

**Interview Records of Donna McWhirter  
Completed for the Black Lives Matter Oral History  
Project**



**Donna McWhirter was interviewed By Kaila Seger  
10/26/2023**

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## **Table of Contents**

Abstract	3-4
Field Notes	5
Transcription	6-21

## **Abstract- Donna McWhirter**

Narrator: Donna McWhirter

Interviewer: Kaila Seger

Interview Date: October 26th, 2023

Location: Over Zoom, Narrator in Colorado Springs, CO, Interviewer in Sewanee, TN

Length: One hour and three minutes

Donna McWhirter was born in 1938 in Colorado Springs CO. She worked at many places throughout her life, starting as a preschool teacher and then moving on to conduct research for the Disciples of Christ and the Historical Society in Nashville. She also did photography and worked at the Belmont mansion in Nashville as well as the Colorado Springs Pioneer Museum. The interview starts with a discussion of Donna's background. She details how she has moved around a decent bit during her life, starting in Colorado Springs, CO, and now having moved back there to retire. She describes the jobs that she has had over the years, discussing how she became involved with her church, conducting research for her church and becoming a minister. She then talks about her travels, discussing the trips abroad she has been on as a part of her church and church functions, recalling that she has been to Jamaica, Thailand, Indonesia, New Zealand, Australia, and England. She goes on to talk about where she found community growing up, that being within primarily her neighborhood, church, and school. The interview moves on to discuss Black Lives Matter, starting with her general assessment of the movement. She then discusses that she gets her news from primarily MSNBC and a youtube network called Midas. She discusses how she sees things as going backwards in terms of race relations, seeing hate

within the government, toward African Americans, recalling that she remembers when Little Rock integrated schools and the violence that she saw. She talks about how the Black Lives Matter Movement hasn't changed the way she interacts with people of color because she grew up in the same neighborhood with many people of color, but admits that the Black Lives Matter Movement might have given her more perspective and insight into others lives than before. She recounts how she came into contact with the Black Lives Matter Movement through TV and the news. She then states how she thinks that the Black Lives Matter Movement has had the biggest effect on younger generations, touching on how we are now able to see police brutality extremely easily with it being shown on the news. She discusses a few closing remarks, discussing how just by the name 'Black Lives Matter', she agrees with the movement in general. She moves on to talking about how discrimination is bad, drawing connections between gender discrimination and racial discrimination. She states that she believes that we are stronger and better off when working together, then going on to discuss how she realizes that she might not know all that much about Black Lives Matter, and might have a very superficial understanding of the movement. Her last major closing remark consists of discussing how you can't blame people for what they haven't been allowed to do or have. This interview is a part of the Black Lives Matter Oral History Project to document people's thoughts and experiences with the Black Lives Matter Movement.

## **FIELD NOTES- DONNA MCWHIRTER**

(Compiled 11/29/23)

Narrator: Donna McWhirter

Interviewer: Kaila Seger

Interview date: 10/26/23

Location: Over Zoom, Donna was in her house in Colorado Springs, Colorado. Kaila was in her dorm room in Sewanee, Tennessee.

**Narrator:** Donna McWhirter is a retired minister living in Colorado Springs, Colorado. She was born on November 10th, 1938 in Colorado Springs, Colorado. She has a BA relating to religious education from Phillips University, a MRE from Lexington Theological Seminary, and a MDIV from Vanderbilt University. She has worked as a cooperative preschool teacher, as well as a researcher and photographer for The Disciples of Christ Church and The Historical Society in Nashville. On top of those occupations, she has also been a tour guide for Belmont Mansion in Nashville, Tennessee and for the Colorado Springs Pioneer Museum in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

**Interviewer:** Kaila Seger is a student at Sewanee, The University of the South currently in her Junior year. She is working towards completing her final project in her class 'Black Power to Black Lives Matter' aimed towards documenting oral histories concerning the Black Lives Matter Movement. She is a History major interested in Women's history and history's portrayal in popular media, minoring in Woman and Gender Studies.

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Heather Seger ([00:00:00](#)):

You can't see her

Donna McWhirter ([00:00:00](#)):

Oh you're tiny, small.

Heather Seger ([00:00:03](#)):

Yeah I know well thats

Kaila Seger ([00:00:03](#)):

Yeah, I don't have a.. uh I don't have a camera on my computer, so very sadly, you just, you got to look at a picture of the Galaxy instead.

Donna McWhirter ([00:00:15](#)):

Okay. Is there any more sound or is that about

Heather Seger ([00:00:17](#)):

Yeah I was trying to, there try that Kaila speak.

Kaila Seger ([00:00:25](#)):

Hello?

Donna McWhirter ([00:00:26](#)):

Oh, that's a little better.

Heather Seger ([00:00:28](#)):

Okay.

Donna McWhirter ([00:00:30](#)):

Don't ask me any questions that I can't answer.

Kaila Seger ([00:00:36](#)):

Well, alright, so we are recording already. And you ready to start?

Donna McWhirter ([00:00:45](#)):

Yeah, I guess.

Kaila Seger ([00:00:47](#)):

Alright, so this is just a little baseline. So this is Kaila Seger from Sewanee, the University of the South. It is October 26th, 2023 a Thursday. I am with, go ahead and say your name.

Donna McWhirter ([00:01:09](#)):

Donna McWhirter.

11/21/23)

Page 1 of 19

Donna McWhirter Interview (Completed  
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Kaila Seger ([00:01:10](#)):

And where you're from.

Donna McWhirter ([00:01:13](#)):

Um Colorado Springs, Colorado.

Kaila Seger ([00:01:15](#)):

Alright. And thank you for being here. Let's go ahead and start with just a few general questions to kind of get us started and on a roll. So where are you originally from?

Donna McWhirter ([00:01:31](#)):

Colorado Springs, Colorado. I was born here.

