off the bus and Dunbar is on the other side of one of the worst projects in the city. I'll never forget the name, called Service and Quart, they were just horrible, you know. And I get off the bus and I'm like, I'm gonna cut through here 'cause I can see Dunbar on the other side, I'm gonna cut through the projects. I already understood if you in the neighborhood you're not supposed to be in, something gonna happen.

**Kerry Reed** [00:27:14] Yeah.

**Lou Whiting** [00:27:15] You know. But I didn't care. I'm like, I've been through this before, you know. And plus I had a lot of confidence in my hands, you know. But I remember walking through there and the first day of school, and it was about 10 or 12 guys that was hanging out on these steps. And I just knew in my head I said this is not going to end well. And I said, they're going to say something, then with something going to break out. So I was getting prepared mentally. Like my first day of school, I'mma get jumped, I'mma have to fight and then I'm gonna have to run, you know. That's what was in my head. But you know what Kerry, it never happened. They never say anything to me. I walked all the way through that project, and nobody never say a thing, anything to me at all. So I made it to my first day of school and what's interesting is that there was another guy that was recruited from the same middle school as me, and he was 6"10' coming out of the 9th grade. 6"10'. I was only like 5"9', you know. He's 6"10' and they actually accosted him.

**Kerry Reed** [00:28:18] Oh wow.

**Lou Whiting** [00:28:18] Yeah. And I'm like, maybe I had a look.

**Kerry Reed** [00:28:23] Yeah, yeah.

**Lou Whiting** [00:28:25] Yeah, he had a rough first date.

**Kerry Reed** [00:28:26] Sounds like it.

**Lou Whiting** [00:28:27] He did. And that was my introduction to Dunbar. So I get up there, and it was just, and I begin to understand that's why people kept talking about Dunbar and up here and what's going on up here. Man I'll tell you that school was live, that's the best way to put it. It was a very, very unique experience for me, you know. So there you go. That was probably the 2nd phase of my athletic career. It ended up being a blessing.

**Kerry Reed** [00:29:01] Yes absolutely.

**Lou Whiting** [00:29:02] For me. Because Dunbar was relatively unheard. They had a couple of great athletes from time to time. But the coach was very unique. That's the one that recruited me, you know. Really today I would probably say he was crazy man. His whole thinking and you know. Yeah he never got the accolades he should have got. But my 10th grade year he recruited players, you know, that were fatherless, all that grew up, all of us came out of public housing. And he put us all in one pot, you know. And [sigh] man talking about tension, you know man the guy was hard. He ran us hard, he worked us hard, and he was all about being maximum aggressiveness. That's how he was as a coach. And so we would practice and we had no out of bounds. There was no out of bounds. Wherever the ball went, he expected 10 people that was on the court to go for the loose ball, you know. So needless to say a lot of fights broke out. It was always extremely tense, you know, but my 10th grade year we ended up losing 2 games that whole year. We were like 28 and 2. Went to the city championship, shocked everybody. Nobody saw us coming. Went yeah 28 and 2. Went to the championship and lost. And I'll never forget that feeling man. I wasn't really that emotional, you know, I guess because of the environment I came up in, I just didn't. We didn't celebrate Christmas, I knew there wasn't a Santa

Claus, and all that kind of stuff. And I guess at some point you're going to be thinking why you become a pastor man, it seem like everything was against you. [Laughing]. But yeah, that was my upbringing. I never knew my dad, you know. So that's the one thing that bothered me. I'd be playing basketball, there'd be thousands of people in the stands, my dad was nowhere around. So I would go home and lay in bed at night and cry because my friends knew their dad, even though the dad might, at least they knew who he was. I don't even know who my dad was. No idea whatsoever. No memory of him. But my 11th grade year rolled around and we was coming off of a successful season even though we lost. And so now the news reporters was coming around, the fan base was just exploded, okay. Scouts were coming, the whole 9 yards, and we just had a following. We got invited my 11th grade year to different tournaments and stuff like that. Somewhat to make a long story short, my 11th grade year we ended up being number one in the nation. We were 29 and 0. We'd beat teams in New York, Pennsylvania, we just traveled everywhere. My 1st experience getting out of the neighborhood, out of Washington, D.C., and seeing that the world was bigger than what I was accustomed to and what I was aware of. I saw people live differently. I saw people [of] different races, culture. I never was exposed to that all the way up to my high school career. All I knew was that everything the whole world and neighborhood was drugs, black people fighting, murder, all of that. That's all I was exposed to until basketball took me to places I never dreamed of. And so my 11th grade year we were number 1 in the nation. Scouts from all of the top schools across the country, you know, anything could name of ACC [Atlantic Coast Conference] schools, everything. They were just packing it out. And we had so many fans coming to the game that they moved our games from a regular high school gym, which probably held like 1,500 to 2,000, 'cause it would usually be more people outside trying to get in to our games. And so they moved it to what is called a D.C. Armory. And that held about 8,000 people. We sold it out every single game. So we had these mad fans. And Dunbar fans were like they were the worst because they were like drug dealers, murderers. I'm telling you, it was just always a fight after the game.

**Kerry Reed** [00:33:22] Yeah.

**Lou Whiting** [00:33:22] Always, you know. And we never had a home court because Dunbar was old, so they'd never built the gym for that particular time. So everybody else's court was, you know, is where we went to play. But anyway our fans didn't care. But I'll tell you Kerry, just playing, being in that kind of exposure and playing before 8,000 fans every single game, was this just. I never dreamed of anything like that. So needless to say everybody on the team was popular, you know. I didn't need to sneak on the bus anymore. As a matter of fact, I ain't even catch the bus anymore because people gave me rides everywhere. Free tennis shoes. It was just like, oh, this is good, I think I'm gonna stick with this.

**Kerry Reed** [00:34:16] Cool stuff?

**Lou Whiting** [00:34:17] Yeah. And I'm like, I got into clubs free, movie theaters free. And it was just like, I'm like, oh, this is what basketball is all about. Like I said I'm gonna keep practicing.

**Kerry Reed** [00:34:28] Yeah most definitely.

**Lou Whiting** [00:34:29] Yeah. And so being number 1 in the nation bought a lot of accolades. We went back to the city championship again and we played against one of the most dominant schools of that time, which was DeMatha. And we played out at Cole Field House because they were good and we were good. So they moved that game to a Cole Field House would seat 15,000. We packed it out, 15,000 and it televised it. D.C., Maryland, Virginia, channel 5. I wish I could find that videotape. And for the first time, my mother could watch me play. I'll never forget that. She could sit home and watch me play. She couldn't come to the game because it was just too many people. When I say, I mean thousands of people, they used to be pictures of people being like 4 or 5,000 people outside trying to get in. Yeah, that's how popular we were especially when was undefeated, you know. Just walking through the hallways during high school to class, I had to go to class, all that kind of stuff man. It was just the knowledge and the visibility and all of that was just, you know, everybody don't get a chance to experience that.

**Kerry Reed** [00:35:46] Absolutely.

**Lou Whiting** [00:35:47] You know, and playing out at Cole Field House against the number 1 team at that time, which was DeMatha, they were known all over the country. We had lost to them my 10th grade year. We was up by 20 at half time and lost the game. Lost the game.

**Kerry Reed** [00:36:05] That's rough.

**Lou Whiting** [00:36:06] Yeah. And I couldn't understand why them guys was crying. I'm like man its just a game, you know. I want to smack them, you know. But they took it real serious, and they were passionate about it. I guess I was basically a unemotional guy. But my 11th grade year, we played DeMatha and we was up about 21 again in halftime. They came back and tied the game up at the 2nd half. It was a vicious battle. 'Cause they had some players, they did, they had some players. And my greatest memory from that game was I ended up being at the free throw line and the game was tied. Fans was just screaming. This the 1st time in my life because, you know, in all the other games you played, the backboard was like tin. Well we get out to Cole Field House, it's fiberglass. You can look right through the glass and you can see screaming fans and calling you names and all of that kind of stuff. Which I was used to the name calling 'cause playing in the interhigh in D.C., they throw books at you, they rock your bus when you leaving and all of that kind of stuff man. So I was used to that but being on a free throw line with 13 seconds left, game time, 15,000 screaming fans televised Maryland, D.C., and Virginia. I know my mother was at home looking at it and I was standing on the free throw line, and I'm like, oh my god. I was nervous. I was.

**Kerry Reed** [00:37:36] Oh yeah.

**Lou Whiting** [00:37:36] Yeah, oh man. I took that 1st shot man, the ball clanged off the rim and bounced probably outside somewhere. [Laughing]. I kid you not. And then the coach of DeMetha called a timeout to freeze me on the 2nd one. Get over to the sideline, I'm in my head, I'm like, man, the coaches is gonna blast me. He never said a word to me. He just talked about the strategy. He said, "After Lou hits this free throw." And that's the only thing, I didn't even hear the fans screaming. I

ain't hear them calling us names. None of it. All I heard him say was, "After Lou hits this free throw, this is what we going do." And went to the free throw line. I started thinking about the accolades I was gonna get. Man, when I get to school tomorrow, the girls gonna be coming up to me. This is going through my head, right. I got to make this one. I can't go back to school tomorrow if I don't make this one. And then I heard the coach's voice again. "After Lou hits this free throw." And that was my moment there. The 2nd was straight through. Swish. Yep. The other coach called a timeout. I guess he wanted to give them a chance to position themselves to win the game, but we was up by 1 point. 13 seconds left in the game when they had an opportunity to win, but they missed a shot. They missed it. And our center Craig Shelten, he was All-American, he got that rebound and held it like it was his baby.

**Kerry Reed** [00:39:09] That's funny.

**Lou Whiting** [00:39:10] I'll never forget that moment man, I never will.

**Kerry Reed** [00:39:13] That's a fantastic memory.

**Lou Whiting** [00:39:14] Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah.

**Kerry Reed** [00:39:15] What position did you play?

**Lou Whiting** [00:39:17] Point guard.

**Kerry Reed** [00:39:17] Point guard? Yeah.

**Lou Whiting** [00:39:19] And the thing about it Kerry was, I was only like 5'9", 5'10" back then.

**Kerry Reed** [00:39:24] Yeah.

**Lou Whiting** [00:39:25] And so when I got recruited, I had a growth spurt over the summer. I grew like 5, 6 inches over the summer. And so when the coach saw me, he only remember me from being 5'9". He was like, "Oh, okay, we got to change your position." You know, but college was a whole different thing, man, that was a big adjustment. It really was. But that's the greatest memory I have. As far as being an athlete playing sports and stuff, should I say the greatest positive memory I have. But I realized man in basketball man, it opens the doors for a lot of things. That I wouldn't have never experienced, you know, so that was one of the best decisions I could make as a kid.

