Recreational Segregation: The Role of Place in Shaping Communities

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Recreational Segregation: The Role of Place in Shaping Communities

by

Iyshia Lowman

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts With a concentration in Cultural Anthropology Department of Applied Anthropology College of Arts and Sciences University of South Florida

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Keywords: memory, identity, black beach, Jim Crow, history, heritage

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my family and to my friends, without whom, this would not have been possible. This work is also in loving memory of my friend, and second mother, Rose Marie.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my major advisor, Dr. Antoinette Jackson for her support and advice throughout my graduate years at the University of South Florida.

I would also like to thank the rest of my committee, Dr. Weisman and Dr. Yelvington for their guidance.
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ABSTRACT

Institutionalized racial segregation in the United States has had a significant impact on many aspects of American culture. Segregation was practiced in every aspect of public life, even in areas of recreation. For those labeled as “nonwhite,” even going to the beach was legally restricted. The events between the 1950s and 1960s at Homestead Bayfront Beach in Homestead, Florida are evidence that social stratification based on the social categorization of race has a significant effect even today. This research examines how legalized segregation in the past impacted society and contributed to the development of a place and identity at Homestead Bayfront Beach. This analysis not only fills a gap in the historical record on segregation and recreation in the United States, but also contributes to research on place and place making and the formation of memory and identity.
CHAPTER 1: RESEARCH CONTEXT

Introduction

American culture has had a significant history of legal segregation based on race and it is inscribed in the development of place, collective memories, and identity. Segregation was practiced in every aspect of public life, even in areas of recreation. For those labeled as “non-white,” even going to the beach was legally restricted. This qualitative study examines racial segregation at sites of recreation and its impact on the development of place and the role of memories in Miami-Dade County, Florida. “Place” refers to the anthropological concept of “a framed space that is meaningful to a person or group over time” (Thornton 2008:22). These beaches (or places), as sites of recreation, and fellowship contributed to the shaping of African American identity. I will focus on beaches within Florida during the period of legal segregation in the United States between 1950 and 1960, before the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was enacted.

In this study I will argue that a more nuanced understanding of place is achieved through the critical analysis of identity and the process of memory creation. I will also show that while place contributes to the formation of identity, identity in turn affects memories attached to those same locations. Specifically, each concept is intertwined in a complex relationship. I will address these research questions:

1. How do community memories and a National Park Service (NPS) ethnographic profile create a nuanced understanding of the multiple roles of place in informing issues of segregation at sites of recreation in South Florida?
2. How do multivocality, multilocality, and social context create a comprehensive understanding of place in south Miami Dade County?

3. How does power influence the formation of place, identity, and memories at segregated beaches in Miami Dade County, Florida?

This research was an effort to document the events that occurred at Homestead Bayfront Beach during the 1950s and 60s until the Civil Rights Act of 1964 at the request of Biscayne National Park (Lowman 2012). Initially, Biscayne National Park lacked documentation (i.e. narratives) on this period to inform the historical record. The resulting report was entitled “Jim Crow at the beach: An Oral and Archival History of the Segregated Past at Homestead Bayfront Beach” (Lowman 2013). This study furthers the NPS report by utilizing the oral histories and interviews gathered as forms of community memories to analyze its connection to identity and place making (Lowman 2012). These memories contribute to the identity of the community and are an essential part of the development of the segregated place known as Homestead Bayfront Beach.

This study is important because, not only does it add to literature on segregation, recreation, and place by addressing previous gaps; it gives voice to communities and histories that were once silenced. According to Jackson, “engaging in a critical examination of the impact of legalized segregation in America as it existed prior to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 becomes essential if we are to understand its continuing impact on public representations, cultural resource management, and the interpretation of history and heritage today” (2010: 5). In examining segregated recreation, the depth of segregation practices and their effects on the American social structure become evident. This analysis contributes to an expansion of awareness and understanding of how historical processes shape the present.
The paper is organized as follows: in chapter one I provide an overview of the research sites. In this chapter the details of this study are presented including the research process and an overview of locations covered by this research. A profile of each of the sites provides basic historical information the beaches and communities mentioned in the collected oral histories. In chapter two, I review previous research on the history of segregation in the United States with vital focus on segregation in the state of Florida and at sites of recreation—identifying gaps in the literature and associated implications. Additionally, I review literature on the anthropological concept of place and the connection between memories and identity. Chapter three presents the research methodology, inclusion criteria for participants, development of research and interview questions, procedures for data collection, and the ethical issues involved. In chapter four, I present and analyze the findings in order to answer the research questions. In the fifth chapter, I construct a comparative analysis between segregated sites of recreation in Florida. The last chapter summarizes the research findings including limitations and suggestions for future research.

**Research Process**

My entry into the investigation began with an internship with the National Park Service. I was recommended and applied for the internship as the oral history interviewer for the National Park Service, specifically for Biscayne National Park located in Homestead, Florida beginning October of 2011 (Lowman 2012). This project was sponsored by the American Conservation Experience (ACE) through a grant from the National Park Services. Funding was distributed bi-weekly through the University of South Florida (USF) via an agreement between ACE and the USF Heritage Lab.
My role was to gather oral histories from former beachgoers. To achieve this, I developed the interview questions with assistance from Charles Lawson, Cultural Resource Manager and Archaeologist at Biscayne National Park and my graduate advisor and USF Associate Professor, Antoinette Jackson, PhD. Through contacts with Biscayne National Park employees and advertisements extended by the park as well as myself, I conducted interviews with former beachgoers in the Miami-Dade County area. In these semi-structured interviews, the participants and I discussed their experiences during and after legalized racial segregation.

I focus on their experiences and compare Homestead Bayfront Beach to other beaches mentioned in the interviews that are located within a 50 mile radius (or one hour drive) in order to provide a more complete framework of Homestead Bayfront Beach in relation to the other segregated beaches and their surrounding communities. I conducted participant observation at these beaches, as well as in the city of Homestead, in order to recruit more participants. I traveled to Homestead and Miami at least once a month over a nine month period. I kept a log of the work/research that I did every day for this project (see Table A4 in Appendix). I averaged six to eight hours of work per day in the two to three days that I was in south Florida. In all, I spent at least 108 hours on this project.

I also traveled to, and contacted by phone and email, research centers, libraries, archives, newspapers, and museums located within Florida including Miami, Tallahassee, and Tampa. I profile each of these establishments in chapter three. These establishments provide additional information and add context to the oral narratives. I primarily relied on institutions in the south Florida area because they offer more specialized information about Miami-Dade County. I conducted archival research to find documentation and artifacts to add historical context, for example, photographs and newspaper articles. This combination of oral histories and archival
research marks this study as an ethnohistorical study. Ethnohistorical studies examine the cultures through historical record as well as ethnographic data. Jackson uses this method in her study on the Kingsley Plantation in Jacksonville, Florida and describes it as “oral history interviews, ethnographic field data, maps, pictures, and other archival and historical data, which have been used to capture and preserve the memories, stories, and experiences of residents,” (Jackson 2006: 59).

My internship resulted in the publication of my research by the NPS in a document entitled “Jim Crow at the beach: An Oral and Archival History of the Segregated Past at Homestead Bayfront Beach” (Lowman 2013). This document is available for public use. It is being used as the basis for pamphlets, guided tours, and documentation for Biscayne National Park. As a result of this internship, I became interested in the role of place at sites of recreation as a means of understanding identity formation and memories in context to segregation. I am interested in how racial segregation in America impacts communities. I examine how power in the form of racial segregation effects the development of identity and place. I expand on identity and communities in Miami-Dade County and examine the connection between place and community memories. The information found, aids in the understanding of the historical and socio-cultural implications of race at segregated sites of recreation.

**Research Sites and Profiles**

The sites of interest to this study include Baker’s Haulover, Virginia Key, Crandon Park, Matheson Hammock, and Homestead Bayfront Beach. I map sites mentioned in the collected oral histories in Figure 1 as well as other areas researched. Other sites noted in the oral histories are Bear Cut and Elliot Key. Bear Cut is the water way between Virginia Key and Key Biscayne, not a coast as suggested in the oral histories. Elliot Key is the start of the Florida Keys
on Key Biscayne located within Biscayne National Park boundaries. However, they are not included in this analysis. Bear Cut is water channel, not a beach so it was not included. Elliott Key, despite being mentioned in the collected oral histories was known to be a pineapple farm rather than recreation site and it was a part of Homestead Bayfront Beach.

I examined and compared narratives and archival records for beaches researched in regards to segregation, memories, identity, and place. Previous research on the racial segregation in south Florida is limited for all of the beaches except Virginia Key Beach. In 2002, Virginia Key Beach became a nationally recognized Florida Heritage site and was placed under the care of the Virginia Key Beach Park Trust designated by the City of Miami. The Virginia Key Beach Task Force prevented the beach from becoming private and made efforts to preserve and restore the beach in 2008. This communal effort helped preserve Virginia Key beach in the historical record. Public information about the other beaches includes local newspaper articles and travel brochures that mainly center on the beaches in terms of tourism.

Figure 1: Research Sites in South Miami-Dade County Rendered in Google Map (1945-1964); Miami-Dade County Communities also shown (Made by Iyshia Lowman via googlemap.com)
Biscayne National Park

This is the principal research site. It is set on the coast of Miami-Dade County in south Florida, about twenty minutes east of the city of Homestead. It is the site of present day Biscayne National Park. Biscayne National Park’s boundaries include Biscayne Bay. Almost 95% of the 172,924 acre park is under water (NPS 2014; Martin 1968). Established in 1968, this park was built on the site of the former Homestead Bayfront Beach North. Little has been documented on Homestead Bayfront Beach North before the park was established.

Homestead Bayfront Beach North and South

Homestead Bayfront Beach South was dedicated January 28th, 1939. However, development was stopped due to the onset of America’s involvement in World War II (Martin 1968; City of Homestead 2013). The land was leased to the United States Government until 1947. Development was reinitiated after Dade County regained the land from the United States Government (Lowman 2012). Among the changes made were the addition of restrooms, a refreshment pavilion, a two-story residence building, a maintenance shed and a toolshed (Lowman 2012). Then the atoll shaped beach was constructed along with an enlarged marina, parking area, and an entrance road (Lowman 2012). Following these additions, Homestead Bayfront Beach South also known as the “white side” was rededicated on February 2nd, 1951 (it was originally dedicated in 1939). Six thousand Dade County residents attended the ceremony (Redland District Newspaper 1951).

Homestead Bayfront Beach North was dedicated in 1955 (see Figure A11 in Appendix) to be used by blacks and other nonwhites (Homestead Leader Enterprise Newspaper 1955). It was significantly smaller in size than the South side, which was designated for whites. It, too, was characterized by an atoll shaped beach, yet had an unpaved dirt road as opposed to the south
side entrance road, which was paved (Lowman 2012). This unpaved road is still present to this day as a service road and is a reminder of segregation in Florida, which to date is unmarked (see Figures A12 and A13 in Appendix).

**Virginia Key Beach**

According to a the “Virginia Key Beach Parks Special Resource Study Report of Findings and Conclusions” published by the National Park Service, Virginia Key Beach was an unofficial beach for black recreation in the 1920s and 1930s before World War II (2008). During World War II, this beach became a temporary training area for black military personnel use. This move in 1944 was a compromise instead of allowing the black and white soldiers to train together (Dunn 1997, NPS 2008). The local black community was enraged by the lack of swimming facilities available to black soldiers and civilians on a permanent basis and in 1945, a wade-in at the white only North Miami Beach was initiated (presently Baker’s Haulover Beach) (Dougherty 2003; NPS 2008; Bush 2006). A wade-in is the protest of segregation at a pool (or other body of water, i.e. a beach), in which the protesters stay for long periods of time and refuse to leave. In response, officials designated a separate beach for blacks in the Miami area as a compromise to appease both pro- and anti-segregation supporters (Cruz 2012). Virginia Key, one of the few exclusively black beaches, opened in Dade County on August 1st, 1945 (National Park Service 2008; Dougherty 2003). Beach attendance far exceeded expectations and because there was no disorder, it was decided by the director of parks of Miami-Dade County that further developments would be made, including: bathhouses, a carousel, a children’s train ride, picnic areas, and concession stands, however, for the first two years of its establishment it was only accessible by ferry (Cruz 2012; Dunn 1997; Virginia Key Beach Park Trust).
The park was closed in 1982, however, it was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2002 (Mattox 2004; Virginia Key Beach Park Trust). The Virginia Key Beach Park Task force, a community run organization, rallied against private development efforts and oversaw its reopening (Virginia Key Beach Park Trust 2009). Virginia Key is one of the most famous black beaches and is well documented in public record. The next beach, located just north of Virginia Key, was named Crandon Park.

