**Bea Hines Interview**

**Kathy Hersh:** This is Kathy Hersh speaking. I am interviewing Bea Hines for the Miami Beach Visual Memoirs Project on July 7th, 2012. We’re at the offices of the Miami Design Preservation League. Bea, we’re going to really focus here on your experiences on Miami Beach.

**Bea Hines:** Okay.

**Kathy:** Tell us about the work that you did here, when you first came, doing this work.

**Bea Hines:** I started working on Miami Beach — actually, my first job as a maid on Miami Beach was in 1958. It was just a short — it was my first job as a household worker. I had been a maid at Burdine’s right out of high school, and that was a real good job back then, especially for somebody just out of high school.

Then, in 1958, after my first son was born, I went to work for a family on Carlisle Road…Avenue…whatever they called it. I don’t remember. I only worked there for a short while — for maybe about a month. Then I didn’t do any more domestic work until the early ’60’s. About 1962, I started working, and my first — and I went to work in ’63.

Let me see…my husband was killed in ’63, and I was working at that time. I went to work in ’62 on Miami Beach, at this home — a private home, where there were three children. In fact, the baby was born while I was there. A baby boy. I cared for him up until I left.

**Kathy:** When did you leave?

**Bea Hines:** I gave my notice in December of ’64, and I gave them two weeks’ notice, and then I started my job at the Miami Herald in January, the first Monday in January, 1966. Excuse me. I gave them my notice in ’65 — in December of ’65, and I started my job at the Miami Herald as a file clerk in 1966. The first Monday in January, 1966. I think it was January 4th, if I’m not mistaken.

**Kathy:** What made you decide to go over to Miami Beach and seek employment as a domestic?

**Bea Hines:** I was separated from my husband at the time. He wasn’t supporting us, and I needed work. Back then, if you know anything about Miami in those days, I was a good student at Booker T. Washington High School. I could type. I wrote well. I could spell, but I couldn’t get a job in clerical work because I was black.

The only thing that was open to black women, if you didn’t have a degree in nursing or a teacher’s degree, or social work, you became a maid. Even some teachers, some women who had gone to school, graduated from Florida A&M, and [phonetic][03:13] Bethune Cookman College — at the time, it was “college” — they had to work as maids, because there were only so many black schools, and if there were no openings, then they had to work somewhere.

Many of those women got jobs with the really upper-crust people on Miami Beach, and they were glad to let people know they had educated people working for them. That’s why I went to work as a maid. It was actually the only thing I could do. I needed to feed my children, so that’s what I did.

**Kathy:** Did you know a lot of other people who were maids?

**Bea Hines:** Yeah. Yeah. I knew a lot of people. A lot of people my age started out. If they went to college, they came home in the summer, and they were maids, because that’s what they could find to do. To work.

**Kathy:** That involved not only cleaning, but other things as well?

**Bea Hines:** Other things. Cooking. Some people — I cooked. I even cooked for the family. I was a nanny and a maid for the children. A family that I worked for before then…I worked in Coral Gables. Actually, it was in the [phonetic][04:28] Rhodes section of that area, of Miami. I didn’t know that people could be so cruel.

I had my baby son — my youngest son was six months old at the time. I remember, one night I’d been up with him all night long, because he was teething, and he was so sick. I hated to leave him — my neighbor babysat for me — but I needed that money, so I was a little late getting there that morning, and the woman was so cruel to me.

I said, “You know, I wasn’t going to come in, but I didn’t want to disappoint you, because I knew you were depending on me,” so I came in. I’d been up all night long with my baby, and I came in anyway, and I had the ironing — I did all the cleaning, and then the last thing I did was the ironing. It was a hot day like this. I was in the garage, ironing.

When I got through, she was still angry because I was a little late coming in that morning, and so she said, “Well, the woman who used to work here is coming back. Maybe if we need you for a certain party or something, we’ll call you.” I said, “Alright. Thank you,” and I left, and that was that.

You know, that was common back then. I had one woman who told me — the woman I worked for on Miami Beach used to tell me maids were a dime a dozen, and she was really telling the truth, because there were so many women, and the Cuban influx hadn’t happened at the time, so it was just the black maids who were doing all the work. American blacks, and some people — we had a few people from Jamaica at the time. Not that many. American blacks, and the people from the Bahamas — a woman from the Bahamas.

We were the workforce, the maids, and we did the work, and they treated us all — if you were lucky, you got with a family who was kind, and who really cared about you. I wasn’t that lucky. I wasn’t so lucky. I gave my all to this family. I gave everything. It broke my heart to have to leave my babies and go and love her babies, but I did it, and then I came home and double-loved my children because I felt so guilty. She didn’t appreciate me.

**Kathy:** There was no way that they would have allowed you to bring your children on the job?

**Bea Hines:** Not this woman. When my mother — when we were little, my mother worked for a fine woman whose name was Ethel Goldstein, who allowed her to bring us to work with her. She really loved my mother. She treated my mother like a daughter, and [crosstalk][07:13] treated —

**Kathy:** Was that on the Beach?

**Bea Hines:** That was in Coral Gables.

**Kathy:** Okay.

**Bea Hines:** My mother, later — after I got the job…the reason I even looked for another job was, I was getting in a rut. My friends who had gone on to college — I had a scholarship in voice, and my mother was so old-school, she didn't think I would be able to find a job as a concert singer, and she didn’t want me to take it, and so I didn’t go to college.

I was going to go to college, but then I was so despondent over everything. I was ready to go. I had my luggage. I had sent my room-and-board fee in and everything, my deposit, and then just before I was ready to go, she said she didn’t think I should go. Of course, what was I going to do? It was my mother, so I didn’t go.

The next year, instead of — I was saving my money, but instead of going to college, I got married. I used the money to get married, which was not a good thing to do. You know, sometimes you need to wait. I don’t think I was ready for marriage, and he wasn’t, either. We were both too young. I was 19, and he was 21.

