

**Interview Records of Elizabeth “Liz” Overton Colton
Completed for the Black Lives Matter Oral History
Project**



**Elizabeth “Liz” Overton Colton was interviewed By Lizzy
Ray
10/15/2023**

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Narrator: Elizabeth Colton
Interviewer: Lizzy Ray
Date: October 15, 2023
Location: Zoom
Length: One hour, twenty-two minutes, thirty-seven seconds

Liz Colton was born in Corpus Christi, Texas in 1945, but spent her childhood in Asheville, North Carolina. She got her B.A. at Randolph-Macon Women's College, now Randolph College, and has two Masters degrees from Vanderbilt University, in English Literature and Sociology-Anthropology. She received her Ph.D. in Social Anthropology, at the University of London School of Economics and Political Science. As a child, her community consisted of Trinity Episcopal Church in Asheville, her school friends, and her family. When she was growing up, school integration was occurring all over the country, but slowly in the south. She recalls this being a very inspirational time that fueled her life-long ambition of being a civil advocate.

Liz spent a lifetime working in civil rights, especially taking part in the Civil Rights Movement from a young age—the 1950s in elementary school and throughout high school and college, even being a part of ASCORE, Asheville Student Committee on Racial Equality. She recalls working in the Peace Corps in Africa when Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated and the ripple effect across the world. Colton has worked for the United Nations, was an international/national/local journalist in the news media, and served as press secretary for Rev. Jesse Jackson in 1988 U.S. Presidential primary. She was a diplomat with the U.S. Foreign Service, professor for UNITAR, and currently Diplomat and Journalist in Residence at Warren Wilson College.

Elizabeth Colton has spent her life helping the people around the world and continues to do so to this day. She is still fighting for a better future for minorities and continues to educate the future generations on how to fight for their own rights and how to fight for each others' rights. From this perspective, she opines on the Black Lives Matter movement.

FIELD NOTES – ELIZABETH “LIZ” COLTON

(compiled November 5, 2023)

Narrator: Elizabeth Colton
Interviewer: Lizzy Ray
Date: November 5, 2023
Location: Zoom

NARRATOR. Liz Colton grew up in Western North Carolina, living the majority of her life in Asheville. Throughout her childhood she attended Trinity Episcopal Church, in downtown Asheville, and is still an active member. Growing up in Asheville she experienced the civil rights movement first hand and was even one of the few white members of ASCORE, Asheville Student Committee on Racial Equality. She has lived in many countries and worked in many more, and is currently a professor for UNITAR.

THE INTERVIEWER. Lizzy Ray is an undergraduate student at Sewanee: The University of the South, currently completing an oral history project for her seminar class “Black Power to Black Lives Matter.”

DESCRIPTION OF THE INTERVIEW. The interview was conducted on Zoom, with Colton in her Asheville, North Carolina home, and Ray in Sewanee. The interview starts right away with a summary of the idea of the project and the reasoning behind the interview. Ray starts the interview with the date and time of the recording and the basic information about where Colton is from and where she grew up. The interview lasted approximately an hour and twenty minutes. On the whole, Colton was very willing and open to answer any questions, and would dive into her life experiences and beliefs, from growing up during the Civil Rights Movement in America, and on the basis of Black Power and Black Lives Matter, without prompt. Colton was very helpful at answering all the questions asked and it was a pleasure to interview her.

NOTE ON RECORDING. I recorded the interview on Zoom.

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LIZZY RAY ([00:01:21](#)):

Hi, Liz.

LIZ ([00:01:26](#)):

Hi.

LIZZY RAY ([00:01:27](#)):

Hi. How are you?

LIZ ([00:01:32](#)):

Well, it's nice to see you on Zoom since I saw you at church a few weeks ago.

LIZZY RAY ([00:01:37](#)):

It's very good to see you.

LIZ ([00:01:38](#)):

Yeah, thank you. I'm sorry about the form. My printer doesn't work and it's, but I was hoping you would explain everything at the beginning so I can just, we can discuss before the formal interview.

LIZZY RAY ([00:01:52](#)):

Yes, I was, that was my plan. Just how was your morning?

LIZ ([00:02:01](#)):

Oh, well, it was a beautiful church service, actually. It was All Saints Day, and I read the lesson, which was beautiful from Revelations and about seeing the lambs and everything. Magnificent. And then we had the baptism.

LIZZY RAY ([00:02:20](#)):

I love baptisms.

LIZ ([00:02:21](#)):

Yeah. Precious little boy, baby, about five months old and named George Mitchell. And he, through the whole service, smiled and didn't do a thing. No screaming or yelling or anything. And--

LIZZY RAY ([00:02:36](#)):

I never thought about my brother's baptism.

LIZ ([00:02:38](#)):

Yeah, it was beautiful. And then the music was fan--the church was packed, really packed. And then on top of it, of course, the reception in the courtyard, but also then they had the food that we had

ordered, the delicious comfort food, meatloaf and mashed potatoes and green beans to help the EYC for their trip to Greece.

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LIZZY RAY ([00:03:09](#)):

Oh yeah, my brother's part of that.

LIZ ([00:03:11](#)):

Yep. How old is he?

LIZZY RAY ([00:03:13](#)):

15.

LIZ ([00:03:14](#)):

Okay. So is he in the 10th grade or--?

LIZZY RAY ([00:03:18](#)):

Yes, 10th grade.

LIZ ([00:03:20](#)):

And what year are you at Sewanee?

LIZZY RAY ([00:03:23](#)):

I'm a sophomore.

LIZ ([00:03:25](#)):

Okay. And anyway, it's so great to meet you this way, and I look forward to seeing you when you're back in Asheville.

LIZZY RAY ([00:03:32](#)):

Oh, me too. I should be home for Thanksgiving break. Not exactly when that is this year, but when that comes about.

LIZ ([00:03:41](#)):

Tell me, have you chosen your major yet, or you're still w--

LIZZY RAY ([00:03:44](#)):

I am a history major.

LIZ ([00:03:45](#)):

Oh, good. Excellent, excellent.

LIZZY RAY ([00:03:47](#)):

Yes.

LIZ ([00:03:49](#)):

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You know I teach all over the world and I've done many, many things in my life. And I was an English major and a Classics minor--Latin and Greek, and Classical Civilization, and of course, a lot History, a lot of Philosophy... Undergraduate, I didn't--I took one Sociology course to fulfill the Social Studies. So it wasn't until I went off, and then I went immediately in the Peace Corps after college, and I was in Africa. Then I came back and I was getting a PhD in English, and I met somebody who said--at Vanderbilt--and they said they were majoring in Anthropology. And the truth was, I didn't even know what Anthropology was. And I said, "Well, what's Anthropology?" And she said, "Well, it's the study of peoples and cultures all over the world." I said, "Well, that's me!" You know--and I changed, and then I got a master's in English, and then I got a master's in Sociology, Anthropology. And then I got a PhD in Social Anthropology from the University of London. And--But the point is, and then all of those--all of my teaching is mostly subjects I never took courses in. And so I teach Politics in the Media, Diplomacy, Speech Writing. I teach all kinds of Media Analysis, and all of this is based on my life work. And the fact is that being an English major or a History major, or a Philosophy major, I believe even though the mass media doesn't say this, they're fabulous because you can do anything!

([00:05:34](#)):

And because you have a foundation in History or English or Philosophy or USAS(??) or Religion, whatever, for moving and doing, jumping around. And I tell English majors, I said, "Don't let your parents tell you that's useless." I said, "Because every single place in the world needs people who can write."

LIZZY RAY ([00:05:55](#)):

Yes, exactly.

LIZ ([00:05:56](#)):

And so history too. I mean, all of these, when I went into Peace Corps, there were four of us. There was nobody who was an Anthropology major. Fifty-two people in our training group. And when we came back from Africa a few years later, four of us--three were History majors, and I, an English major--ended up going into Anthropology and getting our PhDs.

LIZZY RAY ([00:06:21](#)):

Yeah.

LIZ ([00:06:22](#)):

So you're doing right.

LIZZY RAY ([00:06:25](#)):

Well, thank you. I almost was an Anthropology major because one of my favorite professors is an Anthropology professor.

LIZ ([00:06:31](#)):

Oh, who is that?