**Crandon Park**

Crandon Park, located in Biscayne Bay on Key Biscayne, was established in 1947 for public recreation use (Savage-Rich 1977). It was first established by Charles Crandon, named the “Father of Dade County’s Park System” (Smiley 1973). He was also responsible for securing land for Matheson Hammock and Baker’s Haulover (Smiley 1973; Miami-Dade Parks and Recreation 2013). For many years before the establishment of this park, the area was used residentially and for businesses for white people only. After a successful wade-in led by members of the Congress for Racial Equality (CORE) in 1959, and a lack of police opposition, Crandon Park became unofficially desegregated from that day forward (Cruz 2012).

**Baker’s Haulover**

Another beach examined in this study was the beach that was the setting for the 1945 wade-in in Miami-Dade County, Baker’s Haulover. It was previously named North Miami Beach. It was an exclusively a white’s only beach and was the site of the wade in May 9, 1945. This led to the creation of Virginia Key Beach, an exclusively black beach, as noted previously. Dade County Parks and Recreation took possession of and built a marina in Baker’s Haulover in the early 1950s (United States Army of Engineers 1959; Saconchik-Pytel, Martha 2012).
**Matheson Hammock**

Matheson Hammock was the final beach examined in this study. It is located in Miami-Dade, to the north of Homestead. Matheson Hammock was established in 1938 by the Civilian Conservation Corps as an area consisting of marinas, boat ramps, atoll pools, wading beach, and nature trails (University of Miami 1990; Savage-Rich, Peggy 1977). This beach was also restricted to the white community only. These beaches and parks provided the South Miami-Dade county population with recreation choices.

These beaches are important to study because they aid in underscoring segregation in Florida in terms of sites of recreation. It is not enough to look at the beaches in isolation; rather it is necessary to probe into the communities and neighborhoods that surround those beaches. By studying surrounding communities, identity and memories can be analyzed in broader context. The following section outlines key places in the surrounding community that serve to contextualize the broader reach of segregation in South Florida.

**Communities**

I chose to include information on several communities within Miami-Dade County because they were mentioned in the oral histories and they help in understanding the identity making in this area. Table 1 shows the population changes based on racial categories in Miami Dade County from 1950 to 1990 (Dunn 1997). This table is significant because it provides a description of the population during times of racial tension and socio-political change due to the continued differentiation based on the labeling of skin color. The times that are significant to this study are 1950, 1960, and 1970 because they highlight changes in population during the Civil Rights Movement in America. Table 1 shows that from 1950 to 1970, the population of blacks in North Miami increased but blacks were still less than one percent of the overall
population. For Miami and North Miami Beach the black population increased from 16% to 23% in 1970. In Homestead, Florida City, Miami Beach, and South Miami the black populations decreased by 1970. It is also important to note that the communities of interest to this study are areas that are closer to segregated beaches and which often contribute to the beachgoers population. The local beachgoers would visit these sites of recreation provided they had transportation. These areas included: Homestead, Miami, North Miami, Perrine, and Florida City. I used the information gathered to create community profiles.

**Miami**

The city of Miami was established in 1896 as a largely segregated area in which blacks were restricted to Coconut Grove, Colored Town (presently called Overtown), and south Dade (Bush 2000; Smith Cavro 2007). Miami experienced a number of migrations from Cuba, from the Northern United States (both blacks and whites), and the Caribbean throughout the 20th century (Dunn 1997; Bush 2011; Smith Cavro 2007). These migrations contributed to the overall population demographics as well as the clashing cultures. This quote, “in 1960, Miami was more residentially segregated than any other large American city, and even today school and residential segregation persist to a substantial degree” underscores this occurrence (Angell 1996: 355). Within the black population was a large number of Bahamians who fled after the collapse of the Bahamian economy in the 1880s (Smith-Cavros 2007). They occupied a part of Coconut Grove and their cultural impact seen to this day through their African roots (i.e. celebrations) (Dunn 1997; Smith-Cavros 2007). By the 1900s a considerable number of the black population in Miami had Caribbean roots (Dunn 1997). One interviewee of Caribbean descent stated that “we were always oriented to the beach…to nature” when referring to the Caribbean (and church)
population in Miami (Smith-Cavros 2007: 354). Despite ethnic and cultural differences within the black population, anyone with dark skin tone is labeled black and therefore “inferior” during legalized segregation in America.

Table 1: Black Population in Dade Count Florida (Dunn 1997: 163)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>1950 No.</th>
<th>%a</th>
<th>1960 No.</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>1970 No.</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Miami</td>
<td>40,245</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>65,213</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>76,155</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N-Miami</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opa-Locka</td>
<td>1,681</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>3,544</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>3,503</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N. Miami Beach</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>719</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1,010</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homestead</td>
<td>1,691</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>3,178</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>3,871</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miami Beach</td>
<td>640</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>508</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>319</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida City</td>
<td>1,547</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>2,403</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>3,040</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Miami</td>
<td>1,599</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>2,403</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>2,842</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miami Shores</td>
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<td>n/a</td>
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<td>n/a</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Portal</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Dade</td>
<td>18,147</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>59,788</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>99,174</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dade County</td>
<td>64,947</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>137,299</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>189,606</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Percentage is of city population.


By the mid-1900s, Miami was divided into many different census designated places (CDP), by the United States Census Bureau (2013). These areas lack a separate municipal government, but are physically similar to incorporated places (i.e. cities, towns, and villages) (United States Census Bureau 2013). These smaller sections (or CPDs) show specific characterization, specifically in terms of demographics and geography such as the areas of Goulds and Richmond Heights. They will be referred to as cities, communities, or neighborhoods instead of CDPs in this study. These subdivisions are examples of the diverse and rich cultural composition that represents Miami identity. For example, Richmond Heights was originally established for black veterans and professionals, conversely the railway and packing warehouses in Goulds attracted transient laborers.
Richmond Heights was one of the census designated places within the city of Miami. It was established in 1949, as the first private development for black veterans of World War II (Dunn 1997). It quickly became an area for black professionals as well. Residing in this area of Miami was a status symbol. This area was deemed “the Negro’s Shangri-la” composed of mostly two bedrooms with one bathroom houses (Dunn 1997).

One of the other census designated places I examined was Goulds. This city was established in 1900 by black homesteaders and was a popular stop for the Florida East Coast railroad (Dunn 1997). It was initially called Gould’s Siding, then Goulds, and it is also called Black Point (Dunn 1997). With the establishment of the Florida East Coast Railway and packing warehouses in 1903, Goulds was rumored to be populated by convicts, drifters, and other laborers (Dunn 1997). This population contributed to the “rough” image of Goulds to outsiders.

**Perrine**

Further south of Miami was the city of Perrine, which was established in 1838 by Dr. Henry Perrine. Unfortunately, Dr. Perrine was murdered and the city later named after him. Later, it became a segregated city with blacks mostly limited to the West and whites to the East side (Dunn 1997; University of Miami 2000). This is still the picture of Perrine to this day. The blacks within this city are some of the poorest economically in Miami-Dade County (Dunn 1997).

**Florida City**

Florida city along with Homestead and Perrine was one of the first major settlements when black farmers and homesteaders migrated south (Dunn 1997). Florida City was originally settled by homesteaders dissatisfied with the city of Homestead and originally from Kansas (Florida City website 2013). When the Model Land Company from Michigan bought a portion
of this area 1913 they advertised it, mostly in Detroit, as a “Garden of Eden” (Florida City website 2013). Disputes between northern and southern settlers continued in this area until most of the people from Detroit left. Florida City was incorporated as a city in 1914.

*Homestead*

The city of Homestead, as mentioned before, is located south-west of Perrine. It was established in 1913, when H. Flagler extended a railroad from Miami to the Florida Keys (Dunn 1997). Some of the workers remained and founded the city of Homestead. Its main economic source is agriculture. It is located in between two national parks: Biscayne and Everglades National Parks. Population of communities in areas surrounding the beaches of Biscayne Bay contributes to community identity making. This overview of beaches and communities in South Florida impacted by segregation laws and practices offers a broader context for this study of race, place, and identity.

*Conclusion*

Racial segregation is an example of how social, legal, and economic power can be exercised. Through my examination of black beaches in South Florida, I found that a lack of documented research was one of the reasons for this study (Lowman 2012). Virginia Key is one of the most researched segregated beaches in the south, but few outside of South Florida know other beaches in this area. The cooperative project with Biscayne National Park and the University of South Florida opened discussions about previously overlooked areas. The literature review in the next section provides support and context for this study.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

I conducted a literature review on legalized racial segregation in America. Sources included books, peer reviewed journal articles, microfilm (i.e. newspaper articles), online media, and National Park Services publications. Issues that I found most consistent and important in terms of this study were the history of the effects of slavery and processes for legalizing segregation in the United States. Through this research, I became interested in connections between place and identity and the influence of segregation. The oral histories gathered are a critical part of analyzing identity formation. Power dynamics in racial segregation contribute to notions of place. I created subtitles by examining topics in the literature review. This section begins with segregation in the United States with a focus on the state of Florida and sites of recreation. I then, present anthropological literature involving the development of place and the connections between identity and memory.

Segregation in the United States

In this section, I discuss the impact of racial segregation within the United States. By looking at processes of establishing and de-establishing discriminatory practices as well as socio-cultural responses, a greater understanding of the everyday interactions between those restricted by racial categories becomes clearer. Racial segregation is the systematic separation of groups based on societal labels and categorization based on skin color. These categorizations provided basis for differentiation in treatment steeped in notions of white superiority. This separation was
based on socially created differences. These differences were arbitrary and served as justification for colonization, slavery, and the subjugation of entire groups of people. Racialized segregation was the basis for unequal treatment and discriminatory practices. While these rules of behavior seem only social on the surface, they were part of legal standards that carried heavy penalties (Chafe 2011; Shoefner 1977; Bernstein and Somin 2004; Massey et al 2009).

There were a number of legislative and judicial actions that characterized and shaped race relations from the 1800s to present day American society. Some of the most significant national court cases include the 1857 Dread Scott decision that established that no “colored” person (free or slave) could ever attain American citizenship (Kennedy 1990). This ruling was critical in setting the political and social mindset toward people of color for years. However, in a bold political move at the end of the American Civil War, the 13th amendment to the United States Constitution was approved to end slavery in 1865 (Kennedy 1990; Chafe 2011; Shofner 1977; Library of Congress 2004). Then the 14th amendment, in 1868, was ratified. This addition to the Constitution granted citizenship to all born or naturalized in the United States (Library of Congress 2004). It also prevented any state from taking away “the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.” These two amendments were a great movement toward equality for all people of color; however what was written on paper and what was enforced tended to differ. Another one of the most influential legal rulings was the 15th Amendment, which granted all men regardless of race the right to vote in 1870 (Library of Congress 2004). Although this amendment was established, it could not always be enforced, parallel to two previous amendments. There were many obstacles to the non-white vote including threats, intimidation, literacy tests, and poll taxes (Chafe 2011; Shofner 1977). Despite the legal acts to bestow non-
whites with more rights, there were efforts by the Supreme Court that prevent them from being truly enforced during Reconstruction between 1873 and 1883 (Library of Congress 2004).

In 1896, Plessy v. Ferguson set a ruling of “separate, but equal” within American society. People of color were placed under the illusion of equality with whites in public spheres, but were still separated from true equality and treatment. Decades later, in 1954, the court case Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas destroyed the legality of racial segregation within the public school system, however as with the other legal verdicts, it took time for the decision to be incorporated into all of the United States schools (Chafe 2011; Shofner 1977).

From the history lessons taught in schools to the entrances to public establishments, blacks were reminded constantly of their social and political status (Chafe 2011; McKay 1954). Black parents attempted to defend their children against the effects of racism by infusing counter strategies to deal with the mental and emotional effects of discrimination in their child rearing (Chafe 2011). More public attempts to resist these inequalities were exercised through joining civil rights groups (i.e. The National Negro Committee, later named the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People), sit-ins and other less dangerous actions intermingled within everyday life (Chafe 2011). Each state had its own reactions and adjustments made to the federal ordinances that dictated racial segregation, I will explore Florida in particular in the next section.