**Kerry Reed** [00:40:19] Absolutely. So one of the things that really stuck out to me in your story about you playing ball in high school, was how proud you were that your mother was finally able to watch you on television. Could you describe your mother briefly?

**Lou Whiting** [00:40:39] I don't think my mother, her educational level was passed probably 7th, 8th grade. She grew up in Georgia. And I used to try to talk to her about her past, but she never said a lot about it. My mom's was very aggressive, extremely aggressive. So if I had to say, you know, when it comes to abuse, she probably abused men more than they abused her. I've seen her fight men. And that's a real thing. So the environment was pretty intense in my home. And my mom's, she's whooped

the living daylight out. And I never understood why I got beatings man, and maybe I deserved em', but I never thought, you know, as a kid, you don't think you deserve any beatings and stuff. But my mom was, she was quiet. She drank, she smoked, but she never smoked outside of the house. And the only time she drank was like on Friday and Saturday, she would sit out in the back of the house with a couple of other neighbors, and they would just sit out there and talk and drink and stuff like that. I don't ever remember her working. And I know we were on welfare, as far back as I can remember. So of course, at the 1st of the month is when we got food stamps and stuff like that. So the public assistance, I think that's what they call it. And she would send us grocery shopping, or she would go herself. So the only time we had food was like between the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd, and after that, it was gone. Because it was 6 dudes who ate up everything. It didn't last long at all. So that's why I say, I don't think she was educated enough. I never remember her having a job or working anywhere, like in a retail store or anything like that. She was always home. Always home. But what she did do was she played the numbers, you know, I'm not sure if you're familiar with that, but she played the numbers. Now they call it the lottery, you know. But that was big back in public housing. You played the numbers, and she got pretty good at it, so she would always have a couple of dollars on her and stuff. And I think that's what kind of put her over the hump as far as caring for us. And it's not like she had a lot of money where we got new clothes all the time, you know. Everything was passed down or either somebody gave something to us and stuff like that. So our furniture wasn't real good in the house and stuff like that. Initially we all slept in the same bed and stuff. It was public housing, you know. So I have a lot of bad memories from that. And that's what drove me to be committed to being an athlete, to get out there, because I thought that was the only way I can get out of there unless I got killed. Or died or something like that. Now, I do remember there were a lot of athletes that were way better than me. But they never made it out in the neighborhood because of drugs. I didn't want to end up like them, but I couldn't understand if they didn't make it, what chance did I have? But that never stopped me. I had to get out of there. And I couldn't rely on my mom because she just didn't have the education. She couldn't tell me nothing about college. Nothing. Amazingly, I was a good student. I was an "A" student, as a matter of fact. I graduated 4th in my class. Books came easy to me, I never had to study real hard. I don't know, I guess I was just gifted with that, you know. So that's why I was able to leave school in 8th, 9th grade, go straight to the basketball court, because I did my work real fast, so I never had homework, you know. I would sit in class and look out the window because it was never challenging enough for me. And so like I said, I finished in the top 10%, I think I was number 4 in my class and I got recruited by I think back there might have been like 8 Ivy League schools. So they all wanted me. And I visited every last one of them, and they actually invited me up there for like 3 or 4 days, a stay over the weekend, hang out with the basketball players, hang out with the students. Which was good exposure, I'm like, wow, okay, this is outside of growing up in the hood and you know, around different cultures. Because believe it or not Kerry, I never thought white guys could play because I never played against them. I literally, that's why I said, I don't want to offend you.

**Kerry Reed** [00:45:41] I know we can shoot. I know that much. [Laughing]

**Lou Whiting** [00:45:42] [Laughing] Yes, but DeMatha had like 1 or 2, maybe 3 white players max. And so my 11th grade year, even my 10th grade year when we lost, I never understood why we lost.



And I would say, "Y'all got white guys and how yall do that?" And then we realize, they really had the referees on their side. Because they was fouling out our best players. So we realized that we weren't playing against 5, we was playing against 7. That's why we beat them the 2nd year. Matter of fact we beat them, we beat the heck out of them. Like 'cause we played them 2 or 3 more times that year and it wasn't even close man, at all man. But anyway, going off and being recruited, I probably visited, back then it was no limit on the number of schools you can visit and stuff, so I was just flying all over the place. I ain't know what I was doing. I ain't had no guidance man, I'm just like, all right, well okay, cool. I'm just gonna go see the school. They want me, you know, had a box of letters coming from all across the country and stuff like that, but I had nobody to give me any direction, you know. Lou you need to look at this, you need to do that, blah blah blah. And I'm like all I know is man, my goal was get out of the projects, you know, and I'll say I just want to go far away as possible because I'm tired of this killing. This drugs, stabbing people, fighting, you know, all of that man. Time I got out of high school Kerry, honestly I was tired of fighting. I was. Because I mean, Dunbar wasn't no joke. It was man. I mean there a couple of games where the whole student body jumped our team. Soon as the whistle blew, and the game was over, the whole stands were empty and they would just jump us. And so a couple of times, we had to literally fight from the court all the way to the locker room, you know. I was tired of that man. I'm like, you know, life got to be different, you know. But again, to answer your question, my mom was I don't think she was very educated at all because she never said, "Hey, you need to fill this form out," you know, this financial aid and all that kind. She never talked to me about college at all. Matter of fact, she never said, "I'm proud of you. I'm glad what you're doing and stuff like that." She just, you know. I don't know why. I don't know why. Yeah, it's just a lot of things I don't understand now that I'm older. And I figured she just wasn't educated at all. She didn't know how to give me that direction. I think that she left Georgia, probably under duress. That's the best I can get. And I think she married my dad before she left. And something must have happened that made her leave because she never went back, never talked about it. And I think it was some horrible experiences within the family, her family that she just never talked about. And so whenever I would try to ask her, it was friction. So I didn't grow up knowing a lot about my family until I probably was in my 30s, late 30s.

**Kerry Reed** [00:49:06] What was it like to find out about your family then in your 30s?

**Lou Whiting** [00:49:10] Exciting and devastating at the same time. And I remember the 1st time I laid eyes on my dad, I went to his funeral. I didn't know that my dad was a street bum. He was one of the people that you see even today in D.C. sleeping on those grates at night, you know, homeless. That's what he was. I never knew that. I probably kicked him at some point when I was in high school because I didn't like homeless people at all. But he was still in D.C., my mother never said anything. He was just a street person. And I never knew this all the way through high school, all the way through college. And I got married, still didn't know at all. And til one day, one of my siblings said, "Hey, I saw dad." Because he was in the military, so he was traveling around the country. He said, "I met our dad. I went and found him." He was the only one that has a memory, and he's no longer with us, but he's the only one to see my dad alive. And I guess maybe a couple of years after that, because it never piqued my interest. I didn't care because he was never part of my life anyway. Yeah, well, good for you. And I kept on, kept it moving. But I remember my dad had 3 sisters. And they came up to D.C., found them sleeping on the street and took them back down to Florida. And my mom never told us.

Until one day they would reach out to us and they said, "Hey, your dad passed away." I'm like, my dad, I got a dad, you know? I only went down to Florida to the funeral because I wanted to see what he looked like. Didn't care anything else. And so me and my siblings, we got together, drove down to Florida man, just to go to the funeral. And I remember looking over at him in the casket, I'm like, man you dead man, I can not tell what you look like, you know. Which is like it was totally insignificant. I'm like, well okay, well, at least I've got a chance to put eyes on him. By that time I think I was 30, between 30 and 40 years old. Seeing my dad in a casket for the 1st time in my life. That's the only memory I have of my dad, and that's when I met my aunts. And it's interesting, see my middle name is Glen. They were calling me Glenn because that's the last memory they had of me. Yep. That's the last memory. They never call me Louis. Even to this day, they still call me Glen. And so I met that side of the family for the first time in my late 30s. I had all these cousins I didn't know about. Aunts that I didn't know about, and all of that, and it was just exciting.

**Kerry Reed** [00:52:25] Yeah.

**Lou Whiting** [00:52:25] You know, I'm like, wow. It was terrible because I grew up and I never knew 'em, so we're all adults now, you know. So that's why I said it was a good experience. It was great, but then it was negative at the same time. A lot of mixed emotions and stuff like that.

**Kerry Reed** [00:52:43] Certainly. So when you finally did meet all your aunts and your cousins, did you learn more about, you know, your family history going back beyond, I guess, the immediate generation?

**Lou Whiting** [00:52:56] I actually learned more about myself.

**Kerry Reed** [00:52:58] Okay.

**Lou Whiting** [00:53:00] And I learned some things about my family. A lot of secrets. A lot of terrible secrets, you know. So there wasn't a lot of dialogue and conversation about some of the things. There was so much stuff in our community that's taboo, that they never say anything about. That's why I concluded that my moms left Georgia under duress, something happened. She never talked to us about it. But she was always angry, you know, and she raised us as an angry mother, you know. But she did a good job 'cause none of us got locked up, you know. And she raised us to be independent. So it's funny, when I got married, I knew how to wash, I know how to clean, my wife ain't had to do nothing even to this day. Because that's how my mom raised us. But it was just emotional man. I just came out of that saying, I never want my kids to experience what I experienced. They'll never grow up in a ghetto, they'll never lack. I'll do whatever I can to make sure that my kids don't experience, don't even sniff, what I was exposed to, at all.

**Kerry Reed** [00:54:23] Absolutely. So you mentioned to me in a previous conversation we had, that you would head into Alexandria, far from D.C. as a kid. Would you come on the same bus that you would sneak onto? Did you ever...

**Lou Whiting** [00:54:40] I was driving by then.

**Kerry Reed** [00:54:40] Oh, you were driving by then? Okay.

**Lou Whiting** [00:54:42] Or either some of my friends were driving.

**Kerry Reed** [00:54:44] Okay.

**Lou Whiting** [00:54:46] Legally or illegally.

**Kerry Reed** [00:54:47] Yeah.

**Lou Whiting** [00:54:48] You gotta understand, read between the lines. But in one neighborhood man, it was stolen cars all the time.

**Kerry Reed** [00:54:54] Right, right, right.

**Lou Whiting** [00:54:56] Matter of fact, one used to sit back up in the alley all the time, and you ever wanted to drive, you can go driving and stuff like that man. That's how I learned how to drive, you know. And I stayed away from the busses man. I think I learned, I started driving probably in the 9th grade.