Anyway, when that didn’t work out — my husband did go back to school after we got married. He went to Kentucky State, and I worked. I was not living here at the time. I was living in Orlando, but then when I came back home, that’s when — then he got killed.

He left school and became a police officer. He had only been on the force less than two years when he was killed in a barroom brawl. I don’t think the guy really meant to kill him. He just wanted to get him off him, because he stabbed him with a little knife — a pen knife — but it just, unluckily, hit a vein that caused him to bleed to death.

So, I needed to work. I just needed a job. One summer, the family went to Europe, and she said to me — the woman said to me — “Well, I guess you can find some work while I’m gone.” I didn’t know what I was going to do. I was so devastated that she would do that, because most of the women I knew that were working as maids, if their families went away, they paid them while they were gone, and she didn’t.

I was so angry and hurt, and I said, “I’m going to find a job. I’ll fix her,” but of course I didn’t. Then, I’m a Christian, and I don’t — God doesn’t want us to do things for revenge, and so I didn’t find a job. I looked diligently, but I didn’t find one, so I went back to work for her, but I said, “Okay. I know why I didn’t get this. I’ve got to change my plan.”

I worked for her from Tuesday through Friday, and I had another day in Coral Gables I worked on Monday. So, I asked her if could work Saturday and be off Wednesday, and she said, “Of course,” because she wanted her house shining for the weekend. So, that’s what I did. By that time, she had had another child — the third child — and so I used Wednesdays to go look for a job. You couldn’t go on Saturdays to look for a job. You had to do it during the week.

On Sundays, I would circle all the ads in the paper that said, “We are an equal-opportunity employer,” and then I would check those ads out. Some of them had phone numbers I would call.

One particular ad had a — they wanted a bank teller trainee, and I thought, “I could do that,” and so I called. A nice little woman on the phone said, “What high school did you graduate from?” I said, “Booker T. Washington High School,” and of course right then, anybody who’d been in Miami long enough knew that that was a black school.

We were not integrated at the time. She said, “Oh, okay. I need you to speak to my manager.” He got on the phone, and he said, “That job has been filled as of right now,” and put the phone down.

So, I was reluctant to make any more calls to places. Most people would just tell me, politely, “No.” I did call one bank that wanted to — I even went through the interview and everything, but because I hadn’t had any college, they hired another woman who had two years of college.

Every year after then, she would call me. The person, that woman, would call me and wanted to know — by that time, I was waiting for that job, when I saw the ad in the paper for a file clerk at the Miami Herald. They didn’t have a phone number. I had to write a letter of application, so I think they wanted to know if I could write and spell or whatever, so I did that, and send it in. Sent my resume in, and to my surprise they sent me a letter and asked me to come in on my next day off for an interview.

In the mean time, I was waiting for this other job to come through. The woman was really nice. She really wanted to hire me, and finally she called me and she told me that they had hired the other woman because she had two years of college. Every year, they would call me, after I started working for the Herald — every year, I got a call from that personnel department, wanting to know if I was happy, and I said, “Yes.”

The last time they called me, I had become a reporter, and I said, “I’m a reporter now,” and she was so happy for me. I wish I could remember her name. She deserves to be recognized. She was such a fine woman, and kind to me.

**Kathy:** What happened when you told the family that you had gotten a job at the Miami Herald?

**Bea Hines:** Well, so many things happened in-between. First of all, can I back up and tell you the story about the little girl?

**Kathy:** Sure.

**Bea Hines:** All her children were beautiful. The little was so pretty, with big doe eyes — you know, doe-shaped eyes. She had long brown hair. I was giving her a bath one night, and I said, “Oh you’re so pretty.” She was always — she let me hug her. I started working there when her mother — I didn’t know this at the time — but her mother had always told her that we were not equal to them, and we were not good enough, and all kinds of horrible myths she would teach the children when they became school-age.

The little boy was a year and-a-half younger, and he still wanted to be cuddled. I would cuddle him, and then after a while he would push me away, because he didn’t want his mother to see me cuddle him in my arms.

The girl was older. She was about five, and it had already gotten to her. I was giving her a bath, and she said — she had a big birthmark right there. A big, brown birthmark, about the color of me. I was trying to reach out to her and I said, “You’re just such a pretty girl. You have such pretty hair,” and she looked at me and she said, “You’re ugly, and you’re black, and you have ugly hair.”

I said, “Okay,” and I said, “Oh, my goodness. Look at that big brown spot on you. It seems to be growing. I hope you don’t — after a while, it may cover you, and you may be just as brown as I am all over.” She told her mother. I was hoping she would. The next day when I was bathing her she said, “Mommy says that when I’m old enough I’m going to have plastic surgery to remove this,” and I said, “Well, it’s a birthmark, and it’ll come back.”

Her mother never said anything to me. I wanted her to confront me, because I wanted to know, “Why would you teach a child such evil things? Why would you mess up her mind like that?” but she never did. You know, most racists are cowards anyway, so she never confronted me.

The baby, who she really didn’t want, but loves now — I mean, she came to love him. She didn’t want any more children, but this baby came, and she had nothing to do with him. I would dress him. I would get there early in the morning. I would bathe him and dress him, and he was so cute, and I said, “Come look at your pretty little baby.” She said, “Oh yes, he looks so cute,” and she’d keep going. She wouldn’t hug him. She wouldn’t pick him up. So, I was the one who gave him nurturing and cuddling.

There was another woman who lived on, and when I wasn’t there, she loved him, but I was the one who really loved him, because he knew me first. When he started talking, I’d say, “Uh-oh, I hear Mommy coming. Here comes Mommy.” I think he thought his mother’s name was “Oh,” because he would say, “Bea, here comes Oh.”

His mother thought that was so funny. I thought it was so sad, because I think the baby really wanted to call me Mommy, but he knew I looked different. I potty trained him, and I loved him, and one day we were at the breakfast table, and I was feeding him. He wouldn’t eat for anybody but me. I fed him just like I fed my children.