**Segregation in Florida**

Segregation in the United States permeated every state. In this section, I will discuss how segregation played out in Florida. From 1865 to 1866 the legislature under the suggestion of a three person committee enacted a series of codes to preserve the “much abused and greatly
misunderstood institution of slavery” (Shofner 1977: 279). These codes were referred to as the “black codes” (Shofner 1977; Kennedy 2011; Chafe 2011). These codes limited the rights of blacks socially, but also legally and economically. Black codes made the role and rights of “freedmen” (term for blacks after the abolishment of slavery) a mere regression to the rights of free Negros during slavery (Shofner 1977). Nevertheless, Florida enforced a limited number of integration laws, both social and political, for blacks to follow due to in an economic system that found their labor essential (Shofner 1977; Bernstein and Somin 2004; Kennedy 1990). “In Florida, like in a majority of other places in the U.S. South, the transition from agrarian-based, plantation-dominated agricultural community structures to industrial or postindustrial infrastructures involved the restructuring of the entire social order on which communities were built and the economy was based” (Jackson 2010: 80). Florida, in particular, made laws and statutes to nullify any attempt to change the social practices and customs in which the residents had grown accustomed. For example, literacy and poll taxes restricted the black vote (Chafe 2011: 408)

The legislature in Florida, the court systems, and the social customs counteracted most of the laws aimed at deconstructing segregation and intolerant practices. For example, after the Civil War, federal laws were enacted to aid in the Reconstruction including laws to elevate the social and political status of blacks (Shofner 1977; Kennedy 2011). In his book, *Remembering Jim Crow*, Chafe outlines examples of the social customs which reinforced notions of black inferiority:

- Whites (adults and children) referred to as “Mister and/or Mrs.” by non-whites
- Blacks can only enter houses and businesses through back doors
- Blacks (and other non-whites) must step aside for white pedestrians
- Black (and other non-white) men cannot stare, look, or even glance at white women
- Blacks (and other non-whites) couldn’t try on clothes in department stores
- Blacks (and other non-whites) had to shop and otherwise do business at separate establishments and use separate amenities (water fountains, entrances, restrooms, schools) [Chafe 2001]

In addition to dictating social customs, the black codes dictated legal precedent in reference to marriage, vagrancy, crime and punishment, taxes, and labor based on racial categories (Shofner 1977). One code dictated that a Negro man and woman could not cohabitate unless married and interracial marriage and cohabitation was still illegal (Shofner 1997; Chafe 2011; Kennedy 2011). For even minor offenses Negros received corporal punishment, labor, and fines were allotted (Shofner 1997; Chafe 2011; Kennedy 2011). Death was considered a punishment if a black man had sex or “raped” a white woman. In terms of employment, the “Act in relation to contracts of persons of color” was specifically directed at occupations limited to blacks and their employers (Shofner 1977). If a black man was found to have breached his contract with his employer, his punishment included a fine or forced labor to pay off the fine. However, if a black man was to have a complaint against his employer, he could be fired and his complaint ignored. Transitioning from the agriculturally oriented south to an industrially based economy with a labor class that was mostly composed of the very group that was subjugated and feared brought only more tensions (Jackson 2011). In every aspect of daily life the racial tensions were evident.

The tensions boiled over to produce action. In 1868, Negro suffrage was passed; however there was a critical backlash from the white community (Shoefner 1977; Kennedy
2011; Chafe 2011). This hostile response was not restricted to any domain; it included economic and political actions and even escalated to widespread violence, beatings, and murders. Characteristically of the south, the crimes against blacks were never fully investigated and the white who committed the crimes never punished (Shofner 1997; Chafe 2011; Kennedy 2011).

In 1873, a civil rights law was enacted for equal accommodations for all public places (McKay 1954). This act also permitted school integration, however, it was not enforced (McKay 1954). Despite this act, Leon County and the rest of Florida passed laws essentially nullifying it; resulting in little if any change in social conduct (McKay 1954; Bernstein and Somin 2004). Furthermore, with the election of President Hayes and the establishment of the Compromise of 1877, soldiers were removed from the south, taking support from civil rights efforts and the Republican administration (Shofner 1977). Even the Civil rights cases (1883), which ensured limited civil rights established by the 14th amendment, were undermined (Shofner 1977; Bernstein and Somin 2004). The civil rights protected only against “official” or governmental discrimination, it was not effective for private institutions (Shofner 1977; Bernstein and Somin 2004). Once again the state of Florida could institute racism and segregation into its society without technically breaking the law.

The progressive downfall of the support of racial equality continued with the 1885 Convention. This event formally dissolved the Republican Party and continued to disenfranchise blacks by issuing a poll tax and a tax for anyone running for office (Shofner 1977). Since people of color were disproportionately limited to the lower economic classes, this poll and election tax restricted their political power as well. The destruction of the Republican Party, took with it the small amount of advocacy for blacks. Therefore in the year 1889, the “Jim Crow” laws further
protected the legal sanctioning of the current establishment of segregation (Shofner 1977; Bernstein and Somin 2004).

Racist ideology was not limited to the law; it was continually strengthened in politics, newspapers, and creative as well as scientific writings (Shofner 1977; Kennedy 1990). These mediums constantly reinforced the racist customs. They justified systematic racism as a way to deal with such an “inferior” and “primitive” race as those labeled as Negros (Shofner 1997). In the past, in times of legalized slavery the slaves were given some degree of protection from public abuse, but now that blacks were not considered valuable property their abusers when without punishment (Shofner 1997; Kennedy 2011). The cultural mentality became less patronizing and more stigmatizing.

Gradually the federal court system negated the segregationist laws in Florida (Shofner 1977). More action was being taken to ensure a level of equality among the racial categories. Due to the massive migration of blacks to the north, blacks acquired more political power by aligning with the Democrats and voting for Franklin Roosevelt in 1936 (Shofner 1977). Even the NAACP which for years had been demoralized was able to win cases and reclaim political and legal power. Brown v. the Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas was one of the final Supreme Court Rulings that undermined Florida Segregation laws (Shofner 1977; Bernstein and Somin 2004). Then with efforts to establish anti-lynching legislation and the rerouting of education funding to Negro schools, by the late 1960’s the Jim Crow legal system was nullified (Shofner 1977).

More than Florida’s economic system was dependent on slavery; its political and social systems were as well (Shofner 1977; Bernstein 2004). It took massive efforts from the federal
government and other anti-segregation supporters to finally institute civil rights for non-whites. However, the effects of segregation were still prominent in Florida. Specifically, a larger number of people of color still resided in less desirable neighborhoods than whites and in response to integration in public schools, whites increasingly sent their children to “Christian” schools (Shofner 1977). So the ideology of segregation was moved from a more macro organization (i.e. widespread political efforts) to a more subtle and micro version (i.e. zoning laws and residential restrictions) of itself to coincide with custom (Shoefner 1977; Bernstein and Somin 2004; Massey et al 2009). One of these areas impacted by segregation is sites of recreation which will be examined in the next section.

Segregation at Sites of Recreation

In this section, I will show how segregation permeated all aspects of life including sites of recreation. Racial segregation at sites of recreation was a complicated condition that diluted national rulings to prolong the social custom of racial stratification especially in the south. The symbolism behind such actions as restricting access to public space strengthened the system of discrimination.

There were a number of designated black beaches in Florida including Bethune Beach, Manhattan Beach, Butler Beach, American Beach, and Virginia Key Beach. Before the establishment of these exclusively black beaches, blacks in Jacksonville were allowed to visit the south end of Pablo Beach (presently Jacksonville Beach) one day a week in 1884 (Phelts 1997; Jackson 2006). The rise and fall of these “black only” beaches begin with Manhattan Beach. Manhattan Beach was the first recreational resort for black in Northeast Florida. It was initiated when Henry Flagler and his Florida East Coast Railway sold property to black railroad workers
in the early 1900s (Phelts 1997). The end of this black beach was initiated by the Great Depression, which shut down the train that provided transportation to most of the beachgoers in 1932 (Phelts 1997). As the number of visitors declined for Manhattan Beach, the developments for both Butler Beach in St. Augustine and American Beach on Amelia Island began (Phelts 1997). American Beach was established during the Great Depression in the mid-1920s as a place for blacks only established by the black community. American Beach was located on Amelia Island as a resort for blacks established by the Afro American Life Insurance Company. In 1939 the development for Bethune Beach named for and established by Mary McLeod Bethune added another exclusively black beach on the west coast of Florida (Phelts 1997). These areas were subject to the legal and social fluctuations characterized in early 20th century America.

Courts decided that the School Segregation Cases did not affect cases about recreation segregation (McKay 1954). The legality of racial segregation in areas of recreation was debated separately from other public areas such as schools. The question that these courts had to answer was whether the act of segregation violated the 14th amendment was impacted by a particular courts interpretation and ruling (McKay 1954). Segregation was assumed to prevent possible violence between races and as long as the areas provide “equal” facilities in terms of amenities and activities, the 14th amendment was not violated (McKay 1954; Kennedy 1990; Bernstein and Somin 2004). There were two cases referenced to aid in these decisions. The case of Durkee v. Murphy (1942), ruled that as long as it prevented racial tensions segregation was permissible, and Rice v. Arnold (in Miami, Florida) established that separate, but equal accommodations for blacks and whites was, in fact, legal (McKay 1954). There was a difference drawn between providing the same educational opportunities for all races and a constitutional right to recreation.
on public property especially when the properties are equal as far as the physical facilities (McKay 1954).

The effects of these rulings did cause more harm for the black community by legitimizing exclusion. Not only were these people excluded physically, but their voices were actively silenced in in community centered cultural studies prior to the 1960s (Jackson 2009). According to Lassiter’s work in the Muncie community, he determined that parks present a special place for blacks historically as a gathering place (Lassiter et al 2004). Park gatherings would allow and encourage group conversation, which would be a way to transmit memories and oral traditions as well as strengthen relationships (Lassiter et al 2004). The racial separation enforced the presence of the white narrative and in turn silenced the experience of a group of people (i.e. blacks) and excluded them from the historical record (Jackson 2009). The experience of isolation of a community in regards to a certain location (i.e. sites of recreation) contributes to the cultural connections, memories, and therefore place.

**Place**

**Place as Multi-local, Multi-vocal, and Socially Constructed**

Place has been examined as a construct effected by culture, creating a more fluid definition and tying it to identity. The following authors have conducted analyses on the once specifically geographical concept of place and how it contributes to a greater anthropological understanding. I used this literature review to support the premise that place is more than just a physical location and is subject to the socio-cultural perspectives. Ward explains that in the past, place was merely mentioned under terms like “ecology,” “locality,” and “environment,” but the full impact (geologically and socially) of the place was not considered as it is now (2003: 81). In addition, Geertz poses that "place makes a poor abstraction. Separated from its materializations,
it has little meaning” (Hertzfeld 1998: 1). Geertz emphasizes the importance of other factors when discussing the creation of place (Hertzfeld 1998). It is dependent not just on the geographical location but also on the people who experience the place. Multi-vocality is the term that describes the numerous perspectives that contribute to place (Rodman 1992). Multi-vocality involves multi-locality in that the narratives of places are told through more than words and not restricted by geographical location (Rodman 1992). The substantial presence of place adds to the experience by utilizing other human senses (i.e. the smell of the water or the feeling of sand). This specific information can be inspired and even bound to the landmarks, according to Salmond (Rodman 1992). According to Turner, a location only becomes a place when significance is connected to it (1988). He goes further to suggest that places that makes up a part of our “existential space” are a part of us and us a part of those places (Turner 1988). These authors reinforce the position that place is not just a geographical location and it only has meaning when meaning, in the form of connections or memories, is ascribed to that location.

The notion that “culture, identity, and place are deeply intertwined” is a relatively new conclusion (Thornton 2008: 22). Flores claims that “culture is generated from the memory of fixing social discourse to a public place” (2002: 33). Kahn asserts that “places are complex constructions of social histories, personal and interpersonal experiences, and selective memory” (Jackson 2010: 59). Not only do memories contribute to the formation of place and communities, but to culture itself. Place is a complex concept that must involve many different factors to increase understanding. In turn, place, is subject to the social context.

Place is a result of the integration of culture and geographical location, thus culturally and socially constructed. Rodman states that the assumed definition of place as nothing more than locale and it is portrayed as an academic and Western creation, not a social construct
determined by the people who inhabit/populate the area as it should be (1992). The impression of colonial, westernized ideas is seen even within anthropology by denying the importance and existence of multiple perspectives (multilocality) in determining place (Rodman 1992). Place has gone from a static concept to one that is more flexible, and unbounded; it is a diversified dimension consisting of physical, environmental experience, and tangible versus symbolic (Pretty 2003). More precisely, groups define and structure themselves in relation to geographical locations (Thornton 2008). This perspective can provide the group with a sense of control and power over their identity.

The sense of place is created by the community, rather than others outside of the community. This study will examine place primarily. Place has a relationship with memories and identity. It connects people to specific locations and gives them character and identity as those groups attaches memories to the location. This process can enable the group, to some degree, to mediate its identity (Thornton 2008).

**Place and Power**

Lindstrom proposes a connection between power and place with his statement that “power is localized” (Rodman 1992: 648). Rodman further explains that in her study place helps people organize their “know-how,” yet this knowledge can be unevenly distributed; therefore the group with the most knowledge would possess more power than other groups (Rodman 1992). Flores also equates the creation and control of cultural memory as an act of power (2002). Memories are critical to the establishment of place due to its connection with identity. Memories are influenced by legalized segregation. The lack of voice given to this historical instance is an example of “silencing the past” (Trouillot 1995). The absence of information could be an attempt to silence the narratives on segregated beaches by those in power in the past. The NPS
ethnography project opened the discussion on segregated beaches in South Miami-Dade County. This social context influences the way that memories are formed and even remembered, and those memories can be connected to a location to form place.

Feld and Basso support the idea of place being intertwined with power dynamics. “Places are matters of arguments, struggles, and clashes regarding geographical, political, and ideological control and power,” (Scholttner 2000: 259). Racial segregation is a method of control and power distribution, by separating and providing uneven amenities or choices. By controlling where people can and cannot go, the dominant group can limit freedom and the memories that could have been developed with those experiences. While communities can create and negotiate their identity, such societal pressures will be seen in the formation of their identity. For example in most of these black communities, a strong sense of family and kinship was the defense from outside discrimination.