**Kerry Reed** [00:55:13] Okay.

**Lou Whiting** [00:55:14] Something like that. Man, you're stirring up a lot of memories for me. But yeah, that's how I learned how to drive man. We used to get in a car and, you know. When I was in high school, because of the success that Dunbar had, I got exposed to a lot of clubs, you know. And they had some real top notch clubs down in D.C. and over in Crystal city and stuff like that. Even though I was high school, because I was an athlete and it was so much notoriety floating around out to it. You know, we'd get into clubs, they would just let us in. They knew we were young kids, we couldn't even drink, you know. They would let us in anyway because a crowd came with us, you know. And just people knew us. I mean, I even made a commercial with the Globetrotters one time so.

**Kerry Reed** [00:56:04] Oh, really?

**Lou Whiting** [00:56:05] Yeah. So when I say notoriety, we were extremely popular, you know. If if I did catch the bus man, and they'd be like, "Oh man, come on Lou, get on the bus," you know. I'm talking about people, I never knew their name, never seen them a day in my life, none of that. And just being exposed on a court where 8,000 people a game. That's a lot of people.

**Kerry Reed** [00:56:29] Yeah.

**Lou Whiting** [00:56:30] And I didn't realize it at the time, but they would recognize my face and I wouldn't know them from Adam. Even to this day, people come up to me, "Lou, how are you doing?" I'm like, I have no idea who these people are. "You still playing basketball?" I'm like man I'm 66! Why would I still be playing basketball? I'm like, that's stupid question man. But yeah man it was a lot of exposure and going to the clubs and stuff like that. But it was always an unwritten rule that you don't cross the 14th Street bridge and come to Virginia. Because Virginia was considered extremely racist.

And that's why it was an unwritten rule that you don't go over there, because it was just as bad in D.C.. And my moms would sit down with us. I'll never forget the conversations. Like when you get pulled over by the police this is how you respond, this is how you talk, this is how you act, blah blah blah. And I used to get tired of those conversations. But as I got older, I understood why she had those conversations. I mean, I have memories of being pulled over and confronted by the police, and I'm doing absolutely nothing, you know, at all. Was just a black kid, you know. And so it was worse coming over to Virginia. You know, getting hit with them lil' billy clubs man was just, you know. But you just couldn't let him catch you, you know. That's the thing I mean if you gotta, you know, hit a couple of cars getting out of Virginia and getting over the bridge, the key was to get back over across the line.

**Kerry Reed** [00:58:21] Right.

**Lou Whiting** [00:58:21] And being a kid, you know how it is man, you got a short attention span man. And you know, you just follow the bouncing ball. I don't know if you remember this, but it was a club right over the side over here called the Canal 8.

**Kerry Reed** [00:58:39] I've heard of that.

**Lou Whiting** [00:58:40] Right by Charles Houston [Recreation Center] now.

**Kerry Reed** [00:58:41] Yeah, I think it was before my time, but I've heard of it, yeah.

**Lou Whiting** [00:58:45] Yeah, it's interesting cause actually, my wife lived like right around the corner from that club and I never knew it. But I used to come over to the Canal 8 because it kind of modeled what I was exposed to in college. I went to school in Youngstown. Youngstown, Ohio. It's a Division one school and it's like, I call it a little hick town. It was way slower to D.C.. But I intentionally wanted to go to a town like that because D.C. was extremely fast and I needed to go somewhere where I needed to slow down. And at that time I really wanted to live longer than 21, okay. And so that's what the Canal 8 reminded me of. Of some of them little taverns on the side of the road and stuff like that. And so I say, hey man, I'm going to go past Crystal City. I'm going to go down here to Old Town. I'm like man did I take some chances man. Lord have mercy, man. Then a couple of my friends got ahold of me. "Lou, you don't need to be doing that, don't go over there, you gotta go back to school." And you know, and by that time man, you know, Love Boat was floating around, and it was just so many things that was available to throw you off course. And I'm sure you know that man, it couldn't have been too much different when you was growing up. But D.C. it was just wide open like that man. And they still had prostitutes, and it was just so much stuff man that was enticing.

**Kerry Reed** [01:00:14] Yeah.

**Lou Whiting** [01:00:15] That could throw you off course and stuff.

**Kerry Reed** [01:00:17] So you mentioned that the reputation of Virginia in D.C., was that Virginia was considered extremely racist and problematic. You mentioned, you know, the Billy clubs and everything like that. Did that idea of Virginia extend to Alexandria as well?

**Lou Whiting** [01:00:34] Yeah.

**Kerry Reed** [01:00:34] Okay.

**Lou Whiting** [01:00:35] Yeah. It was all of Virginia.

**Kerry Reed** [01:00:37] All of Virginia?

**Lou Whiting** [01:00:37] Yeah.

**Lou Whiting** [01:00:38] But I only visited Crystal City and Alexandria. That's it.

**Kerry Reed** [01:00:41] Okay.

**Lou Whiting** [01:00:42] And I never went anywhere else because it was just, to me, it was going to deep into Virginia unless I was passing through, going to North Carolina. Or something like that.

**Kerry Reed** [01:00:54] So besides for the Canal 8 club, did you visit anywhere else in Alexandria?

**Lou Whiting** [01:01:00] In Alexandria, no.

**Kerry Reed** [01:01:00] No, just around there.

**Lou Whiting** [01:01:02] Actually the Canal 8 was like a line of demarcation for me. It actually for me to go to the Canal 8, that's when I began to realize, hey, man, something wrong with you man. I'm like, you shouldn't be over here, you know you need to get your tail back on the other side, and that kind of stuff like that. But by then man, I was just, you know, as kids, you hard headed man.

**Kerry Reed** [01:01:33] Right.

**Lou Whiting** [01:01:34] And then you boys don't help you out when they're hanging with you man. We all thinking the same way man and stuff. Nah, that's the only spot that I came to. I was familiar with Old Town. Man I wasn't going down Old Town. I wasn't man, it was just nah. When I say taboo, coming over there was taboo.

**Kerry Reed** [01:01:55] So you mentioned DeMatha, and I know that's part of the, I forget the name of it, the Catholic League.

**Lou Whiting** [01:02:01] Yeah, yeah.

**Kerry Reed** [01:02:02] Whatever that's called. So did y'all ever come to play, like Bishop Iverson or over there play O'Connell or anything like that?

**Lou Whiting** [01:02:10] No they were sorry.

**Kerry Reed** [01:02:10] Okay. [Laughing] Fair enough.

**Lou Whiting** [01:02:14] We did play T.C. Williams though.

**Kerry Reed** [01:02:15] Oh really? Okay.

**Lou Whiting** [01:02:17] We played a lot of, I don't remember all the schools, are you familiar with Maggie Walker.

**Kerry Reed** [01:02:21] I've heard of it.

**Lou Whiting** [01:02:22] It's down in Richmond I think. Yeah but we played T.C. Williams and I don't know, this one guy over here, he used to tell me, man, we beat y'all. Like man, y'all had a dude with 1 eye. I don't know what that dudes name was. Willie or something. Like man y'all had a dude with 1 eye man. How we gonna let a dude with one eye beat us, you know. But he was their best player.

**Kerry Reed** [01:02:41] Oh wow.

**Lou Whiting** [01:02:42] Yeah, it was man. What T.C. was, I think it was pretty good, but man we stomped them, you know. But other times we would come off. I don't know if you remember, Lorton Reformatory.

**Kerry Reed** [01:02:53] Say that one more time, I'm sorry.

**Lou Whiting** [01:02:54] Lorton Reformatory it used to be a, you know, it was a detention center.

**Kerry Reed** [01:02:57] Oh, yeah yeah.

**Lou Whiting** [01:02:58] Yeah it was a federal prison. Still, you see remnants of it down here.

**Kerry Reed** [01:03:03] Yeah, it's like an art like workhouse now. Yeah absolutely.

**Lou Whiting** [01:03:06] Well that was a jail, was a huge jail. So everybody that did time from D.C., that's where they would send them.

**Kerry Reed** [01:03:12] Oh, okay.

**Lou Whiting** [01:03:13] Yeah. And it was thousands of convicts in there, right. And a lot of them was from my neighborhood. And my high school coach, what I do, that's when I say, man, someone he wasn't rap type man, but he would take us down there to scrimmage the inmates. I kid you not. My 11th grade year when I said we were undefeated.

**Kerry Reed** [01:03:38] Yeah.

**Lou Whiting** [01:03:39] Lawton is the only team we lost to. They whipped the living daylights out of us, man. They did. I mean, yeah, they killed us man. They treated us like we couldn't play. They had guys lifting weights on the sideline, they come in the game, and when they hack you man you feel like every bone in your body broken, you know. And they roughed us up man. They just knew we were little kids. And the thing about it, they were from our neighborhood, we knew a lot of 'em, stuff like that man. What they was just the environment was. I thought that was abuse for our coach to take us down there, but they got us ready, you know. So I would say yeah I've been in Woodbridge a couple of times but it was just to play basketball. And we went to Lawton and you know, it was hard getting in there and it was hard getting out. I'll never forget that experience man. That was a corrupt environment.

**Kerry Reed** [01:04:44] Yeah. [To] say the least. So you mentioned to me earlier how you viewed, you know, sports as a sort of escapism. And it was a way out of the environment that you were in.

**Lou Whiting** [01:05:01] No, no.

**Kerry Reed** [01:05:01] So were you very socially conscious as a youth? I know that you probably spent a lot of your time playing ball.

**Lou Whiting** [01:05:09] I wasn't an activist.

**Kerry Reed** [01:05:11] Okay.

**Lou Whiting** [01:05:11] I was socially conscious. And I talked to my wife about this all the time. Growing up in that environment, and because all of my teachers or instructors were African-American, they always talked about things in the African-American community. Inventions, inventors, public figures that you wouldn't learn in any other environment. For example, we never paid attention to Christopher Columbus Day or Columbus Day, whatever you call it. Because they taught us in school that Christopher Columbus didn't discover America, you know, how can you discover a country when people are already here, you know stuff like that. You know they would talk about Islam, you know. Then you had the Black Panthers. They was grandmas up this little kids in little groups, and they would talk to us about the government and all of that kind of stuff. And this stuff combined with the stuff that we learned in school as far as the history books and stuff like that, you know. They kind of got away from the history books because the history books didn't expose us to the things we needed to know. So I came out of the public school system a lot more grounded than most people who didn't come out of the public school environment. So I knew about a lot of black inventors, activists, and stuff like that. Even though I wasn't, you know, so I was socially conscious from that perspective, and then also being in that environment, you know that white police officers treated you differently.

**Kerry Reed** [01:07:07] Yeah.

**Lou Whiting** [01:07:08] And being a basketball player, I realized that if I could play, it would open doors for me and I would be tolerated and allowed in different environments. And that's a true statement. Especially when I went off to college. And by the way, that was a hard transition for me.