We were having breakfast, and I was looking over the paper, and there was a picture on the — schools all over the country were beginning to integrate, and there was a picture on the front page of a little black girl who was crying, and a little white girl, who was comforting her. It was her first day at this all-white school.

I said to the girl — the woman was working — I said, “You know, if grown-ups would leave children alone, they could work this out. Children don’t have any prejudice. Look at this picture,” and the little girl who — I worked for her family — she was sitting there eat, and she said, “Bea, what’s prejudice?”

I explained it to her, and I said, “That’s when people teach their children that one person is better than another, especially if they’re black” — or I said “negro” or “colored” at that time. She said, “Mommy tells me that.” I looked at Liz and I said, “Okay. I think I need to get out of here, because I don’t know if I can stand it if this baby grows up and calls me a nigger, or tells me I’m ugly and black.”

**Kathy:** You couldn’t stand it because you were attached.

**Bea Hines:** I was attached. I loved him. I mean, I nurtured him from birth, and I couldn’t deal with that. I don’t think I could stand it. So, I really started looking for a job then.

When I did find the job at the Miami Herald, and I told them — at the Herald — that I would like to give the people I worked for two weeks’ notice, they said that would be fine. I went in the next day and I told her. It was a Thursday. She was getting ready to go to some club to play games, or whatever she was going to do.

I said, “I need to talk to you.” She thought I was going to ask for a raise, so she said, “What do you want?” She was very short with me. I said, “I just wanted you to know, I have another job, and I’m giving you two weeks’ notice.” She plopped down in the nearest chair. She was so shocked. She never saw it coming.

She said, “Well, what are you going to be doing?” I said, “I’m going to work at the Miami Herald, and I’m going to be a file clerk.” “Well, what are they going to pay you?” She talked real short. I said, “They’re going to pay me — I’m going to be making $60 a week,” which was only $10 more a week than I was making as a maid, but the dignity that came with it, and the self-esteem, was worth it. It was worth a million dollars to me.

So, she said these words to me: “Well, things are going to go back the way they were as soon as Johnson is not in the chair.” President Johnson was the President at the time. He was President.

I said, “Maybe they will.” I said, “Maybe they will go back, but I want to be one who said that this door was open, and I took the opportunity and walked through.” I stayed there until after the first of the year, and I left and went to work my first day at the Herald.

**Kathy:** How were you treated in the interim, after you gave the notice?

**Bea Hines:** She was very nice. In fact, she came to me a couple of times and told me that her husband would take out insurance so that my sons could have college educations. I’d worked for her for four years, and I’d never had a vacation. She never gave me a paid vacation. I worked sick, because I couldn’t afford to take a day off, so I went to work many days when I could hardly hold my head up, because I couldn’t afford it.

I knew she would dock me if I took the day off sick. So, God was just good for me. I didn’t have any serious illnesses. I had maybe a bad cold or something like that. Then she told me, “Well, you know, when they take out the tax” — she had figured out what they were going to do. Here was a woman who never took out my Social Security. She never paid into my Social Security, but she showed me how much I was going to be making after they took taxes out

**Kathy:** At the Herald?

**Bea Hines:** At the Herald — and Social Security. I think I may have that paper somewhere, where she had written it down. I was going to be bringing home $52 a week — only $2 and change more than what I was making. It still mattered to me, and I told her it was okay. At least there, I’d have the opportunity to get raises. She would never raise me. My mother worked for her until they kicked her out, and she never made — I don’t think Momma ever made more than $200 a week.

**Kathy:** For the same family?

**Bea Hines:** Same family. When I left, they wanted to know if I knew anybody who would come and work for them. Well, my mother had been what they call a wet nurse. She took care of babies for two weeks after they came from the hospital, but she didn’t want to do that anymore, although she loved babies. It was so time-consuming, she never really had time for herself, and she loved church. So, she said — she had taken care of her first two children when they came home from the hospital —

**Kathy:** For this same family?

**Bea Hines:** For this same family.

**Kathy:** That’s how you had a connection there.

**Bea Hines:** Right. Right. So, Momma said, “I think I’ll just give up the baby nursing, and at least I’ll be in one place, and I’ll have Saturdays and Sundays off, and I can go to church.” So I said, “Okay, Momma. They’re not nice people.” She said, “I know they’re not.” She didn’t know them. She’d known them for two weeks, you know.

She did not know them, and so I said, “They’re not kind people.” She said, “I can handle it,” and she went to work for them. They acted like they really loved having her there, because my mother would get there at 6 o’clock in the morning, and make sure everybody was up and fed and everything, and that the husband was fed and sent off to work and everything.

When the daughter, who was now a teenager — you know, 17 or 18 — when she got a new car, they gave my mother the old car. Now my mother thinks they’re in love with her, and they’re not. I kept telling her. I said, “Momma, don’t be fooled. They don’t love you. They don’t love you. You’re good to them, and they know that, so they gave you their car so you would be there on time. It wasn’t because they love you. If you didn’t have to be there at 6 o’clock in the morning — if she didn’t want you then, they wouldn’t have given you that car,” but my mother didn’t believe me.

Momma worked there until 1995. She had knee-replacement surgery, and she was doing very well. She was getting ready to go back to work and everything. Then it was her birthday — now it’s ’96. Her birthday was — this was four months later, because she had the surgery in the latter part of the year.

This was like six months later. She was ready to go back. She was walking well. She had lost weight, and she looked good, and she was happy. Before, her knee turned in, and she could hardly walk, and now it’s straight, and she’s feeling wonderful. She’s going back to work.

It was her birthday, and she called, because no one had sent her a card. I came in to bring her some roses that day. I had a new puppy — a little black-and-white Maltese. It was about this big. It was so cute. I wanted her to see him, so I brought him and the roses.

She had asked me to make her a black-and-white dress. She wanted something in black and white, and I found this beautiful shadow-print fabric, black and black and then the white on white. I was going to make her a suit out of it.