Thornton stated that in order to create place a culturized (or adaption to the norms or culture), a combination of social organization language, material production, and ritual process must be managed (Thornton 2008). With these components, place, and the power inherent within it, can be controlled. These mechanisms of place are provided by the community and the community is shaped by its characteristics and subject to the social, political, and economic forces. Kahrl calls the control of segregated beaches, a connection between racism and “commodification of the beach as a commercial asset,” or “coastal capitalism,” (Satter 2012: 454). Power is a force connected to the establishment and the development of identity and memories and therefore place. In this study, oral histories, or narratives, are used to explain a period and event in time. These narratives embody aspects of the cultural/community memory.
This cultural memory is a part of the identity of the communities. Place, once again, is the link between culture and physical location.

**Understanding Identity and Its Connection to Memories**

The following authors were chosen for their analyses into the definition and development of the concept of identity within the social sciences. The importance of identity to this study is further clarified in a statement by Baker: “by observing circumstances with which people navigate identity, one can better understand the socio-historical factors that shape those circumstances” (Baker 2003). Baker simply defines identity as “the way and individual chooses to identify his/herself” as opposed to identification which he states is “the way others choose to identify an individual” (2003). The process of identification for example involves designs of social ranking, judgment and value (Baker 2003). Both definitions show the importance of outside (cultural or societal) and internal (individual) forces. Identity and identification involve culture, power, and historical influence and how these factors influence the structure of society (Baker 2003).

This understanding indicates identity as a fluid and ongoing notion, providing the process of identity and identification with an amount of agency. W.E.B. DuBois’s “living behind the veil” concept describes an understanding that people live within and between different cultural worlds that are manipulated with purpose and agency (Baker 2003: 12). Along with this notion, identity becomes and important concept in this study in particular. Identity provides an understanding of social and historical influences and how people traverse those influences.

Baker poses conceptualizing identity as a practice rather than theorizing and analyzing it as a conceptual apparatus (2003). In this framework, acts of practice and performance in social life exemplify identity (Baker 2003). Social life, in regards to identity, involves
personality/individuality definitions, collective groups that are imagined to have some common cause and a way of explaining the relationships between other references (i.e. collective identity and individual identity) (Baker 2003). According to Tilley, who agrees with Baker, the public representation of identity often takes the form of a shared story, a narrative (Brubaker and Cooper 2000: 12).

Bubaker and Cooper also assert that identity usually involves being created by or a type of social or political action, fundamental sameness among members of a group, a core aspect of self being, and/or a product of a fluctuating, unstable definition of the contemporary self (Brubaker and Cooper 2000: 7-8). In America, “cultural patterns are continuously in flux” due to changes in migration patterns technology, class relations, economic cycles, and global relations (Baker 2003: 1). Sökefeld poses that “the value of identity as an analytical category is its ability to accommodate the duality of essentialist and constructivist readings. The acknowledgement of human's ability to construct and deconstruct identities requires us to conceive of human individuals as reflexively acting selves” (2001: 542). The various practices and performances including speech, habits, and behavior are used as points of analysis (i.e. leisure activities). This method of analysis is also in accordance with Connerton’s concept of “habit-memory” (Yelvington 2002). Connerton asserts that habits, gestures, and body postures are a form of collective and social memory and these memories are a way to form and transmit group solidarity (Yelvington 2002).

Identity as a fluid performance or practice involves power in the form of agency and negotiation. The issue of power and control is described by Smith in her article, *Heritage as a Cultural Process*. She asserts that “claims to cultural identity often framed the political legitimacy with which policy makers viewed wider claims to sovereignty and economic and
social justice” (2006: 50). In terms of identity making, Yelvington agrees that memories, history, and even culture are impacted by politico-cultural factors and contexts (2002). Additionally, excluding memories and history are endeavors to silence perspectives. Both Yelvington and Trouillot recommend guarding against actively produced silences in discourses of the past as they are exercises of power in rewriting or erasing a historical event or perspective (Yelvington 2002; Trouillot 1995). Silences enter the historical production process at different points and therefore, “they cannot be addressed—or redressed—in the same manner, (Trouillot 1995:27).

Another important aspect of shaping identity is the nature and formation of memories (Lowenthal1985; Smith 2006). The role of memories in shaping identity is one of the premises of this study. Memories are one of the ways that we know and engage with the past (Jackson 2013). Yelvington argues that anthropologists must distinguish between the historical process and the representations of the past (2002). This study showcases representations of the past, specifically memories. He asserts that “memory is an activity in the present, a production of symbolizations in relation to experience, significant cultural themes, and categories” (2002: 239). Flores also supports memories tie to identity: “…cultural memory imbues narratives with meaning; they are also involved in the formation of identities” (2002: 17). Cultural memory, as defined by Flores, is the narrative associated with cultural products and meaning, is also involved with the formation of identities (2002). Flore’s concept of cultural memory is linked with a cultural product; and that cultural product can exist in the form of a physical structure or natural environment, or for the purposes of this study, segregated beaches (Flores 2002).
Conclusion

This literature review underscores important issues in the analysis of place, memories, and identity and underscores how key scholars have organized their thoughts on these concepts. Power impacts the development of place and is exemplified by the formation of memories and process of active silencing. These points will be further explored as they pertain to segregated beaches in the findings section. The next section clarifies the methodology used in this study.
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter is an explanation of the methodology used in this study. The first section discusses the research design and theoretical paradigm. The second section describes my research questions and their importance. I explain sampling methods and then the process of developing interview questions. Then, I describe all of the methods including interviewing and archival research in this section. I then, explain the process of data analysis for this qualitative study. After that, the study limitations and in the last section, the ethical considerations and informed consent were clarified.

Research Design

In this qualitative study, I employed a critical theory paradigm for collecting and analyzing my data. This paradigm helped set the foundation for the types of research questions that are formed, which communities are studied, and how the data is interpreted (LeCompte and Schensul 2010). It postulates that truth resides in and is created through connections of power (LeCompt and Schensul 2010). I focus on the power dynamics involved in the development of place and identity. Methods used in this study address the research questions involve ethnography, geographical information systems mapping, participant observation, archival research, casual conversations, and oral history interviews.
Research Questions

The research questions were developed to address the role of place and identity formation created at segregated beaches during the 1950s and 1960s. In order to examine this topic, participants were asked questions about their memories and activities. The inclusion of these memoires informed the role of place within the community’s history. The questions helped create the historical context which influenced the development of place. The questions focused on the participants’ childhood, communities/neighborhoods, games/activities, and family dynamics. Since this study utilized a critical paradigm, questions about conflict and discrimination were asked to understand the power dynamics at play in the past. The telling of these stories contributes to creating awareness of a previously untold story, imparting power to the storytellers. This information was supplemented by archival research in the form of newspaper articles, documents about the physical structures, and previously documented oral histories about other segregated beaches.

The research questions/topics for this study were:

1. How do community memories and a National Park Service (NPS) ethnographic profile create a nuanced understanding of the multiple roles of place in informing issues of segregation at sites of recreation in South Florida?

2. How do multivocality, multilocality, and social context create a comprehensive understanding of place in south Miami Dade County?

3. How does power influence the formation of place at segregated beaches in south Miami-Dade County?
**Sampling and Recruiting Strategies**

In explaining the informed consent process, I informed participants of the basics of the study to ensure the research topics will be met. The participants were at least 18 years old and had some knowledge about Homestead Bayfront Beach during and after segregation. I followed the guidelines set forth by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to attain IRB certification. The collection of stories and perspectives from people aged 50 and older and those who have relevant information about the past, present, and future assisted in completing the goals of Biscayne National Park. These participants were more likely to have had personal experience with the beach during its segregation. The oral history component consisted of interviews of residents of Homestead with the purpose of collecting information about their memories and perspectives on the following topics: memories of the segregated beaches and the communities in the 1950s and 1960s; racial, gender, class, and ethnic issues (past and present); recreation; and perspectives or opinions about the past and present.

**Participant Profiles**

There were five participants who shared their stories and experiences in this study. The participants were recruited due to their response to the Biscayne National Park Project flyers as well as recruitment within the National Park Service. The researcher also took part in an online radio interview with Melvina Ravenel on Gullah Geechee News (blogtalkradio.com). This interview was intended to build awareness of the project and recruit participants. The four participants were black males who have had personal experience with Homestead Bayfront beach and other segregated beaches in the 1950 and 1960s.
J.K.

J.K. is an employee at Biscayne National Park. He is a 60 year old black male. He has lived in Homestead, Florida most of his life and worked with the park for 38 years “enjoying every minute of it!” His family moved to Homestead from Camilla, Georgia when he was young and has lived there ever since. J.K.’s experiences with the beach include family outings after church, playing games with the neighborhood children, and parties. Even after decades at the beach he still calls it his “getaway,” even going fishing after work.

O.W.

O.W. is a black male in his 60s. He was one of the employees at the segregated Homestead Bayfront Beach. He worked with the Miami-Dade Parks and Recreation Department for 37 years. He was raised in Homestead, but joined the Army and was able to experience a less segregated lifestyle. While attending college outside of Homestead, he worked as a life guard at other segregated beaches on the Florida coast including New Smyrna, Bethune, and Virginia Key. As a lifeguard, he was responsible for public safety as well as teaching swimming lessons, beach cleanliness, development and maintenance. He was working as a lifeguard at Homestead Bayfront Beach while simultaneously becoming one of Homestead’s first black police officers. At this time like other black police officers he could not arrest white people. He was still at Homestead when the North side of the beach closed in 1964, with a few of the other employees.

B.V.

B.V. was another current employee at Biscayne National Park. He was a 59 year old black male. Like Julius he spent a number of years with the National Park Service. Before transferring to Biscayne National Park in 2007, he worked in Flamingo for over 30 years. He is currently a mercury marine technician with Biscayne National Park.
R.M.

R.M. is presently an artist in Miami. He was a 61 year old black male. While attending Miami-Killian High School, he and some friends ventured south and went to Homestead Bayfront Beach for impromptu parties. Some summers they worked in the plant fields cutting sticks for pole beans along the canal toward the beach. He attended Syracuse University and earned a Bachelor’s degree in Fine Arts. He has been an employee with the Miami-Dade Park and Recreation Department in 1976 until the 1980s.

W.B.

W.B. is an employee at Everglades National Park. His first memory of Homestead Bayfront Beach was his seventh birthday party. He and his family moved to Richmond Heights in 1959 from Homestead, yet still visited Homestead Beach to “relax.” He attended Miami-Killian High School from 1965 to 1969. Race riots were common in this time. In 1973 he was drafted and served in the military for years before returning to work at Everglades National Park where his father worked as well.

Interview Questions

I developed interview questions to directly address the issues in the study including community identity, recreation, environment, economic, and occupation (in Appendix D). These questions were developed using James Spradley’s “The Ethnographic Interview” (1979). I constructed descriptive, structural, and contrast questions. Descriptive questions created a main part of ethnographic interviewing as a way to establish rapport and elicit information. Structural questions then, found out how the individual organizes their cultural knowledge. Then contrast questions helped discover contrasts, similarities, and the relations between cultural symbols identified through the interviews. I monitored and addressed relevant issues in the form of
follow up questions, when needed during the interview, through follow up questions to provide clarification to the study. The research questions explored aspects of community identity in the past and the present, memories about any experiences at the beach, and issues on race, gender, class, and ethnicity.

**Oral Histories (Audio and Visual Techniques)**

Oral histories are a primary-source material created in interview style with a participant in an event or way of life to preserve information and make it available for others (Sommers and Quinlan 2009). Oral histories are a way to document events, preserve even the most disenfranchised histories, preserve languages, teach, and a way to reach out to the community (Sommers and Quinlan 2009). This method of collecting data involves creating an interview structure that includes: background research, obtaining equipment (audio or visual devices), developing questions, scheduling and conducting the interviews and any follow up tasks that may have to be done (Sommers and Quinlan 2009). It is different from other recorded interviews in that it is structured, systematic, with an emphasis on deep and detailed information and “adherence to strict processing techniques” (Sommers and Quinlan 2009: 3).

As a project oral history interview, the interviews consisted of one pre-interview either in person or over the phone to establish rapport and then one or two interview sessions about a specific historic event and time (Sommers and Quinlan 2009). This type of oral history is different from the ongoing autobiographical oral history interviews. For this study, the interviews focused on segregated beaches and communities in Miami-Dade County during the 1950s and 1960s. Oral histories are an essential methodology that, according to Thomson, “increases understanding of the importance of memory as ‘people’s history,’” clarifies the “subjectivity” of memory; discusses the role of the interviewer, and impacts technology
This method was particularly significant to this study because it provided in depth perspective and accounts of a historical event that was not well documented. It also afforded the cultural context to help define place and how people experienced and influenced the communities.