**Kerry Reed** [01:07:29] I can imagine, yeah.

**Lou Whiting** [01:07:30] You know. I never experienced racism until I went to college because my environment was 99% black. So the first time I experienced racism, I get to college. And I really didn't handle it properly. I really didn't. I would say, let's see school started in September. By the time December rolled around, I got kicked out of 3 dorms. So I had to live off campus the rest of my college career. I even got kicked out of the athletic dorm, and I'm like that dorm was a cruddiest one on campus man. So I'm like that's when I knew I had problems. I'm like how you get kicked out of athletic dorm, everybody here cruddy. But yes, that's when I begin to experience racism and the benefits of being an athlete. We good?

**Kerry Reed** [01:08:25] Yes, just testing the audio.

**Lou Whiting** [01:08:28] Okay.

**Kerry Reed** [01:08:30] So it seems like your social consciousness and awareness of black history came through the community. Is that fair to say?

**Lou Whiting** [01:08:38] Yeah.

**Kerry Reed** [01:08:38] Okay, interesting.

**Lou Whiting** [01:08:38] No doubt.

**Kerry Reed** [01:08:41] So along that same vein, when you came to Alexandria, going to, you know, the Canal 8, did you notice similar I guess issues that faced the black community in D.C. when you were in Alexandria, or is that not something you were paying attention to?

**Lou Whiting** [01:08:59] I considered them having it made to be honest with you.

**Kerry Reed** [01:09:01] Really?

**Lou Whiting** [01:09:02] Yeah.

**Kerry Reed** [01:09:03] Can you describe why you thought that way?

**Lou Whiting** [01:09:05] Because the public housing over here wasn't like the public housing in Washington D.C.. The school system was different and I saw that as I got older. Just the whole environment, there wasn't open air drug markets over here, you didn't see a lot of people selling drugs standing on the corner. Kids running around 4 or 5, 6 years old all night long, you know, shooting, police sirens all day long, every day. And so this whole environment over here was totally different. As a matter of fact, when I got married and I moved over here, I had a hard time going to sleep at night because it was too quiet. I mean, you could actually hear the crickets over here. Like man, where'd these crickets come from, why they so loud. Nah a couple of gunshots and sirens man, I can



go right to sleep, you know. But most of the time we was always outside anyway man so. But it was totally different over here. There was more public housing. No, no, no, there was more private housing over here. You know, single family homes, you know. Didn't look like in D.C. at all. Manicured yards. It's just the environment, just totally different. It was more peaceful over here. Restaurants. Back when I was growing up, they didn't have a lot of restaurants in D.C. because of riots, you know, they burned down D.C. when Dr. King was murdered, then the city was up in flames. So it was not like it was a lot of places you can go. But the culture was still in D.C. because D.C. was still chocolate city back then. So there was a lot of house parties and stuff like that that you can get involved with, but it wasn't like you can go out to dinner and all of that kind of stuff, nice malls and stuff like that.

**Kerry Reed** [01:11:31] So when did you move to Alexandria?

**Lou Whiting** [01:11:35] When I got married.

**Kerry Reed** [01:11:36] When was that?

**Lou Whiting** [01:11:37] That was 1985 or '86.

**Kerry Reed** [01:11:46] And you said your wife was from Alexandria.

**Lou Whiting** [01:11:48] Yeah, she grew up in Alexandria. She grew up in Alexandria, actually she was the 1976 senior class president at T.C. Williams.

**Kerry Reed** [01:11:57] Oh, wow. Okay.

**Lou Whiting** [01:11:59] She was all part of that Remember the Titans thing and all of that.

**Kerry Reed** [01:12:02] Okay.

**Lou Whiting** [01:12:02] Yeah, she knew all of the athletes. She was the class president during that time, and so my wife was pretty popular. As a matter of fact, she worked for the city of Alexandria for 20 years.

**Kerry Reed** [01:12:13] Oh wow.

**Lou Whiting** [01:12:14] I think she could have ran for mayor and won to be honest with you man, but she still has a lot of connections around in the city. But when we got married, I was living in Maryland at the time. I decided, you know, when I came home from college, I was used to being independent. And so it's funny, I told my mom when I graduate, I came home and I said imma sit around and imma be a lousy bum for 30 days. I said, I might not even take a shower and shave. That's what I told her. And I sat around in the projects man, in our house, public housing. And I ain't do nothing. I just laid around and looked at TV, all that kind of stuff, stuff I wasn't supposed to be doing. And then after 30 days, I literally got up, hit the pavement, started looking for a job. My first real job, nah my first job, I got a part time job stuffing newspapers. I don't know if you remember this company, General Newspapers?

**Kerry Reed** [01:13:12] Nah.

**Lou Whiting** [01:13:12] Okay. They were in down Springfield, they were Springfield, Virginia. I had a part time job stuffing the Sunday newspapers, you know, and then I just moved on from there. And I guess the first real job I had, I would say I worked for Frito Lay, which was a subsidiary of PepsiCo, and that's where I met my wife. We worked in the same place. She was already, I don't know if you familiar with the term, she was already born again. She was in church, I wasn't. I was nowhere near the church, you know. And I remember the first time I saw her, I was attracted to her because I was attracted everybody, you know what I mean Kerry? [Laughing] I was attracted to anything that had a dress on. And I saw her and said, "Oh, you cute." And I hit on her, I did, I hit on her. And it was D.C. style, you know, it was terrible. That's what it was, it was terrible. But she rejected me and I got mad, had a couple of choice words to say to her and stuff, which wasn't nice. But because we work together, I had a chance to watch her, everyday because I'm thinking, she fake. Most church people fake anyway. That's what I was thinking, because I wasn't raised in church, you know, at all. And as I watched her every day, she never changed. And she saw the bad side of me. Yeah, she saw the bad side of me. And I guess, I don't know how long the time was, but I walked up to her one day, and 'cause I ain't like anything about what she said to me when I hit on her. First thing she asked me was, "Was I saved?" I didn't know what that meant man. I'm like saved, what that, if I got to be there, I could pretend, you know. I just wanted her, you know, that's it. And yeah, I had bad intentions man. But she said, "I can't date you, you're not saved." And that really ticked me off, you know. But nonetheless, I watched her, and she showed me something different. Because she was consistent every day. She became like friends with the other people at the job. One of them, 1 or 2 of them guys I homed with at work, one of them was my roommate, we had a condo together. And they all would get together on Friday night, going out to restaurant dinners, stuff like that. Well because my lifestyle was different, Friday night I went back up into the public housing and sold drugs and stuff like that, you know, so my whole life, it was like night and day from what she lived. And even the other guy that I was friends with, and I remember one Friday I walked up to her, I said, "Hey, you still go to Bible study on Fridays?" Which I couldn't understand that concept, you know. And she said, "Yeah." So I said, "Can you come pick me up and bring me the Bible study?" She looked at me like she ain't believe me right, 'cause it was no indication Kerry, at all. It was just right out of the blue.

**Kerry Reed** [01:16:28] Yeah.

**Lou Whiting** [01:16:28] I'm like, I'm want to go to Bible study, come pick me up. 'Cause I knew something was missing in my life. I was just, it was just too much stuff going on man, you know. I wasn't like one of them, you seen people when they hit rock bottom, they don't have nothing left. I wasn't at that point when I was at rock bottom, what my rock bottom was. And needless to say, Kerry, she came by that Friday night and picked me up man. And well I remember her knocking on the door. Had a Heineken in my hand, one in my back pocket. I just took a couple of shots of Johnnie Walker Red straight. That was my best, my favorite drink. And snorted some cocaine, smoked a big old fat joint. I rolled that joker, it was about that long, smoked out. So by the time she knock on the door, I know my eyes was bloodshot red man. And I'm like, okay I'm ready, you know. And she went to her car and sat in the car, she took off driving, and I sipped on my Heineken. She ain't saying nothing to

me, and I say nothing to her, I was just enjoying my Heineken. Finished that bottle, threw it out the window, pulled the other one out my back pocket and kept drinking, and we finally get to Bible study. I ain't know where I was man, well I was high as a kite too. And I figure man, my mindset honestly, Kerry was, I'm a trip all these church folk. That's what my mindset was, 'cause I had never been to church since I was 12. That night I got saved. That night was the last time I smoked, drank, partied, or dated another one. My whole mindset was like free for the first time in years. I was no longer an angry black man. Because I was angry, I was angry, that's why I did all the fighting, I was just angry. Just mad at everything man. I never got along with coaches, you know, everybody was my enemy, you know. And that night I got saved, my whole life changed. And I realized even though we weren't dating or anything like that, I knew she was my wife, you know. And I remember that night I went back home, flushed all my drugs down the toilet, poured all my liquor, beer, everything down the drain. Got rid of everything. Got in my car and drove back up to the public housing where my siblings were, and I told them I wasn't selling drugs anymore, said my life changed. They laughed me out of the house. They thought I was joking. Oh man, they started throwing joints at me, said, "Come on over, hit this thing, we don't wanna hear that crap," you know. And I said, "I'm telling you, I'm serious. I ain't doing any more." So I left. I left out the house and that's when my whole life changed. And I started going to Bible study every Friday night. Never missed a Bible study. And so then we started dating, on dates with Bible study, that was it. I tripped a lot of people off, and I lost a lot of friends. It was like I had to play, you know, but I didn't care 'cause I wanted her, you know. And then with my life changing like that, I'm like, how does that happen? Who is it that stopped me in my tracks? And that stirred up a curiosity. And I think, maybe a year later, my wife and well, she wasn't my wife at that time, but we eloped, and I told her I wanted to marry her. I mean I was committed. Never said anything, never dated, man I had a black book full of people man, you know. And she saw it, she saw my lifestyle man. She saw how women were running in and out all over the place man, you know, they would meet me after work and we trying to leave out of the warehouse and stuff and be waiting for me to park. So she saw that, but she still came to pick me up, took me to Bible study man. And like I said that night I got saved and she's the only person I've dated since then. So a year later, I said I want to get married, and I say, I can't go any longer. I say, I been committed to you for a whole year, I said, I've been celibate, that's something that I never dreamed I would ever do. I was celibate for a whole year because that's how much respect I have for her and what she stood for. And we went to a Justice of the Peace, and so we eloped. And so, after we got married, we moved over here to Alexandria, which I'm like, I must be, I must be changed. [Laughing]

**Kerry Reed** [01:21:41] That's funny.

**Lou Whiting** [01:21:41] Yeah, Alexandria. Yeah no, that was a whole interesting thing man. Yeah. Never thought I live in Virginia, let alone Alexandria. Yeah and so my whole life changed man.