Kaila Seger ([00:01:35](#)):

Alright, so you were born there.

Donna McWhirter ([00:01:39](#)):

But I didn't live here all my life.

Kaila Seger ([00:01:42](#)):

Alright. Where else have you lived other than Colorado Springs?

Donna McWhirter ([00:01:48](#)):

Well, I- I lived in uh Oklahoma for a while when I went to college,

Kaila Seger ([00:01:53](#)):

Ok

Donna McWhirter ([00:01:53](#)):

and, and then I was at uh Lexington, Kentucky when I went to seminary and that's where I met my husband.

Kaila Seger ([00:02:06](#)):

Ok

Donna McWhirter ([00:02:06](#)):

And so after we got married and graduated from Lexington Theological Seminary, we went to Indianapolis, Indiana and uh he was the librarian uh, let's see, an archivist, I guess that was his title. He was the theological librarian and archivist At The Disciple? No, at the Christian Theological Seminary. That's what that was.

Kaila Seger ([00:02:33](#)):

Ok

11/21/23)

Page 2 of 19

Donna McWhirter Interview (Completed  
Transcript by [Rev.com](#)

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Donna McWhirter ([00:02:33](#)):

And uh so then I worked as a nursery school teacher while we were there and we had our first and only two children there. And then after Indianapolis, we were there for 14 years and we went to Nashville, Tennessee where he became the librarian and archivist for the disciples of Christ's Historical Society. And we were there for 25 years and he retired from there. And I also spent some time working at the Historical Society. I taught in nursery schools and also became uh tour guides in an um antebellum house. And uh then when we uh finished, uh we retired there and came to Colorado Springs again to retire here because he was from Niagara Falls, New York or, well Tonawanda really? And he didn't want to go back to live there. So we came to live here because my mother and father were still alive then.

Kaila Seger ([00:03:55](#)):

All right.

Donna McWhirter ([00:03:56](#)):

An- and well actually my mother died before we finally made the move, but um then my father lived with us for 10 years and then he was in a nursing home for four and we inherited the house here and we stayed here um an- and until he died. My husband died in 2013. And so I've been living in the house here by myself still in Colorado Springs.

Kaila Seger ([00:04:23](#)):

Alright, so you already kind of touched on this before, but what is your occupation and what was your journey to this role?

Donna McWhirter ([00:04:35](#)):

Oh my goodness. Well, my first I guess I would call my first occupation after college. Um I did not go into

what I studied for. I studied to be a director of religious education in a church and I never did that, but I learned a lot about education. So when we went to Indianapolis, I uh discovered uh cooperative nursery schools and that's where I taught for 14 years. I was the teacher and then the parents in order to have a little less cost to them, participated in the classroom and helped me as my aides. So two of them would be there every day that we had nursery school. And then I would teach and they would help me. And then I also would teach them how to learn to live with their preschoolers.

Kaila Seger ([00:05:36](#)):

Mhmm

Donna McWhirter ([00:05:36](#)):

And I did that there for 14 years. And then when we went to um Nashville, um it was kind of a different situation. There were no cooperative nursery schools for me. David went there to be at the Disciples of Christ Historical Society as a librarian and archivist. And so I worked in um nursery schools there, but they were different, a little bit different than it was just a church uh organization, had a nursery school. And then I taught in that for a few years

Kaila Seger ([00:06:18](#)):

Mhmm

11/21/23)

Page 3 of 19

Donna McWhirter Interview (Completed  
Transcript by [Rev.com](#)

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Donna McWhirter ([00:06:18](#)):

and you're going to have some blank spaces here while I try to remember what I did. It's been so long.

Kaila Seger ([00:06:27](#)):

That's fine. And then just for quick clarification, David was your husband?

Donna McWhirter ([00:06:32](#)):

Yes.

Kaila Seger ([00:06:33](#)):

Alright.

Donna McWhirter ([00:06:35](#)):

And um so then I also started working in historical society. I would get paid by persons who wanted research done and I would look up church histories, families, ministers, and their families and whatever kinds of materials we had that would help them know more about their church or their own family.

Kaila Seger ([00:07:03](#)):

Ok

Donna McWhirter ([00:07:03](#)):

And and I also did photography for the Historical Society because people would like to have copies of pictures that were in their files. And so I would copy those and with uh c- my camera and I developed 'em. I had a uh dark room in that, a building said when they built it, they built it with a dark room, but nobody had ever really worked in it because I didn't know how to do it. And I had took some classes in Indiana and in uh Nashville and I learned how to develop pictures and develop negatives. And so then if somebody wanted pictures of their minister from, oops, I touched that and I'm I disappeared. Is that okay?

Kaila Seger ([00:07:57](#)):

You're okay, I can still see you.

Donna McWhirter ([00:07:59](#)):

Alright.

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

Uh so I would take pictures and develop them eight by tens or five by sevens, whatever it was they wanted. And then they would pay me.

Kaila Seger ([00:08:10](#)):

Oh, okay.

Donna McWhirter ([00:08:11](#)):

11/21/23)  
Page 4 of 19

Donna McWhirter Interview (Completed  
Transcript by [Rev.com](#))

This transcript was exported on Nov 30, 2023 - view latest version [here](#).

And uh so that's kind of part of what I did is uh my responsibility. And I earned a little bit of money that way.

Kaila Seger ([00:08:20](#)):

Mhmm

Donna McWhirter ([00:08:20](#)):

And then sometimes when they wanted me to look up things uh in folders, I would also spend a lot of time making copies of uh minister sermons or family y'know uh trees and whatnot. So I did- I worked uh, uh doing that and I really enjoyed doing that. And uh so then aft- it was Nash, we only- lived in two Indianapolis. Nashville, and then we retired and came to Colorado and we didn't really have uh any jobs after we retired we uh. And because my hus- my husband would also um, when he was a librarian in

Indiana and in Tennessee, he would do some preaching in uh little country churches that needed somebody or if there were a church was looking for a minister, they might want for six weeks or a couple of months have somebody preach while they were looking for a new minister. That kind of thing. And I also then went um back to school um when I got to Tennessee and I-I taught for a while in nursery school, but I had always wanted when I went to seminary to become a minister myself.