The use of visual and audio recordings makes data processing and text analysis and easier and more accurate for the researcher. The taking of notes during an interview without recordings can interrupt the interview process and can be distracting to the participant. Visual and audio recordings are effective interactive tools for community building and spreading cultural history. The interviewer may have trouble with the technology, the portrayal of the participant, and the participant’s sense of comfort. As long as it is cost effective, unobtrusive, and agreed upon by the participant, visual and audio recordings can make an interview more advantageous than taking notes alone.

**Participant Observation**

Participant observation is a data collection method that usually involves field work; however, it does involve observing the target population or area in natural settings (Bernard 2006). I observed beachgoers and recorded the occurrences in my field notebook. For example, I recorded the sights and sounds of the daily activity by spending time in various areas of the beach and interacting with the people visiting the beach. These recordings not only help contextualize the beach as it is now but also how it has changed over time in regards to the features and the beachgoers. They add to the archival research conducted in this study.

**Archival Research and Institution Profiles**

Archival research is useful in studying culture through time (Bernard 2006). It is the process of performing research through archival records such as birth records, census data, and
government reports. I conducted archival research in several facilities including the University of South Florida Library, the Florida State Archival, the downtown Miami-Dade Public Library, the city of Homestead Library, and History Miami Museum. In these institutions I found newspaper clippings, microfilm, pamphlets, and photos that referenced the segregated beaches in the Miami-Dade County. I also utilized the internet, census information, and data obtained from past oral history interviews. These sources of information were used to provide a more complete picture of the beach visitors and the beaches in the past. The photographs and newspaper articles (on the microfilm) were used in this study and some are depicted in this paper. This information aids in the analysis of the beach goers experiences as described in the oral histories.

**University of South Florida Library**

I used the University of South Florida (USF) main library facilities numerous times. The Special Collections and reference librarians provided specialized information and connections to other libraries and sources for more information. This library is located on the USF Tampa campus and according to the USF website its collection contains over 1.3 million books in print and electronic. It also includes electronic journal subscriptions, media, and other material. The Special Collections, established in 1998, specializes in Florida history, American Literature, and other rare material. I engaged the special collections and anthropology librarians for their assistance in finding more information about segregated beaches.

**University of Miami Library**

The University of Miami is located in Miami, Florida. This library possesses over 3 million volumes and access to 74000 electronic resources, according to the website. I communicated with the reference librarians via email to obtain vital sources in their special
collection. I obtained resources as well as information for other institutions that had material as well. From this institution, I was sent several photographs and leads to other sources.

**Florida State Archival**

The Florida State Archival is located in downtown Tallahassee, Florida. While I obtained information in the form of photos through their online Florida Memory Project website (part of the Florida Department of State Division of Library and Information Services), I was able to thoroughly look through their collection in person. At this archive, I collected city planning/development proposals for the city of Homestead in addition to documentation and photographs of the visitors of Homestead Bayfront Beach.

**Miami-Dade Public Library System (Main Branch)**

The branch of the Miami-Dade Public library was located in downtown Miami, Florida. It was relocated from the Miami Bayfront Pak site in 1985. It is now in a plaza with the History Miami Museum and the Miami Art Museum. Within this location, I collected the information from books in the Florida Department section as well as microfilm from local newspapers. This section emphasizes the south Florida region. The microfilm included negatives from the Redwood District, the Homestead News Ledger, and the Miami Herald. I scanned through a section labeled by the library as “segregated beaches” as well as other newspapers during the 1950s and 1960s that may have covered Homestead and other beaches in the area.

**Miami-Dade Public Library System (Homestead Branch)**

The Homestead Library is located in the city of Homestead. This branch was open in 1980 and its collections include over 87000 volumes. Within the reference section on Florida and local history, I found a number of sources. While this location is small compared to the downtown branch, it contained a number of books and pictures specific to that area. In this
location, I was able to obtain specific information into the history of Homestead and its local government.

**History Miami Museum**

The History Miami Museum is located near the Miami-Dade Public Library in downtown Miami, Florida. History Miami was previously known as the Historical Museum of Southern Florida. It was established in 1940. It is now an affiliate with the Smithsonian Institute; therefore it has access to their resources. I visited the Archives and Research Center to browse through their collection. I gathered travel pamphlets from the past, photographs, and maps associated with segregated beaches in south Miami-Dade County.

**Miami-Dade County Parks and Recreation Archives**

The Miami-Dade Parks and Recreation archive is located in downtown Miami, Florida in a locked location. Through connections with Biscayne National Park, I gained access. I looked through files that contained contract information as well as many labeled and unlabeled pictures of the facilities and visitors.

**Geographical Information Systems**

Geographic Information Systems (or GIS) is a computer system used to store, manage, and display geospatial data (Chang 2012). GIS has been used since the 1970s and recently it has been integrated with the internet, Geographical Positioning Systems (GPS) and wireless technology. It is a useful visual tool for constructing maps that show activity and this activity can be compared as overlays of maps; these overlays provide for accurate comparison by creating maps that are on the same scale, use the same projection, and have the same origin (LeCompte and Schensul 2010). Not only can GIS help locate and compare geospatial locations, but it can help track activity, behavior, and progress over time (Chang 2012). These activity
patterns can be associated with demographic factors such as age, sex, or residential neighborhood (LeCompte and Schensul 2010). In this study, I used GIS to visualize the geographical locations of the segregated beaches near Miami-Dade County and limited my search to those within a 50 mile radius of Homestead Bayfront Beach.

Data Analysis

I used grounded theory research to analyze the data in this study. Grounded theory is an inductive type of qualitative text analysis that utilizes data to develop concepts and theories (Bernard 2006). This approach is necessary to identify concepts or themes and linking those concept/themes to theories. As opposed to content analysis, where there are themes and concepts identified before text analysis, grounded theory allows the text/evidence to build the themes (Bernard 2006). The steps in grounded theory include: producing and analyzing the transcripts, identifying categories, pull data to support those categories and compare them, use these to create models, and lastly to present the results in the form of quotes or exemplars (Bernard 2006).

In this study, I reviewed the literature associated with the topic of segregation in America. By becoming more familiar with those sources, I identified certain concepts that would be of interest. I compiled a list of topics and questions to interview the oral history participants. I was able to include in the interviews, follow-up questions in areas concerning power expression, segregation, and daily life. Power expression was of importance due to the critical paradigm that I employ. I wanted to look closely at the power dynamics. I compiled lists of words, when analyzing the transcripts that appeared most often as well as those that were uniquely descriptive, such as “left to nature.” I coded the interviews and the field notes for themes or absence of themes. These themes were patterns that seemed to be reemphasized and
words or phrases that are repeated. The themes were constructed by excerpts and key words from the interviews. Through this type of data analysis, I discovered themes of race relations, identity, leisure activities, and place. These themes were then created into taxonomies which are displayed in Chapter 4 (see Figures 5, 7, 8, and 10).

**Limitations**

As with most studies, there are limitations and areas for concern that must be addressed. The main issue was the sample size. This ethnography was based on five interviews. Of those interviews, four were from black males and one was from a Latino male who has no personal experience of the Homestead Bayfront Beach during segregation. Despite this sample size, the depth of the study is significant in opening up a discussion about the previously undocumented segregated beach and making a places and stories visible. It filled in a gap in historical knowledge identified by the NPS. It also contributed to oral history record and documentation on segregated beaches in Florida. Before this study there were no documented oral histories for this time period regarding Homestead Bayfront Beach as a segregated place.

**Informed Consent and Ethical Considerations**

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is a division of the University of South Florida's (USF) Human Research Protection Program (HRPP). Its purpose is to protect the rights of the human participants in research. Each study must be approved by this institution in order to be conducted. The ethics of this study adhered to IRB standards in conducting research with human subjects. The only foreseeable ethical consideration was the participant revisiting uncomfortable or troubling memories due to the time period of segregation they have experienced or any discomfort or false portrayal through the audio or visual recordings. These memories were the type one may want to forget. Participants were reminded of their freedom to opt out of the study.
at any time as well as the choice to have their interview unrecorded. The people who participated chose to continue. The informed consent was explained thoroughly before the interview began and confirmation that they could stop the interview at any time and withdraw their participation. Confidentiality was explained to all participants (unless consent is given) as well as any names mentioned in the study. All of the participants consented to have their real names included in the study, rather than pseudonyms. I used abbreviations of their names instead of their entire names. There could be possible issues with the information that was shared in the interviews and linking this information to other people (either living or dead) and their sense of privacy. Other names mentioned in the interviews were kept confidential unless consent was obtained.

**Conclusion**

Methods used in this study involve oral history interviews, participant observation, geographic information systems, and archival research. This research design focused on a critical paradigm approach to explore the power dynamics in segregated places. The sampling and participant and institutional profiles provided context. The next section will present the findings and address the research questions.
CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Research Question 1: “How Do Community Memories and an NPS Ethnographic Profile Create a Nuanced Understanding of the Multiple Roles of Place in Informing Issues of Segregation at Sites of Recreation in South Florida?

The memories shared by the former visitors of segregated beaches paint a picture of a strong, resilient community determined to maintain their sense of unity despite the looming influence of racial segregation. The memories created there amongst segregated spaces were still treasured as times when “people cared about each other.” The excerpts in this section are taken from the oral histories gathered about Homestead Bayfront Beach. They are used to aid in creating more descriptive and personal accounts of the past. Through the very words of those who were in attendance, this study will help preserve the memory of the segregated beach experience. The concept of place was created and changed with the community.

The interviewees were between the age ranges of 50 and 65 years old at the time of the interview, so the experiences range from when they were young children (8 years old in one instance) to a teenager even before integration. One of the interviewees was a lifeguard before and after integration (1964), while the others were young children who experienced the beach before and after integration as well, and even up until the present, as several have been/are employed with Biscayne National Park.

The entrances to Homestead Bayfront Beach North and South differed. This separation and difference influenced the memories recalled and the resulting NPS ethnographic profile. The
road to Homestead Bayfront Beach was separated into two: the north side historically the black side and another for south side historically white side. At 162\textsuperscript{nd} St and Lucy Rd, the roads separate into parallel roads: the road to the north side (non-white side) and the road to the south side (white side). The differences in the roads were evident and perhaps telling of the contrasting ways that each racial group was treated. The road to the north side was unpaved and uneven as described by former beachgoers in the following excerpts:

And uh, I remember a sign said “colored beach” at one time and the other side of the road, I never experienced that until they did integrate but we used to come down the road with one area, it turns into more like a rocky road. [R.M. 2012]

I remember the roads they were more like the 1\textsuperscript{st} bridge up there, when you come in where the blinking lights are. That was the last chance you had to get on this to get on this side, you know to go to the so called black beach…I remember a sign said “colored beach” at one time and the other side of the road, I never experienced that until they did integrate but we used to come down the road with one area, it turns into more like a rocky road. [B.V. 2012]

The differences between the roads and the parks were reinforced by the conditions and maintenance of the separate roads. Across the canal the paved, roads were visible to those on either side. Those on the “colored” road could see those on the “white” road conversely. Even before the areas of direct segregation were reaches the sense of separation and difference is maintained by the physical differences of the roads. Figures A11 and A12 are pictures of the unpaved road to the north side of the beach in 1960. The road remains in that same state to this
day and is used as a service road for park officials (see Figure 2). The designated “black road” (foreground and left of the canal in Figure 2) is currently used as an unmaintained canal service road. The previously designated white road is used today for all traffic entering Biscayne National Park or Homestead Bayfront Park (SW 328th St, or Lucy Road). The two roads remain separated by the C-103 Canal. These photographs support and visually display the descriptions of the accounts of the road. The road to the white side of the beach was paved and is still in use to this day. It was patrolled by police at all times. If a non-white beachgoer would drive down that road, missing the “colored beach” sign, then they were given a ticket and redirected to the “right side.”

Figure 2: Designated “Black Road.” Photo Taken by Iyshia Lowman (Lowman 2012)

The physical differences between beaches were displayed in size, amenities, and park maintenance. The north side was notably smaller than the south side and also not as well maintained. The following excerpt is an example of a former beachgoer’s perception of the black side of the beach:
I remember when we used to get in there things used to be a lot of, a lot of seaweed in some area…and we got into the water the rocks and you didn’t notice them right then but they were you know you really had to get out so far the rocks got a little sharper…I remember the beach it was basically a small hole, it was a hole in the away from the bay…Matheson Hammock was the same way because to get to deep water I mean water above your to your waist, you had to go to into the bay you had to walk out a couple miles and then to get even in high tide you have to walk so far out and you had to catch steppin on the creatures especially with the little spikes…the urchins, sea urchins and stuff. So you had basically a swimming pool. The side and that was the swimming hole.