**Kerry Reed** [01:21:56] Absolutely. Where was the Bible study?

**Lou Whiting** [01:22:03] Clinton, Maryland.

**Kerry Reed** [01:22:04] Maryland.

**Lou Whiting** [01:22:05] Yeah. Clinton, Maryland. Even though she lived in Virginia, she used to sing in this gospel group.

**Kerry Reed** [01:22:13] Okay.

**Lou Whiting** [01:22:14] And that's how she ended up over in Clinton, Maryland, because the originator of the group lived in the Clinton, Maryland.

**Kerry Reed** [01:22:22] Okay.

**Lou Whiting** [01:22:25] Yeah, yup. So that's how we got connected to Clinton, Maryland. But she still, she wasn't gonna leave Virginia, for some reason she just loved Virginia.

**Kerry Reed** [01:22:36] Right.

**Lou Whiting** [01:22:37] And I'm like, I can't stay in Virginia. It was really interesting man. I don't know what made me say, okay, we're going to get married, we'll come over here and live in Virginia. We actually moved in with her mom. So I lived with my mother in law, and we lived there for 3 years at least. And I would be looking around, that's probably one of the other sections in here, and I started recognizing something that I was exposed to growing up in Washington, D.C., and that was gentrification. And I remember mentioning that to my wife in the beginning of our marriage, and she didn't understand what I was saying, or she probably thought I was crazy too. I said no, I said, this city is under gentrification. And I explained to her that I went through it in D.C., and I said I recognize the signs. And I said, the problem was my mother wasn't educated enough to navigate the gentrification, so she got caught up in the extreme negative aspects of gentrification. So she lost the public housing that she lived in for like, almost 30 years. She had nowhere to go. The neighborhood they weren't doing anything for it, it became extremely dilapidated. I watched how my neighborhood actually was the 2nd public housing development that they tore down. And to this day, I've been married 38 years, so I would say about maybe 40 years now, they still have not built anything on that property. And I really think they just wanted to get us out of there. That's what made me recognize gentrification. They wanted to get rid of all of the public housing first. The next thing was to make it hard for employment, you know, jobs that will allow you to afford to live in an atmosphere of gentrification. So they started getting rid of a lot of little fast food restaurants, the little corner stores where people would get jobs and stuff like that. They started getting rid of the little trade classes that you can get in high school and learn a skill. This little things like that that I experienced, that I saw, and I began to recognize that was happening over in Alexandria. And I couldn't quite put all of the pieces together immediately, but I actually talked to my wife about it, and I think that's when I began to be interested in doing something from a social perspective.

**Kerry Reed** [01:25:41] Absolutely.

**Lou Whiting** [01:25:42] You know, because of the environment I came up in, not a lot of people made it out of there. My best friend died when he was 12, we were both 12 years old. So I was used to a lot of destruction and death, you know, poverty, violence and all of that, you know, and so the

environment over here in Virginia, in Alexandria, was just like night and day. But I was able to recognize the gentrification that was taking place.

**Kerry Reed** [01:26:15] So you mentioned that you moved in with your mother in law for several years. Where was your mother in law living at the time?

**Lou Whiting** [01:26:22] Like right over here on Wythe Street.

**Kerry Reed** [01:26:23] Oh, Wythe?

**Lou Whiting** [01:26:24] Yeah. 1005 Wythe Street. It was one block from Charles Houston. Right across street from Charles Houston is where she had a single family home. And actually, that was the first time I lived in a house where it had a front and a back yard. I'm like, oh this is different, you know. But of course, there was public housing right surrounding Charles Houston.

**Kerry Reed** [01:26:53] Yeah.

**Lou Whiting** [01:26:54] And I remember when I first moved in with my wife, I said, "I'm gonna walk around," I said, "I want to see what's out here." She said, "You can't do that." I say it's public housing across the street. She was really concerned. And I looked at her, I'm like, I say, "Those are projects?" I said, "Those not projects." And I said, "No, let me take you and show you what projects look like." So I took her back over to D.C. and said, "These are projects." And said, "Over here, these are not projects at all. This is not public housing. They got grass, you know, they don't have bars on the window, you know. They don't have people selling drugs and stuff like that." I knew they were selling drugs, but the environment, it wasn't violent like it was over in D.C.. So I came over here, I actually would leave, you know, my mother in law's house and it was just fun for me to just walk around in the projects, 'cause it was nothing frightening about it at all. Sure I saw dudes standing around and stuff, and they just, they look soft to me, you know. I'm like man y'all just faking over here. That's what y'all doing, y'all just faking. So it was just totally different. I'll say the projects over here is different from the projects in D.C., you know.

**Kerry Reed** [01:28:14] So where did you see the signs of gentrification in the city? Because I imagine, if you're living on Wythe at the time, you're looking at the Atkins homes. So I'm curious, because you mentioned the steps right, the erasure of community jobs, the removal of local betterment classes for lack of a better term. So where in Alexandria while you were walking around, did you see these signs of gentrification?

**Lou Whiting** [01:28:46] I noticed that the fast food restaurants were disappearing.

**Kerry Reed** [01:28:49] Okay.

**Lou Whiting** [01:28:50] Okay, that was the first sign of gentrification.

**Kerry Reed** [01:28:52] Yeah.

**Lou Whiting** [01:28:53] You know, that meant that if you only had a high school education or you didn't graduate from high school, it was almost impossible for you to gain employment and to be able to take care of yourself or even your family. I mean, even today in Alexandria, its just one McDonald's.

**Kerry Reed** [01:29:22] In the city proper, yeah.

**Lou Whiting** [01:29:24] It used to be more than that.

**Kerry Reed** [01:29:25] Yeah.

**Lou Whiting** [01:29:26] You know, but I watched the little restaurants and stuff like that just disappear. And I noticed how people were moving out of public housing, but they wasn't moving people in to replace them. And that's what happened in D.C.. Whenever someone moved or they created rules that would allow them to put you out of public housing, that was the process of attrition, you know. And I watched the different communities in Alexandria try to fight against that, but you can't fight against gentrification, you know. And I watched how the same thing happened over here, happened in D.C., it hit a lot of the residents over here, and they never saw it coming, and they didn't know how to respond to it. They didn't know how to galvanize or come together to position themselves to come out at least with some type of victory, you know. You can't stop it. And I'm watching D.C. change from, it used to be chocolate city, it's not like that anymore, you know. Some of the things I see in D.C. now, I thought I would never see, you know. I can go down to downtown D.C. now and not have to worry about carrying my piece with me or anything like that, you know. 'Cause back when I was growing up in D.C., you only went downtown if you had bad intentions, you know. So that's what kind of trained me to kind of watch, because when you can't find employment it creates an environment on an atmosphere of survival. Okay. I can't find a job so I'mma rob you. And I can't find a job, so I'mma sell drugs, you know, stuff like that. It's a lot of implications that happens as a result of gentrification a normal person wouldn't pay attention to, unless you came up in that environment, okay. When my moms got caught up in that, she couldn't go anywhere. But I was in a place because I had got my education and finally had a real job, you know, where I had enough income 'cause I didn't have any kids. Don't know how I made it through all of that and not have any kids out of wedlock, which was amazing, you know. And I didn't have any bills, so I was getting money. Wasn't selling drugs anymore. And I just had all disposable income, you know, so I was able to take care of my mom's, you know, which that was one of my objectives to take care of my mother. And I wanted to get her up out of that environment, especially when I saw how bad it was getting. Another sign of gentrification was that they wouldn't come in and repair the housing, they just would let it become dilapidated. So it's not signs that if you're on the outside looking in, it's not glaring things that you see, but when once you go through it, you won't forget it at all. So everything that's happening now, Kerry, I'm not surprised.

**Kerry Reed** [01:32:45] Right.

**Lou Whiting** [01:32:47] Saw it coming like 20 years ago.

**Kerry Reed** [01:32:51] So you said that seeing all this stuff happen while you were living on Wythe, prompted you to want to get more involved in the community.

**Lou Whiting** [01:33:01] The first thing that really I got involved in was the housing aspect.

**Kerry Reed** [01:33:08] Okay.

**Lou Whiting** [01:33:09] Because like I said, I saw what my mom went through. And so I really got involved with the housing movement. That was the first social action that I took. And 'cause I saw them beginning to roll out that gentrification process with public housing in the city of Alexandria. So I started going to meetings, voicing my opinion, trying to be a part of the movement and stuff like that.

**Kerry Reed** [01:33:42] Were there any successes in this early housing advocacy?

**Lou Whiting** [01:33:49] No. Just like a snowball. The sad thing about it was there wasn't enough unity from the people who lived in public housing. There wasn't enough education amongst residents. A handful of them. But once that thing snowballs, it's really nothing you can do about it, it really isn't. And it's sad, when you see the older residents who's been living in this location, public housing for 25, 30 [years]. That's all they know, and now all of a sudden, they have nowhere to go. Or they can't afford to move back into where they came out of, or they can't afford to be relocated anywhere. And then the other part of it was they ran out of vouchers. That was by design. All of that to me goes into that part of gentrification. The only thing you can do is get out of the city, you know. If you don't get ahead of it, you can't really position yourself to really have impact in the community to help people out that's caught up in it. But you can't stop it. I know that sounds bleak and bad but, you know. If you're unskilled and uneducated, you don't have a chance, you know.

**Kerry Reed** [01:35:37] So after getting involved in housing advocacy, what did you do next?

**Lou Whiting** [01:35:53] That kind of took up a lot of my time.

**Kerry Reed** [01:35:56] Okay.

**Lou Whiting** [01:35:58] I think I did that for the 3 years I was over here, and then I decided that I just couldn't live in Alexandria anymore. And that's how I started having conversations with my wife, because I think seeing the signs of gentrification kind of affected me.

**Kerry Reed** [01:36:16] Yeah.

**Lou Whiting** [01:36:17] You know, I said, I can't go to this anymore. Watching what happens to people, people who don't know how to respond to it. And so finally, my wife was like, okay, let's move to Maryland. I think she kind of got tired of it too. What she was seeing, and nothing could be done about it, so we moved over to Maryland. And so that was the end of my social activism over here in Virginia, because I wasn't over here anymore. Yeah, I think out of sight, out of mind.

**Kerry Reed** [01:36:49] Yeah.

**Lou Whiting** [01:36:51] Kind of thing, it irritated me, that's what it did. It really, really irritated me. And it brought back memories of what I went through, and what I saw my mom go through. There were probably 1 or 2 public housing communities in D.C. that developer who cultivated the right strategy to combat gentrification, where they looked out for the residents that were being moved out of public housing, you know. So I really tried to do my part in introducing that to the movement over here in Alexandria, they just didn't catch it.