LIZZY RAY ([00:06:33](#)):

Dr. Steven Bergquist.

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LIZ ([00:06:34](#)):

Okay.

LIZZY RAY ([00:06:35](#)):

Yes.

LIZ ([00:06:36](#)):

Well, it's a great, actually, my life, once I've studied it, I realized that my whole way of looking at things is as an anthropologist--the perspective. And it was funny, I was chair of the Mass Communications Program--which I had never studied, by the way--but I was the chair at Shenandoah University and I was creating all these courses and my students loved it. And there were a lot of double majors and others from other schools like the Conservatory Drama School and Music and all, and Business and Health, and the regular Liberal Arts. And my students--so after three or four years, I finally taught an Anthropology Introduction course, and I said, "Okay, I want you to understand what the anthropological perspective is. You look at the world holistically and diachronically and without bias, and you try to have a generalist view, things like this. And my students said, "Liz, you've been teaching us the whole--this the whole time in all the other courses." I said, "I guess so. I didn't know it."

LIZZY RAY ([00:07:48](#)):

Yeah.

LIZ ([00:07:50](#)):

Anyway, so tell me please, what this is. Just lay it out for me. I know I have a general idea, of course, but I want to hear from you.

LIZZY RAY ([00:07:58](#)):

Okay. So you are one of my last interviews. I have to do at least five people. So you are my fifth. I'm hoping to get more viewpoints as well, cause I find this really interesting. But the whole thing is my professor, Dr. McGinn, is teaching two classes currently, Black Power to Black Lives Matter, and African American History--One and Two. And so all of these classes are kind of doing a oral history project, which is a collaborative Digital Humanities project between my professor, Dr. McGinn, the Department of History at Sewanee, and the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion here at Sewanee.

LIZ ([00:08:43](#)):

Ok.

LIZZY RAY ([00:08:46](#)):

And the whole goal is to document and archive the experiences of those that came in contact with the Black Lives Matter movement and also the movements that came before, and also the movements that occurred because of Black Lives Matter happening in the media. Because one of the things that I learned in 2020 when it all kind of started, because I was a Covid student, I didn't really have much to do. I kind of just dove deep into the whole, "How is Black Lives [Matter] affecting the rest of the world?" And I saw all of the imperial powers, like England, the people in England were also boycotting, not necessarily boycotting, but protesting,

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LIZ ([00:09:34](#)):

Protesting

LIZZY RAY ([00:09:36](#)):

The imperial powers and the statues of the previous Imperial men. And so I found that very interesting that the movement in America was able to influence another movement in England.

LIZ ([00:09:55](#)):

Mm hmm.

LIZZY RAY ([00:09:55](#)):

So we kind of have a website. It's not really a full website yet, but it's a Counter Archive filled with student-collected, oral history interviews, as well as any related digitized items or artifacts that are given to us. So yeah, it's quite fun.

LIZ ([00:10:22](#)):

So what was--so in your interviews, just to give me an idea, what have you been, have they all been different in terms of your questions or are you asking similar questions, or what are you trying to get in? Are the people--they're, various people from all kinds of backgrounds?

LIZZY RAY ([00:10:40](#)):

Yes ma'am, they're from all over. One is a lady that my mother used to work with at Wells Fargo, or well before it was Wells Fargo--I th--Wachovia or First Na--

LIZ ([00:10:54](#)):

Yeah, Wachovia. Wachovia.

LIZZY RAY ([00:10:56](#)):

Yes. And so she grew up in a small town in North Carolina that's majority black. And so I got her perspective on Black Power.

LIZ ([00:11:08](#)):

So she's African American?

LIZZY RAY ([00:11:10](#)):

Yes, ma'am.

LIZ ([00:11:10](#)):

Good.

LIZZY RAY ([00:11:12](#)):

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And I got her perspective on growing up through the Black Power Movement and how that was taught to her in schools, and then how Black Lives Matter has affected her family, how she has seen the movement evolve through her entire life and all that stuff.

([00:11:31](#)):

I've interviewed a few students here at Sewanee on their viewpoints because we all were kind of Covid students, so I wanted to see how maybe in different cities around America, how kind of those schools related to Black Lives Matter, because my high school, we had a lot of protests when we got back, we did walkouts where we would walk out and--

LIZ ([00:11:55](#)):

Which was your high school?

LIZZY RAY ([00:11:56](#)):

Asheville High.

LIZ ([00:11:57](#)):

Oh, it was Asheville. Okay.

LIZZY RAY ([00:11:59](#)):

Well Silsa(?), but Asheville High.

([00:12:04](#)):

And so we would walk downtown and we would sit nex--sit in Pack Square and all that stuff, and the Vance Monument and all that stuff. So I wanted to get multiple viewpoints and everything. So it's been good.

([00:12:17](#)):

I've been using a similar question structure for everybody, but I've been branching out with the answers that are given. Cause I want to get more in depth with everybody.

LIZ ([00:12:27](#)):

Sure. Which you should do for each whatever direction people go.

LIZZY RAY ([00:12:35](#)):

Yes. There's the general question pool, just to kind of make people comfortable. It's mainly about community and your travels and stuff. And then my more in-depth are about the Black Lives Matter in general, and the news, social media, how it has impacted your relationship in a social aspect or how you interact with people, and also race relations, just not only in the US but in other countries as well. If they have that traveling experience, and I've seen that. Then I kind of just let y'all dive deep into it, cause I know I can talk forever, so when somebody asks me a question, I can just go into it forever, until they tell me to stop, and so--

LIZ ([00:13:32](#)):

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I suspect, I don't know, and we'll find out, but I suspect I'm your oldest person maybe. And I was born in 1945, so I graduated from high school in 1963. I was throughout the beginning of the Civil Rights

Movement all my life. So I suspect I have a perspective that's pretty far back.

LIZZY RAY ([00:13:55](#)):

Yes ma'am. I think the first person that I interviewed, her name was Vera Avery, and--

LIZ ([00:14:02](#)):

I think she was younger than I, from what you told me.

LIZZY RAY ([00:14:05](#)):

--I think she was born in 1960.

LIZ ([00:14:07](#)):

Yeah, she was about 15 years younger.

LIZZY RAY ([00:14:09](#)):

Yes. Yes ma'am.

LIZ ([00:14:10](#)):

So by the time she came along, what we had done was having an effect.

LIZZY RAY ([00:14:18](#)):

Yes.

LIZ ([00:14:18](#)):

So I think just to suggest this, that I think from me, you're going to get this farther back, well before Black Lives Matter--

LIZZY RAY ([00:14:27](#)):

Yes.

LIZ ([00:14:28](#)):

--and I will tell you about my continuing work with people when we were living in a very segregated society. These people became my friends, but they were teenagers, and I'll tell you about that. But they're my friends now. 65 years later, they're my friends, and we were across segregated lines.

LIZZY RAY ([00:14:53](#)):

That's beautiful. Okay, so--

LIZ ([00:14:56](#)):

What did you need me to sign?

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LIZZY RAY ([00:14:59](#)):

Oh, it's just a form that says you're good with me recording this interview and sharing it with my class. And then the other one is a bio sheet that just kind of fills out--

LIZ ([00:15:14](#)):

Okay. Is there any way that I could fill this electronically? But I mean, I can go and make copies, but I just haven't had time to go to a--

LIZZY RAY ([00:15:23](#)):

No, you're good. I can send it to you. Do you use Word or Google Drive?

LIZ ([00:15:29](#)):

I don't like Google Drive. If I had a Word document that I could copy and then fill out--

LIZZY RAY ([00:15:37](#)):

Yes, I can do Word and send that to you.

LIZ ([00:15:39](#)):

Yeah. Otherwise, I'm so sorry. I don't--my stupid printers not working.

([00:15:44](#)):

We're all good. Sometimes the one at home for me used to not work either, which was really not fun, especially when I had to print stuff for school. So I do understand. Awesome. Okay.

([00:15:55](#)):

Are you ready to start the interview?

([00:15:59](#)):

Yeah. And so you do know something about my background, right?

LIZZY RAY ([00:16:03](#)):

Yes. I read the article that was in the church--?

LIZ ([00:16:09](#)):

Yeah, that I wrote. The one that I wrote?