Kaila Seger ([00:09:52](#)):

Mhmm

Donna McWhirter ([00:09:52](#)):

So I had the opportunity because there was a a discipled di- uh uh dean at Vanderbilt University and he would- I got to go for three years to seminary with only having to pay um for my ticket at Vanderbilt for use at football games and basketball games and stuff I never used, but it cost me like a \$30 a semester and it was over \$300 a semester for an hour. So I got a good deal and I went back to seminary when I was in my forties and I studied and graduated and became an ordained minister.

([00:10:44](#)):

And uh so then while we were still in Tennessee, I served a couple of uh country churches, one for seven years and one for one and a half. The one and a half was because they were very sexist and they really kind of were mean to me. So after I finished those two churches, I uh went back to doing almost full time, um working and volunteering at the Historical Society. So I think I may have missed some thangs things in between, but that's part of my professional life.

Kaila Seger ([00:11:26](#)):

Alright, that's okay. Alright, so what kind of traveling have you done? I know that you've traveled a lot.

Donna McWhirter ([00:11:36](#)):

Well, David, I traveled a lot in the states and uh then I had an opportunity, and this is where I have trouble remembering when I did what?

Kaila Seger ([00:11:49](#)):

Oh, that's fine.

11/21/23)

Page 5 of 19

Donna McWhirter Interview (Completed  
Transcript by [Rev.com](#))

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Donna McWhirter ([00:11:51](#)):

Um when we were in Nashville, I went to um, oh, oh, oh um gosh, I told your mother that I was going to have trouble with my words because I'm having a little short term memory loss.

Kaila Seger ([00:12:10](#)):

That's ok!

Donna McWhirter ([00:12:10](#)):

Jamaica. I went to Jamaica with a friend of mine in Indianapolis, or I mean uh Tennessee, and she had been a missionary in Indianapolis. Okay, let's get this straight. She had been a missionary, a nurse in Jamaica. Now I got it. And what she did, she came to try and put together a trip of a group of people to do a mission um trip where we would go help somebody out. Well, at Vine Street Christian Church, I was the only one who volunteered and wanted to go on the trip.

Kaila Seger ([00:12:52](#)):

Mhmm

Donna McWhirter ([00:12:52](#)):

And so she didn't cancel it. She and I, and a man from Indianapolis who also was a friend of hers and supported the this mission in Jamaica, we, three of us went to Jamaica and our our objective along with having some fun was to put the, uh to get a roof on the house of a woman who had had seven years with only a roof on one side of her house. A storm had to come through and y'know blown the roof off. And so we cleaned the fire ants out and we painted the inside of her house and we paid to have somebody put the tin roof up for us and then we fixed steps on the back of her house so she could get back into the back of her yard.

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

Where her, where she got her water was from a rain barrel. And uh so we, we that was our project. But then we got to have fun and uh the head of that school there, uh he and his wife had a um cabin, or what they call it was a tourist. They rented it out to tourists in another part of the island. And so we got to travel across the island and see a lot of the different sites and so forth, and then stay in this house that they rented out and go to a resort that she knew um somebody had uh- was the uh uh manager of it. And so we got to spend a day there and just sign our name and eat lunches and stuff. Good food, where rich people go and not people like me. But anyway, so that was my first experience away from David that y'know I went on that. And then um at another time I went through the church to um Thailand with a women's group and we were there over two and a half weeks or so. And we traveled by bus from place to place and visited different churches and talked to different people and went to universities and that kind of thing. And then another time I went to on a similar trip and I'm trying like mad to remember the name of the country. Um it was all islands. You can you think of something that's All Islands.

Kaila Seger ([00:15:35](#)):

Was that uh the trip that y'all took to New Zealand?

Donna McWhirter ([00:15:39](#)):

11/21/23)

Page 6 of 19

Donna McWhirter Interview (Completed  
Transcript by [Rev.com](#)

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No, that was later. David went, we were together on that. This was, oh shoot, I can't remember. Anyway, it's a country that's all made up of islands and I went with another group of women and we traveled across that um from island to island and church to church and different things you know. And I had and and David didn't go on me- with me on that one. Maybe I'll- I'll be able to fill you in on the name of the country later if you want to know, um and then

Kaila Seger ([00:16:16](#)):

We can always come back to it.

Donna McWhirter ([00:16:19](#)):

Ok, and then David and I together went to New Zealand and Australia.

Kaila Seger ([00:16:23](#)):

Mhmm

Donna McWhirter ([00:16:23](#)):

Well, the other way around, we went to Australia, first took uh, took a tour through Australia and then we went to New Zealand and stayed with friends of ours who had come to uh Nashville. And you know our churches are really weird. We we formed a church that we wanted to unite people. And what we did was end up with three different churches, the Church of Christ with- who has no organs, and then the independent Christian Church and then the disciples of Christ. Now the Church of Christ is the most conservative and the disciples where we belonged was the more liberal.

Kaila Seger ([00:17:11](#)):

Mhmm

Donna McWhirter ([00:17:11](#)):

And anyway, the way they worked us for the church to get together was every four years they had a world convention. And David and I were able to go to England on that world convention because we had retired by then and had the time to do that.

