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Spring 2000

AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY INITIATIVE
ANTHRACITE HERITAGE MUSEUM
Interview Outline

Background

What kinds of people were your parents/grandparents?
How did your family come to reside in the Anthracite region?
Why did they leave former region of residence?
Why did they choose the Anthracite region?
--migration stories (if possible ask about cultural transition—particularly if from the South, values of new community, etc)
--any family stories about the underground railroad?
Family occupations?
What were the values that your family tried to impart? Community values, lessons? What are the values that you tried to impart to your own children?
(think about values of *respectability*, Church enforcement of community values; styles of discipline, alternative values outside of family structure, the tension between these value systems)

Family

--household composition (parents, siblings, others living with family)
--extended family (did they live nearby, did you see them, etc)
--family routines
Who was your primary caregiver? Did anyone else in the community help to raise you? Your children? (fictive kin)
Describe the home you grew up in?
Describe the neighborhood you grew up in?(race and ethnicity, general socio-econ status, relationship to other neighborhoods)
Describe your current neighborhood? How has community changed over the years?
(Try to understand the quality of everyday life)

Community Building (institutions)

Church
What role did the church play in your life, your family's, your community? Currently?
What were the values that the church tried to teach (respectability)?
What denomination was your church?
Did you assume any positions of leadership in the church?
What were some of the church activities that you were involved in?
Was your church active in politics?
Integrated or all-black church? Currently?
Where did your family fit in your community (try to get at class position and what that meant)?
(Lodges other local institutions)What organizations, other than the church, were important in the lives of you and your family?
Are those organizations still important? Are other organizations more important?
Local meeting places (public space)
--what were some other local meeting places? (union halls, bars, women's pub space?) try to get an understanding of the general milieu of these places; types of discussions, who frequented; what outsiders thought of these places; this is a good place to look for men's and women's culture
Community leaders—your family's relationship with them

Education

Tell me about the schools you attended: teachers; subjects; schools; other students

How was school “valued” in your family/community?
What role did race play in your education: segregation, quality of education, tracking, what you thought about it at the time, later
What were your goals/aspirations as a young person? Your parents goals for you?
Did you put the same emphasis on your children's education?

World of Work/Unions

How have you earned your living? Jobs and career; training and preparation?
What work did your parents do? What kind of work do your children do?
Role of racial discrimination in your work life? Parents? Children?
Were African Americans excluded from certain jobs, better pay, skill ceilings
Were affirmative action programs implemented? Did they help break down existing barriers?
Gender discrimination in the workplace?
Role of unions in your work life; union activity;
Did you or any members of your family work in coal? What was the job like? If not, why didn't you or your family work in the mines?
Union exclusion and tracking by race and gender
Ask about any union battles with management; strikes; intra-union struggles
Ask some gender specific questions about work, types of jobs, skills, etc ... positions within the union

Politics

Have you been involved in local politics? What was your family's involvement in local politics?
Your children's involvement?
Their attitude toward political involvement/causes?
Were you involved in any Civil Rights organizing? Your family members?
(Try to find out if the Civil Rights Movement had any affect on the political consciousness of local people)
Did the War on Poverty programs affect your community in any way?
Voting?

Race

What was it like growing up in a predominantly white community?
Were you taught to behave differently around whites? If so, how?
What were you taught about the meaning of race?
When did you first realize you were black?
(Try to get a sense for the variety of attitudes toward race and racism within the African American community.)

Discrimination

Recollections of racial discrimination:
--neighborhoods and housing (racial covenants, red-lining?)
--segregation (de jure or de facto) in public places
--racial prejudice by public officials (police, courts)
How did your parents/family deal with discrimination? Family stories (passed down as lessons)?
Did any instances of discrimination lead to organized or political responses from the African American community?
How did the region's racial climate compare to other areas you were aware of?
How has it changed during your lifetime?
Try to get a feel for the general racial climate of the region

Deindustrialization

How did the demise of the coal industry (& other industrial work) affect your life? Your family's?
How did you cope with the changing economy? (new jobs, re-training, political demands, etc)

Consumption

Where did your family shop? (ethnic or specialty stores vs. stores of mass consumer culture)
Who did the shopping in your household? For what items?
How have these changed over the course of your lifetime?
Did your family place much emphasis on appearance? (purchasing nice clothes etc-respectability)
Has your attitude changed? Your children's?

Culture

What kind of music did your family listen to?
What kinds of books (magazines, newspapers) did your family read?
What kinds of church music did your church perform? (gospel vs. hymns)
Did you frequent local plays, concerts, lectures? (local culture)
Did you go to movies, buy records, etc...? (nat'l culture)
What events did your family celebrate? (coming of age rituals)
What was dating like in your community?
(Try to get a sense of how African Americans might have attempted to express an independent black culture within a dominant white culture, the interplay of culture)