I said, “Well, I’ll wait until you’re really up on your feet. Then I’ll make the dress,” but I bought roses for her that day, and a card. I looked on her dresser, and there was a card from the [phonetic][24:14] grands, my children and my brother. There was nothing from the family. Nothing.

She was so sad, and I didn’t know until later that she had called them that day, because she thought they just forgot, and she would need to let them know how she was coming along. The woman said to her, “Why are you calling? You’re not coming back here to work.” Just like that. My mother was devastated. That’s why she was so sad when I came in.

I asked her, I said, “What’s the matter, Momma?” and she said, “Oh, nothing.” So I put the puppy on the bed, and she played with the puppy for a while, and I knew. I didn’t ask her if she’d heard from them, because I saw there was no card or anything from them. That little boy. that I was there when he was born, was almost two when I left. She took care of him all through — he was out of college and everything. He never sent her a card. It was so painful, she had a stroke a few days later.

I’ve always said that my mother had that stroke because she was so heartbroken. She couldn’t get over that, the way they treated her. She didn’t really want me to know, because I had told her, “They don’t love you, and they’re not going to care for you,” and so they never paid into her Social Security, and they kicked her to the curb without even anything in retirement. They never gave her $500 for retirement.

When she had the stroke, all of the burden fell on me. I had to use my retirement money. She had the stroke in ’96. I didn’t retire until 2001. I had to take my money out. I was always broke. Sometimes I’d borrow from my retirement, and I even re-financed the house, because we had to have central air, we had to have things done to the house, because she couldn’t be in the heat. The burden fell on me. My brother helped a little. He could have done more, but he didn’t, so that’s that.

**Kathy:** She never got over it.

**Bea Hines:** She never got over it. She never got over it. When she had the stroke, I called the family and told them that she had had a stroke, and they sent $300 and some flowers. Then, I think another time they sent $200 for her birthday. We didn’t hear from them anymore until she passed.

The month she passed, which was in December. I was so surprised to get a card from the family with $300 in it. I said to my mother - my mother’s mind was excellent. I said, “You got a card from the family you worked for.” She said, “What?” I said, “Yeah. They sent you $300.” She said, “What?” It was so funny, the way she said it.

So, Momma died a few days later — I think like two weeks later. I hadn’t spent the money, so I called the woman and I said, “I’m going to send it back to you, because Momma passed.” She said, “No, keep it, and maybe you can use it on the funeral arrangements,” and that’s what we did. They came to the funeral.

**Kathy:** They did?

**Bea Hines:** They did come to the funeral.

**Kathy:** The children, too?

**Bea Hines:** Tears and everything. My younger son was very upset. He said, “I can’t understand how they could cry, the way they treated Grandma” — or, he called her “Granny.” “I don’t understand how they could even shed a tear, after the way they treated her.” He was so upset.

Momma had the stroke in April, and [phonetic][28:02] Rashan graduated law school in May. He doesn’t practice. He never took the bar, but at the time he was so upset because they hadn’t prepared anything for her retirement that he wanted to sue the family.

We had heard of a family that had been sued because they didn’t pay into the maid’s Social Security, and they didn’t give her retirement or anything. That woman had received $1,000 a month, until she died, from that family. The law required them to do that. They sued, and that’s what happened.

My mother didn’t want us to do that, and I didn’t want to go through it either, but my son was just so upset. He said, “That’s not right, Momma,” and it wasn’t right, but what could you do? You can’t change people, you know.

**Kathy:** Did you see the movie, “The Help”?

**Bea Hines:** I did, and it reminded me so much of my own life. In fact, I wrote a story. The Ladies’ Home Journal last year had a short story contest, and it had to be something, you know, that happened. It couldn’t be fiction. It was non-fiction. I wrote about that. I wrote about my life as a maid, and then how I ended up as the first black woman journalist at the Miami Herald. I told those stories in the story about what happened to me as a maid.

One of the stories that I told in that — this was not from the Miami Beach family. This was from the woman that I worked for in Coral Gables. Another woman. She was an executive secretary for a big real estate firm here in Miami. She’s passed on now, but at the time, when I worked for her, she was a real — she was a Christian woman, she said. She sent a part of her tithe into my church every month, but she would leave a broken dish and a cup, and tarnished silverware for me to have my lunch — to eat off. Then she would tell me to clean the bathroom last, before I left.

She was from Mississippi, so I said, “Oh, that’s where that came from.” I never understood why she wanted me to clean the bathroom, except that she didn’t want to use it behind me, but in “The Help,” those women weren’t even allowed to use the bathrooms in the house. One of them even got in trouble for using the bathroom.

So, what I did was, when she went to work, I used her good dishes whenever I ate. That’s dangerous to leave off a plate with a black line in it. You know, all kind of germs. I wouldn’t do it. Then I’d clean the bathroom first. I always cleaned the bathroom first. She never knew it.

When she found out — she did. She knew it, because I told that story when I became — at the paper, I was the first black woman columnist, in 1982, I believe. ’81 or ’82, that I was hired as a columnist. Keith Merriweather was the managing editor, and he wrote a story about me on the viewpoint page — you know, introducing me to the community as a columnist.

I had told him that story, and he re-told it in it. She called me. She recognized herself. We never called her name, but she recognized herself, she knew what she had done, and she knew I had told the truth. She called me and she said, “Beatrice” — that’s what she called me — “I want you and your mother to come to lunch at my house one day,” and I think she wanted to say, “I’m sorry.”

My mother was a young granny. She was still working, and she worked Saturdays, so we never had time to go, but I kept in touch with her. Her church would send me stuff that I would put in the paper for her. We stayed in touch until she passed. That’s the one regret that I have — that I never gave her the opportunity to apologize. I knew she was sorry, and I knew she would have.

That was the way it was. She was brought up in Mississippi, and I could deal with her better than I could the woman on Miami Beach. It wasn’t in malice that she treated me the way she did. That was just the way she was brought up.