LIZZY RAY ([00:16:11](#)):

Yeah.

LIZ ([00:16:11](#)):

Yep. Okay. And did you read some articles about me?

LIZZY RAY ([00:16:17](#)):

Yes. I can't remember what it was. Let me pull that up real quick--

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LIZ ([00:16:21](#)):

Just to tell--it doesn't matter, but I just wondered if you know so--any about my background here.

LIZZY RAY ([00:16:26](#)):

Yes, I was sent stuff, and so, I mean, I did read them about a week ago or two weeks ago, so it's not fresh on the brain. So--

LIZ ([00:16:38](#)):

Ok.

LIZZY RAY ([00:16:39](#)):

--hopefully we can dive more deep into that. Okay.

LIZ ([00:16:42](#)):

So tell me something, did you grow up in Asheville?

LIZZY RAY ([00:16:46](#)):

I was born in Durham and then moved to Winston-Salem when my Dad went to med school at Wake Forest. And then I moved to Asheville in 2014. Yeah, 2014. And I've lived--

LIZ ([00:16:58](#)):

So how old were you then?

LIZZY RAY ([00:17:02](#)):

Nine, 10.

LIZ ([00:17:04](#)):

Ok.

LIZZY RAY ([00:17:04](#)):

That sounds right.

LIZ ([00:17:06](#)):

I moved to Asheville when I was eight--

LIZZY RAY ([00:17:08](#)):

Yes.

LIZ ([00:17:08](#)):

--and the third grade. But before that, my father had been in law school in earl--the mid, late forties after World War II, and then we were in Morganton, North Carolina, where he practiced law. And then he started--he gets bored in law cause he always said, "Well, there's nothing--there's no cases here except bootleg and"--because it was a dry county--"bootleg and divorce." And he said, "I'm not

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interested in those." So he went into, at that time, life insurance. So then we moved to Asheville in 53, and I'll tell you that.

LIZZY RAY ([00:17:45](#)):

Okay, awesome.

LIZ ([00:17:46](#)):

But it sounds like about the same age you came to Asheville.

LIZZY RAY ([00:17:48](#)):

Yeah, my brother was in first grade when we moved to Asheville, so 6ish, I think?

LIZ ([00:17:57](#)):

Yeah.

LIZZY RAY ([00:17:57](#)):

So, yeah, he's lived there [the] majority of his life.

LIZ ([00:18:00](#)):

And where did you go first before you went to Asheville High?

LIZZY RAY ([00:18:05](#)):

I was at Vance Elementary now Lucy S. Herring?

LIZ ([00:18:09](#)):

Yeah. Okay. Vance--

LIZZY RAY ([00:18:10](#)):

West Asheville. And then I went to Asheville Middle School.

LIZ ([00:18:15](#)):

Oh, you went to and Asheville Middle. Okay.

LIZZY RAY ([00:18:17](#)):

Yes. I was there for a year before they built the whole new building.

LIZ ([00:18:22](#)):

Okay. And then where did you get the name? Lizzie. Is that your middle name? Elizabeth?

LIZZY RAY ([00:18:26](#)):

My full name is Sarah Elizabeth. Yes. My parents used to call me Sarah Elizabeth, but then apparently when I was in preschool, my preschool teacher didn't think Sarah Elizabeth fit me, so she started calling me Lizzy.

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LIZ ([00:18:41](#)):

Oh, really? Okay, cool. Well, I went through, I was Elizabeth, and then I finally said I was Liz, but my parents, my father called me Lizzie sometimes.

LIZZY RAY ([00:18:52](#)):

Yeah. My friends, whenever they find out my full name, they're like, yeah, I don't see you as a Sarah or anything. I'm like, yeah, I think Lizzie fits my personality. Yeah, cool. One of my best friends also calls me Liz.

LIZ ([00:19:05](#)):

Yeah. Well, so I tell you, here's the suggestion. Just when you open up, I will say, "Yes, I agree to having this interview as archives."

LIZZY RAY ([00:19:15](#)):

Yes.

LIZ ([00:19:15](#)):

So that you have it on the record in the interview.

LIZZY RAY ([00:19:19](#)):

Beautiful. Thank you so much. Okay. I'm going to start with just a baseline sort of thing

LIZ ([00:19:24](#)):

Now. Be sure. Are you recording?

LIZZY RAY ([00:19:26](#)):

Yes, ma'am. Don't worry.

LIZ ([00:19:30](#)):

I teach every day around the world online and Zoom. So I know about recording my webinars.

LIZZY RAY ([00:19:37](#)):

Yeah, I had to figure it out the first time. It was a struggle the first time because I'd never recorded on Zoom. I feel like I'm a pro now.

LIZ ([00:19:46](#)):

Good for you. Good for you.

LIZZY RAY ([00:19:48](#)):

Okay, so I have to start with the baseline.

([00:19:51](#)):

This is Lizzie Ray from Sewanee, the University of the South. It is Sunday, November 5th at 1:18 PM I am with, if you could state your name and where you are

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LIZ ([00:20:04](#)):

And it's the year 2023.

LIZZY RAY ([00:20:06](#)):

Oh yes. 2023. Thank you.

LIZ ([00:20:10](#)):

My name is Elizabeth and my nickname, and the name I use is Liz Colton, C-O-L-T-O-N. And I'm in Asheville, North Carolina right now. And I will state at the beginning that I give permission for my

interview to be used in the archives for this special project. And I--

LIZZY RAY ([00:20:30](#)):

Thank you.

LIZ ([00:20:30](#)):

--And I congratulate you all on doing this.

LIZZY RAY ([00:20:34](#)):

Thank you. Appreciate it. Thank you for being here, Liz. So Liz, we kind of touched on this, but where are you originally from?

LIZ ([00:20:44](#)):

Well, I am--I grew up in Asheville, North Carolina, in Western North Carolina and then at the age of eight from third grade in Asheville in--from the earl--the 1950s. I was born in 1945. So that gives my age, but it means that I really lived through, I have lived through a lot and participated and been active from my--really from my childhood in all of these things. So I grew up here in Asheville, North Carolina. And then I'll tell you what else I did later.

LIZZY RAY ([00:21:17](#)):

Awesome. You say you grew up mainly in Western North Carolina. Is Asheville different than the other places in western North Carolina that you lived in?

LIZ ([00:21:31](#)):

Well, I lived in a small town, which was Morganton, but then that was before I was eight. So yeah, so really from the time, I mean, of course I remember that. But really, Asheville was my hometown. And in fact, my church was Trinity Episcopal Church where you and I also go.

LIZZY RAY ([00:21:53](#)):

Yes

LIZ ([00:21:54](#)):

But I will add just quickly and I'll tell later. Then when I turned 18, I went to college and I went off for almost 48 years, literally around the world. I've lived all over the world. I've lived in 13 countries, I've worked in 122 countries, and then I came back home to my hometown, Asheville.

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LIZZY RAY ([00:22:13](#)):

That's amazing. I would love to travel all over the place. Where did you find community as a child?

LIZ ([00:22:25](#)):

Well, everywhere, all kinds of places I grew up. My family was always very supportive and interesting. And I was at church first in the junior choir and in Sunday school classes, and then the EYC, which was extremely active in my day in the '50s and early '60s, the Episcopal Young Churchman at Trinity Church and also throughout western North Carolina. And we were leaders and act--very active in at the very, very beginning of the Civil Rights Movement. And then also, of course, in all my schools, I was a leader in those days, I will say, you see, girls could not be, for example, President of the class or President of the student body. Girls couldn't do anything. They weren't allowed to. Girls were nothing in the church. We could not be acolytes, we could not be crucifiers. We had no priest, no women priests to look up to. It was against the rules. But as a little girl, I still dreamed of doing a lot of things, and fortunately my parents never told me that girls couldn't do it, even though at that point it wasn't simply a race issue, which of course was the worst, but also against women. So most girls my age grew up without any options in front of us, except getting married or being a nurse or a secretary or a teacher. That was that.

LIZZY RAY ([00:23:53](#)):

Yes. Where did you go to high school? In Asheville.

LIZ ([00:23:57](#)):

So I went to high school, but I want to go back to my third grade on. May I do that here?