[R.M. 2012]

Those on the black side were prohibited from going to the other side (by law and police presence); however, if one swam out far enough or peered through the mangroves, glimpses of the white side were possible. Although at some places on the white beach were possible to see, the non-white beachgoers could not completely compare the beaches until the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was passed. This act outlawed segregation and legalized integration in the public sphere. In this same year, however, the north side of the beach was closed down due to county funding, according to the interviews. A first experience with the white side of the beach after restriction to the black side of the beach is shared in this quote:

That’s why that beach was black and that beach over there was white. It was one-third the size as that one. That was, I mean, when we started going over there, people started going over there I couldn’t believe the size of that place. It was like, I’m not kidding, it’s about one-third the size of that place. When I got in that water over there, believe me it wasn’t too much tension because we went there a lot of people stopped going. Oh, they
honestly did, not kidding. I remember getting in that water and walking…walking out in the deeper water, I didn’t feel the sharp stones anymore. They were all smooth. It was like “wow.” I wouldn’t have dared try to swim across there. I probably wouldn’t have made it. It’s like “whoa, this is pretty nice you know.” …you forget about things using that picnic grills. I can do a little picnicking out there and everything and um, the solidarity (clarity) of the water it’s the same and everything but um, I could’ve swore that water seems cleaner. I think it might have seemed cleaner because of the, uh, sea growth on the bottom. Out here like I say there was sea weeds in there and there were some over there too but not like here and we had more. The sand looks better and the water couldn’t seem cleaner cause all the water came from the ocean and we still had the little fish over there. [J.K. 2011]

While both beaches were man-made lagoon type atoll beaches and maintained under the jurisdiction of Dade County Parks and Recreation Department, the aesthetic differences still persisted. The amenities for Homestead Bayfront Beach South included: free parking, changing rooms, showers, refreshment stand, and lifeguards on duty from 8 am to sundown. This beach was for white beachgoers and their families only. The other amenities established for this site of recreation consist of volleyball net and a swing set (see Figure 4).

On the north side compared to the south side, there were no changing rooms, a small number of picnic tables, (colored) lifeguards, and only one shower. The descriptions of the North side of the beach include comments like “left to nature” and not maintained very well. One beachgoer stated that thinking of the beach when he was younger, he remembered:
… a lot of seaweed in some area… and we got into the water the rocks and you didn’t notice them right then but they were you know you really had to get out so far the rocks got a little sharper… and I remember fish being in the water, occasionally a jellyfish something like that. Occasionally I remember seeing a jellyfish out there and we were actually comfortable out here. You know you come to the beach and everything, you have a little picnic. [B.V. 2012]

Further comparison will be conducted between the beaches in Chapter 5. These comparisons will be examined between not only the north and south sides of Homestead Bayfront Beach but also the nearby segregated beaches mentioned in the oral histories.

Another topic that arises in this study is the influence of the researcher. In a project that recalls and constructs memories, a reflexive understanding of the effect of the study on the oral
histories must be examined. My presence as an oral history researcher looking into the segregation aspects of the beach’s past does have an effect on the project. That in and of itself can influence the information shared in the interviews and the way that those memories themselves were recalled. With history, the very nature of memories and remembering, and the social processes that each individual is subject to, this study is placed in context. The limitations and nature of memory must be addressed and have been in the literature review. However, this point must be reasserted.

This section describes the primary beach sites, where previously there was no description and compares them from the perspective of the community members. This study is an examination into the identity and place formation and development influenced by racial segregation from 1950 to 1960. The degree to which it depicts the experiences of beachgoers and their perceptions and identity during segregation is not all encompassing.

**Research Question 2: How Do Multivocality, Multilocality, and Social Context Create a Comprehensive Understanding of Place in South Miami Dade County?**

Place is developed when memories and meaning are ascribed to a location. The memories ascribed to the geographical locations were subject to the influence of the social and historical context. As stated in the literature review, the studies on place throughout time have supported that the anthropological concept of place is more than just a geographical location and is under the influence of the identity and memories. The resulting meaning is created, influenced, and maintained by not only the physical features at the location, but the activities that the population engages in while at that location. These activities create the memories that
become attached to the location. These communities were within the grip of segregationist practices, which influence their construction of memories.

Venturing to the beach was, more often than not, a group and/or community activity. These groups included churches, families, and even groups of neighbors and other community members. According to Lassiter et al, these interactions contributed to the formation of black communities (2004). The relationships and interactions created not only a sense of community, but reinforced the memories created by the community interactions at the beach. For example, the children were watched by all of the adults, not just their relatives, and especially by the elders who were well respected. This practice along with other group activities reinforced the connections between identity and community.

The north side of Homestead Bayfront Beach did not have as much as the other side in terms of amenities such as a swing set (see Figure 4) and volleyball court. However, the children on the north side provided their own type of entertainment including football, duck and up, and “Underwater” (see Figure 5). These activities and behaviors aided in the formation of childhood memories of play and community. The children in the community would gather and use their imaginations as well as the surrounding environment, as described in this excerpt:

We play tag you it…underwater. We used to like Lloyd Bridges…we used to watch it on tv. We figure we’d be like Lloyd Bridges and all that stuff. And we can only go so far, that was our favorite program, especially on Saturday. Sea Hunt. When we come out here, we thought we were Lloyd Bridges. We wouldn’t have all the necessary equipment he would have, but with our imagination we just had a great time… He had a truck and he always threw his kid’s birthday party and then we always came on the beach. And we load on the back of that truck…and when I say load, we load that truck up! Come out
here and Ms. Margery would have the food, the music be playin, and aw, man, everybody just have a good time. [J.K. 2011]

**Figure 4: Homestead Bayfront Beach South Swings Set August 4, 1957 (Lowman 2012)**

Using grounded theory and Spradley’s process of domain and structural analysis, I constructed this diagram (see Figure 5) and the other diagrams in this section (Figures 6 and 7). Using inductive methods while analyzing the transcripts, certain themes emerged such as leisure activities, places, and race relations. The activities mentioned within the oral histories are mapped (see Figure 5) as a part of the leisure activities. These were the words and associations that the beachgoers connected to a typical day at the beach. Within these leisure activities are a collection of the types of groups associated with going to the beach such as church groups and family outings that likewise included other community members. Involvement in these activities
created and maintained identity and relationships as well as generated memories for the community and place.

Among the amenities that the north side of Homestead Bayfront Beach did have was a barbeque pit for public use (see Figure 6). It was used frequently especially during parties. One beachgoer remembers on his seventh birthday a carousel in the concession stand cooked corn dogs and sausage dogs. In addition to those features, a round slab of concrete played the role of

**Figure 5: Taxonomy of Leisure Activities at the Beach**

Among the amenities that the north side of Homestead Bayfront Beach did have was a barbeque pit for public use (see Figure 6). It was used frequently especially during parties. One beachgoer remembers on his seventh birthday a carousel in the concession stand cooked corn dogs and sausage dogs. In addition to those features, a round slab of concrete played the role of
a dance floor; even possessing a jukebox and one speaker set on a pole that played a radio station when songs were not requested. The jukebox was under the control of the workers in the concession stand, but they would play songs when requested by the visitors as well. However, another interviewer stated that they could add a nickel to the jukebox (near the dance floor), to play the songs wanted.

We had a big round circle, okay, and the jukebox used to be right in the middle but on the edge and back then it was a nickel. Nickel used to play one song, so on a Saturday you had to have a couple nickels in your pocket to listen, but you had to have somebody to help you out there to put the nickel in and put the numbers in and all this stuff. [J.K. 2011]

…a little round circle, cement circle and they had a little juke box. ‘Course the jukebox was in the concession’s place, but they could punch the little records outside. [O.W. 2011]
There is a sense of disbelief at the contrasts between the two beaches and what was denied to a large group of people. This isolation was not because of what they did, but because of how the skin color they were born with was labeled. At that point you are made aware of what you were missing and intentionally denied. According to the interviews, there was no overt negative action when the beaches were integrated. One person described the interactions in these words: “little black kids playing with little white kids and all that you know. On the shore line, it was very fun. It was different altogether” (Lowman 2012).

Thus community memories and identity changed after the dissolution of legalized public segregation. The place, meaning Homestead Bayfront Beach North, still retained its memories as it was closed down after in 1964, due to problems with county funding according to the interviews. This area was turned into Biscayne National Park years later. The community adapted to creating memories on the “new” Homestead Bayfront Beach. This community
consisted of a mixture of black, white, and Latino individuals united to change the role of place. Each beach elicited a different association in regards to feelings and memories. For example, Homestead Bayfront Beach North was combined with the overall feeling of Homestead, namely “the country” in which one could come to relax.

The change in social practice contributed to the changes at the sites of recreation. The population size, characteristics, communities, and the environmental features available also contributed to any differences in place. These alterations are represented in the memories associated with the different segregated beaches within 50 miles of Homestead Bayfront Beach. Virginia Key Beach had a more family oriented atmosphere with a larger population. It also displayed diversity within the black community in terms of ethnicity and class due to its popularity, amenities, and location near the city of Miami. The other beaches had less space and therefore less of the population visited, yet had the possibility of a more mixed crowd. At Homestead North and Matheson Hammock, blacks and Latinos would use the same space. Both of these beaches had a calmer atmosphere and were located in more rural areas or “the county.” Crandon Park’s population was mixed as well due to the unofficial desegregation in 1959. Baker’s Haulover Beach was still a restricted space to non-whites.
I created the previous diagram (see Figure 7) to show all of the names for the different beaches mentioned in the interviews and therefore compared in this study. It displays how the different locations are associated with these names attributed to them. These associations reveal the connections and memories elicited when these locations are mentioned. The communities and neighborhoods are presented as well to add to the identities and memories connected to the locations. Since the names are created and linked to specific locations by those who frequented these areas; we can see a relationship with that location as well as the type of relationship. For
example, comparing Virginia Key Beach as the surf versus Homestead Beach as the hole, relates not only the environmental differences but the differences in what people think of the areas. These associations show the community memories and resulting identities for these geographical locations.

Similarly, Figure 8 is a collection of the quotes associated with the neighboring communities mentioned in the interviews. This illustration aids in the contextualization of the communities effected by and fueled by these segregated places. An analysis of these communities adds to the identity formation and the memories established at the beaches. This graphic adds to the study in presenting an identity rooted in the memories of the community members as well as the materialistic remains and reminders.

**Research Question 3: How Does Power Influence the Formation of Place at Segregated Beaches in South Miami-Dade County?**

The assertion of power through segregation impacts the place, identity and community memories. The lack of a documented history, separation of physical amenities, and reassertion of the illusion of equality and fairness are ways that power was exercised by the dominant group. These practices subjugated and stereotyped non-whites.

The rewriting of history is what most people think of as an act of power, but the silencing of historical events entails active and powerful forces. Instead of having to fight conflicting historical information, the implementation of an absence or silence requires only that the event be ignored, contained, and made unimportant (Trouillot 1995).

The separation and denial of physical recreational amenities exercises a sense of control. Despite Virginia Key having a carousel, train, and other facilities, the tension of racial
segregation was still present. This beach was established on the foundation of racial separation and the ideology that certain races were inferior. Figure 9 is one of the most well-known pictures of Virginia Key Beach regarding segregation. It is a reminder of how the race was used and how much it has changed.

![Figure 8: Taxonomy of Communities]
Flores documents changes in physical space to illustrate deliberate and successful attempts at social transformation concerning the Alamo (2002). Differences in beach amenities and physical environment reflect the differences in social status and an attempt at social transformation. The addition of black only beaches was an attempt to compromise between supporters of segregation and those against segregation. Providing amenities similar to the white beaches further underscored the “separate, but equal” legal ruling and its shortcomings.

The segregation and integration theme emerged from the interview and was used to construct Figure 10. This diagram condenses all of the quotes associated with race relations and interactions from the interviews. Instead of grouping them under terms like segregation, I decided to use a more neutral, less leading terms to refer to the racial dealings.

All of those interviewed indicated that there was no overt violence emerging from the tension of integration on Homestead Bayfront Beach. Perhaps there was another reason for the ease in which the integration was taken on this particular beach? A number of the white beachgoers fled Homestead Bayfront Beach in favor of Elliot Key, which was only accessible by boat and utilized by whites due to the small number of blacks who possessed boats.
Figure 10: Taxonomy of Race Relations at Homestead Bayfront Beach

You know and it wasn’t it wasn’t any kind of real violent, violent riots down there, but it was just like you know people just you know didn’t get along. You know and they didn’t know that there were certain things they didn’t like, you didn’t like, they didn’t like...well as far as on the beach that little beach, you did you just didn’t really pay attention that there was an area where the whites were, but what I remember is they always had their boat. (laughs) You know we had to move the water area and plus because down there there’s the island, Elliot Key, and they would take the boats and go to Elliot Key. We couldn’t go to Elliot Key. We didn’t have boats so we didn’t take a boat anywhere. We just swim, in that little tidal basin. [R.M. 2012]
As laws and ordinances of segregation were applied displays of control and power that were executes impacted community. Displays of control and power were exercised and impacted the community memories and community identity of not only those labeled as non-white, but labeled as white as well. Each community responded to the same issues, yet they handle them in different ways due to differences in race, ethnicity, class, and access to resources.