([00:17:33](#)):

And so we went to England, um I've- I've got a cat coming,

Kaila Seger ([00:17:37](#)):

That's ok

Donna McWhirter ([00:17:37](#)):

we went to England. We went to England, and that was after Australia and New Zealand. But New Zealand was with the friends who worked in the Historical society in Nashville for 13, 14 years, had their office there, but their homeland was New Zealand, but they were the head of this world convention that planned these uh things every four years. And so that's um how come we went to New Zealand on that trip to Australia because we stayed with them on the south island of New Zealand. And they took us everywhere on, we didn't get to the North Island ever, but we saw so many wonderful things. But

anyway, that was a great trip. And then our last trip was the one to England where we went to the  
11/21/23)

Page 7 of 19

Donna McWhirter Interview (Completed  
Transcript by [Rev.com](https://www.rev.com)

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World Convention and they also had trips that you could sign up for. So from after the English part of the program was over, we joined the tour that went to Europe

Kaila Seger ([00:18:48](#)):

Oh!

Donna McWhirter ([00:18:48](#)):

and that's, we got to see the wall in Germany y'know that was put up

Kaila Seger ([00:18:55](#)):

Berlin wall.

Donna McWhirter ([00:19:00](#)):

Yes and uh we went, we went several count-, about three or four countries by bus because you could travel y'know close, close together. But Germany I remember the most because of that wall. Um but we we traveled for I think at least three countries other than um the y'know trip that we went to England. So that was kind of an extension of that trip since you could sign up and we were free and had a little more money, so we signed up because we had never traveled to Europe. So that's kind of our traveling, I can't think of anything else. Y'know and we traveled all, I think all 50 states, Alaska. We didn't get to Hawaii. And the only way I got to Hawaii was when I went on one of the women's trips, they stopped in Hawaii, but we never got out of the airport.

Kaila Seger ([00:19:59](#)):

Oh

Donna McWhirter ([00:19:59](#)):

So I don't know if you can count that. And I always wanted to go because I had an aunt and uncle who lived there and uh my parents visited them two or three times, but I never got to. So anyway, that's kind of our traveling here or mine. Anyway.

Kaila Seger ([00:20:19](#)):

Alright, so a little bit of a pivot from your traveling, but nonetheless, where did you find community as a child?

Donna McWhirter ([00:20:31](#)):

Oh, let me back up. Indonesia was where I went.

Kaila Seger ([00:20:35](#)):

Indonesia,

Donna McWhirter ([00:20:36](#)):

Uh huh, the islands. Alright. Okay. Now ask me that question again.

Kaila Seger ([00:20:43](#)):

11/21/23)

Page 8 of 19

Donna McWhirter Interview (Completed  
Transcript by [Rev.com](#)

This transcript was exported on Nov 30, 2023 - view latest version [here](#).

This is a little bit of a pivot from the traveling question, but where did you find community as a child?

Donna McWhirter ([00:20:54](#)):

Oh boy. Now you're getting into personal things, aren't you? Well, I had friends in the neighborhood. I made friends. I only lived a half a block from the elementary school that I went to. So y'know they often in the summer had programs and we'd go down there and find y'know camaraderie and we'd do plays and things like that. And our neighborhood was pretty full of children too so. Um and then church probably um because I my parents were a member of a church and I was born into that church and I started in the nursery and went all the way through high school in that church. And then David and I came back as adults and became a part of that program. And there was y'know camaraderie and comfort and and trust and so forth there. So basically I think that it's with this my neighborhood and my school and in my church.

Kaila Seger ([00:22:02](#)):

Alright, it's your neighborhood, your school and church. All right. So let's go ahead and dive into the big questions. Feel free to um speak however you want to. If there are any parts that you don't want put into the interview, you can just tell me and we can take that out. You don't even have to have the entire thing put up on the website that we're doing this project with. You have full control over what gets put out and what doesn't. So, and this is over the Black Lives Matter movement. Let's go ahead and start with what is your opinion on the Black Lives Matter movement?

Donna McWhirter ([00:23:04](#)):

Well uh, not having been personally a part of it. I mean, I think that it's a good thing. I mean, I-I think that it's good for people to be able to lift themselves up, especially when they've been put down like the blacks in this country have been, it's hard to y'know to be who you need to be and to be accepted as you are. And we're still not a very good country in our race relations at all. So I-I don't know y'know all the pros and cons of the movement itself, but I like the idea of lifting up their culture and y'know lifting up what they're doing and that kind of thing. And I so I'm not as familiar with it probably as I should be.

Kaila Seger ([00:23:59](#)):

That's okay. That's okay. You can just- you can just say what-what you know and how you feel about it in

general. Is there any other

Donna McWhirter ([00:24:09](#)):

But I don't feel negative about it at all.

Kaila Seger ([00:24:12](#)):

Alright. Is there any other specific thing or opinion that you have about it? Or is it just that you have that general sort of positive feeling towards it?

Donna McWhirter ([00:24:24](#)):

Well, yeah, and like I say, y'know there could be negative sides to it because people, human beings are kind of mean sometimes with it- even when their causes are good, they don't always follow through. But as a child, I grew up always living in a neighborhood of mixed race in Colorado Springs. When I was growing up, the neighborhood in which I lived was black, latino, white. It was mixed. It was unusual

11/21/23)

Page 9 of 19

Donna McWhirter Interview (Completed  
Transcript by [Rev.com](#)

This transcript was exported on Nov 30, 2023 - view latest version [here](#).

because for example, let me just say we had three um junior high schools at that time, several elementary schools, but they fit into these three junior highs. And our south junior high was really the only school that had any amount of blacks or Latinos or Chinese or anybody else. Our neighborhood was completely mixed. And i- and it also, we felt what I know Black Lives Matter, people feel, we felt like the the y'know lowest people on the totem pole.