LIZZY RAY ([00:24:03](#)):

Of course,

LIZ ([00:24:04](#)):

Yeah. So let me--since you're asking--I just wanted to give sort of a framework. When, in 1954, there was the big Supreme Court ruling, which is known as Brown v. Board of Education, and it was in May of 1954, and I can remember the day I was eight years old, and before that time, both in the town I lived in before Morganton and in Asheville, I had--I didn't understand, and I would ask my parents, and they would be very nice about it. They weren't happy about the situation. I kept asking why the children, I'd--for example, walking home from school, I walked home sometime with, I--became friends with some black children and they--we were friends, on th--but they didn't go to my school. So I didn't understand this, and I would ask about it. So in the third grade, in the spring of the third grade, here in Asheville, it was called William Randolph School at that point, which was all white because it was segregated.

([00:25:18](#)):

The ruling came out, and I remember it, and I kept worrying--I remember as a child hearing on the radio--we didn't have television yet in those days, at that time, the--I was worried there might be some new Civil War or something. And I was concerned and talked to my mother and father about it, and they said, "No, darling, it won't be, but this is a good thing and this is very important." So my parents supported it. Well, later in life, my mother told me, not long before she died, she remembered how she said, "You know, Liz, the day after the Brown v. Board of Education ruling in May '54, you came home from school from third grade and said our teacher brought it up in class. Well, of course, I think that's fabulous that

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she brought it up. And for little third graders, and mother told me, and I was pleased to hear this from my mother, she said, "I asked you, Liz, 'What did you say about this?'"

[\(00:26:26\)](#):

And I said--according to my mother, but I'm sure it was true--I said, "Well, I think that this Supreme Court decision is going to make our country more [of] the kind of place it's supposed to be ...of our ideals about freedom for all people." And I said, well, later, many years later, I said, "Mother, did I say that?" She said, "Yes, you did say that as a little eight year old." So it is true that I was concerned always. And there wasn't--but it wasn't until later--that was 1954, things started happening ... with, and I can remember, you see the downtown, there were water fountains for blacks. I mean, f--and they were called color--colored and white and everything. And the movie theaters were segregated. The African Americans had to sit upstairs in the balcony, the buses, they had to sit in the back of the bus 'ntil--until Rosa Parks, the famous pioneer--woman--refused to get to the back of the bus.

[\(00:27:41\)](#):

And I can--this was all during my childhood, and we were excited about this, and--but in 1959, there started to be some developments, some kind of sit-ins and protests, and at lunch counters in drugstores and drugstores in those days had soda fountains, [and were places] where people ate and had coffee, ate lunch, a hamburger.

[\(00:28:09\)](#):

...But the blacks were not allowed there. So people like my parents and people at the church--you are in my church--Trinity Church, led by the Minister who was Mr. Tuton and the Bishop of Western North Carolina, Bishop Henry. These were leaders and my parents and their families in going to the lunch counter strikes to sit there, the protest to sit there at a stool. And so if an African-American came in and our parents, those people would welcome them and say, please sit with me and have a coffee so that the people behind the counters wouldn't say, you're not allowed here. So that was the purpose of this. And the good thing was that early in the 1950s, after 1954 ruling, the church, our church, really began to be leaders in outs--and were leaders in the community. Everybody knew. And it also because what also happened was that because the schools were segregated and there were no restaurants that were not segregated, there was nowhere for us to meet with the people with the African-American people.

[\(00:29:32\)](#):

So the church, the Diocese of Western North Carolina, which had a house out in Black Mountain, North Carolina called In the Oaks, and also Trinity Church, and also the--mostly--the African-American Church, St. Matthias, they provided meeting spaces, not just for the student children and teenagers to meet with African-Americans, and--at that time called coloreds, but then later, and--Negroes was later used, then blacks and then African-Americans--but the--they began to provide the meeting spaces. So it was really quite remarkable that the church was really the foundation for bringing together these meetings where, I mean, you can't imagine--there was no place that we were allowed to meet. You couldn't go to a restaurant or something, and you couldn't go to a school to meet. So we had to meet [in] these kind of places.

[\(00:30:35\)](#):

And so then I joined--there was the Black High School, which was called Stevens Lee, and the White High

School, which was called Lee Edwards, which then ultimately became Asheville High--the students at the black school, Stevens Lee, started to found something called the Asheville Student Committee on Racial Equality: ASCORE. And this was started in 1959. At that time, I was in the eighth grade, and then--I mean the ninth grade, yes, in ninth grade--and then, s--in abou--in 1960 or early fift--late 59 or early 60, then

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they started saying, "Well, we'd have some white members" if we wanted to be members. And of course, you can imagine there weren't that many,

(00:31:29):

But I was also a leader in the school and not just doing this. So I wasn't afraid, and I believed. And so I became a member of ASCORE, one of the--one of the few and only white members of ASCORE, the Asheville Student Committee on Racial Equality. And what is amazing, honestly, today, I've come home back to Asheville in 2012--11 and 12. Some of my best friends here are the African-Americans who were with me, and we were together in this Asheville Student Committee on Racial Equality. So we know we share bonds because we know how it was, and we share a lot with each other. These are some of my closest friends. One of them is now on the Buncombe County Commission, Al Whitesides. Another is Dr. Oralene Simmons, who was the founder of the Martin Luther King Association. And she led--she was the co-chair about the Vance Monument. Well--and she was two years older than I--and she integrated Warren Wilson College, which is near Asheville in Madison County.

LIZZY RAY (00:32:49):

I have a lot of friends that go to Warren Wilson.

LIZ (00:32:50):

Yeah. Well, in 1961, when she graduated from Stevens Lee High School, two years before I graduated, she went off. She was from Madison County where Mars Hill is, and she was the first African-American to go there. And it was--she will tell the story, and she's one of my best friends, and so is Al Whitesides and a number of other people. And what's interesting is that for all of us today in 2023, it makes us very sad that we're still discussing a lot of this. Extremely sad. It also makes us sad. I have to tell you--all of us--black or white, doesn't matter--when we hear from younger people that we did nothing, my gosh, we've spent our whole lives doing things. We've spent our whole lives overturning and because people--I don't mean this badly--but people of your age, because of the way you grew up, you have no idea what it was to live in a segregated society between black and white. You have no idea what it was to be a female with no options in the world, and you can't imagine or to be allowed to go to Sewanee. I mean, I was not allowed to go to Sewanee because it was against the rules for a female. So all I'm saying is that, and we talk all the time, these people, and we have wonderful, very deep friendships now.

LIZZY RAY (00:34:25):

That's awesome. Well, thank you for answering that. That was amazing.

LIZ ([00:34:28](#)):

Yeah. I'm sorry if I went on too long, but

LIZZY RAY ([00:34:30](#)):

You are all good. Nothing to apologize for.

LIZ ([00:34:33](#)):

Sort of gives you a bit of a historic, and then you see, then I went off and they went off and things happened and we didn't--some came back and stayed here and some did things, and now we're back and we can share this stuff. I mean, just to tell you, I then--there were many things through my whole life. I was very actively involved in the Civil Rights Movement throughout college, throughout the '70s.

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Then it became the Anti-War Movement and the Women's Movement and the early Environmental Movement. My whole life has been active in these things. And when I lived all over the world, yes, there is racism everywhere, and there is also discrimination everywhere against all kinds of people. But the people that I hung out with, I genuinely--it wasn't--there was never a question of color. And so this has been one of the hardest things for me to come back to the United States where we're talking about color all the time. This, to me is crazy.

LIZZY RAY ([00:35:45](#)):

Yeah, no, it absolutely is. How--going back into the whole Trinity thing, how did Trinity--what was Trinity's whole reaction to the Civil Rights Movement?

LIZ ([00:35:59](#)):

Well, as I said, because we had a Minister, the Rector, who was a real leader, not just in the church, but throughout Asheville and Western North Carolina, John Walter Tuton, he spoke out, and the Bishop, Bishop George Henry, these people were--Bishop Henry helped give refuge or give a place for Martin Luther King Jr. to come and work on some of his speeches

LIZZY RAY ([00:36:27](#)):

Oh, well--

LIZ ([00:36:27](#)):

Right here.

LIZZY RAY ([00:36:29](#)):

That's amazing.