**Kathy:** The family on Miami Beach — economically, were they well-fixed, or…?

**Bea Hines:** Yes. Yes. If I called their names, you would know who they are.

**Kathy:** It’s not that they didn’t have the money to…

**Bea Hines:** They had the money. They had the money. They were well-fixed. Mm-hmm.

**Kathy:** How did you get to the Beach every day, to work?

**Bea Hines:** Yes. I was blessed to have friends who worked over there. One of them drove. She would come and pick — it wasn’t carpool. Well, I guess it was carpool, because none of us had a car, but she had the car. We would pay her. We would pay her every week for taking us.

**Kathy:** How many people were there in your [crosstalk][inaudible][33:22]?

**Bea Hines:** Sometimes three, and sometimes four.

**Kathy:** And they all worked as domestics?

**Bea Hines:** All worked — and they all had their identification. I didn’t.

**Kathy:** Why didn’t you have to have one?

**Bea Hines:** I wanted somebody to stop me. I wanted to protest, but nobody ever did. They never questioned me. They never stopped me and said, “Where’s your ID?” I really wanted that. I wanted it to happen so bad, because I really wanted to protest that, but they never did.

**Kathy:** I understand that everyone who worked on the Beach, who didn’t live on the Beach, had to have an ID.

**Bea Hines:** Had to have it. Mm-hmm.

**Kathy:** [crosstalk][33:54] It wasn’t just black people.

**Bea Hines:** But especially blacks. I mean, they would not stop you, if you didn’t live on the Beach, you know, to check to see if you had an ID, but they would do that randomly with black people.

**Kathy:** And you had to be off the Beach by 11 PM at night?

**Bea Hines:** By 11 PM at night. When I was younger, I understand you had to be off by sundown. I don’t know about that, because I was still in school at the time. You did have to be off, and if you had to serve a party or anything, they had to make sure they brought you home or found transportation for you to get home.

**Kathy:** You never did even apply for the ID, [crosstalk][34:37] and no one ever checked it?

**Bea Hines:** Never did. Nobody ever checked it.

**Kathy:** That was going to be your personal protest.

**Bea Hines:** That was my personal protest. My first new car was a Toyota, and one day, back in the early ’80’s, I believe, there was a little story on the front page. Like this. Just small. I think they used it as a filler. Some uppity muckily-muck in Japan said that America would be better off if they got rid of all of us blacks. It was right on the front page. I wish I had saved that story.

So, I had my own personal thing, that I would never buy anything Japanese anymore, and I said, “I wish I could get the word out to all the black people in this country,” because we were the ones that were buying the Toyotas. I wanted everybody to give their cars back, but of course, that was unrealistic.

That was my own little personal protest. They didn’t miss my few dollars. They never even knew that I was even — I mean, they had so much money, and so many people were buying cars, they had no idea that I wasn’t buying one, but I knew that I wasn’t buying one.

**Kathy:** On your way over with the other domestics in the car in the morning, you must have shared some stories, [crosstalk][35:57] and vented some frustrations.

**Bea Hines:** Yeah. Yeah. We did.

**Kathy:** Do you remember any of the other peoples’ stories?

**Bea Hines:** I don’t remember so much their stories. The two women — the woman who was driving, and her best friend, they sat in the front, and they used to talk about their own personal stuff. Once in a while, we’d talk about what happened.

Once, at my job, I hadn’t been there very long, and I went into the bedroom to clean the bedroom and everything, and she had put $300 on the dresser, right where I could see it. Everything was kind of cluttered, so I took the money up, and I counted it. I knew it was a test. She wanted to see if I would take anything. I counted it and said, “Let me see what she’s trusting me with — tempting me with,” and it was $300.

I dusted the dresser and wiped it down, put everything back, put the money right back where it was, and one day, when the new maid came in, I was telling her about it. I said, “You be careful, now. She’s going to tempt you with money and stuff. I hope you don’t steal, because she will lay stuff around to see if you will take it.”

She didn’t wear shoes, and she walked through the house — the woman of the house — she walked through the house, and she heard me telling her. She walked right in on me. We were in the kitchen, and I said, “Good morning.” I thought she was going to say something, but she never said a word, because she knew it was the truth.

You’ve got to know how to deal with people like that. I knew it was a test. I knew she was tempting me, and so I was trying — I didn’t know the woman who she had hired. Liz. I didn’t know her, but I was letting her now, “This is what you might have to face.”

**Kathy:** You must have related to a lot of things in the movie, “The Help.”

**Bea Hines:** I did. I really did, especially with the woman and the relationship with the little girl, how she was trying to build her self-esteem. I hated to leave the children for that reason, because I didn’t know what was going to happen when I left.

She did hire another woman as a live-in, when Liz left. The woman was white, and she was so nasty. Oh, my goodness, she was nasty. The things that she would do. I can’t even put it on the…I don’t want to put that on this recording. Don’t even want to repeat it. She was very nasty, and I’m thinking, “Boy, you said maids are a dime a dozen…” That’s what she used to tell me all the time. “Maids are a dime a dozen.”

**Kathy:** She really was exercising her power over you, then, with that?

**Bea Hines:** What she thought was her power over me, yes Yes. It was very tough to keep your self-esteem, you know, and your dignity. So, I prayed a lot, and I would ask my church to pray with me, because she was not kind.

**Kathy:** Did you know of anyone in a similar circumstance to yourself, who worked for some nice people?

**Bea Hines:** Yes. Her name’s Cherry Turner. She’s 90 years old now, and she worked with a family right down the street. That family had a couple who lived in, who were from my church. They had Cherry Turner and Eunice Brown.

The couple died. The husband and wife died, and also, Eunice died. Cherry’s the only one living. They were so good to them. In fact, that family still, every year, sends a nice sizable donation to my church in memory of the couple who worked for them. Every year, they do that.

**Kathy:** We interviewed…of course, I mentioned to you the [phonetic][40:12] Pinkneys, and Enid’s parents kept a house, and she, of course, could not live with them, [crosstalk][40:18] because there was no place for her to go to school.