([00:25:44](#)):

There was a north junior high school that was almost all white and they were affluent and they had white skin. And then West Junior sch- High had a little bit of-of-of black and other races, but not many, and they were mostly white. And then south junior high was always lowest on the totem pole. So when we went into high school, most of the leadership of our high school would come from north or west. And a smattering from the south where I was, but I always felt so lucky to have grown up among other people of other cultures and and so forth. And I think that it has been a a real boost to me in being more positive about those kind of things. And yet my father was very racist and isn't that strange? But he he also grew up in that neighborhood. His mother and father lived there in that neighborhood too. So even after I was born, they were still living there. Now you may have to direct me sometimes I may lose my thought and where I'm going

Kaila Seger ([00:27:00](#)):

Oh you're you're fine

Donna McWhirter ([00:27:00](#)):

and waste your time. What was the question? Was there any question to what I was answering?

Kaila Seger ([00:27:10](#)):

You were just expanding upon the question that I already asked and that's completely fine. We we want to get as much information, as much detail as you are willing to put out there.

Donna McWhirter ([00:27:22](#)):

Well then I will just say that we lived in that neighborhood. My parents even lived in there until- in that racially mixed neighborhood until um all the children I had a sister and a brother and myself were gone from home. And my mother and father then had more money and they moved to a more affluent neighborhood. We lived in a lower class neighborhood, you would call us the wrong side of the tracks kind of neighborhood, partly because of the mixture of cultures and races. Um and we were on the other side of the railroad tracks, really literally. Um but um so then my mother and father moved up into the more affluent white neighborhood on Mesa Road here in the city that had a gorgeous view of Pikes Peak and that sort of thing. So um they did move up into a better um life because when there three of us were home, we must have cost them a lot of money y'know and the- and they stayed always. And, and every house I ever lived in was built by my father because he was a carpenter and a contractor. So even the house, affluent house they moved into after we uh left home was built by him as well.

Kaila Seger ([00:28:49](#)):

Mhmm

Donna McWhirter ([00:28:49](#)):

11/21/23)

Page 10 of 19

Donna McWhirter Interview (Completed  
Transcript by [Rev.com](#)

This transcript was exported on Nov 30, 2023 - view latest version [here](#).

So uh anyway, I-I think that, I don't know if there's anything else you want to know about that or not. I was going to say too, going back to uh groups, I think the Girl Scouts was Brownies and Girl Scouts were one of places that gave me comfort and belonging

Kaila Seger ([00:29:12](#)):

Alright

Donna McWhirter ([00:29:12](#)):

when I was in elementary school. Now when I got to junior high, there wasn't any of that, but I remember uh being a brownie and a girl scout and that gave me some uh support and friendship.

Kaila Seger ([00:29:31](#)):

All right, let's go ahead and move on to another question then.

Donna McWhirter ([00:29:46](#)):

Are you there? Oh, okay.

Kaila Seger ([00:29:48](#)):

I'm- I'm still there.

Donna McWhirter ([00:29:50](#)):

I can- I touched by accident some keys and I'm changing my screen because I'm I'm touching it and I shouldn't be touching it y'know

Kaila Seger ([00:30:01](#)):

Oh

Donna McWhirter ([00:30:01](#)):

But as long as we can talk, it doesn't matter whether we see each other.

Kaila Seger ([00:30:07](#)):

You are fine. Uh Zoom is telling me that apparently that I have like seven minutes of remaining meeting time left, which we might have to fix in a moment. Umm but I'm going to go ahead and ask how do you receive the news?

Donna McWhirter ([00:30:28](#)):

Oh, how do I receive the news? Well, I have in the past um gotten my news from MSNBC on television, uh but I am now also watching a uh YouTube newscast that comes through uh Midas, a Midas family called, it's the Midas network. I get most of my news through um either MSNBC or Midas. Um I-I guess that's really, and I don't ha- I don't have a radio or anything, so it it's just mostly comes from that. And it's not necessarily nightly news because I'm a real... oh wimp when it comes to the regular newscast talking about the wars that are happening and things like that. So sometimes I kind of skip the war stuff,

Kaila Seger ([00:31:36](#)):

11/21/23)

Page 11 of 19

Donna McWhirter Interview (Completed  
Transcript by [Rev.com](#)

This transcript was exported on Nov 30, 2023 - view latest version [here](#).

Yeah

Donna McWhirter ([00:31:37](#)):

But I'm into a more liberal, look, open-minded, look at the at the uh news, and also wanting to know what's going on y'know in Washington DC with the president and-and uh the House of Representatives and senators and so forth. So I don't go with just the any old regular TV news. I usually go to a more um on the edge or liberal, I don't know what you want to call it, progressive um point of view.

Kaila Seger ([00:32:14](#)):

All right. So a lot more just progressive sort of news outlets and more kind of alternative ways to get your news using YouTube?

Donna McWhirter ([00:32:24](#)):

Yeah, because really the Midas network on YouTube is not a y'know a newscast like on NBC or CBS or something y'know, their-their-their own people. But I believe I hear more of the truth there than anywhere on ABC or NBC or whatever.

Kaila Seger ([00:32:53](#)):

All right. So I'm going to move on to another question, which is, what is the state of race relations in the United States?

Donna McWhirter ([00:33:12](#)):

I think it's very bad, I- at this time in history. We seem to be going backwards and I feel like we have too many people in this country who hate, and many of those people are in government, and that's scary to me. And they're doing what they can like to keep blacks from voting. Y'know I think that's pretty bad race relations and doing what they can to hurt people who are not like them. And it's- an it and it tends to be especially white males,

Kaila Seger ([00:33:55](#)):

Mhmm

Donna McWhirter ([00:33:55](#)):

but white females too. But y'know white males seem to get in leadership a lot, especially on this um side that has more hatred. I see it as hatred and trying to-to make rules so that the blacks and the Latinos and the Chinese and the whoever else y'know we have in the country haven't got their full rights.