**Kerry Reed** [01:37:41] Yeah.

**Lou Whiting** [01:37:42] Because there was a solution to it, you know. It just didn't catch over here. I don't know why, and it was just kind of frustrating. So my best move was, okay, let me move, had my first child, and I'm like, I don't want them to come up in this environment, and so we left.

**Kerry Reed** [01:38:01] So did you start to look to become a pastor before or after you moved to Maryland?

**Lou Whiting** [01:38:11] It was after we moved back over to Maryland.

**Kerry Reed** [01:38:14] Okay.

**Lou Whiting** [01:38:16] It wasn't at the top of my bucket list man. It really wasn't. I was just happy that my life was different.

**Kerry Reed** [01:38:29] Yeah.

**Lou Whiting** [01:38:29] So wasn't my goal to be in any leadership position in the church at all. Like I said, I was just happy that my life was changed, didn't have to look over my shoulder anymore, didn't have to worry about enemies, you know, all of that kind of stuff. So it wasn't like, alright I want to be a pastor, so I'm going to church, I'm going to start out being a deacon. Nah, I ain't even want to be a deacon, I ain't want be nothing, I was just happy just to go to church. I'm like, give me a broom, I'll sweep up a church, I don't need a title.

**Kerry Reed** [01:39:02] So was there a moment where you decided, no, I'm going to go look into being ordained? Or was it just this sort of naturally happened over time?

**Lou Whiting** [01:39:12] Yeah, it just kind of, I never looked for it. It might be hard for you to believe, but I didn't, I didn't, I never looked for it. And when I said I was just happy to be born again. We was attending a church over in Maryland, called the National Church of God, it was a megachurch at that time. Let's see how I will lay this out. I didn't pursue ordination or anything like that, but I was extremely active in the church. I was interested in growing spiritually, to know more about the Bible, so I would go to whatever Bible classes they offered. I went with no intentions of ending up as an ordained minister or anything, that was not my interest at all, I just wanted to know more about the God that changed my life. I'm like, how can someone I can't see impact my life like this? So that's what drove me. Couldn't understand a Bible, at all, I mean, I didn't even like it, it had no pictures in



it, you know, like how can I read this man, it's just all words, you know. But it was a part of the Bible that grabbed me, and it was in the Old Testament where it was a lot of fighting. Well, I was accustomed to that, you know. And I'm like man, some of these things I'm seeing in here man, kind of remind me of some of the guys in my neighborhood man. I'm like, okay I can roll with you, you know, stuff like that's what piqued my interest. But I was just hungry to know God, that's it. So whatever information I can grab ahold of, that's what I went for. And I guess, the pastor's saw my passion, my commitment, and asked me to join ministry and you know, participate in different aspects of ministry, like children's church, blah, blah, blah, that kind of stuff. And that's what I did, with no goal of becoming a pastor or deacon or nothing. Like I said, the best way I can put it Kerry is when you come out of a violent environment and now you in peace. I'm like, I don't wanna go back there, you follow me, I don't want to be angry anymore.

**Kerry Reed** [01:41:37] Yeah.

**Lou Whiting** [01:41:37] It feels good to smile, to be happy, to have people who are making progress is heading in a different direction and all of that kind of stuff just intrigued me, you know. So therefore, I was just happy just to go to church. That's it. Getting up with my family, going to church, you know, and then once you get that involved man, then you start seeing stuff.

**Kerry Reed** [01:42:04] Right?

**Lou Whiting** [01:42:06] And so I really like I definitely don't want to be a leader man, I said people crazy, [laughing] I kid you not. I'm like nah, I just want to go to church or read the Bible and build on my prayer life. Blah, blah, blah, I want to get to know God, and I didn't know God was working with me all along, I have no idea. I never wanted to be in the front, I wasn't trying to be popular because, I mean I played in front of 15,000 people a couple of times, you know. I'm like crowds is just, superstars never faze me, you know, popularity was never my thing because I've been exposed to it already. When I went off to college man, it was always the gym was packed, you know, banner with my name on it, and all that kind of stuff. So it was, none of that stuff fazed me anymore. A matter of fact, I was like, I was tired of it, to be honest with you man. I just wanted to just grow spiritually. That's it. So go ahead.

**Kerry Reed** [01:43:11] So what role then do you see faith having in communities who are suffering from, you know, gentrification or eminent domain or things like that? It seems like and please correct me if I'm wrong, but it seems like your faith has grown out of experiencing turbulence to put it politically. So yeah, what role do you see faith having in Black communities?

**Lou Whiting** [01:43:42] Let's see if I understand what you're asking. What role does faith play in my life, or just in black communities all together?

**Kerry Reed** [01:43:54] I guess I guess you could say both.

**Lou Whiting** [01:43:56] Okay. I think as an African American people, well culture, I think we're inherently spiritual. I think that's just a part of our nature. And what I learned growing up in D.C., that a lot of the songs, the Negro spirituals they call them, were actually signals. And they sang spiritual

songs that were actually signals. And that's why I say I think we were just naturally or inherently, spiritual. And so faith has always been a part of our culture, it's always been a part of the foundation of us as a race of people. And that's my perspective, I don't know if everybody will say the same thing. But we were such a persecuted people in America that that was our foundation, you know, we look to to heaven, we look to God for our help, or my ancestors did. That was the only reliance that they had, and that's the only hope that they had, that there was always a better life. And so that's why I say, I believe that the foundation of us as a race of people, it's just spiritual. And even growing up in the community that I grew up in, people were in church. They went to church, it's just that I didn't. But one of the things I realized when I got older was that the church never came out to get me. And I could have died in my sins. And I mean, I never thought I would live to be 21 when I was growing up in that environment. My goal was to live until I was 21, and when I reached 21, I'm like wow, everything else icing on the cake so that I had no guardrails after that, you know. But the church never came out of the building to get me, or anybody else. And from that perspective, I think the church really needed to change a lot, and it did down through the years, it's not the same today as it was back then. Church wasn't appealing to me.

**Kerry Reed** [01:46:44] What church did you go to growing up?

**Lou Whiting** [01:46:47] It was a neighborhood church we went off to every now and again. It's called Beulah Baptist Church.

**Kerry Reed** [01:46:52] Beulah Baptist Church.

**Lou Whiting** [01:46:53] It's on Dix Street, northeast D.C., Dix Street, 58th and Dix.

**Kerry Reed** [01:47:03] And where do you go to, or minister at now?

**Lou Whiting** [01:47:06] Well, I'm the pastor and the founder of My Father's House Christian Church on Eisenhower Avenue. That's a whole long story, we'd probably have to carve out another day for that one.

**Kerry Reed** [01:47:22] When did you found that church?

**Lou Whiting** [01:47:24] When?

**Kerry Reed** [01:47:25] Yeah.

**Lou Whiting** [01:47:26] 2001, January 7th. Yep, that's when I came back to Alexandria, which was kind of baffling to me. And my wife was opposed to that too. She's like, we don't need to start a church over in Alexandria, why we can't start a church over in Maryland? I said, that's what God's speaking. He spoke to me to say, go back to Alexandria.

**Kerry Reed** [01:47:55] That's what's so curious and what I was about to ask why Alexandria? Why did you feel the need?

**Lou Whiting** [01:48:02] This is interesting because this environment over here is Baptist, predominantly Baptist over here or Catholic. And I think a lot of it had to do with the fact that there were people over here that God could see, and God knew that I could impact their lives. Because even though Alexandria was going through gentrification, there are people here that still needed hope, even through that. There were people over here that wanted something different besides tradition. And that's what was different about me. I came over here, started a church that didn't have a steeple, so for years people never looked at us as a church, you know, so this environment over here was extremely hard to penetrate, you know. All the churches have steeples is Baptist. Matter of fact, you can go down Alfred Street it's nothing but rows of churches going all the way down Alfred Street. And even that was kind of peculiar to me when I came over here. I'm like, why is it like that? And then as I begin to understand the community of Alexandria, I realize that that was my desire, you know, because of the racism that existed over here in Alexandria. There's a corridor over there on Queen Street, I'm not sure you're familiar with it, it's a very historic area. There's like 4 or 5 barber shops right there in the area, maybe 4 or 5 churches that's right there. But that was a thriving retail district in the city of Alexandria, and that's the only place that African-Americans were allowed to start their businesses, but that's not talked about a lot.

**Kerry Reed** [01:50:10] Yeah.

**Lou Whiting** [01:50:10] In Alexandria and as a matter of fact, I wanted the city to put historical signs up in that area because all the history that's over there. Barbershops and hair salons were very important to our community, always have been. That's where you hear a lot of solutions to your problems, where you cultivate a lot of relationships, where, you know, you encounter people that you respect and stuff like that. That's a whole another days conversation. Yeah. What time is it? 12:57.

**Kerry Reed** [01:50:51] Well, again, I'd love to have have you back, talk more about.

**Lou Whiting** [01:50:55] That's your call man.

**Kerry Reed** [01:50:56] Absolutely, it's been fabulous. I was curious about about the founding of the church because you also were a founding member of the Social Responsibility Group, the SRG.

**Lou Whiting** [01:51:10] Yeah.

**Kerry Reed** [01:51:11] So which came first then? Was it the SRG or was it the church?

**Lou Whiting** [01:51:14] The church.

**Kerry Reed** [01:51:15] The church came first?

**Lou Whiting** [01:51:16] It was the church. I think I have unique God given ability to organize.

**Kerry Reed** [01:51:21] Okay.

**Lou Whiting** [01:51:26] And I believe that, I don't believe, I know, that I have compassion for people who are hurting. Less than, the marginalized, the disenfranchised, that's a part of my fabric. And I

believe that's one of the reasons why God chose me to come over to Alexandria. You can't imagine how many people I've been able to encounter and store hope in their lives, change the trajectory of their life. Because I don't want anything from people, I think I've experienced enough great things in my life, so there's no strings attached to my relationships with people. I just want you to, my goal is to be an asset and not a liability to anybody. And I don't take anything for granted when I meet people. Like when I met Kerry, I didn't take it for granted. I said, there's something that's supposed to come out of this conversation to impact your life, you know, whether I'm sowing seed or watering seed is already in your life. And I said, I look at my life, you know, and God left me here to have the impact. So being 66 years old is now about, it's about legacy for me, it's not about riches, wealth, fame, none of that, you know. 'Cause I believe that I've achieved a lot in my life. I really have because I wasn't supposed to get this far, you know, so the church was first and the church is what gave me visibility and it allowed people to become familiar with who I am.