LIZ ([00:36:31](#)):

And this was going on in the late '50s and early '60s and through the up. So we had--I mean, I'm sure there were many people who might not have liked it at Trinity Episcopal Church, but the leadership was not--it wasn't as simply saying, "Okay, everybody, you can have whatever your views are." I mean, of course they'd say that, but they would be having sermons and they would be in our EYC, you see, at the EYC, we were encouraged to go to these meetings with the--Afri--with the black students. So it was our EYC leaders. And like I said, my parents, many other people, they were down there at the lunch counter strikes, and they were--we were all working. For example, the public library was only for white people. The beautiful library on Pack Square, which is now the Asheville Museum, art Museum, and the African Americans had some little tiny place. So we--one of the things we all worked on was to integrate the library. Everything had to be integrated. Step by step. Terribly.

LIZZY RAY ([00:37:46](#)):

Yeah. That makes me more proud of being a member of Trinity.

LIZ ([00:37:48](#)):

Well, yeah, I, and then there were years where they didn't, but at that time, fortunately, we had the leader in the Minister, the Rector, the Priest, and we had the leadership of the Bishop of Western North Carolina. Everybody knew. So in Asheville, for example, it wasn't ex--or Western North Carolina, these

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were people who were held up by every other citizens who said, "Oh, yes, they're the leaders in the Civil Rights Movement."

LIZZY RAY ([00:38:18](#)):

Yeah. Wow. Well--

LIZ ([00:38:24](#)):

Unfortunately, as we know, churches have never really integrated, and we all know this. And this is--there's the saying that it's the most segregated church time in America--it's the most segregated time any--in the country today. But I don't know, it is still very important. And as you may know, I'm also on the Martin Luther King board now, and Oralene Simmons, she founded it and I'm on the board. There are only te--11 of us on the board--10 of us, sorry. And I put on--I am the chair of the candlelight service that we have now every year, and we have it at Trinity Church. And I was the one who brought it to Trinity. And it's a beautiful service. And fortunately, our rector, Scott White, is very supportive of this. And of course, now our assistant rector Amy Peterson. But this is very important. We have this as part of the whole Martin Luther King celebration weekend, and it's right now at Trinity.

LIZZY RAY ([00:39:36](#)):

Yeah. Wow. We talked about how you are a teacher of some sorts, but what exactly is your job title, and what was your journey to this role?

LIZ ([00:39:51](#)):

Well, right now, I am a professor and what--for the United Nations Institute for Training and Research, which is the acronym is UNITAR, U-N-I-T-A-R. And it's an arm of the United Nations, and it's headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland. And they came to me eight years ago after I had retired from the Foreign Service. And then my whole life, I was a journalist for years in all the media, I was also--I worked at the United Nations. I got a PhD from the University of London. I got two masters from Vanderbilt University in Tennessee. And I also then later was the press secretary for the Reverend Jesse Jackson, who was a major--and still is alive--civil rights leader with Martin Luther King. And he ran for president in the Democratic Primary in 1988 and also 1984. And I had met him when I was a journalist in Syria--in Damascus, Syria, in 1983-84.

([00:41:00](#)):

And I knew of him always. 'Cause he also--he came from Greenville, South Carolina. He was four years older than I. He went to the North Carolina A&T University, and he was one of the first lunch counter protestors in the sit-ins in the late 1950--in 1950s, late 1959-60. And anyway, he asked me to be his press secretary in 1984, and I said, "No, I'm a foreign correspondent." But then in 1988, he asked me again, and I did it, and I wrote a book about that campaign, and it's called the Jackson Phenomenon. He did very well. We did well. We were a tiny little crew. We didn't have much money like the big boys did in the running, but we went from number seven in the primary to number two. Anyway, I did that. I was then--I became an editor of 10 newspapers in Northern Virginia. Then I went and covered the Desert Storm war 'cause I'm also--I was a war correspondent and a diplomatic correspondent. And then in the 1990s, I was--I ran--I was chair of a mass communications department in--at Shenandoah University in Virginia.

([00:42:18](#)):

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And so my teaching--to go back, I started as a teacher in the Peace Corps in Africa right after college. Then I did all these other things. From time to time, I would give lectures all over the world, but then I was professor for nine years at Shenandoah. But then I had in the back of my mind that my whole life, I had done all the other things I wanted to do in spite of the fact that things were closed to girls early on and throughout most of my life. I wanted to be a diplomat for--in the US Foreign Service. So I took the exams and I passed, and I went in the Foreign Service in 2000, and that was--I was in my fifties, early fifties at that point. So I did that, and I was in many--the highest--the security places. I've worked on hostage negotiations, wars, diplomacy, and before that, I had covered it all as a journalist.

([00:43:16](#)):

And then when I retired, mandatory retirement age in 2011, I came back here. So the United Nations came to me and asked would I teach in their program? Well, I didn't--and they said it was online, which I had never done--of course, this was 2016--but they came and they call me what they call me now. And I've been doing this eight years. I teach lots of kinds of diplomacy, but I focus on public diplomacy and cultural diplomacy. And I also now teach speech writing and delivering speeches at the UN and all k--and

anywhere. My students are on six continents--

LIZZY RAY ([00:43:57](#)):

Oh wow.

([00:43:57](#)):

It's really amazing. It's a complete United Nations of students. And I'm teaching many, many courses now at the same time for them and--online. And of course now since the pandemic, we use webinars all the time too. Not only just online. And my courses are very successful. And the fact is they're not--I mean, you could take a course or anybody, any student or professor, anybody could take my courses. They're through the UNITAR. And so I have diplomats taking it, taking the courses, but I also have many people, artists, business people, writers, students, all kinds of people.

([00:44:42](#)):

That's amazing. Wow.

LIZ ([00:44:43](#)):

Yeah.

LIZZY RAY ([00:44:46](#)):

You've lived in so many places and you've traveled every--it's absolutely crazy. How have you experienced international cultures in your life?

LIZ ([00:44:58](#)):

Just totally throughout my life. I mean, it's really just totally a part of me. And therefore, when I teach a course and we meet for the first time, say 30 students from all over the world, I've been in most of their countries, and I have something to say, and I can speak a few languages. So I use it all the time. And what's interesting right now is since the pandemic, I've been kind of stuck here in Asheville. But the fact is, every single day of my life now, I'm in touch with the whole world. It is wonderful. And I'm inf--I'm having an influence of teaching about what I believe in as the great importance of diplomacy as opposed to war.

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LIZZY RAY ([00:45:48](#)):

And--

LIZ ([00:45:48](#)):

As I tell people, as a correspondent, as a journalist, I have covered many wars in the Middle East and all over Africa, Europe, west Asia, and I have covered diplomacy, and I've covered peace. And I have to say that covering wars, I mean, it's dangerous, of course, but because if you're a journalist, you're looking

for stories that you can get on the air or put online or put it out fast. So covering a war is easier than covering diplomacy. And the reason I say that is if you cover a war, you have something, bang, bang happening. So many people killed, so many people survived, blah, blah, et cetera. So that's the story. Whereas to write about diplomats--to report about diplomacy, you need to get people interested in diplomacy. And when I was a diplomatic correspondent, or every time I've covered diplomacy, I've made it exciting. Not fake, but real.

LIZZY RAY ([00:46:56](#)):

That's amazing. Well, I'm going to dive into the kind of news and social media aspect of my interview. My first question is how do you receive the news?

LIZ ([00:47:13](#)):

[laughs] I am--somebody would say, my gosh, that woman is just, she's arrogant. I'm not. I'm not--I'm just saying I'm as plugged into the news as anybody in the world. But, in this house, I have no television. I don't watch television. I watch television online when I want to see something happening. I know, for example, a presidential debate I watch or a big event or inauguration, but I am receiving news all the time. I read newspapers--by hand papers. I read the New York Times, the Wall Street Journal, the Asheville Citizen Times papers. But I am also reading papers literally from all over the world, every day. And I have--I'm on a lot of Listservs that people are sending me. So I know that it's for international relations, diplomacy, foreign policy, everything to do with World Affairs. I am getting things all day every day. I mean, literally maybe four- or five-hundred emails a day, and I'm reading as fast as possible and staying up, and then I'm teaching.

