

Interview with **Mrs. Folgate**

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 5]

INTERVIEWER: I GUESS—

[sync tone]

INTERVIEWER: —WHAT I LIKED TO KNOW FOR THE, FOR CHILDREN WHO DON'T KNOW ANYTHING, FOR CHILDREN WHO DON'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT WHAT BUS SEGREGATION WAS LIKE. NOT SO MUCH THE PROCESS, BUT WHAT DID YOU FEEL LIKE HAVING TO PAY AT THE FRONT AND THEN GO OUT AND GO TO THE BACK? WHAT DID YOU FEEL LIKE?

Mrs. Folgate: Well, I, I never did feel comfortable about it, because we were paying our fair share just like anybody else and we'd pay our fare and go back and sit down and if some white person would get on they'd tell you to get up and go on back to the back, but you had to get up.

INTERVIEWER: THAT'S RIGHT. WERE THE BUS DRIVERS COURTEOUS TO YOU?

Folgate: No. Just sometime they was and sometime they wasn't. Most time they were haughty.

INTERVIEWER: DO YOU REMEMBER ANY PARTICULAR INCIDENT, FOR YOU THAT, THAT REALLY STANDS OUT IN YOUR MIND THAT YOU REALLY FELT MAD.

Folgate: Well, yes. [coughs] Once I was downtown at a—shopping. I had an arm full of packages and when I got on the bus, I paid my fare, and I couldn't sit down. I stood up over a seat, but I couldn't sit down in it. That's right.

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INTERVIEWER: I SEE. AND HOW DID YOU FIND OUT ABOUT THE BUS BOYCOTT?

Folgate: Well, [coughs] it was on the radio and then different friends would call and tell about it.

INTERVIEWER: AND WHEN YOU HEARD ABOUT IT DID YOU THINK THAT BLACK FOLKS WOULD REALLY STAY TOGETHER TO DO IT?

Folgate: No, I didn't at that time. I didn't think they would stick together like they did.

INTERVIEWER: AND SO, IT, IT SURPRISED YOU THEN?

Folgate: It did, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: WHY DID—WHY DO YOU THINK THEY DID STICK TOGETHER?

Folgate: Well, they wanted a change. They bring themselves together, because they were tired of standing up in the bus. Pay their fare and stand up.

INTERVIEWER: DO YOU REMEMBER HEARING ABOUT ANY OTHER REAL INCIDENTS ON THE BUSES?

Folgate: Well, during the, [coughs] the boycott—well, it was—a lady was shot in the leg. I know that it was in—other things. I can't recall right now, but I remember that well. She was shot in the leg and everybody was afraid to ride the bus after they were integrated for a good while.

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INTERVIEWER: WHAT DID YOUR FRIENDS THINK ABOUT THE BOYCOTT? I MEAN, DID THEY—DID YOU ALL TALK ABOUT IT?

Folgate: Oh yeah we talked about it. We had club meetings and everything. And everybody was willing to stick together.

INTERVIEWER: WERE YOU AT THAT FIRST MONDAY MASS MEETING?

Folgate: Yes, I was.

INTERVIEWER: CAN YOU DESCRIBE WHAT IT WAS LIKE?

Folgate: Oh, it was so many people here in and outside. And when they raised the offering that night people on the outside just said, take my money. I wants [sic] to pay. I wants to be a part of this. And I don't know, I, I believe it was round three or four thousand people here or more.

INTERVIEWER: HOW DID YOU FIT EVERYBODY INTO THE CHURCH?

Folgate: Not all could get in the church. Some [sic] were on the outside and sometime it would be as many on the outside as there was in the church.

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INTERVIEWER: DO YOU REMEMBER WHAT IT WAS LIKE WHEN KING, WHEN DR. KING FIRST SPOKE?

Folgate: Yes. Everybody—it was a—just thrilled to death. And it looked like to me they were just waiting for something good to happen. And—which it did.

INTERVIEWER: PERFECT. AND DID YOU KNOW WHEN YOU CAME INTO THAT MASS MEETING THAT EVERYBODY WOULD APPROVE OF THE BOYCOTT WHEN, WHEN HE TOOK THE VOTE?

Folgate: Well, no. We, we didn't know, then. We were just waiting to see, what would happen.

INTERVIEWER: AND WHAT WAS IT LIKE THAT MONDAY WHEN YOU ALL WALKED THAT FIRST DAY?

Folgate: Well, it was, I think, it was raining. I believe it was raining that day, but if it wasn't raining that particular day it did rain and everybody seemed to be happy. Nobody grumbling.

INTERVIEWER: DID YOU HAVE TO WALK THAT FIRST DAY YOURSELF?

Folgate: Well, no I didn't walk the first day myself. Because—but I did walk. But I didn't walk the first day.

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INTERVIEWER: I SEE. WAS IT HARD FOR YOU WALKING ALL THAT WHOLE YEAR?

Folgate: Well, no not too hard, because we had made up in our mind to try to stick together and accomplish something.

INTERVIEWER: AND WHY—WHAT MADE PEOPLE STICK TOGETHER SO MUCH? I MEAN, WHAT WAS IT THAT DID THAT FOR THEM?

Folgate: Well, they are—as I said, they wanted to better their condition. And we go to the banks [coughs] we had to be the last one to be waited on. Go anywhere, but now it's quite a different.

INTERVIEWER: AND WHAT WAS IT LIKE WHEN VICTORY CAME? WHEN YOU FOUND OUT THAT THE SUPREME COURT HAD RULED AND YOU—

Folgate: Oh, everybody was just happy. They were in Court that morning. And the white people began to whisper among themselves and—so when they came back and announced it. Everybody was happy.

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INTERVIEWER: DID YOU HAVE A MEETING AFTER THAT AT THE CHURCH?

Folgate: Yeah, we has—had a meeting every week. And so, the way they know where the meetings was going to be we had a radio announcer, well he would say, there's going to be a meeting at such-and-such a church tonight. Everybody knew what he was talking about and they would be there. They didn't have to say for what—

00:05:20:00

[cut]

[wild audio]

Folgate: —purpose, but they would be there cause they knew.

INTERVIEWER: AND—

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: OK.

INTERVIEWER: THAT'S VERY GOOD. THIS IS VERY—

[cut]

[end of interview]

00:05:31:00

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