Kaila Seger ([00:34:22](#)):

Mhmm

Donna McWhirter ([00:34:22](#)):

I think it's not good right now. Race relations I-I-I hate. And-and y'know when um you can go on-on TV and-and see uh like in Charlottesville years- some years ago when the the white nationalists marched yknow and Trump would say there's good people on both sides, well, that's not true. There's good people on one side, but not on the other because they were marching in hatred and they were marching

11/21/23)

Page 12 of 19

Donna McWhirter Interview (Completed  
Transcript by [Rev.com](#)

This transcript was exported on Nov 30, 2023 - view latest version [here](#).

with their y'know um torches and that kind of thing. And-and they definitely uh there were not good people on that side. I just don't think. But I think race relations are in a jeop- in jeopardy right now.

Kaila Seger ([00:35:17](#)):

In jeopardy. What do you mean by in jeopardy? Like...

Donna McWhirter ([00:35:21](#)):

Well, that that uh if if certain people, like the white males that I talk about in government are in charge, then the rights of people who are different from them in skin color or eye shape or country of origin or whatever it is, are in jeopardy. Their rights are being rebuked as much as they can, especially their right to vote.

Kaila Seger ([00:35:50](#)):

I see. Is there-is there anything else concerning race relations that you think you want to take note of?

Donna McWhirter ([00:36:00](#)):

Oh gosh. I don't know. I-I've been in the middle of, y'know like I said, I grew up in a mixed racial neighborhood. I wrote on my little paper for you that the year I went to college, 1956, it was a school, a church school, Phillips University, which is no longer in existence from mishandling from a president that was there, but it was a very good school. But I was appalled to know that the year before I went in the fall of 1956, if the first black person was at Phillips University, am I making sense that-that it was that long that it took them in their history, which went way back to um admit persons of the African American or black race. I mean that-that was appalling. And this young woman that was there, she did graduate from Phillips, but she eventually went to Sweden or someplace like that to live out her life. And because of racism and her sister was one of those children taken to the uh Little Rock school when they were integrating, there were like five black children and eh the police and the whatever had to take them to school so they wouldn't get hurt. Her sister who was in uh at Phillips at that time was uh y'know they were related. They were in the same family. I'm just trying to say their sisters...

Kaila Seger ([00:37:54](#)):

We are back recording again.

Heather Seger ([00:37:59](#)):

Alright, lemme give you back to Meemaw.

Kaila Seger ([00:38:07](#)):

All right, um break in recording. Due to Zoom being mean and shutting us off, you were talking about how uh you knew a girl who was related to one of the um one of the girls who went to one of the first integrated schools in Arkansas.

Donna McWhirter ([00:38:37](#)):

Yeah, I just mentioned that because she was the first um black woman who came to Phillips University. And-and in its long history, that's a bad history. And that I went in 1956 of fall of, and she had come the year before. So that was a long history of Phillips University with no black students, it had blind ones, but it didn't have black ones. And that's all. I just was hooking those two together. Cause I remember

11/21/23)

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This transcript was exported on Nov 30, 2023 - view latest version [here](#).

when I knew- found out that Lois Mothershed was the sister of one of the young children going to the school in Little Rock that I wanted to. So I watched the news y'know so I could see that happening and the people were yelling and spitting and y'know the white people. And so I think that some ways things have not changed y'know very... I-It looks like we're turning around and going back to those kind of days. But um I don- I hate to see race relations not being taken seriously and-and-and being seen more as um we don't want them to vote because they'll vote, not vote the way we want them to vote. So they're y'know making laws in their states so uh that the black populations won't have enough sway i-in their voting to count uh that kind of thing that they're doing now.

Kaila Seger ([00:40:30](#)):

Alright. Alright, so moving on from that. Let's do, how has, if any, uh the Black Lives Matter movement changed how you interact with people of other races?

Donna McWhirter ([00:41:04](#)):

I don't think it's changed anyway that I interact because I've been lucky enough to be among other races all along and-and I y'know I didn't really have to turn around and say, oh, they're people, y'know they're human. I already knew that from going to school with them and living with the- in neighborhoods with them and so forth. So personally, I don't think it's changed my views much because I already had positive views.

Kaila Seger ([00:41:43](#)):

Mhmm did it- did it maybe not so it didn't change how you interacted with people of other races, but did it maybe give you some more insight into the into any like hardships or stuff or even broaden your your perspective even more?

Donna McWhirter ([00:42:01](#)):

Well, I suppose that because they were more in the news that maybe I became more aware of-of needs that maybe I didn't know before, maybe that particular kind of thing. Um but as far as making my personal, y'know making me say, oh, that looks like I could be that woman's friend y'know even though she's got black skin. Because uh, because even in like in Tennessee, which was not- is not the most uh y'know open of the racial uh worlds our- through church we, our-our women's, for example, groups who went on retreat together across from across the state had we all had in the bigger cities, black churches. So we related to the black churches when we had citywide or statewide meetings.

([00:43:07](#)):

And so I and I- David and I had both uh attended some of the services at the black church. So we had had a little bit more experience than maybe some of those people in Tennessee, for example, that that I didn't have to change my opinions to be a black woman's friend is what I guess I'm looking at it from that standpoint. And- and uh the black women took leadership in statewide work, and when we had retreats were leaders in retreats. And so we interacted all the time, just people to people y'know. And so I don't know, because I guess that in some ways I didn't really take in all that Black Lives Matter stood for it may- I didn't know about them as much as I should have. I knew their name and I liked the name,

and I-I knew that I had lots of black friends in Indiana and Tennessee and here in Colorado through the church.

(00:44:18):

11/21/23)

Page 14 of 19

Donna McWhirter Interview (Completed  
Transcript by [Rev.com](#)

This transcript was exported on Nov 30, 2023 - view latest version [here](#).

And um so I don't know cause I- the more you're asking me questions, the more I'm wondering if I really knew as much about it as I should have.