LIZZY RAY ([00:48:26](#)):

That's amazing.

LIZ ([00:48:28](#)):

And social media, of course, on Twitter--I mean X right now, and also on--I'm not on Instagram yet, I guess I should be--but also on LinkedIn and Facebook, and I'm--because of th--my friends who're--that I know and follow on, whether it's formerly Twitter, X or whatever, and LinkedIn, because there I'm following lots of sort've global organizational news, like all the UN activities and all kinds of stuff, and seeing and many things also on Facebook. And then of course, again, on the Listservs, people are sending me other things from TikTok or Instagram that maybe I missed. So I'm getting those too. I'm getting them.

LIZZY RAY ([00:49:19](#)):

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Awesome. My next question is, how did you first encounter the Black Lives Matter movement? But before you answer that, I actually want to change that up and ask, how did you first encounter the Black Power Movement?

LIZ ([00:49:35](#)):

Well, the Black Power Movement, you see--there was Civil Rights Movement, say, let's say from late '40s, '50s and into the '60s. And then the Black Power Movement started developing in the middle 1960s. And because I was very active in the Civil Rights Movement, I was very interested and knew people and was involved with Black Power Movement people.

([00:50:05](#)):

I was at one point, during college--because I was in college from '63 to '67 these--and I was in [a] huge protest, and I always sort of hoped I might go to jail, but I didn't get caught. But you know, I w--but at major major civil rights things, and I didn't go--I didn't go down to the south to register people, but many friends of mine were doing this, and I was very active in other ways. I was, for example, a member of SNCC, which was the Student Nonviolent Committee. Anyway, SNCC, one of the problems with SNCC was that when the leader of it, for a lot of women, when they started saying, well, women didn't really matter, a lot of us African-American or White were kind of upset by this naturally because in the Civil Rights Movement, which bec--and then the Black Power Movement that developed kind've alongside that, or out of it--it developed out of it. There was the feeling that--again--there were--we were women and we were also working as hard as the men, but often the men got the most attention from it. But there were women leaders. And so anyway, the Black Power Movement was--came alongside. So it was very much part of our world.

LIZZY RAY ([00:51:39](#)):

Yes, awesome.

LIZ ([00:51:41](#)):

But it was always considered an extension of the Civil Rights Movement.

LIZZY RAY ([00:51:47](#)):

Yeah. That's how we learned about it in class. It was just--

LIZ ([00:51:51](#)):

Yeah. Well, there you go, and I went and briefed it.

LIZZY RAY ([00:51:56](#)):

Going back to the original question--

LIZ ([00:51:58](#)):

And by the way, let me add one other thing--and I've written about--it, and I think--maybe it was in--well, no, another article I wrote earlier this year--the Women's Movement in 1970, which started, I mean, of course, you know there'd been women's movements for hundreds of years before, but the new Women's Movement in 1970, which started in 1970--

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LIZZY RAY ([00:52:20](#)):

Yes.

LIZ ([00:52:20](#)):

--and when things like "Quit calling us Miss or Mrs., we're, Ms--M-S-punctu--period." All of this came out of the Civil Rights movement. And so the Civil Rights Movement, which brought people of all races together towards trying to bring about a more equal America, then it began t--we had the Anti-War Movement, the Peace Movement against Vietnam in the late '60s--and I was very active in that. That was another natural extension from the Civil Rights [Movement] that was late '60s and into the early '70s, and then the Women's Movement, and then the Environmental Movement, which also started in 1970--the new one--all of these developed out of the Civil Rights Movement.

LIZZY RAY ([00:53:24](#)):

Wow. I didn't know a lot of that, so thank you.

LIZ ([00:53:26](#)):

Yeah, it's very important to realize, because we--all of us involved in the Civil Rights Movement had built up such sort of--and the idea of nonviolence, you see that Martin Luther King had sponsored and many others of all races, also supporting the concept of nonviolence as a form of protest, coming--of course, coming out of Gandhi and mayb--and Jesus Christ and these--so it was very much part, so that all of these would lead to protests, which we--would be nonviolent. And then you see the War Movement, the Anti-War Movement was a peace movement. It was nonviolent. And then in 1970, in the spring, when--when the American, when it was the, what was it, the US...anyway, the Arm--National--National Guard gunned down students on a college campus, and yet the students were protesting nonviolently. All of that came from the Civil Rights Movement.

LIZZY RAY ([00:54:43](#)):

Amazing--

LIZ ([00:54:44](#)):

And it also came from the leadership of Martin Luther King Jr.

LIZZY RAY ([00:54:50](#)):

Yeah. W--

LIZ ([00:54:50](#)):

And he was assassinated while I was in--of course, '68--but when I was in the Peace Corps in Kenya, and I remember the day I was in Kenya when it happened, and this was incredible. And we--and of course, as a freshman, President Kennedy had been assassinated, and then after Martin Luther King Jr., then Robert Kennedy. We had quite a few assassinations.

LIZZY RAY ([00:55:16](#)):

Yes.

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LIZ ([00:55:16](#)):

And that was all within the Civil Rights, Anti-War Movements, and then the Women's and the Environmental.

LIZZY RAY ([00:55:26](#)):

Wow. Thank you for sharing that.

LIZ ([00:55:27](#)):

Yeah.

LIZZY RAY ([00:55:29](#)):

Going back, what was your first encounter with the Black Lives Matter movement? Was it in 2012 with Trayvon Martin, or was it 2015, 2016, any of that time?

LIZ ([00:55:41](#)):

Well, with Trayvon Martin, of course, I knew about it at the time and was deeply, deeply concerned, and already I was here--back in Asheville--and working very closely with the Martin Luther King Association, which my friend Dr. Oralene Simmons had founded. And so we were concerned always. And so it was part of my life. I knew about all of this. And then of course, as you point out--and then it got bigger and bigger. 2015. 2016. 2020. So every time something happened, yes, I was very--and I was working behind the scenes, especially with the Martin Luther King Jr. Association here in Asheville.

LIZZY RAY ([00:56:25](#)):

Yeah. What was your first opinion of the Black Lives Matter movement

LIZ ([00:56:35](#)):

Opinion? I thought it was important.

LIZZY RAY ([00:56:38](#)):

Yeah.

LIZ ([00:56:40](#)):

I mean, I thought, yes, this is important. And then of course, people come back and say, well, All Lives Matter. Yes, that's true. But what it came out of--it wasn't a question of "Like, well, other lives don't matter." The question was, "Hey, wait a minute, we matter. Black Lives Matter, and don't do this. Stop it." And you see, you can't imagine. I don't mean to keep saying you can't imagine, but for me, my age, have done all this stuff our whole life, my friends--black and white--we've done all these things, and we think, "Huh, my gosh, it's still going on. Why? Why? Why?"

LIZZY RAY ([00:57:23](#)):

Yeah.

LIZ ([00:57:24](#)):

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That's our feeling. I will tell you, that's my reaction. It's like, "Why? Why are we still here? Why are we still discussing this in America?" This is my deep frustration and the frustration of my friends--black and white--who are as old as I and went through all this.

LIZZY RAY ([00:57:45](#)):

Has your opinion evolved throughout the years over on the Black Lives Matter Movement, like from 2014 to present day?

LIZ ([00:57:54](#)):

Evolved?

LIZZY RAY ([00:57:55](#)):

Yeah.

LIZ ([00:57:56](#)):

I mean, I take it in with sort of news, but I think it's part of--well, I would say it's part of our lives. I think it's part of that--we have to recognize this, and it is not something to dismiss at all.

LIZZY RAY ([00:58:18](#)):

What was your community's reaction to the Black Lives Matter Movement? We went into--kind of--Trinity's reaction to the Civil Rights Movement, but--now I should be able to remember this, but sometimes my brain gets a little foggy--but what was Trinity's reaction to the Black Lives Matter Movement?

LIZ ([00:58:41](#)):

Again, it would be depend[ant] on who you're talking to. I mean, I know the church leadership was concerned, so that was good. And I was on the vestry like your Mother is now, but I was on the vestry during some of it. And again, we put on some programs in which I spoke. I wrote that article about Trinity's role that came around then, and then I brought the Martin Luther King observance, our candlelight service--brought it to Trinity, which it hadn't been Trinity before. So all of that was important. And then you see people--one of my things is you see people on different sides, and what I find shocking--and it's always discussed--oh, the country's so divided. Well, I have to tell you, the country was totally divided in the late '60s and early '70s.

