

Transcription of interview with Charles C. Williams, Jr.
October 15, 2004
2:30 pm
McClellanville, SC

RH = Rukiya Hite DM = Dennis Ming Nichols ACE = Anne Cooper Ellefson
AL = Amy Lopes CCW = Charles C. Williams, Jr.

RH: Could you please say your name?

CCW: My name is Charles C. Williams, Jr. better known as Counterclockwise Willy.

ACE: Do you want to say your name, where you work, and what you do?

CCW: My name is Charles C. Williams, Jr. I work at McClellanville antique where I carve my canes and make castnets.

ACE: How long have you been working there?

CCW: Three years but I've been carving and making nets all my life.

ACE: How did you learn to do all that?

CCW: I learned from my father who learned from his father who learned from his father and it goes on back.

ACE: .Tell us about Gullah and what you said about being American. Like when people ask you if you're Gullah....

CCW: Sure. I'm Gullah, I'm American first, black next, and then I'm a Gullah, all tied in together. You know if you call me a Geechee, well I'm Geechee, ain't nothing to argue about, ain' nothing to get bad about. You know, that's my heritage, I can't deny it. I go along with it.

ACE: What do you think about the , have you heard of Queen Quet and the Gullah Geechee Nation in Beaufort?

CCW: Yeah I've heard of it.

ACE: What do you think about it?

CCW: I don't know, I, some of it, some of the things that they say and do is true, and then again some of it I don't know anything about.

ACE: Like what?

CCW: Well, just some of the way they use the words. My grandparents and them, all their parents were slaves and uh that's one thing they never did talk about. They talk about working on the plantation you know and sharecropping and things of that nature, but so far as sit down and talk about what they used to do they don't do that anymore. So far as speaking Gullah, there are some places right around here that I can take you and you wouldn't understand a word they say.

ACE: So you speak Gullah?

CCW: Sometimes, I don't practice it no more.

ACE: Why is that?

CCW: Well because I, that area is done with. When w were in school and you used that Gullah word, first thing they tell ya that's not proper English, you know, you see what I'm saying? Now its going back the other way they want you to talk tat way but society done dictated that that's not proper so everybody got away from it to a certain extent.

DM: Would you like to see it go back and encourage people to speak Gullah, and practice it and things like that?

CCW: Uhh, yeah, it wouldn't hurt you know, it wouldn't hurt, it would keep in touch with your past. You see what I'm saying? It would keep you in touch with the past.

RH: How does think that affects children's self esteem, back in the day when they told you guys stuff like you were speaking, it was not proper to speak that way. Do you feel like it made you not want to stay connected to the Gullah language?

CCW: That's right, that's right. That makes you feel, like I said, you know, you go in there, gimme dat ting, mamma said dis, you see what I'm saying? And then, oy, that's not proper, you know, you don't use that, you know, so now you gotta do what the teacher says cause that's what they want you to do. Now once you get home, then you go right back into that Gullah speaking life, then you get like I did, you go into the service, you go into, you know, you get to work about the multicultural type people and you got to think hard about what you're saying cause you don't want them to laugh at you. Cause its not proper to say dey and kum yah and things like, and you see what I'm saying? And now, they want you to do that, but when I came up that was taboo, you didn't talk that kind of talk.

ACE: Where are places you can go around here that you can really hear Gullah?

CCW: I'm not gonna tell you that on that thing there. *Laugh laugh.* No ma'am, I gotta live here. *All laugh in response.*

ACE: So people don't like it, they don't like feeling like....

RH: ...Do you feel kinda like, yeah...

ACE: exploited (Rukiya agrees)?

RH: Do you feel like an exhibit or something like that when people ask you stuff about Gullah and stuff like that?

CCW: Do I...

RH: Do you feel like an exhibit or like you're being exploited...

CCW: Well I think they're seeking information so, um, you see what I'm saying? They are seeking information about the past, trying to record information about the past, so no I don't feel offended or anything like that.

ACE: But why would you get in trouble if you told us where people speak Gullah, just cause they don't want people coming in and...

CCW: Yeah cause some people go there and laugh at them. You see what I'm saying? They go up there and laugh at em.

ACE: What is the importance of carving the canes and the nets to your family, is it important cause ya'll use them.

CCW: No its just the fact that when I came up, if you didn't know anybody that make a net you didn't have one. And in this area here, net is important for the winter time for fish and in the summer time for shrimp, and you didn't go in the store and buy em, because you know they didn't mass produce em like they do today. But the mass produced net is just a cheap way to get rid of your money really cause they're no good. They're made out of Marlifoe (?) line and the sunlight and the ultra violet light will make it last less than a month if you gone really use it. Now the net that I make are made out of nylon chord and they're something that can be passed on for generations. They don't rot.

Sound test.

RH: You have an awesome voice.

CCW: Ohhhh, let me get tank up if you wanna see somethin.

AL: Go' on now.

RH: Is there anything else you want to add?

ACE: About the culture around here, how has it changed, livin in this culture, from the time you were growing up til now?

CCW: Well it hasn't, the countryside hadn't changed any, you know, just some of the ways and some of the things we have been doing we learned to do it in a better way. You know, but so far as the country itself, no it hasn't been changed. The people are still the same, we are still a basically a one horse town, we're away from the big city, you see what I'm saying? We still, do have some of the crimes and the bad elements that the city have but not on the city scale. If you wanna look for a place to live, this is it. McClellanville, SC.

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My name is Charles C. Williams Jr, I reside at 8523 Old Georgetown Road, McClellanville, SC 29458. I'm better known as Counter Clockwise Willie. And if you need to buy a cane or a castnet, you can call, 843-887-3768.