Kaila Seger (00:44:34):

Mhmm

Donna McWhirter (00:44:34):

Um that's kind of what I'm asking myself that I don't maybe really know. I know what they stood for, like they're human beings and we need to be traded- treated as equals that I agree with completely. And but I maybe didn't know the ins and outs, the intricate ins and outs of the group itself and what it did. Y'know so maybe I'm asking myself questions. Did they do anything that I would not have liked? I don't know. I guess I just never bothered to find out and that's- that's not good either.

Kaila Seger (00:45:15):

Okay. So then what-what would you say your first encounter with the Black Lives Matter movement would be?

Donna McWhirter (00:45:24):

Well y'know that's, it really almost lately on TV y'know when-when the man with the guy had his knee on his uh throat and he died y'know when those kinds of things happened. And when the white people would blame Black Lives Mater- Matter for um causing trouble or something, maybe it was through TV that I really became more aware because personally I hadn't encountered it as a club or a group or an organization personally as much as on tv. Um so maybe that's that it came late, um but yet the the name didn't turn me uh off. And I agree that Black Lives Matter. And so that part I didn't feel like I um had any personal account of, but I think it was on TV when these groups would have clashes. And uh so then the white people, whether whatever they were nationalists or whatever y'know would say that. Well, what and y'know there's another group that has black members and they say they blame them for things. Like they blame them for January 6th. Well, I didn't see any black skin at January 6th, y'know but I watched all that happening and I saw a lot of white skin knocking policemen over and-and squeezing guards in a, y'know between doors so they can't breathe and they're in pain. I-I saw white people doing bad things, but I didn't see that other group that they're blaming, that's a black group uh. I didn't see that. So I don't know. I'm-I'm just kind of saying I guess that maybe I've known about Black Lives Matter more at a distance than personally.

Kaila Seger ([00:47:44](#)):

Then what- what like TV news sources or like what channels on TV would you say were your first encounters with the Black Lives Matter movement?

Donna McWhirter ([00:47:57](#)):

Well, I would imagine that it'd be MSNBC because that's the channel I used to watch for news. And now I watch that always um that's been my choice. So I would say that MSNBC would be my first encounter, and because I trusted their people more than any of the other stations.

Kaila Seger ([00:48:23](#)):

Mhmm

11/21/23)

Page 15 of 19

Donna McWhirter Interview (Completed  
Transcript by [Rev.com](#)

This transcript was exported on Nov 30, 2023 - view latest version [here](#).

Donna McWhirter ([00:48:23](#)):

And so I-I would imagine, I mean, I learned about them on the TV news and it had to be through MSNBC.

Kaila Seger ([00:48:36](#)):

Alright, so then you've kind of you've kind of hinted at maybe feeling like you-you don't know as much. So then which generation in your opinion is the most affected by Black Lives Matter movement?

Donna McWhirter ([00:49:00](#)):

Oh my. I'm not sure about that. I think that-that maybe the younger young people when, y'know, I don't even know when they were formed,

Kaila Seger ([00:49:12](#)):

Mhmm

Donna McWhirter ([00:49:12](#)):

So I can't really tell you if I y'know what- over what period of history in the in this country that we were uh aware of Black Lives Matter. Um so that's part of my problem, I guess. And part of it is I would say probably younger people knew about them more than I did. I don't know, um because I-I be- I may be older than the movement. So it-it had came in when I was y'know a mature adult, so it was something new to me when I first encountered it. So I'm not sure- I'm just- this is a little confusing to me as far as um y'know the group itself and what I know or don't know about it.

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

That's okay.

Donna McWhirter ([00:50:06](#)):

And then of course, the news played on when um so many black young people were being shot um on a police stop or something y'know and killed by um police officers, which y'know just breaks my heart. And-and uh then the blame that the Republicans would put on this other black group to say they're the ones who did the disruptive stuff, not us, y'know but there- but it's kind of easy to see if the black community was there or not because they're black skinned. So many of them, I mean, I'm not saying that whites can't maybe be-belong to Black Lives Matter because we agree with it, but um it's just that you don't blatantly blame somebody for something that you've done, although they do it very easily nowadays. They- everything lately that's come from the right is they're saying that the left has done is what they're doing. Am I making any sense?

Kaila Seger ([00:51:18](#)):

You are.

Donna McWhirter ([00:51:20](#)):

So the blame is really, they're putting the blame for their behavior on somebody else.

([00:51:26](#)):

And-and we can see it because we know what we're looking at y'know and things are on tv. We all watch January 6th, so uh and they're trying to make it a racial thing that these were black people that

11/21/23)

Page 16 of 19

Donna McWhirter Interview (Completed

Transcript by [Rev.com](#)

This transcript was exported on Nov 30, 2023 - view latest version [here](#).

were attacking the um offices y'know where the Democrats and Republicans and so forth of the Hill trying to stop the election. Well, we are smart enough that we know that's not true, but if we want it to be true, then we might pass that news on. I don't know. But i-it seems like that's what they're doing, all their shortcomings, they blame on somebody else so and they're so racist. These people on the right, and I'm not saying all of them are, but the many in the leadership right now are very racist. So they blame um y'know other races because they think they can get away with it. But I-I think most people are smart enough. I hope to see that it's just a lie. It's not true. But-but anyway, I would guess that I-I first became cognizant of what was going on through that MSNBC news program, and I will watch Rachel Maddo-Maddow and some others that I trust, and even they have let me down sometimes in some things they believe. But then that's probably true of any human. We don't always agree with everybody, but we have people, some people who we trust more than others.

Kaila Seger ([00:53:20](#)):

All right. Um are there any sort of closing remarks that you want to touch on? Any topics that you were thinking about concerning Black Lives Matter and the movement that you wanted to speak on?

