

Interview with **Georgia Gilmore**

1979

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Interview gathered as part of *America, They Loved You Madly*, a precursor to *Eyes on the Prize: America's Civil Rights Years (1954-1965)*. Produced by Blackside, Inc. Housed at the Washington University Film and Media Archive, Henry Hampton Collection.

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**Note:** These transcripts contain material that did not appear in the final program. Only text appearing in *bold italics* was used in the final version of *Eyes on the Prize*.

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[sound roll 7]

[wild audio]

Georgia Gilmore: Name is Mrs. Georgia Theresa Gilmore

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[sync tone]

INTERVIEWER: CAN YOU TELL ME WHAT IT WAS LIKE ON THE BUSES BEFORE THE BOYCOTT STARTED. THE KIND OF INDIGNITIES YOU ALL FELT.

Gilmore: Well, you was sittin' [sic] in the front even in the middle of a seat and the bus was crowded and the whites would get on the conductor would make you get up and stand up and give the whites the seat. And, usually, it would be a disturbment [sic] cause some peoples would get up and some wouldn't. And if you didn't get up they would always have you arrested.

INTERVIEWER: DID YOU THINK THAT BLACK FOLKS WOULD STAY TOGETHER FOR THE BOYCOTT? WHEN IT FIRST STARTED?

Gilmore: No. You didn't because so many times you had tried to get 'em to stick together

and they wouldn't. But until Reverend King come and they all got to the really and truly understand what it would be like to stay together that was when we decided that we'd all stay together and try to make something of ourselves.

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INTERVIEWER: WHY DO YOU THINK THEY WERE ABLE TO BEAR UNDER NOT BEING ABLE TO GET ON A BUS FOR A WHOLE YEAR? WHAT WAS IT?

Gilmore: It was just the idea that you could make the white man suffer. And let the white man realize that you could get along in the world without him.

INTERVIEWER: HOW DID YOU FEEL WHEN THE BUS COMPANY WENT UNDER?

Gilmore: Well, it wasn't so much for me making the bus company go under it was just the idea of letting the bus company know that we were all human and that you would have to be treated as human if you would expect to receive the money that we had to contribute to their support.

INTERVIEWER: AND WHAT WAS THE SPIRIT LIKE DURING THE BOYCOTT? YOU DID A LOT OF SERVING OUT OF YOUR PLACE.

Gilmore: Oh it was just real nice. Everybody stick together. We had, what we call, the club from nowhere. And this, this was the east side and I was the president of that and Mrs. Inez Ricks was the president of the west side. And we would all see who would be able to contribute the most each Monday and Thursday night when we would have the mass meeting. And east side would always beat the west side. [laughs]

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INTERVIEWER: HOW MUCH DID YOU USUALLY COLLECT FOR EACH WEEK?

Gilmore: Oh, maybe five hundred, six hundred dollars. I have some of the receipts now that I would receive. Mrs. Hazel Gregory and a Ms. Ernie Dirngy [sic] was the secretaries there and they would always give us the receipts for the money that we turned in. And we would all won—we were trying always to have more than the other ones so that we would get the most claps. [laughs]

INTERVIEWER: SO HOW DID—WHEN YOU GAVE IT AT THE MASS MEETING HOW DID THAT WORK?

Gilmore: It worked just fine, because we had certain people that would get up for the west side and people that would get up for the east side.

INTERVIEWER: HOW DID YOU FEEL WHEN YOU WON? WHEN THE SUPREME COURT DECISION CAME DOWN?

Gilmore: It was just one of those things—you know I'm a Catholic. And the priest always said if anything that you desire and wish you had to pray and ask the Lord for it. And if you had enough faith in yourself the Lord would always open it up for you. And by praying and everything I had always asked the Lord if it would ever be—become possible for me to be able to just go around and not have to worry about going in the backdoor or getting up giving somebody else my seat. That I would always thank the Lord because I knew He would answer my prayer. And he did.

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INTERVIEWER: AND DID A LOT, LIKE DR. KING AND A NUMBER OF PEOPLE, USED TO COME IN AND OUT OF YOUR HOUSE RIGHT? YOU, YOU SERVED THEM—

Gilmore: I served them food and everything. And Reverend King was one of—and Reverend Abernathy and Reverend Powell and all. But Reverend King, most of all, was just like a member of my family, because the very things that I needed he helped me to obtain 'em. And nobody, but he and I today know about them.

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INTERVIEWER: DO YOU THINK THAT ALL KINDS OF PEOPLE SUPPORTED THE BOYCOTT? I MEAN RICH, POOR?

Gilmore: Yes. All types. White, black, rich or poor. Anyone that you would talk to and explain it to him and really and truly, you know, explain the whole situation to him you would always remember that he would be your friend. Now a lot of people that we thought that wouldn't contribute and help us did.

INTERVIEWER: AND DID LOT OF THE CHURCHES PARTICIPATE ALSO?

Gilmore: All the churches participated. All the churches.

INTERVIEWER: CAN YOU DESCRIBE WHAT IT WAS LIKE, THAT FIRST DAY, DURING THE MASS MEETING?

Gilmore: Well, it was, it was kind of a wool gathered thing. It was something that you was afraid to go to, but still you wanted to go to it. Because you was afraid that if you'd gone [sic] the police would arrest you and then you was afraid if you didn't go you couldn't understand nor nobody could explain to you what really and truly happened. So it was a chance that you just take.

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INTERVIEWER: DO YOU THINK THE BUSES HAVE CHANGED NOW?

Gilmore: Oh the buses is much different. They're much different because we have a Negro bus drivers and we have white bus drivers. And, and, in other words, whenever you get on the bus each and everybody treat you as you human being. And everybody seems to re—one seem to respect the other. And by peoples respecting you that make you have—feel better about, you know, and feel that even though Reverend King died his death wasn't in vain.

INTERVIEWER: OK. CUT. CUT, CUT.

[cut]

[end of interview]

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