

Patricia Calhoun:

Our stories are important to us because we've been here for generations, and, yet, the community is changing so rapidly and has changed so rapidly that we could be erased without a thought, and that's what's been happening as homes are destroyed, as businesses are destroyed and new businesses, other ethnicities come in and have new businesses. No one will ever know that... what it once was.

Clifton Van Dyke Sr.:

On this street, there are only... On this block at least, there are only three black families on this block, so all of our neighbors are not African-Americans. As a matter of fact, at four or five, o'clock, I'm going to a meeting across the street to talk about some community issues with my neighbors, but I'll be the only brown face there.

Lydia Moore:

When I grew up, the neighborhood was just that. It was a neighborhood. I spent a lot of my time running errands for the ladies in the neighborhood, because a lot of them were widows, and so they... and they didn't have children or they didn't have children here, so I ran errands for them. I knew everybody, not just me, but my sister, all of us. We knew everybody in the neighborhood within a three to four-block area all the way around. You knew the names of people. They knew who you were. I never felt afraid or ignored or anything, any danger in my neighborhood.

Lydia Moore:

I moved from my home because the neighborhood has changed in a way that is unfriendly. Most of the people on the street where I grew up are new, and, when I say new, they're new to the neighborhood. Some are new to the city, but most all of them are new to the neighborhood. There is a sense of, "I don't know you. I don't want to know you. I don't want you to know me." There is a sense that, "I'll put up a fence. Matter of fact, I'll put up a wooden fence so you can't even see anything." They didn't say something, but it's the way in which you live that makes people feel you've come into the neighborhood, but you're not interested in being a neighbor.

Arlene Youngblood:

The dog cannot call 911 when you pass out in the backyard or the front yard and, because the fences are up, nobody can see if you passed out in the back... the front yard or the backyard so we can call and get some help. They don't want to be bothered.

Clifton Van Dyke Sr.:

I like my neighbors. They're all nice, fine people. I think that East Austin as we used to know it is not anything close to what it was because the people who lived here are not here any longer. I jokingly say that, if we aren't careful, this would be just like visiting a museum where people will come and say, "Well, this is where the African-Americans used to live," and they might have to have statues of what black people look like here because there are no more.

Freddie Dixon Sr.:

The most important thing that I want to say is that there will no longer be an East Side, so we might as well say that that's over with. Gentrification has taken place.

Edward Roby:

Nobody lives... Black people don't live in East Austin anymore, and you know what the law was before, don't you, the reason we're all in East Austin?

Female:

Right.

Patricia Calhoun:

This once was really a thriving community of African-Americans, and we did not choose to be here either. We were all over the city. My family was in the university area. They lived at 24th and San Gabriel, and that's true of all of us. There were different colonies and different settlements, as Stephanie's been working on, all over the city and, 1928, of course, it was decreed that we should all be here.

Lydia Moore:

The city's no longer the city I grew up in, but nobody's is, but I do feel that there is a disrespect that has permeated the air, and it's very hurtful. I feel badly that people in their old age, a lot of people in their old age are feeling disrespected, trampled on and hurt, and somewhere, somehow, we have to correct some of that.

Vonnye Rice-Gardner:

It's all about how you relate to people. I remember that first year. It was about two or three weeks into the school year, and one of my white parents walked in, and she sat in, and I showed her where to sit. We were finishing out the day, and she said, "I just had to come and see you." I said, "Oh, well, I'm glad you're here." She said, "I just found out today that you were colored." She said, "I've been hearing about you and what's going on in the class and how much fun he's having and what all he's learning." She said, "But I never taught my child to respect black people." She said, "But I now have a different point of view."

Vonnye Rice-Gardner:

Anyway, before the conversation ended, she said, "Can I be one of the homeroom mothers?" I said, "I would love for you to be." She was one of my best homeroom mothers, totally different. It's all in how we deal with people.

Vonnye Rice-Gardner:

Now, we're in a different era. The hate is back, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. I'm not going to go into that because I like to stay positive, because I think history is important and we need to know exactly what's going on, and whatever I can ever do to help, that's what I want to do.

Arlene Youngblood:

Mom and dad made sure we had our own library on black people and black history from when we were little, ordering stuff from the Weekly Reader. I don't know if you remember Weekly Reader. You might not have even been born, but the Weekly Reader. We'd order our books on different black celebrities, historical figures, so we had our own library, and then also mom and dad would order encyclopedias, and then we'd buy books, too, and then Carver Library. My brother and I, when we'd walk home from school, we'd always stop there and check out books, and, that way, mama couldn't give us a whipping because we were at the library. It was legit. We weren't just roaming around before we got home.