As stated in Troullot’s “Silencing the Past,” silence is an active process done by those in power to those without power. Instead of fighting integration, some whites fled to Elliot Key or another place of recreation. Most of the narratives I include mentioned this occurrence. There were neither acts of violence nor reported disputes when integration came to Homestead Bayfront Beach, according to the interviews. Despite the “peace” on the beach, the city of Homestead and many other cities at the time, experienced violence in the form of riots, beatings, and lynching. However, at the beach, those with money and the means could simply go to another place in their boats, where those without money (mostly non-whites) could not go. It is possible that there were problems, yet they were not noted by these former beachgoers.

Conclusion

This chapter addressed research questions I developed for this study. I looked at the connection between place and community memories in order to create a more nuanced understanding of Homestead Bayfront Beach before the Civil Rights Act of 1964. This understanding involves accounts of everyday life interspersed with reminders of racial restrictions. Second I examined the characteristics of place. Based on the literature review, place consists of multiple perspectives, locations, and is subject to the social and historical context. This study contributes to those findings. Third I looked at the role of power and control inherent in segregation practices on the development of place, identity, and memories. Since all
of these factors intertwined, what effects one affects all of them. Power influences the formation of individual and/or group identity and how the memories are stored and recalled of particular events. In the next section I will conduct an in-depth comparative analysis of segregated beaches in Miami-Dade County as well as an additional analysis of American, Virginia Key, and Homestead Bayfront Beaches.
CHAPTER 5: SEGREGATED RECREATION IN FLORIDA—A CRITICAL COMPARATIVE APPROACH ON THE ANALYSIS OF COMMUNITY MEMORIES, IDENTITY, AND PLACE

Comparison of Segregated Beaches in Miami-Dade County

Racially restricted beaches within 50 miles of Homestead Bayfront beach were Baker’s Haulover, Virginia Key, Crandon Park, and Matheson Hammock. The environmental, demographic, and community differences contribute to the memories and attachment that people create. Environmental distinctions as well as amenities are displayed in the table below (see Table 2). All beaches included in this study possessed the minimum required standards for public operation including: restrooms and lifeguards and/or first aid. They all also have barbeque areas, picnic tables (at least 1), and concession/snack stands as general requirements for areas of recreation. I have also included a line for unique features that some beaches possessed, such as a train and merry go round at Virginia Key Beach (see Figures A13 and A14 in the Appendix).

One of the interviews stated Virginia Key Beach was deemed more lively, populated, and active yet also more dangerous because of “shootings.” Virginia Key was closer in terms of distance to Miami than Homestead Bayfront Beach. The physical differences between the beaches (Homestead and Virginia Key) are exhibited in this excerpt:

Once you put your foot in that sand and walk through it to get to that water… It was different altogether. They sand was most like…say you walkin on a sponge to get to the
water it was different altogether. Cause then you see little species of fish, you like “oh man.” You try to chase then and you like, “what you doin? You can’t chase no fish! You chase ‘em but you know you not gonna catch ‘em, right.” (laughs) Then you see little species of crabs, you know like, they water much cleaner cause close to the ocean and that was “ooo.” Especially the breeze, when it blows north, blowing south [J.K. 2011] Virginia Beach was called the “surf” as opposed to the “hole” (Homestead Bayfront Beach). With more space and a better setting, experiences differed as did the community memories and definition of place. For example, the different communities present at Virginia Key Beach would compete against each other (i.e. Richmond Heights versus Goulds). Communities would identify themselves by where they resided and band together against other neighborhoods. That was not the same case at Homestead Bayfront Beach.

Elliot Key was the area where the white people may have gone after the integration of Homestead Bayfront Beach. It is located within Homestead Bayfront Park boundaries, yet accessible only by water. It was stated that few blacks went there because they didn’t have the boats to follow:

You know we had to move the water area you know and plus because down there there’s the island, Elliot Key, and they would take the boats and go to Elliot Key. We couldn’t go to Elliot Key. We didn’t have boats so we didn’t take a boat anywhere; we just swim, in that little tidal basin. [R.M. 2012]

As far as experiences and activities on Homestead Bayfront Beach, the teenagers would get together in groups to play football or baseball; sometimes during the times that they should be in school. Instead of going to the more populated beaches such as
Virginia Key, they would come to the “country” to “stay out of trouble”. As a teenager
one of the interviewees describes the community relations in this way:

Table 2: Comparison of the Features of Segregated Beaches in South Miami-Dade County

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Homestead Bayfront North*</th>
<th>Homestead Bayfront South*</th>
<th>Virginia Key</th>
<th>Crandon Park</th>
<th>Baker’s Haulover</th>
<th>Matheson Hammock</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>size</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>smaller atoll pool, 97 acres (with south side)</td>
<td>atoll pool, 97 acres (with north side)</td>
<td>0.5 mile bathing area, 77 acres</td>
<td>2 mile bathing area, 800 acres</td>
<td>1.5 mile bathing area, 99 acres</td>
<td>atoll pool, 590 acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nearby communities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homestead, Florida City, Perrine</td>
<td>Homestead, Florida City, Perrine</td>
<td>Key Biscayne, Miami</td>
<td>Key Biscayne, Miami</td>
<td>Golden Glades, North Miami</td>
<td>Richmond Heights, Miami, Coconut Grove, Perrine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dressing rooms</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>showers</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BBQ and picnic area</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>restrooms</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>concession stand</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>marina</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fishing</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>children play area</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lifeguard/1st aid</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unique features</td>
<td>dance floor</td>
<td>swings, volleyball net</td>
<td>Ferris wheel, train, railroad, merry-go-round</td>
<td>Zoo, train, restaurant</td>
<td>outdoor shelter, forest trails</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*indicates primary research and comparison site
It was all, yeah—It was always welcoming, and it would be--yeah like I say it was never there was I never felt you know that it was…I’m from Richmond heights I gotta hang with people from Richmond Heights...we would find a way to get a way down to Homestead because the beach I mean it was off beaten path. You go down…the roads basically follow the canal down, up to the base and because it was it was isolated you know. [R.M. 2012]

Other beaches studied had similar features, yet were less documented. Matheson Hammock was called the “rock pit.” Areas referred to as “rock pit” were deemed to be dangerous for swimming due to the uncertainty about the depth. It was compared to Homestead Bayfront Beach North. According to the oral histories they were both called “holes.” The saying provided by one of the interviewees referenced concerns about safety: “flowers in the garden gotta be chopped, swimming in the rock pit gotta be stopped” (Lowman 2012).

These descriptions show that beachgoers regarded smaller bathing areas and physical impediments (i.e. rocks) as less appealing than places like Virginia Key Beach with its added amenities and larger population. However, attendance at these beaches was still considered a type of recreation. The population at this Homestead Bayfront Beach included blacks and Latinos. One participant stated that usually Latinos went to this beach or Miami Beach instead of the other beaches. This beach is closer to Miami, which had a larger Latino population than Homestead.

Baker’s Haulover Beach was the location of the 1945 wade in and the reason for the creation of Virginia Key Beach. It remained a whites-only facility until the Civil Rights Act in 1964. There is not much mentioned in the collected oral histories about this beach since it was off limits to blacks and in this study the oral histories were from non-white visitors.
Crandon Park was desegregated unofficially since a 1959 wade in. Despite the various amenities including a zoo, there was not much mention of it in my oral histories which covered the 1950s and 1960s. However during the 1970s it seemed to be popular to Cubans and other Latin Americans and their families according to archival findings.

Beaches featured in this study consist of one well documented site (Virginia Key Beach) and four other less documented sites. The findings through this and the National Park Service report are used to develop a better understanding of the differences and similarities between these sites and examine how performances of power and control affected place. What can be drawn from these comparisons are the various identities and interactions within a relatively small area.

The next section goes beyond the scope of Miami-Dade County to encompass other documented segregated areas within Florida. One of these areas is the exclusively black beach on Amelia Island called American Beach. This beach will be compared to both Virginia Key and Homestead Bayfront Beach. They will be examined for community characteristics and socio-historical issues in race relations, class, and ethnicity.

**Comparative Analysis of Select Segregated Beaches in Florida (American, Homestead Bayfront, and Virginia Key Beaches)**

In this section, I examine and compare documented sites of recreation in Florida during the period of segregation. These beaches are important in contextualizing segregated recreation in Florida. There were a number of exclusively black beaches in Florida including Bethune Beach, Manhattan Beach, Butler Beach, American Beach, and Virginia Key Beach. I will focus on American Beach in Jacksonville, Florida and Virginia Key Beach in Miami, Florida as they
are two of the most documented black beaches in Florida that remain open to the public. For example, MaVynee Betsch or the “Beach Lady,” had an informal museum on American Beach in 2005 (Jackson 2012). I analyze community identity through the experiences of place at American Beach and Virginia Key Beach based on my findings at Homestead Bayfront Beach. I will include a comparison of perspectives of segregated beaches, specifically an educational understanding from Cruz’s “Swimming Not Allowed: Teaching about Segregated Public Beaches and Pools” as well as Jackson’s anthropological analysis of segregated recreational places (Cruz 2012; Jackson 2012).

American Beach, Virginia Beach and Homestead Beach differ in terms of land area, ownership status, and number of people that visited. Physically, American Beach was the largest of the three beaches at 200 acres, second is Homestead Bayfront Beach at 97 acres (North and South beaches), and then Virginia Key Beach at 82.5 acres. American Beach was the only privately owned beach. The other two were opened and maintained by Miami-Dade County Parks and Recreation. The fact that there was a difference in type of ownership explains differences in maintenance, community support, and legal and political impact. Private ownership includes the ability to limit public access, while public ownership requires the institution responsible for the beach to maintain appearance and safety standards.

Table 3 is a compilation of information about Florida beaches in general (Florida Department of Environmental Protection 2014). It also shows how race was a factor in land type and maintenance. Despite the 663 miles of beaches and even more shoreline (1,197 miles), exclusively black beaches were only 12.15 miles or 0.5% of the Florida beaches. This table does include Pablo Beach, yet it was only accessible to blacks one day a week and during baptism on Sundays.
Race, Ethnicity, and Class

As noted in the literature review, the legal structure in Florida denied social and economic equality between whites and blacks. Black beaches offered a counter to these restrictive policies. American Beach was based in a community started by a black entrepreneur (Abraham Lincoln Lewis) and company (Afro American Life Insurance), thus privately owned. On the other hand, Virginia Key was started to appease black beachgoers who did not have a customary swimming and recreation area in Miami-Dade County. However, in the 1920s and 1930s, it was an undesignated beach for blacks until World War II and its subsequent designation as an exclusively black beach. Homestead Bayfront Beach was initially white only and four years after the dedication added facilities to an adjacent side in 1955 to prevent interaction between the races. These facilities were so close that at certain places beachgoers on the black side could see those on the white side. These factors of response to racism and exclusion contribute to building community memories and the formation of identity.

Rymer, in his book, *American Beach: A Saga of Race, Wealth, and Memory*, looks further than the stories told about racism to uncover the underlying legal, social, and economic consequences (1998). He discloses racism within acts of violence at Amelia Island (Rymer 1998). While my research did not uncover any violence on Homestead Bayfront Beach itself, there were instances of riots and other acts of violence within the nearby communities (i.e. Homestead), either to maintain the status quo and the white authority or to challenge it in hopes of justice and equality. One informant describes conflict between neighborhood teenagers and gives an example of racial tensions:
Table 3: Florida Beaches-- Exclusively Black Beach Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Florida shoreline</th>
<th>1197 mi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beaches</td>
<td>663 mi (439,569 mi²) of beach (mostly publically owned)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of exclusively black beaches (by date)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>2 (Manhattan Beach and Pablo beach-1 day a week)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>2 (Manhattan and American Beaches)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>3 (American, Bethune, and Butler Beaches; Manhattan beach closed this year, changed to Hanna Park)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>4 (Homestead Bayfront North, American, Bethune, and Virginia Key)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>from 1900-1960, amount of coastal space dedicated to black beaches</td>
<td>7773.5 acres (or 12.15 square miles)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>percentage of black beaches to Florida beaches in all (663 miles)</td>
<td>0.50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some country boys say “What you niggers doin out here?” I go “What?” “Oh, we goin to so and so we gone...” Turn the car, they turn the car completely around and headed at us and I said, “alright boys let’s hit the tracks.” To the railroad tracks. When we got on the tracks we had plenty of ammunition, we had rocks! And I placed my brother her, I put the other guy here, I said “alright, ready, chuck!” (laughs) Got right down there, throwin rocks. Oh, yeah, yep. Remember that night. That was the 1st experience that me and my brother went through that. After that, when we hit the tracks, we had no more problems. [B.V 2011]
This quote shows racial conflicts and how they were handled. Accounts like this support the idea that blacks were active in battles for social equality. Not all of the conflicts end as quickly or as bloodless as the one described. According to another participant, Virginia Key Beach was infamous for shootings and as a result liked going to Homestead Bayfront Beach instead. Differing experiences regarding community as well as differing geographical locations add to unique concepts of place.