([00:59:39](#)):

I mean, I know that, but people younger don't know that, and people didn't talk to each other, et cetera. And I've found that if you go and attack someone and criticize and tell 'em that they're stupid or that, "Why do you have this belief?"--I'm talking about people, for example, who might be against the Black Lives Matter, or whatever--you're not going to get anywhere. And this is my belief--maybe as an old lady, but I found it just doesn't work if you attack someone. And I'm always in shock now. I mean, leaving out Black Lives matter, just general politics. When I have someone on the far left friend or right, and they attack the other and say, you're stupid, well, that's the end of the discussion. There's no influence, and this is what I teach in diplomacy. The diplomacy is about trying to bring people together--

LIZZY RAY ([01:00:37](#)):

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Uh huh.

LIZ ([01:00:37](#)):

--in consensus and building positive relations. You don't have to agree on every single thing. And I mean, just this very weak, my good friend Oralene Simmons, who led the thing about the--who led the movement and the decision about the advance monument. She went down along with the mayor and others down to Raleigh for the hearings, the new hearings, and she had to make some very brave statements. It's quite courageous to support, to explain, because people don't understand what it meant to people.

LIZZY RAY ([01:01:20](#)):

Yeah

LIZ ([01:01:22](#)):

And so I think you have to be brave and you have to be courageous, but I don't think it helps to attack [or] insult the other side because once you do that, they will not listen to you.

LIZZY RAY ([01:01:33](#)):

Exactly. Yeah. In your opinion or belief, what generation was most affected by the Black Lives Matter Movement?

LIZ ([01:01:47](#)):

What generation?

LIZZY RAY ([01:01:49](#)):

Yes.

LIZ ([01:01:51](#)):

Well, I'm not sure exactly what you want. You're talking like age, you're talking age?

LIZZY RAY ([01:01:58](#)):

Yes.

LIZ ([01:01:59](#)):

Well, I would think the younger one, whatever you call it, Z or--

LIZZY RAY ([01:02:06](#)):

I think my generation is Generation Z.

LIZ ([01:02:08](#)):

Yeah, whatever the fact is, it came in and it's kind of like the Civil Rights Movement from my generation and the Women's Movement from my generation, and yet my Grandmothers had been in other--they had done very amazing, pioneering work about integration and about women, for example. But then that was back. So in a way, the Black Pow--Black Lives Matter Movement, Black Lives Matter Movement,

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it is kind of like, okay, we're still here. I mean, we're still talking about this. This is something very important. And I had a lot of young black friends and white friends in--all over the country, and especially in Washington, for example. I mean, they would call me and tell me, I'm at the protest at Lafayette Square in front of the White House, and these were younger people. They were in their twenties. And I was saying, "Great, I'm glad you're there!" because you see, this became a new thing that instead of the old Civil Rights [Movement] that was sort of dying out, people forgot, [or] didn't realize it's still going on, and this starts again. And so it has that kind of power, I believe.

LIZZY RAY ([01:03:31](#)):

Yeah, I very much agree that my generation was kind of post affected by it. I also feel like it's kind of

something that we are working to achieve or work on within our generation, and hopefully--

LIZ ([01:03:44](#)):

Yes. Yeah. See, and so that's why I say it's part of--it's sort of part of a continuum, but you often need something identifying like that Civil Rights Movement, Black Power Movement, Black Lives Matter, these kinds of things jump out and you identify.

LIZZY RAY ([01:04:03](#)):

Yeah. Has Black Lives Matter affected how you talk with family, friends, just people in general?

LIZ ([01:04:16](#)):

Not really. I mean, yes--and I put my views out. As I said, I don't attack another side.

LIZZY RAY ([01:04:22](#)):

Yeah.

LIZ ([01:04:22](#)):

I try not to. I try--but nobody's perfect, but most people I know, or a lot of people I know--I can't say most people, I know a lot of people-- are for it, but you see, one of the things is like whatever movement it is, even right now, the--there're nuances of the whole thing. I have a lot of black friends who are not thrilled to death with the Black Lives Movement. They might be older, and they have their reasons, and that they feel, oh, well, this is going to knock down what we're trying to do--for whatever, I don't know. But I'm not going to attack them. I hear people out, and then I try to put forward what I believe about what I've been just telling you about how important such movements can be.

LIZZY RAY ([01:05:18](#)):

Yeah. Well, thank you. Has the Black Lives Matter movement--I know we kind of touched on this-- changed how you interact with people of other political parties or political affiliations?

LIZ ([01:05:32](#)):

Yeah. Well, that's what I'm saying. I mean, I will be outright in saying I support this, but I'm not going to get into a huge fight with somebody over it verbally because, well--not physically, certainly--

LIZZY RAY ([01:05:46](#)):

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[laughs]

LIZ ([01:05:46](#)):

--but because I don't think I can put my view out and let them hear. And often I give speeches on different topics about the news, and I could bring up about Black Lives Matter as part of the news. 'Cause I do--I give a lot of talks worldwide and locally about politics in the media and news journalism, world affairs in the media, diplomacy in the media, everything. And in those, I speak as an analyst, really. And that's like as a historian of--you're a history major--or I think part of the problem nowadays is that people, when they start talking, they just throw in their angry opinion

LIZZY RAY ([01:06:37](#)):

Yes

LIZ ([01:06:38](#)):

And that's destroyed what they might want to gain. And what I try to do is present: okay, here we have this. We have this. This is the situation. These are the possibilities. And then I put it out there and people--I have given speeches many times where people are on all sides: left, right, center, center right, right center, blah blah, left center, whatever, moderate--and people come away and say, "Wow, your speech really has me thinking, and I couldn't tell exactly [but] you weren't attacking some side." I said, "Yeah, you're right. I'm not. Because I don't think that gets us anywhere."

LIZZY RAY ([01:07:24](#)):

Yeah. Amazing. Now, this is kind of a biased question or anything.

LIZ ([01:07:34](#)):

Oh, great.

LIZZY RAY ([01:07:34](#)):

Not necessarily biased from me question. It's a kind of--how do you think the Black Lives Matter Movement has succeeded, or how do you think it has failed?

LIZ ([01:07:45](#)):

How do you think it has done what?

LIZZY RAY ([01:07:47](#)):

Succeeded or failed?

LIZ ([01:07:51](#)):

Well, I would say it succeeded in a lot of ways that it raised just exactly everything I've been talking about--that it raised the issue again.

LIZZY RAY ([01:08:02](#)):

Yes.

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LIZ ([01:08:02](#)):

Let's say part of the problem then came when you had, for example, similar beatings by black officers of black officers, you see? So then it became like, "Oh, well, you can't just say it's white people doing this to the black people." And this became--and everybody sort of got, "Okay, how do we deal with that?" So I think it succeeded. Just the reason I just said that it's important probably, I think historically, if you look across, and I'm looking now across 70 plus years, that you have movements that come in and get people going,

([01:08:47](#)):

And the movements can change the course of history. That's why I say that people of my age, who, those of us--black and white--who were active early on in the fifties as ch-teenagers and young--even grade schoolers, as we were active, we really changed things. You're going to a college where you weren't allowed in my day. African-Americans are in places where they weren't allowed. Women are places they weren't allowed. Everything is--you cannot imagine what huge, huge changes there have been since the '50s and the '60s and the '70s. In 1970, I was not, as a female, allowed to have a credit card in this '70s! Everything I was married. I wasn't allowed to go into Vanderbilt Hospital in Nashville, Tennessee as a student unless I used my husband's name--which I didn't use.

Speaker 3 ([01:09:54](#)):

That's crazy.

LIZ ([01:09:56](#)):

Yeah. That was the reality. And it wasn't in the South. It was all over the country. Everywhere. And so what I'm saying is that all these movements and now the Black Lives [Matter] Movements and now Palestinian Movements, or whatever, these are all going to bring about changes. Not today, maybe--not immediately, but they're having an impact. And for those of us with a big perspective, historical, we know there've been radical radical changes that have happened.