**Bea Hines:** Right.

**Kathy:** Of course, they owned a home in Overtown, so they would see their children, but she describes coming over a year, when the family would come down in the winter, and how they would get all dressed up, and it was very exciting for them to come down to [crosstalk][40:39] the Beach, because it was so different.

**Bea Hines:** Right. Yes. Yeah.

**Kathy:** Your commute was from where to…?

**Bea Hines:** I was living, at the time, in Liberty City, and it was about a 30-minute commute. Let me see…yeah. We took I-95, and got off on 125th Street, and went over to Broad Causeway.

**Kathy:** Did it feel like a different world over here?

**Bea Hines:** It was a different world. It was a different world. I worked for another family. I was a day worker. I went in once a day, and they came down only in the wintertime.

I remember eating — she had made a tuna fish salad, and told me I could have a sandwich. I was eating rather fast, and she said — she didn’t know I heard her — that I was eating like there was no tomorrow. I only had 15 minutes to eat, so I was eating kind of fast, so I could get back to my work. She was just a gruff old woman. She said that.

The next time I came to work — it wasn’t because I was trying to show her, or that I was being mean to her — I was fasting for spiritual strength. I had gone on a two-day fast, I think. This was the first day of the fast, and when it was time for lunch, she went, and I said, “No, thank you.” “Why don’t you want to eat? Why aren’t you eating?” She knew I had heard her by now. I said, “No, thank you. I’m just not eating today.” She thought I was doing it because, you know…

**Kathy:** Of what she had said?

**Bea Hines:** Yeah. Of what she had said. After that, she was always fixing something nice. She didn’t want me to think that she was the mean old lady that she was. Anyway, yeah. They…

**Kathy:** Looking back on those days, what lessons did you learn?

**Bea Hines:** First of all, I learned that no matter what anybody says, and whatever they do to you, you have to know that you’re somebody. You have to have that on the inside, and so that’s what I did. I had to make sure I knew that I was somebody.

Sometimes the things they said were so demeaning, and the way they treated you was so demeaning. You had to know within yourself that you are a person. You are God’s child. You are somebody. I read somewhere that God never made any junk, and I am not junk. I am a person. I am a human being, and I had to keep telling myself that sometimes.

**Kathy:** You said you called on your church to help?

**Bea Hines:** To pray. Yes. You know, one of the saddest times in my life was when — when I was working there — was when Kennedy was shot. She was still asleep, and I was ironing in the maid’s room. She had a little TV in there, and I went running to her room to tell her. At that time they had said that they’d seen a colored man running away, so they thought it was somebody black who had shot Kennedy. That was the first report. I’ll never forget that.

I went running to her room to wake her up, to tell her to turn on the TV, and that President Kennedy had been shot. We didn’t know he was dead at the time. She said, “Who shot him?” I said, “Well, they saw a colored man running away,” and she said, “Well, that figures,” because Kennedy had been sort of a friend to blacks. “That figures.” You know, like, “Serves him right.” Thank God it wasn’t true. I was so happy when I — I was sorry that it happened, but I was relieved that it wasn’t a black man who had done it. I was so relieved.

**Kathy:** It’s interesting that some of the leaders, in fact, the founders of [phonetic][44:55] Core, according to people I have spoken with in this town, were actually Jews from Miami Beach.

**Bea Hines:** Yes. You know, that’s what shocked me. That family, and another women who — when I went to work at the Miami Herald — were Jews, they hurt me more than anybody could ever hurt me. I could not understand that, because we’d all had a pretty close connection, and I felt safe when I got the job on Miami Beach. I felt pretty safe, until I realized that not everybody who calls you “brother” is a brother or sister. I was shocked. I was really shot.

**Kathy:** Prior to your experience with this family, you had thought of the Jews as being…

**Bea Hines:** Friends to the black people. I still do. My mother used to say, when I would tell her — I was walking alone on the sidewalk one day. I was about nine. A car with some white people passed by, and the child in the car yelled out, “Nigger!”

I was telling my mother and she said, “Well, there’s good people and bad people all over the world. You’re going to run into some bad people from time to time,” so I just pushed that out of my mind. It hurt me, but I just pushed it.

She’s right, and so that’s how I looked at the situation with the Jews, especially on Miami Beach, where I work. I was able to work at that family down the street from her, when some of the women would be off on a holiday, and they would ask me to work in their place. That was the summer that they went away to Europe, and I didn’t have any work.

The woman down there wanted me to work for her. She liked me, and she wanted me to work for her, and she was so kind, but I was…first of all, if I had taken the job there, one of her woman, who were much older — she was much older than me. In fact, she was six years older than my mother — I would have had to take her place. I wouldn’t do that. She wanted me to come to work for her.

Then, there was another young woman whose husband committed suicide. I don’t remember their names, but they were friends of this family, and she asked me to go over and help them out for the whatever — you know, for the repast after the funeral. So, I went over, and I set the table, and I did everything. The woman was so excited when she saw how I put the food. I made it pretty on the table, and she wanted me to come work for her. I wouldn’t do that. I wouldn’t leave her and go to work for her friend. So, you know, [crosstalk][47:46] there were opportunities.

**Kathy:** You had more loyalty [crosstalk][47:47] than they had.

**Bea Hines:** I did. I did, and my mother, too. My mother was so loyal. I was loyal to them, too. Every year, when the little girl — she bought the prettiest dresses for her. There was a place called Young Style, where they bought a lot of — they sold children’s clothes — pretty things. I don’t know if it still exists anymore. It was on Miami Beach.

She would buy all these pretty little dresses, and many times they were too long, so I would take them home, and I would hem them on my time off. I never got 10 cents for it. Never did. She never gave me anything extra for it. It was just like I was expected to do it. Of course, I never asked for anything. I never said, “Well, this is going to cost you $10 a dress.” I never did that. Probably wouldn’t have gotten it anyway, so I just [crosstalk][48:39] did it.