Patricia Calhoun:

It wasn't like we were just here living off of other people. We actually contributed to the growth, and so it becomes important to us and to the generations to come, the generations following behind us to understand those contributions and to have that sense of worth because that's typically from slavery. Those are the things that were stripped. At the same time, you're being thought of or taught that you're worthless, but, at the same time, things couldn't operate without you.

Freddie Dixon Sr.:

There is a history. There is a significance. African-Americans played a tremendous part in the making of the history of Austin, and just don't sit there and think it's East Austin, but it was all of Austin where we made some history because we used to have businesses down on East 6th Street. They're right there by 35 where persons owned stores and owned restaurants. Austin has a rich history of blacks, and so there was not this complacency of African-Americans in the City of Austin. No. In spite of all of the racism and the impediments that went on in Austin, because I'm relying on that because that was part of the reason why African-Americans were never given their just due here in the City of Austin, because there were not opportunities for them to do that, because the banks and other institutions prohibited the movement and the opportunity, and I want young people to know first and foremost that there was a progressiveness on the part of African-Americans.

Lydia Moore:

I would like the new people to understand everybody's been new somewhere. Try to have respect for the people who are already there. Respect them, and understand there's a... There was a history before you got there. Be respectful of that. Everything doesn't have to be changed, brought up to date. There are many things that are from the past that are important to know now. Respect that.

Arlene Youngblood:

Now, in terms of my interest being piqued as I've gotten older and with the changes in Austin, it's even piqued more because I want the story to be told right, just one slip of putting the wrong year or people not caring about spelling a person's name right. People love their name being spelled right. People love their maiden name being shared along with their married name. People want you to know who they were before they got married to Mr. So-and-so.

Lydia Moore:

Listen to the stories of the people. Don't come in with everybody new writing my story. I want to hear your story. You're coming in from someplace. I want to hear about you. I want to learn about you, and we can only learn to be respectful of each other if we get to know each other, so we have to be more loving, more open to one another and really mean it.

Vonnye Rice-Gardner:

The thing that I want to see make happen would be more books are written. I want to see more information not just sitting inside of the Historical Commission or any other organization sitting in your organization, but I would like to see some events so these things can be shown to the public so they would know who came before them.

Vonnye Rice-Gardner:

It's important that we get that message out. It's like all the material that I have. If I took all of these names away and I asked, I would have to go back to say, even some of my students in their 50s, they would not even recognize these people and know who they were or why it was important to even know who they were. These were accomplished people during a time period when it was very difficult for black people to even go to school, let alone, get a doctorate degree and start a business and start a family.

Patricia Calhoun:

It's interesting how the worthlessness is the part that has continued through the generations, but if you stop and think about it, the worth is that nobody could have survived without you. We were toiling the lands and we were doing all of the labor, and that's what moved this country forward, and that's true of other ethnicities, too.

Patricia Calhoun:

Now that you know we had it as a wonderful community, it's being stripped away again, and here we go again. Where do we go from here? Am I going to have to move to Lago Vista or the Buda or some other place because I can't afford to be here anymore because we're being pushed out. So, in light of that, I think that's where the impetus has come for us to really make a statement of who was here and what was built here.

Clifton Van Dyke Sr.:

There won't be anybody here to tell the story, and I'm so glad that you're doing what you're doing, the work that you're doing. It's so very, very important because, if the story isn't told, not too many others will put forth the time and the energy that it takes to really get the story, and all cultures have stories.

Vonnye Rice-Gardner:

I need to get somebody to help me get all of these pictures organized, because I have a whole list that thick of funeral programs and, one of the programs, it's about Dr. Christian, but there's nowhere in there to note that that was Mrs. Christian's husband and that he was a doctor in the community and where he used to live. Those little notes make a world of difference so the children will understand, "Oh, that's where so and so lived."

Freddie Dixon Sr.:

But you see, we had countless little persons in our communities who were not national heroes, were not world heroes, but they're still heroes. Do something, young people, whatever it is, I don't know, but I challenge you to make your mark. Even though we don't have a real continuous African-American community anymore, there are still ways that you can still be creative in making a place better for others and leaving something that is indelible.

Female:

Thank you very much.

Freddie Dixon Sr.:

You're welcome.