([01:10:32](#)):

But I would add one other thing, and I think it's terribly important, and that's what--again, my friends and I talk about--black and white, all religions, different religions or non religions, whatever--we all talk about this because we've lived through all of this that you, of your generation, whether it's Z or whatever, or whatever the next one's going to be called, you need to safeguard what you've got now because there are a lot of people of your generation and the early millenium--millennial that they think everything is, "Well, this isn't normal, this is natural. I have rights." Well, everybody, those rights can be taken away just like that. So you have to stay on guard and not think that everything is cushy.

LIZZY RAY ([01:11:27](#)):

Yeah. Awesome. Thank you for answering those. Okay. What do you believe, or essentially, what is the state of race relations in the United States currently?

LIZ ([01:11:43](#)):

What is the state?

LIZZY RAY ([01:11:44](#)):

Yes. State of race relations.

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LIZ ([01:11:47](#)):

Well, on the one hand, I think it's not good. On the other hand--what I've been saying--there are huge changes, and yet, as I look at it over 70 plus years now, since Brown v. Board of Education 70 years ago, when I was eight years old, there are huge changes. But I'm frustrated we're still--that this is still a situation.

([01:12:17](#)):

It shouldn't be a situation. And I don't think, again, it's not simply one side or another, right or left. There're, people on both sides who are contributing to damaging the relations either by pounding people over the head with whatever their view is, or--well, both sides do that. All of that, I just think that there are a lot of people who want things to be better. And yet the media certainly is involved because of course--I mean, I'm a j--I've been a journalist. I teach journalism. But [the goal] is to have big drama news because it sells. And people used to say to me--have said to me, "Oh, why don't you have good news stories?" I said, "Do you read good news stories?" Well, no. A lot of people don't read good news stories. It's kind of boring. They'll think, "Oh, good. I'm okay. Don't have to read it." They're going to read. So that sells the news and news is to be drama. And that's one of the reasons I try to teach why diplomacy could be--how it could be covered, but most people don't have the time to cover it, because they want--they love wars. It's great news, sadly.

LIZZY RAY ([01:13:55](#)):

Yeah

LIZ ([01:13:55](#)):

And so are bad race relations.

LIZZY RAY ([01:14:02](#)):

And just kind of my last, final question, what do you think is the future of the Black Lives Matter Movement?

LIZ ([01:14:12](#)):

I think it's going--again, I see it as one in a long continuum of various movements, and I'm sure there will be others. It would be great, if in your generation--but probably not--or the next generation, we reach the point where this is not a topic and not a topic for good reasons, being that we're fully integrated, that we're not fighting about this or that. So I see it--I mean, it may be called something else in next year

or later it could change names and become another movement, or it could do the Civil Rights Movement, which spawned all these Women's Movement, Anti-War, Peace Movements, Environmental, Women's Movements, and then slowly then it came back. And then it was things like, in the later 1980s, when I was Jesse Jackson's Press Secretary. I mean, suddenly homelessness was a big topic in America. So there were concerns that we were discussing at that time, the homeless [and] the poor, under the President, Reagan. So there were--all of these are movements that keep going along. So it's not like if we don't use the title Black Lives [Matter] Movement, that doesn't mean it's disappeared. It meant that it sort of led to the creation [of] and influence[d] new movements.

LIZZY RAY ([01:15:48](#)):

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Yeah. Well, thank you. Yes, I do agree. I've heard from basically everybody, a very similar answer of how the hope for the future of the Movement is that my generation, or hopefully the next one, will have its solved. And so that everything is equal, equity, stuff like that.

LIZ ([01:16:10](#)):

Yeah. Well, and the thing is, in doing that, I wouldn't blame the older generation. This is part of the problem right now, is because people like me and my black friends and white friends who've all worked forever, for decades--many decades--we're very saddened that younger people are saying, "You didn't do anything." Well, the younger people wouldn't have anything if we hadn't done anything. But what we hope is unfortunately, there all kinds of--I mean, I'd go into--and I would suspect they would say in church or synagogue or temple, Hindu temple or anything, or a mosque--there's evil in the world, and all of the religions say this. So, because it becomes like, well, "How can you explain that this is continuing? What is this evil force?" And I'd use this word. It is not a word I would normally like to use, but it seems like there's something that keeps pushing the negative.

LIZZY RAY ([01:17:20](#)):

Yeah. Well, thank you so much--

LIZ ([01:17:23](#)):

Yeah. So I hope this helped and that I answered your questions.

LIZZY RAY ([01:17:27](#)):

You did. It was absolutely fantastic talking to you.

LIZ ([01:17:30](#)):

Well, thank you. Thank you. Well, I just--I think you need to have the perspective, but it's a very positive

perspective.

LIZZY RAY ([01:17:38](#)):

Yes.

LIZ ([01:17:39](#)):

I mean, it's positive in that this is going on and continues, but it's also sad that--as I said, I keep saying over and over--I can't believe we're still discussing THIS.

LIZZY RAY ([01:17:54](#)):

Yes, it's absolutely crazy that this is still something going on--

LIZ ([01:17:58](#)):

But! But there are good things that have happened.

LIZZY RAY ([01:18:00](#)):

Yes, the attention that has been brought to it is quite amazing. But at the same time, it's also that quote- -I can't ever remember who actually said it, but--"If you don't read history, you're doomed to repeat it."

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It's just--you keep seeing over a different span of half a century, you see these different movements that seems so similar, and you're like, "If we had just looked at the past and seen what we could have slightly done differently or what we could have done, then maybe this one wouldn't be happening now." Which is, abs--

LIZ ([01:18:38](#)):

Well look at the--I mean, it's another topic--but look at the world right now with all the conflicts. I mean, talk about,

([01:18:44](#)):

[knock]

([01:18:44](#)):

did even the people who are doing this stuff, did they forget their own history? Did people forgotten their own history? Yes. Whether it's in the Ukraine and Russia, or Palestine and Israel, or there's so many, tragically, there's so many other wars. It's in Yemen. I mean, I've worked in all these places. Niger, these are places in Burma. It's going on. It's awful. And they have histories, and if they looked at their history, they'd see, "Oh, hello. We've done this before"

LIZZY RAY ([01:19:16](#)):

Yeah.

LIZ ([01:19:18](#)):

or "Now we're doing unto others what we ha--what was evil was done to us." You know?

LIZZY RAY ([01:19:26](#)):

Thank you so much for allowing me to interview you, Liz. It's been--

LIZ ([01:19:29](#)):

Well, thank you for honoring me to interview me.

LIZZY RAY ([01:19:33](#)):

You have just led such an amazing life, and it was fantastic being able to ask you all these questions.

LIZ ([01:19:39](#)):

Well keep on and feel free to call on me on--if you have future projects. I think this is a great project, and I'm very glad you're at Sewanee. It's a great, great University.

LIZZY RAY ([01:19:49](#)):

Oh yeah, I love it.

LIZ ([01:19:50](#)):

I would've considered going if I'd been allowed in those days,

LIZZY RAY ([01:19:53](#)):

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[laughs]

LIZ ([01:19:53](#)):

but when you come back to Asheville for your holidays, please notify me so we can get together. We could have lunch or something.

LIZZY RAY ([01:20:02](#)):

That sounds wonderful. Thank you so much.

LIZ ([01:20:04](#)):

And maybe someday I'll come over to Sewanee or something, a talk or something.

LIZZY RAY ([01:20:08](#)):

That'd be beautiful. I think a lot of people here would actually really enjoy that.

LIZ ([01:20:12](#)):

Yeah. Thank you. All right.

LIZZY RAY ([01:20:13](#)):

I'll get those word documents to you so you can fill those

LIZ ([01:20:19](#)):

Sign.

LIZZY RAY ([01:20:20](#)):

You're all good. Thank you so much.

LIZ ([01:20:22](#)):

Yeah, thank you. And keep up the good work and congratulate your professors and all the organizations working on this.

Speaker 4 ([01:20:31](#)):

Yes,

LIZZY RAY ([01:20:32](#)):

Thank you so much, Liz.

LIZ ([01:20:33](#)):

Okay, take care.

LIZZY RAY ([01:20:35](#)):

You too. Bye-Bye bye.