Donna McWhirter ([00:53:39](#)):

No, I don't think so. And I think that's probably because as I talked to you, I don't know as much about it as I should. I just I y'know I-I know what I think of the title. I think it's true. Black Lives do matter, but it doesn't always mean that the black lives that matter don't make mistakes. But I ju- you have to be

discriminating. But I don't think that you go and listen to people who blindly blame people

Kaila Seger ([00:54:13](#)):

Mhmm

Donna McWhirter ([00:54:14](#)):

Who belong to a movement like that because they don't think that Black Lives matter. I mean, we know as women that we don't always matter. Y'know White males are the most prominent people who try to keep the power in their hands. And-and I as growing up, I-I knew that I was not as powerful as even my teenage brothers y'know because males always come out on top and females are always second class citizens. And uh so I- I think that we as females also um experience some of that prejudice, but it's not the same or as bad as it is for people who are different races and who are y'know um blamed for that. And they say, if you have black skin, you must be a bad person. Well, I don't believe that. Or if your eyes are slanted, you must try to get into universities ahead of white people because you're smart y'know or something.

([00:55:35](#)):

That stuff is crazy. And I-I hate the fact that y'know universities and so forth are going backward and accepting fewer uh of those students that need help to come to school and there's just- it would become selfish or something. And I think when we're selfish, we also tend to say, well, we got to keep the power to ourselves and not let anybody else make decisions, and which is completely the opposite of what it should be because when we're all working together, we're really better off and we're stronger. And they think that it's not the case. You have to be a white male or a Republican or whatever it is, y'know just to know it all. But that's not true. And-and that we're really stronger and better off when we're cooperating and we're together.

11/21/23)

Page 17 of 19

Donna McWhirter Interview (Completed  
Transcript by [Rev.com](#))

This transcript was exported on Nov 30, 2023 - view latest version [here](#).

Kaila Seger ([00:56:35](#)):

Mhmm

Donna McWhirter ([00:56:35](#)):

I don't understand it. So I just think that probably I didn't know as much, and I still don't know as much about the organization of Black Lives Matter. I just have to honestly say that's y'know

Kaila Seger ([00:56:54](#)):

That's ok

Donna McWhirter ([00:56:54](#)):

the truth. Because I-I think when you learn about things on tv, you don't have chances to ask people

questions and so forth as if you encountered them person to person. So you don't maybe learn as much what they stand for. And so maybe my understanding is superficial too. Y'know I don't know. But I just know that I'm not as aware of wha- of who they are and what they completely sta-, I know what they're supposed to stand for from their name, but I don't know any personal people in that organization or plan. And uh I've experienced a lot of negative things against black people. So I understand the need for have organizations to bring um more uh equity to their lives and being able to buy homes in any part of the city that they want to, and all the kinds of things that have held them back. So y'know we can't blame people for what they haven't been allowed to do and-and develop y'know if we've kept them from, it y'know it just doesn't make sense. So I need to be more knowledgeable too.

Kaila Seger ([00:58:22](#)):

Alright.

Donna McWhirter ([00:58:27](#)):

So that's all we know. Not very much, but I know what I feel and I know about my experiences and I thank God that I grew up around all races and people and went to school with them because it helped me to be a better person.

Kaila Seger ([00:58:49](#)):

Alright. I think that concludes our interview. So thank you so much for being a part of this. I really appreciate it. And just as another general reminder, if there are any parts of this that you want to be taken out, if you want this to be released after a certain date, let me know and we can arrange that. Um I'm also perfectly willing to send more information or elaborate on this project in general, so you know exactly what's going on and all of that stuff. Um but if

Donna McWhirter ([00:59:36](#)):

Yeah, yeah as-as of this time, I can't say that anything I've experienced or feel is-is necessarily a secret and that I don't want anybody else to know what I think. So I don't know of any reason why, if there was anything worthwhile even of being y'know told in another uh context, I can't see any reason why it couldn't be done because I don't think there are any secrets or ugly things that have come out. So you know maybe I'll y'know go out one day and be shot because if somebody heard what I said to you, I don't know. But I don't feel like that, and I don't feel embarrassed by what I've said, so I-I and I don't know how y'all are going to use it, but I feel comfortable with what we did as far as the content.

11/21/23)

Page 18 of 19

Donna McWhirter Interview (Completed  
Transcript by [Rev.com](#)

This transcript was exported on Nov 30, 2023 - view latest version [here](#).

Kaila Seger ([01:00:39](#)):

All right. And then just-just to answer the what we're doing with this, um Sewanee is making a oral history website about Black Lives Matter. Um my class is the first class to uh essentially work on this, so we're pioneering it. Um all of my classmates and my interviews will be put up on the website for people to access, um to be able to s- to see the oral histories of what a bunch of different people think about Black Lives Matter and what it means to them. Um once it's up, you can access it if you want. You'll be

there in it as long as you are okay with that. Uh so that's what this is about, and that's what we're doing with this content.

Donna McWhirter ([01:01:43](#)):

Well, I-I mean, really what has shocked me is that I've realized that what I agreed with was the name of this organization, but I wondered if I ever learned anything about it that I should know, y'know. I-I so I don't know it as well as I should, but I like the name because I believe wholeheartedly that Black Lives mattered matter and that they have not been able to be mattering y'know in our history because of the way they've been treated. And-and when people in power have no desire to-to make black lives more uh livable and more comfortable and more, t-t-there's something wrong. So I do like the title and maybe I need to do some research myself.

Kaila Seger ([01:02:49](#)):

Well, at the very least got you thinking about it. Um anyway, that's all that I have for you.

Donna McWhirter ([01:02:58](#)):

Okay.

Kaila Seger ([01:02:59](#)):

Yet again, thank you so much for participating and being a part of this. I'm really glad to get your perspective on this. It means a lot to me. I'm going to go ahead and stop the recording.

11/21/23)

Page 19 of 19