



Interview with **Rosie Mars**

Date: June 2, 1989

Interviewer: Madison Davis Lacy, Jr.

Camera Roll: 1106

Sound Rolls: 148

Team: A

Interview gathered as part of ***Eyes on the Prize II: America at the Racial Crossroads, 1965-mid 1980s***. Produced by Blackside, Inc. Housed at the Washington University Film and Media Archive, Henry Hampton Collection.

Preferred Citation

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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 II*.

[camera roll #1006]

[sound roll #148]

00:00:11:00

Camera crew member #1:

Marker.

Camera crew member #2:

Marker.

[slate]

00:00:13:00

Interviewer:

You were telling me earlier about being conditioned. What'd you mean? Tell me about that in terms of yourself.

00:00:19:00

Rosie Mars:

In terms of myself? Condition is like when you accept what is. What is told to you. What is said, this is the way it's supposed to be and you don't challenge. You don't ask questions. You don't try to make a change. You just go on every day doing, you know, or not doing. You know, you don't try to break away from traditional habits. That's what I mean.

00:00:48:00

Camera crew member #1:

Sorry, we have to stop. I'm sorry.

00:00:48:00

Interviewer:

OK, we have to stop.

Camera crew member #1:

Can we get a mirror [unintelligible]

[cut]

00:00:49:00

Camera crew member #1:

Mark.

Camera crew member #2:

Marker.

[slate]

00:00:53:00

Interviewer:

All right. Tell me again about what you meant by being conditioned and link it to the Washington campaign.

00:00:58:00

Rosie Mars:

OK. What I mean is about condition of Harold Washington, like when he ran for first term in office, I was conditioned. ***I got up one Saturday, a week before the election. I was all set to vote for Jane Byrne for Mayor. And my radio normally don't be turned to a talk show, but this morning it was on Operation PUSH.*** So, I was continuing my morning duties, cooking and I heard Reverend Jesse Jackson speak but then Harold Washington came on. And he spoke of his issues of housing, education, better jobs, the homeless. He, he spoke in terms of, of everything and everyone including the city and the people. And so, that's why I say conditioned. I was conditioned. I was not that type of person willing to make a change until that Saturday morning, a week before the election, OK? So, I broke away from the condition, you know. And no longer will I be conditioned. And this is what I be telling people. You are conditioned. And as we move forward, they say we're moving forward. You can only move forward if you are willing to break the traditional habit that was set down on you, to make a change, you know.

00:02:31:00

Interviewer:

OK. Now go back. I want you to do it for me one more time.

Rosie Mars:

Mmm.

Interviewer:

This time forget about the conditioning part of it, and just tell me what happened that Saturday morning, and I want you to end with how you burnt them biscuits.

00:02:42:00

Rosie Mars:

OK. All right. A week before election, I got up, went downstairs, and I started to cook breakfast. The radio was on and I normally doesn't listen to a talk show, but this, it was on the station, and it was coming from Operation PUSH. ***So, I was listening to Jesse Jackson speak and Harold Washington came on the radio. I never saw his face. I didn't know who was running against Jane Byrne, far as color of the skin. And he spoke. So, I sit down. He was speaking so clearly, and for the—all of the city and the people, I sit down on the couch and I went to listening to this man speak. And what brought me out of this trance was my burnt biscuits. The biscuits was burning in my oven. And I sent my children to the adult learning center in the next building to get literature on Harold Washington.*** And I broke out of my conditional ways because I was conditioned up until that point, up until that Saturday morning.

00:04:00:00

Interviewer:

So now you started to work for Harold. What did you do?

00:04:03:00

Rosie Mars:

I—door to door canvassing, petitions, you know, just to get people to listen. This is all I want, listen, you know. Listen to the issues. He had issues. It wasn't about the color of the skin. He was fighting the issues. He was fighting the condition that was set down for many, many years. He had broke away and he had reached out to many.

00:04:32:00

Interviewer:

So, how did you feel when he got in, when he won that primary?

00:04:36:00

Rosie Mars:

I get goosebumps. I, if this blouse wasn't, you know, long sleeves—I get goosebumps. *I felt like I was a part of something. He said, you know, we were making history, you know. So, I was a part of it. I was the small person in the corner that wouldn't get the big headlines, but I made it happen.* I was a part of it. Without the little people—but Harold recognized it, he recognized it. And he made the little people work. I mean, like he say, Can you give me a hundred? I mean, can you give me a hundred percent? You know, and once you give me a hundred percent, I want a hundred and ten. Can you do it? Yeah, I can do it. I can do it. I can do it. And he left you with that. You know what I'm saying? He didn't take it away. No matter how tired you thought you were, if he said, Can you? You could. And I, I'm still at it. [laughs]

00:05:34:00

Interviewer:

[laughs] Do you think any of your children might be able to emulate Harold some day? Would you want them to?

00:05:39:00

Rosie Mars:

Well, it's that individual. I don't feel like anyone can duplicate Harold.

Interviewer:

Mm-hmm.

00:05:47:00

Rosie Mars:

Harold was an individual, he was respected. No one can fill his shoes, but I'm quite sure that we can get us some leading leaders. And I don't want to use that word leader, because he was not a leader, you know. He was a man with great ideas. He was a man that was working for his goal and his beliefs. His goals and beliefs just included the, for all. That was it. And if we could just get people to see what he was saying. I mean, you liked the way he speak, you loved his diction. But did you define the words that he used? I mean, did you comprehend what he was saying? It's you. It's you. He's not here to lead you. Harold went home every night and slept in his own bed. He went to City Hall and he sit at that desk, you know? And if one day, one of my children would happen to achieve their goal, sure.

00:06:52:00

Interviewer:

All right. Stop down.

[wild sound]

Very good. Excellent. Right. All right, thank you.

[cut]

[end of interview]

00:06:58:00

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