**Kerry Reed** [01:53:34] So when did the SRG start?

**Lou Whiting** [01:53:37] Just before Covid.

**Kerry Reed** [01:53:38] Okay.

**Lou Whiting** [01:53:39] It was founded just before Covid, and I remember talking to a couple of the founders. We was like, wow we need to be more socially responsible, how do we impact Alexandria and some of the issues that we see? And it was a couple of things that was put out on the table man, it was actually too many things because you can't do everything, you know. And we was like, okay, let's just form a group. It's funny because everyone in the group didn't know how to form a group or put any structure to it. [Laughing] Oh, man. But I have that ability to do that, that's why I was able to come over and start a church. Nobody helped me, even at some of the larger churches over there, never came out and say, hey, Pastor Lou, how can we help you? Can we help you structure, organize, can we support you financially? Nobody never said a thing, you know, and I've been pastor for 23 years. But because I developed that skill set, I was able to start several organizations. There are a lot of churches that I've helped structure, get their 501C3 status, never charged a dime for anything. It's just that is knowledge that came easy for me, that was just a gift God gave me, the gift of administration, you know. And so I was able to sit down and structurally put the SRG together. Set up the different roles, positions the board of directors, the whole everything from A to Z. I did even file for 501C3 status recognition in the state of Virginia, the federal government, all of them. This all took place before Covid. Our first social interactional activity came as a result of Covid. And we realize that when Covid hit the world, and narrowed it down to Alexandria, that it had more impact on the marginalized and the disenfranchised community than anybody else. And we begin to see the effects of it. It affected everything, it was nothing that Covid didn't touch. But we decided to galvanize and that will be our first strategic effort is to get the necessary information out to the marginalized communities. How can we mobilize them to get the vaccinations, blah blah blah, everything that was needed. And so we connected and partnered with the Alexandria Health Department and other city organizations, and we talked it through. Okay, what can we do? And we say, hey, we're a community based organization, we're going to get out here and knock on the doors, we're going to do what

nobody else wants to do. We'll go to the marginalized communities, and we'll go door by door and we'll pass out the information. We will encourage them, and we will set up opportunities for them to come out and get shots like in Charles Houston Rec Center and stuff like that. We made it easy. Easier, I should say. So we went to places that nobody else wanted to go to. And as a result of it, News Channel 7 picked up on what we were doing and came out one day and followed us all day long as we knocked on doors. What was interesting about it was some of them, a lot of them actually were my members like, hey why you ain't been to church, you know, that thing was funny. It was, "Hey, Pastor Lou," and stuff like that man. And it was actually a blessing, you know, 'cause to me, church is not about being in an auditorium, church is outside of that building. And so I enjoyed that, and plus I enjoyed people, talking to people, interacting with them. I got to see, you know, actually have impact, you know, but a lot of people, they didn't understand how to handle Covid in a marginalized community, because all of them went on the internet, stuff like that, you know. Even the Hispanic community, you know, trying to begin to communicate and listen, you can't just go knock on their doors because they undocumented, you know, stuff like that. I'm like, y'all need to understand, okay, they can't go to school, you can't send one laptop home because it's 5 kids in a house. A laptop ain't gonna last long, you know, stuff like that. Undocumented people are not going to answer the door because you got a laptop, you know, stuff like that. So it really moved to SRG in a place to have visibility, that's what Covid did. And we ended up getting the proclamation from the city for those efforts and stuff. And I think that was the beginning of the SRG having some level of influence around in the city.

**Kerry Reed** [01:59:18] Absolutely.

**Lou Whiting** [01:59:20] So continuing to add structure to it. We had to pick out key strategies because we wanted to be effective, we wanted to do a lot, but the way to have impact is to narrow down our strategy. So just coming into that next year I say, okay, let's just pick 3 things that we want to do, and Douglass Memorial was one of 'em. Okay, and we said, okay, let's tap with that. Let's see what we can do with the school system, which is extremely difficult to work with. Oh my God. I could never understand that. Yeah so Douglass Memorial was one of them. We wanted to establish some level of partnership with Alexander City Public Schools, let's try one more we picked up too. I never remember offhand. And the other thing I endeavored to was to start some solid partnerships around in the city with the Social Responsibility Group. And that's been working pretty good, it's been working pretty good. But what I'm learning, Kerry, is that there a lot of hidden barriers. And they can frustrate you because you never know that you're going to run into them until you run into 'em.

**Kerry Reed** [02:00:54] Yeah.

**Lou Whiting** [02:00:55] Like oh man that's frustrating. Well yeah Covid's kind of like when we kicked off and we got that proclamation and then the social responsibility kind of became a name that was floating around in the city. We wanted to be a voice for the voiceless, we wanted to have a seat at the table, you know, things of that nature. It's not that we wanted to be popular, there were other organizations still around in the city that, you know, they were doing whatever they did, you know. So it wasn't a thing of being competitive.

**Kerry Reed** [02:01:28] Yeah.

**Lou Whiting** [02:01:29] We just wanted to have impact.

**Kerry Reed** [02:01:34] So after the initial success that you had reaching out to marginalized communities during Covid, what, why Douglass Cemetery? Why did the SRG want to help with the Douglas Initiative.

**Lou Whiting** [02:01:54] Well, it was really Michael Johnson's passion. And I was like, okay, how can we support that passion? How can we drive it home, you know? Especially once you start understanding the history of Douglass Memorial in how that is intertwined with the city, the history in the city of Alexandria. I think one of the things that really kind of just got in my fiber of my thinking is when I found out that there were 3 ancient cargo ships that were excavated right down here at the waterfront. And this was probably right around Covid. And right when we begin to take up, you know, just the mantle of having an impact with Douglass Memorial. And sometimes I can be overly analytical man, but I got to thinking about that. And I started talking to some of the city officials, and I'm like, how much did it cost to excavate 3 18th century ships? So what was the dollar figure? Nobody never said a thing. I said, it's got to cost millions of dollars, I said where the money come from? I think I was asking hard questions. And I think that's what probably kind of gave me a little reputation around the city where people don't want to talk to me, they run from me, all of that kind of stuff because I don't mind asking the hard questions, you know. And yeah, it made people uncomfortable because I would ask those questions in meetings. I started going to city meetings because one of our goals was to establish a voice in the city, you know, and to broaden our influence around in the city, to gain a seat at the table so we can be a voice for the marginalized. And so I would take things like that, like, okay, what's the dollar figure on excavating 3 18th century ships? Where are they? What's the purpose of them? Okay. Could it be possible that those cargo ships, some of the cargo were slaves? And I said, you know, that there were tunnels built from the harbor going all the way up through Old Town. And I said, because the citizens that live down in Old Town, they didn't want to smell the stench from the cargo or the slaves that came off the ship. And I say, could it be that Wilkes Street was smelling all the way down here, that maybe some of the slaves were buried in Douglass Memorial Cemetery, you know. So I try to talk in a way where it kind of synchronized together. I said, this is a part of the history of the city of Alexandria, and look how are you treating it, you know. And Michael Johnson did a great job of just really bringing it to the forefront. And we got back on Channel 7 again because they followed us for Covid, now back out here for Douglass Memorial. And we brought so much of attention to it that they just couldn't ignore it anymore, you know, with the pictures. And I figured out ways, along with Michael Johnson and some of the others in the group, like what can be our strategy in bringing attention to this grave site? And ultimately we wanted to expand to other historical grave sites around in the city. But that's how we started the you know, Douglass Memorial was so dilapidated, it still is, it's not where it's supposed to be here. But working with Gretchen, and she's been great for us, Gretchen, you guys have been awesome for us, man. And I remember talking to Gretchen about putting together that initial proposal to take it down to Richmond. And I was collaborating with John Chapman, and I was going to get together with some SRG members, and we will go down there to the legislative session and see if we can ask questions and talk to some of the

legislators down there about paying attention to Douglass Memorial, blah, blah, all that kind of stuff. But because of Covid, nobody really wanted to interact that much. But they approved that proposal for \$2.1 million dollars or something. So that was the beginning, that was the beginning, I hope I'm not just rambling on.

**Kerry Reed** [02:06:41] No, not at all. You're answering a lot of my questions. Your answers are preempting a lot of things I want to ask, which is terrific. But I am curious, though because, you know, not growing up in Alexandria and you know, it being over there on, on Wilkes, it's rather out of the way if you don't know exactly where Douglass is. So I was curious, when was the first time that you saw that you visited Douglass?

**Lou Whiting** [02:07:09] Oh, shucks. Went with Michael Johnson one day, he came to me and he said, "Lou, you know, my ancestors are buried over in this gravesite. And he said he was just frustrated, you know, because of the condition of it." And I heard his heart and I say, "Let's go over there, look at it." And I was just blown out of the water man. I'm like, this is the condition of this graveyard. I'm like, oh my God. And that's what got me, you know. Because I heard his heart, you know, and Mike he's socially active, and so we clicked from that perspective, you know. Okay, this is something that let's just push this, let's get behind it, we don't know where it's going to go. We don't know what's going to happen, but let's just represent those that can't talk, you know, those that's buried here, you know. Let's talk about the history, the connection to the history of the city of Alexandria. Let's bring it to the forefront. Let's not let it be swept up under the carpet.

**Kerry Reed** [02:08:16] Yeah.

**Lou Whiting** [02:08:16] You know, so it was grind, it still is a grind. But we were both passionate about it, you know, even though I don't have any ancestors that's buried here, you know. I just think that you should give honor where honor is due. And just because you're deceased or you're dead, don't mean that you should be dishonored. And I think history is important, even if it's bad history, you know, it's still history. And that's something that I would say I'm very, very passionate about is the history of the African-American. And that's a whole different story. I don't even want to get into that. But that means a lot to me. And, you know, I'll say this and then we probably gotta get ready to wrap this up man. I was disinterested in the Bible, when I first got saved. It just didn't make sense because growing up in Washington D.C., and being influenced by Black Panthers, Black Muslims, I could never understand why pictures were hanging around in public houses, in people house, my friends houses and stuff like that, of a picture of a white Jesus with blue eyes. As a kid, I don't even know why I thought this way man, but it just didn't make any sense to me.