**Kathy:** I was just understood.

**Bea Hines:** Yeah. I just did it, because first of all, I loved the children. I just did it.

**Kathy:** Really, it sounds like what you’re saying is, your loyalty was based on your attachment to the children.

**Bea Hines:** That, and also my own upbringing. You know, my mother was a woman who taught us to be loyal, in whatever situation we were in. I was attached to the children, yes, and although she wasn’t a kind woman to me, I was attached to her in a way. You know, it was a job that I could go to every day. I didn’t expect her to love me. I went and I did my job, and I thought I would be — because I was loyal to her — that she would be loyal to me. It wasn’t the case.

**Kathy:** I was thinking of another question, and it just went out of my mind. Oh. You said your upbringing. Where were you born?

**Bea Hines:** I was born in [phonetic][49:54] Williston, Florida. Do you know where Williston is? It’s up near Gainesville. About nine miles out of Gainesville.

My mother married when she was 18, and I was born the next year, when she was 19. She was in an abusive marriage. Have you ever seen any of Tyler Perry’s movies? Madea? You haven’t seen any of those movies? Anyway, he’s got a character that he calls Madea, and any black person growing up in the south, I think we have a Madea. It’s like “mother dear,” but “Madea” for short.

There was a woman who lived next door to us, who was like a mother to my mom. Her daughter called her Madea, so we called her Madea. She babysat for us. She helped my mother plan an escape, and get out of Williston, because she was tired of the way my dad was treating her.

My mother was always a woman who kept — if she saw the house, now, where I live, [chuckling] she would just be too upset with me. She would say, “This is a sin before the Lord,” because I’m a pack rat. “This is a sin and a shame.” She’d stand up in the doorway. I could just see her saying that. I’d say, “Momma, I’m getting it cleaned up.” Sometimes I say that right now. I know she — I say, “I’m taking care of it, Mom.”

Oh, man. You could eat off her floors — literally eat off her floors. She was clean like that. I like cleanliness, but I just am junky. I keep a lot of stuff. I can’t throw away things.

Anyway, that week, all week long — I remember this like it was yesterday. I was five years old. My mother washed and she ironed and she ironed my daddy’s things, and she got his work clothes all put together and everything. I always got up in the morning with my dad, when he was going to work. He got up around 5 o’clock. She’d fix us breakfast, and the truck picked him up, and he went off to work.

This particular morning, my mother had been ironing and washing all week long, and folding clothes and putting them in a big trunk. I didn’t know that at the time, but that’s what she was doing. That morning, she kissed my dad goodbye, and stood to the door, to watch that truck turn the corner, and then she turned around and got my brother up. He was two years old. Bathed him and fed him. Madea came over and helped to get me dressed, and my mother got dressed, and in a little while, here comes a big lumber truck.

Madea had made arrangements with this man to come and pick us up, and take us to the bus station. He put that big trunk up on the back of the truck, helped me mother up in the cabin, and handed her my brother. I was already — he’d put me up in it. I was between them. He handed her my brother, and we went off to the Greyhound Bus station, and that’s how we made our escape.

She stopped by [phonetic][53:07] Palatka, Florida. Her sister had five children of her own, and she and her husband took care of us until my mother found a place in Miami to live, and a job, and then she came back and got us.

**Kathy:** How old were you?

**Bea Hines:** When I came here I was six. By the time I got here, I had just turned six. So, Miami is home. Mm-hmm.

**Kathy:** Wow. What a story.

**Bea Hines:** Yeah. I said I was going to write Tyler Perry and tell him, “I’ve got a Madea story for you.” We had a real life Madea in our family. Later, she moved to Miami with her daughter, and when my children were growing up, and I was working as a maid, she would take care of them. The van dropped Rick off after kindergarten and day care, and they went to Madea’s house, because she lived like two doors down from us, and she took care of them while I worked.

**Kathy:** The same woman?

**Bea Hines:** The same woman. The same woman. We were so fortunate to have her in our lives.

**Kathy:** I guess so.

**Bea Hines:** Yeah. She loved them. I remember when I was trying to potty-train [phonetic][54:21] Shawn, and she and my mother got together — Rick was potty-trained by the time he was 12 months old. He was going to the bathroom by himself. My mother said I just rushed him. I didn’t let him be a baby long enough. [chuckling] You know, old people stay stuff like that, and now I’m old.

She and Madea — I had bought these little training pants for Shawn. She had the key to the house, and she would come get diapers, because I put the diapers on him at night. He was so smart. He knew how many diapers to put on — because sometimes, as a walking baby, I would put two diapers on. We didn’t have Pampers then, and I would put two diapers on.

He’d say, “Momma, go get my two diapers so you can put my two diapers on.” I said, “Momma, do you hear what this boy said? He knows how many diapers he wears,” and he would help me fold them. He doesn’t need to wear them, but when I would go work, Momma told Madea not to pay any attention to me. That I was rushing him.

One day, when I told her that, and she heard him say that, she got so tickled. I said, “You are not wearing a diaper tonight. You’re going to get up and go to the bathroom,” and don’t you know, he did that? He couldn’t reach the toilet, but I heard him, and I got my mother and I same, “Come look.” He was in there on his little tip-toes, and it was going everywhere — all over the bathroom — but he was trying. It was so cute.

I’m sorry we didn’t have a film of that. That was so funny and my mother was proud of him. She said, “Oh, look at him. Look at the baby.” I said, “I told you, the baby is very smart.” He would hear them saying that I was rushing him, and he didn’t want to put his training pants on. It was so funny.

**Kathy:** He sided with them.

**Bea Hines:** He sided with them.

**Kathy:** I think we’ve got about everything we need. Carl?

**Carl:** Yeah. I would just like…you grew up in the South.

**Bea Hines:** Yeah. I did.

**Carl:** In the segregated South.

**Bea Hines:** In the segregated South. Mm-hmm.

**Carl:** I think sometimes people here — you know, we’re sitting on Miami Beach now. People don’t…you know, it’s hard to remember that age. You grew up in it.