**Kerry Reed** [02:10:06] Right.

**Lou Whiting** [02:10:11] And with the information that I was getting about our culture and history, it just didn't line up. And I was always told growing up as a kid that the Bible was the white man's gospel. I mean, they pushed that in our spirit. So when I first got saved and started going to church, I struggled. I mean, I struggled. I did. But because my life changed that night, I didn't let it go. I said something's not right, I need to understand, I want to know the truth. And I begin to realize based on my own studies, there is no way it could be the white man's gospel. Because first of all, who gon'

tell on themselves like that. It just ain't make any sense? I'm like, I wouldn't put in a book man, that I was watching a woman on a roof, and then I decided to rape her and kill her husband and all that kind of stuff, man. And I'm like, no man, ain't that truthful? You know, I'm like, no. And so I had a whole different perspective on how I looked at the Bible, and I realized as I read it for myself, that part of the problem is that people don't read the Bible. They go by what they hear. But I no longer wanted to do that, I wanted to know for myself. The first thing I realized when I read the book of Genesis. When you start talking about. The Euphrates, the Jordan River and all of that. I'm like that's in Africa. They never told me that when I was growing up, you follow me? And so I just went on a mission. I studied the Bible before, I stopped listening to people, I wanted to know for myself. And I gathered the right study tools and how to study the Bible. That's what set me free. I said, let's say God is not black, he's not white, he's a spirit, he's God. He's all things to all people. I'm like, who messed this up? I say, man. Said man messed this up. So really that set me free, you know it really did. But it didn't negate the fact that history is important and significant, you know, we were all made from one blood. And those are the things that I learn from the Bible. That race is not mentioned in the Bible, but one time, and it didn't mean what we think it means today. When God used that word race one time in the Old Testament he was talking about the heathens. He was talking about those who didn't serve him. It wasn't talking about black, white, Asian or anything, and I learned that from studying the Bible myself. And so it gives me a whole different perspective on how to live in this society. And I believe that's why God sent me back over here to start a church.

**Kerry Reed** [02:13:51] Absolutely.

**Lou Whiting** [02:13:52] Because I look at people through the eyes of Jesus Christ. That's the only thing that's important to me. I mean, yeah, cultural differences do exist, but it should never be a dividing point. And that's how I look at it. We can have the differences of opinion. I mean, there's differences in understanding the Bible, but that shouldn't be a dividing point, that's how I look at it. So I was able to here come over here and start a church, and the church is supposed to be nondenominational. It's not based on anybody else's tradition. And because I wasn't raised in tradition, I came over here raw or should I say pliable. God can use me freely. And so when you come in my church, if you used to tradition, it'll probably trip you out, you know, most of the people in my congregation, especially before Covid, they were all young people. If you come in my church, you don't see me standing up there with a robe on. I just didn't like robes because I wasn't traditional, you know, I ain't wear a suit, you know, I feel like if I'm a leader, then I should be able to be touched and stuff. You know, stuff like that. So I was just totally different. I just didn't fit in those denominations, you know I didn't. I would go visit a church, they bring me in as a guest speaker and I'm like, hey, here a robe, I'm like I don't wear a robe, you know, stuff like that. I'll just never, it just wasn't me. Now, I'm not knocking tradition because a little tradition is good, you know, and we still believe in christening babies and baptism and all of that. It's just, you know, that other traditional stuff is we're not going to use that to be a barrier. You know, there shouldn't be any barriers to understanding God. Man I said a lot.

**Kerry Reed** [02:16:02] Absolutely.



**Lou Whiting** [02:16:03] You never gonna forget this interview.

**Kerry Reed** [02:16:04] No, certainly not. It's been absolute pleasure.

**Lou Whiting** [02:16:07] I went from one extreme to the other man. [Laughing]

**Kerry Reed** [02:16:10] It's been an absolute joy listening to you talk today.

**Lou Whiting** [02:16:13] Amen. Amen.

**Kerry Reed** [02:16:14] So we've been talking now, Pastor Lou for about 2 hours and 15 minutes. It's been an absolute pleasure hearing speak today.

**Lou Whiting** [02:16:22] Thank you.

**Kerry Reed** [02:16:23] I just have some closing questions for you, if that's all right. So firstly, what are your hopes for Douglass Cemetery moving forward?

**Lou Whiting** [02:16:34] I want to see it rise to a level of respectability, at a minimum, the other cemeteries that have received attention that they deserved, of course. But I don't want to see it raise to a level of respectability from the way it looks, the way it is talked about, the way it's handled. Because there's a lot of history there, even the name that's tied into it, Frederick Douglas, that's a historical name in the African-American community. And I guess one of the things that makes me passionate about it is that growing up in D.C., Frederick Douglass was a name that was very popular in the community. And, you know, he has a house over there, and the house is historic and is very well taken care of and stuff. Like the cemetery is named after somebody that's historical, you know. So, I want to see it get to a point where it can be a destination. And when I say destination, I'm not saying people going to be hanging out there, and stuff like that, but you should be able to go there and sit there and just enjoy the serenity and the peace. So that means you gotta look better.

**Kerry Reed** [02:18:06] Yeah.

**Lou Whiting** [02:18:06] You know, it should look honorable, you know, it should look respectable. You can go into D.C. and you can go to the Vietnam Memorial, and you can understand and see the honor that's given to those that are no longer here, you know. And that was one of the worse wars of this country, you know, but they treat them with respect and honor even though they're no longer here. You don't see people walking dogs across the Vietnam Memorial over there. And I think that's the same thing that should be done, over here at Douglass Memorial, even though it's not the largest one in the country or even in the city of Alexandria, it still deserves the same amount of honor and respect. And that's what I want from Douglass Memorial, you know, I want it to be associated with respect and honor.

**Kerry Reed** [02:18:58] Absolutely. Secondly, how would you like to see the city address black history in Alexandria moving forward?

**Lou Whiting** [02:19:11] That question can get me in trouble man. How would I like this city to address black history? I think the main thing for me is that I would like to see the city cultivate a true relationship with African-Americans in the city in it's culture. I don't think the relationship is real, I think it's a facade. I think it looks good on the outside. But where the rubber meets the road, I don't think there's really a relationship there, at all. I'll give you an example, this could be off the b path, but there are homeless people all around the city of Alexandria. There's one sitting that lives right in front of City Hall. I don't understand why that's acceptable. In front of City hall. I'm not saying pick the guy up and toss him on a curb somewhere, but that's a symbol to me of the insensitivity of the city of Alexandria to homeless people. That's how I'll look at that. So how would I like the city to treat African-Americans history? I think they need to have a true relationship, I just I don't think that exists. And there's some other examples I can give you, but the theme for while was diversity, equity and inclusion. It's almost like a rap song, you know, that's all it was, but you never saw it actually have any impact or benefit. You know, putting people of color in positions doesn't mean that's reality. Because if they have no influence then it's really insignificant. I mean they have a race and equity director but that person is not visible anywhere. You don't see them at major meetings and they could be, I don't know maybe I'll just cross paths will them, I haven't seen them. But I know the first one they had to me is like the city put that person in position after all the other major cities in the country had that same person or position that existed. And so Alexandria was the last one over the hill, you know, that's how I looked at it. But that person never had any impact. They were never able to have any, now the second person could be different. So hopefully I'm kind of bringing some clarity to it. So I would like to see a true relationship.

**Kerry Reed** [02:22:22] Absolutely, and then what are your hopes for the Social Responsibility Group moving forward?

**Lou Whiting** [02:22:28] Well, I'm hearing from certain officials that we do have a seat at the table, but I don't think so. And again, it goes back to relationship. And so what can we do to build a stronger relationship with the city of Alexandria? That's my hope for the SRG in the future.

**Kerry Reed** [02:22:54] And then what are your hopes for your church and your congregation moving forward?

**Lou Whiting** [02:23:01] That I can go get an RV or camper and ride off into the horizon man, and say turn it over to the young people. And I can go enjoy my 8 grandkids.

**Kerry Reed** [02:23:13] 8 grandkids?

**Lou Whiting** [02:23:14] Yeah.

**Kerry Reed** [02:23:14] That's a lot, oh, wow.

**Lou Whiting** [02:23:16] Yeah. Shucks man, I met a guy the other day, a Vietnam vet man, 80 years old. He got 21 grandkids, had 5 great-grandkids. And I'm like, what? I thought 8 was a lot! He said he got 21. But I guess for my church, the future, I really wanted, to me the church is perpetual, you know.

And I'd like to see the leaders in my church that I have impacted their lives. I would like to see them take the church to their generation. And I don't think it should look like what I think it should look like, because my generation is different from theirs. And so I want to make sure I give them the liberty and the freedom to be able to do it where it reaches their generation, so it can be perpetual. The only thing I would hold their feet to the fire on is that they don't change the gospel. Don't mess with the Word of God. Whatever channel you want to use, communicate it, fine. Just the gospel is supposed to stay the same. So that's it. That's real simple you think? [Laughing]

**Kerry Reed** [02:24:30] Yeah, pretty straightforward.

**Lou Whiting** [02:24:33] Okay.

**Kerry Reed** [02:24:34] And then lastly, if you could hold on to one memory forever, what would it be?

**Lou Whiting** [02:24:41] Meeting my wife. Yep. If it weren't for her, I don't know, you probably hear this all the time, I would not be where I am today man. I kid you not, you know, she is truly my better half man. I married the right person.

**Kerry Reed** [02:25:01] Absolutely.

**Lou Whiting** [02:25:02] So that's the one memory that I mean honestly it is kind of, I tell my wife almost every night I'm glad that she married me. We've been together for 38 years, I still tell her that, you know. So she is my memory outside of just being born again because if it wasn't for her, I would've never knew anything about Jesus Christ. I met her my whole life changed.

**Kerry Reed** [02:25:29] Absolutely.

**Lou Whiting** [02:25:30] So that's a permanent memory for me. And she gave me 3 kids man, you know. And now as a result of the 3 kids, I got 8 grandkids. I mean, what can I say, man she's my memory.

**Kerry Reed** [02:25:41] Absolutely.

**Lou Whiting** [02:25:42] Yeah. Maybe you can meet her one day man.

**Kerry Reed** [02:25:46] Oh, I'd love to. Well, Pastor Lou, it's been an absolute blessing to be able to speak with you today. I've learned a lot, and I've enjoyed our conversation very much. Thank you.

**Lou Whiting** [02:25:56] Kerry listen, it's been a pleasure sitting down with you, talking and sharing my memories, and hopefully we've been able to cultivate a relationship as a result of sharing, and I hope there's some understanding that you've garnered, as far as the African-American community. This just, it's been good. I've enjoyed it. I've shared some things man, that I haven't talked about in a long time. A very, very long time. Intimate things, I would say that I probably just never cared to talk to anybody about because it shows a side of me that just a lot of people don't know about.

**Kerry Reed** [02:26:43] Well, thank you for your confidence. It's been a privilege. Thank you so much.

**Lou Whiting** [02:26:47] Yeah, I appreciate it man. Yeah, I do. Appreciate the opportunity, man. I didn't know where this was going or anything, but I'm good. Thank you sir. You can turn it off now, thank you.