**Bea Hines:** My sons don’t know. When I used to tell them the stories about riding in the back of the bus, Rick would say, “Not me. I wouldn’t do that.” I said, “You would do it. You would do it. You would do it, and you would do it with dignity.”

We learned how to accept things without having it beat us down to the ground. We knew this was the way it was. If you want to live, and you want to live a good life, you follow the rules. That doesn’t take anything from your dignity. That was the law of the land, and so we did it.

**Kathy:** When you saw the civil rights movement, in Miami — my understanding is, they had the first sit-in, before [crosstalk][57:21] Greensboro, and before [phonetic][57:23] Nashville.

**Bea Hines:** Yeah. Yeah. I think it was a wade-in. It wasn’t a sit-in. They went to the beaches.

**Kathy:** There was a wade-in, and then there was a sit-in.

**Bea Hines:** At [phonetic][57:33] McGrory’s?

**Kathy:** Mr. A.D. Moore…

**Bea Hines:** I don’t think that was before then, because Miami was kind of slow in getting started. The wade-ins and the golf courses, they did that. That was one of the first things that happened in the country. Maybe it was. A.D. Moore may be right. He may be right. Maybe it was the first sit-in. I know, at McGrory’s, you couldn’t. You could go in and buy a corn dog, but you couldn’t sit there and eat it.

**Kathy:** He tells the story of the campaign to desegregate, focusing on the downtown, because that’s where the people went.

**Bea Hines:** Right.

**Kathy:** That’s where all the big stores were and everything. One morning, he was down there, and he decided he wanted breakfast. I think he wanted to test out this place.

**Bea Hines:** Right.

**Kathy:** They hadn’t really worked on it. He goes in and orders his breakfast, and they said, “We don’t serve ’nigras' here.”

**Bea Hines:** Right. Mm-hmm.

**Kathy:** He said, “Well, I don’t want ‘nigras’.

**Bea Hines:** I don’t eat them.

**Kathy:** I want bacon and eggs.”

**Bea Hines:** Yeah. I’ve heard that story. Mm-hmm. He was that way.

**Kathy:** He’s that way still, [crosstalk][58:42], I think.

**Bea Hines:** I haven’t seen him in a long time. How is he doing?

**Kathy:** The last time I saw him was maybe two years ago, at the History Museum.

**Bea Hines:** Okay.

**Kathy:** I did an oral history with him when he was 80.

**Bea Hines:** Okay.

**Kathy:** That would have been, what? 10 years, [crosstalk][59:01] 11 years…

**Bea Hines:** Yeah. He’s got to be past 90 now. Yeah.

**Kathy:** We did it at Turner Tech, in front of a group of students, and that’s how we found out about the Hampton House.

**Bea Hines:** Right.

**Kathy:** He mentioned it, and I tracked that down, and…

**Bea Hines:** I have a picture of me and my sister-in-law — when Ricky was four weeks old, we went. That was my first night out after he was born, and Jimmy let us go, and her husband let her go, and we went on a girls’ night out at the Hampton House. I should have brought that. In fact, we just buried her last Saturday — my sister-in-law.

**Carl:** If I may, I just wanted to follow up with…the civil rights movement comes, and you’ve grown up [crosstalk][59:44] institutionalized, if you will — if I may be so bold — in a segregated South.

**Bea Hines:** Right.

**Carl:** Did that scare people? Did that scare you at all?

**Bea Hines:** It didn’t scare me. By that time, I’m a young mother with responsibilities to my children, so I couldn’t do the marches and going out, and the sit-ins, like some of my younger friends who were not married could do.

I was for it all the way. I was so proud of the people who were doing that, and praying for the people in Alabama and places like that, who were being beaten and having the hoses put on them, and dogs put on them. I thought that was awful. Miami hadn’t gotten to that point yet.

**Kathy:** There was a scene in “The Help” where they’re showing some of the turmoil. The servants and the Emma Stone character are watching it [crosstalk][60:49] on TV in the same room, and the mother comes in and turns it off.

**Bea Hines:** Right. Yeah.

**Kathy:** Did anything like that ever happen?

**Bea Hines:** I was trying to remember to tell you that. When the march on Washington happened, I had to sneak and watch it. I couldn’t wait for her to leave, because she wouldn’t want me to watch it.

**Kathy:** She went out for the day?

**Bea Hines:** She went out for the day, and I did all my work in her room, where that big TV was. I stripped the bed, I did everything I had to do, because I wanted to watch the march, and just wish that I could be there.

25 years later, I went on the anniversary. I was a reporter then, and I covered it. I covered the 25th anniversary. I could not have known that on that day. I can remember being about to burst with pride as I listened to the ‘I Have a Dream” speech. I was so encouraged, and so proud of Dr. Martin Luther King, but I never would have been able to watch it.

**Kathy:** What did your employers think of Dr. King?

**Bea Hines:** Hated him. Hated him.

**Kathy:** They were vocal about it?

**Bea Hines:** Thought he was a Communist. Mm-hmm.

**Kathy:** That must have hurt to hear.

**Bea Hines:** It did. It hurt, because anybody who fought for the rights of black people was a Communist or something. You couldn’t have been an American. I think of all the talent that went down the drain in this country. People who could have contributed so much to the arts and sciences and everything. Because they were black, they were held back. That bothers me, that that happened in this country, but we’re trying to do better now, and that’s a blessing.

**Kathy:** How much better do you think we’re doing?

**Bea Hines:** Well, we could do a lot better than we are, but I’m thankful that we have come this far. When I look back, we have come a long way. We’ve come a long — the very fact that I’m sitting here talking to you, telling you my story, tells me that we’ve come a very long way. Who would have been interested in this story, say, 25 years ago? Nobody.

**Kathy:** And we have a black President now.

**Bea Hines:** And we have a black President. We have a black President. I never thought I would leave to see this day. I dreamed that I would, but I never thought it would happen in my day. I am so thankful that it did.

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