The ethnic diversity within Miami contributed to a large population of Virginia Key Beach beachgoers and their interactions. These ethnicities included Caribbean (Bahamian, etc.) and African Americans. Homestead Bayfront Beach was a getaway from the city life for a more relaxed atmosphere. Ethnicities included African Americans, Bahamians, and Latinos. American Beach was inundated with a large black population and beach community. It was specifically designated for black just like Virginia Key Beach. However, the experiences of blacks were not homogenous. There were different classes and ethnicities. While all of these beaches have a common goal of recreation and leisure, the communities and the social boundaries constructed at each unique beach varied. These findings contribute to anthropological research on identity and place formation in that the place is created and influenced by experiences, memories, and identity. In accordance with Flores’s claims, the memories of a culture or community contribute to the identity of that culture or community (2002). These memories then impact relations of place. In this study, memories are found to not only be ascribed to segregated beaches, but also to development of the community in my research.

Class was not found to play a large role at Homestead Bayfront Beach. It was mentioned in reference to the Leeves family being one of the wealthiest black families in Homestead.
Leeves family would host parties at the beach and pick up neighborhood children to drive to the beach. The Leeves interacted with other non-whites of differing economic classes. This family was only mentioned by one interviewee. However, class was also coupled with racial categories in reference to the “white people and their boats” going to Elliot Key after integration to presumably avoid interacting with non-whites after the Civil Rights Act of 1964. There was no mention of the Leeves family possessing a boat and if they did, it is unknown if they attempted to go to Elliot Key as well. However, a portion of the beachgoers were associated or affiliated with the church. The church goers’ demographics would contribute to a better understanding of that group of visitors. The churches would have gatherings after service at Homestead Bayfront Beach.

Class was, however, a factor at American Beach. The very community was started by Abraham Lincoln Lewis, a founder of the Afro American Life Insurance Company (Phelts 1997). He married Mary Sammis-Lewis, a Kingsley descendent of the Kingsley Plantation, and this “union formed one of the most prominent dynasties of wealth, influence, and power in Florida’s African American community” (Jackson 2006: 24). Blacks of varying economic classes would visit this beach and Afro American Life Insurance even sponsored annual beach trips as well as church gatherings (Phelts 1997).

Virginia Key Beach was also a place where church as well as neighborhood gatherings occurred. Various neighborhoods congregated on this beach and that contributed to grouping according to communities and class. So class was a factor in group dynamics at this exclusively black beach. Class, race, and ethnicity played differing roles in interactions on black beaches during segregation.
The Role of Anthropology in Researching Segregated Places

This study employs an anthropological perspective. In examining the prevalence of segregation practices especially in recreational settings, an anthropological perspective critiques the different viewpoints and analyses the circumstances with a culturally aware outlook. This study supports the concept of place as an intermediary, linking people through landmarks as historically and geographically constituted (Rodman 1997). The anthropological approach contributes to a broader understanding of society through the complex connections to place.

Jackson’s work on the influence of segregation on the Tampa, Florida community of Sulphur Springs helps add to the anthropological framework on segregation and recreation (2010). Many of the recreational and tourist sites in Sulphur Springs were off limits to non-whites and even the stories of black involvement in the establishment and development of Sulphur Springs seemed to be omitted from the historical record for a period of time (Spillane 2007). Segregated places serve as markers especially when analyzed in the context of America’s legacy of segregation and these markers are neither uncontested nor neutral (Jackson 2010). These sites are inundated with meaning through “historically explicit racial directives regarding access, including specific boundary lines and markers of exclusion” (Jackson 2009: 85). These markers through this barrage become the anthropological notion termed “place.” This work is important to note because of the segregated body of water and site of recreation (Sulphur Springs pool) adjacent to the historical community of Sulphur Springs. This comparison focuses on place and identity and how racial segregation impacts its development.

In comparison, Cruz uses an educational approach to methods of instructing others about American history and racism (2012). This approach seeks “to help students understand the broad scope of discrimination and segregation in the United States it is important to highlight the
everyday struggles of ordinary individuals as they fought for self-respect and to change a system of inequality.” (Cruz 2012: 257). She postulates that researching beaches, as a symbol of summer and especially of Florida, is a novel approach to illustrate American segregation practices (2012). Cruz proposes activities and teaching tools to promote understanding of the nuances of racial segregation and the Civil Rights Movement. Her classroom activities include timelines, historical photographs, role-playing, guest speakers, and cooperative learning (Cruz 2012). This perspective provides an applied approach for segregated beach research. While my anthropological approach seeks to understand the underlying systems of segregation and its consequences, the education approach seeks to transmit information about the Civil Rights Movement to students (Cruz 2012).

This study adds to research on multi-locality, multi-vocality, and social construction of place. It also finds an association between community identity, in the form of memories and place formation. Through the oral histories and resulting analysis, different aspects of community memories and identity are shown in a racially segregated social context.

The act of voicing untold accounts that have been silenced is also an act of power according to Trouillot (1995). Thus voices and perspectives displayed in this work take a step in power restoration for marginalized populations by telling untold stories about black people and beaches. Black beaches experienced rises and declines due to community finances and politics. Kahn states that place becomes enmeshed in politics and expands beyond a fixed entity due to multiple perspectives (2000). Place is local, but it is not restricted to mere geographical position. Within the stories of leisure and recreational activities, lie more subtle affirmation of the social rules and customs. The very existence of an exclusively black beach implies limits. The categorization as the “other,” paints a picture of an entity separate from the norm and often
inferior. This categorization is one of numerous attempts to restrict and control spaces even spaces of recreation.
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This study addresses the research questions posed in chapter one. First, I show how community memories and a national Park Service (NPS) ethnographic profile help create a nuanced understanding of the multiple roles of place in informing issues of segregation at sites of recreation in South Florida by providing a description of place at the Homestead Bayfront Beaches (both north and south). I also compared Homestead Bayfront Beaches to other beaches on Biscayne within a 50 mile radius. I included oral history as well as visual and archival indicators of place and identity making as a means of showcasing identity making. By highlighting the presence of the formally segregated road leading to Homestead Beach North, this study underscores the significance of place and identity making at Homestead Bayfront Beach. Next, I show how a multi-vocal, multi-local social context create a comprehensive understanding of place in south Miami-Dade County by comparing multiple sites of recreational activities across south Florida, creating taxonomies of leisure making activities and segregated beaches from participant interviews and archival data. I have also incorporated narratives of beach going experiences as shared by participants interviewed. This created a rich and nuanced context for understanding beaches as recreational places and sites of leisure during the period of segregation in the U.S. Finally, I addressed the role of power in influencing the formation of place, identity, and memories at segregated beaches in Miami Dade County, Florida. In this analysis, I incorporated the performances of power as ingrained in the act of categorizing groups
by race and status. An example of this power is the active silencing of the history of an entire community. In this case the beach going activities of African Americans at Homestead Bayfront Beach in South Florida.

This was a comparative study that analyzed segregated beaches within Florida. These beaches, while designed for the same purpose, still developed unique notions of place due to other factors including the community’s identity and memories. Place must not become an all-encompassing term for any culture, but must be treated as a process affected by time and perspective (Rodman 1992). For example, chapter three addressed how the oral histories and semi-structured interview questions provide personal accounts and memories for the understanding of the communities in the past. Archival research was also critical in adding more detail and triangulating the interviews. In chapters four and five segregated beaches within Florida were compared. This study adds to the literature on segregation and place-making in the U.S. Specifically this study fills in gaps by adding everyday beach going activities and memories of fellowship in times of segregated recreation as expressed by African Americans in a South Florida community. Adding lived experiences to the presentation of historical events, supplements theories of social processes with the richness of a specific community’s identity making process.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

This study acts as an opening discourse in place and identity formation concerning segregation practices in American culture, despite the small sample size. This study would benefit from the perspective of “white,” as well as from an addition of female experiences and beach experiences of members of the Latino community. Beach going experiences beyond the
perspective of the black males should be studied in the future. Not only does this study examine history, heritage, community, place and identity; tourism also plays a role in the findings. According to Rhymer, “tourists and developers ask little enough of history, after all: only that it stay demurely apart from the present, in the realm of completed and the certain” (1998). In order to increase tourism, local representatives and business owners resort to exaggerating the good and downplay the atrocities of a discriminatory history. The concept of tourism was not at the center of this study nor was it explored further, but it did make itself known as a contributing factor in sites of recreation and it can be researched further in additional studies.

Antoinette Jackson asserts that “ethno-historical and ethnographic research including the collection of oral histories, and the analysis of housing patterns and archival data, as well as the study of leisure and recreational activities” provide fruitful intersections from which anthropologists can help local communities place a stake in the “constructions, interpretations, and public consumption” of their heritage (Jackson 2009:5). Anthropology is capable of expanding beyond the analysis of shared meanings into an “analysis of the causal relationships between social structures and the distribution of power, practice and discourse” (Yelvington 2002: 231). Anthropology is equipped to understand and analyze the degrees to which culture, memory, identity, and all of the other “ambiguous” social science concepts interact. Anthropology helps bring a more holistic and contextualized view of this topic for further understanding of how systems of power are exercised in social, political, and economic capacities. This study is a good start and opens the door for further discussion of segregated sites of recreation and leisure and their impact today in terms of memory and identity making.
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APPENDICES
Appendix A: Definition of Terms

**Race**—“Race in the United States is a social construct that relies on common understandings and self-definitions rather than scientific criteria” (Williams, 1989). These understandings and definitions are usually based on physical features shared by a group rather than genetic similarities and/or cultural practices. According to the American Anthropology Association, “…racial” groups are not consequences of their biological inheritance but products of historical and contemporary social, economic, educational, and political circumstances” (AAA, 1998). This study will examine the influence and effects of those historical circumstances.

**Black**—A social and cultural category used to label persons with certain physical characteristics and ancestry roots in Africa. In America it is used to label persons with certain skin tones, hair color and texture, and facial features. The terms “black” and “African-American” are usually used interchangeably presently. In the past black, “Negro,” and “colored” were used to refer to this population. The participants in this study identified the racial group that they identify with. However, in this study, “black” will be used to refer to people from the Caribbean Islands as well as those with ancestry roots in Africa. This group possesses many different types of cultures. This category can be used in addition to ethnicity. For example, one can be racially black, yet ethnically Latino as well.

**White**—A social and cultural category used to label persons with certain physical characteristics and heritage within Europe and Latin and South America. This term is used interchangeably with “Caucasian” as well. In this study “whites” are self-identified and identified by others. “White” will be used in this paper to refer to those who do not identify with an ethnicity as well. “White” is the dominant group so referring to others as “non-white” instead of “non-black” or “non-Latino” is the act of a group in power. This distinguishes those in power from those without power. This category can be used in addition to ethnicity. For example, a person can be racially white while also being ethnically Latino.

**Ethnic group**—“A formal, named grouping of people who see themselves as sharing a common cultural-historical tradition that distinguished them from other groups” (Bailey and Peoples, 2002). Ethnicity is not only based on ancestry, but also to which group the individual identifies. In America one of the largest ethnic groups is labeled Hispanic or Latino.

**Hispanic**—term established by the U.S. census bureau to label those with ancestry from Spain

**Latino**—term applied to those with heritage from Latin or South America. This term is used interchangeably with Hispanic to refer to anyone with Spanish, Latin, or South American heritage.

**Jim Crow Era**—A period of time from the 1880s to the 1960s in the United States. In this time period legal acts mediated the social, economic, and political interactions, in general the legal separation of blacks and other minorities (or non-whites) from whites. In this time period of the “Separate, but equal” legal and social standard it was legally punishable to have non-whites in the same establishment or public area as whites. The term “Jim Crow” became synonymous
with segregation practices as well as justification for the retention of segregation as a norm. Jim Crow was a minstrel character created by Thomas Dartmouth "Daddy" Rice, a white performer. Rice would blacken his face with burnt cork and act the part of a stereotypical Negro man (i.e. lazy, jovial, dancing, and dressed in beggars clothing). This character justified segregation and the general attitude toward blacks.

**Place**- A social construct that extends past a simple geographical location. In this study, place is created by the community and the memories that people attach to that location. Place is also describes as “a framed space that is meaningful to a person or group over time,” (Clark and Yang, 2008).

**Sense of Place**- The social and cultural connection between people in the community and a geographical location. This connection is created and reinforced by the memories attached to the location. In this study, it is proposed that while the community identity is influenced by the sense of place the sense of place is determined by the community.

**Community**- A social unit that shares common values, geographical location, and resources. This paper explores the community’s connection to a particular geographical location (sense of place) and how that influences the community’s identity and representation. Anderson argues that communities larger than villages that provide face to face interaction are imagined and that image is what a community can be judged by (Anderson, 2006). Community is not only tied by the aforementioned factors but also the sense of connection and solidarity.

**Community identity**-how a social unit identifies and distinguishes itself from others. The community identity will be drawn from the interviews and archival documentation compiled in order to examine how it intertwines with place.
Appendix B: Figures and Tables

Table A4: Example of Travel log/Timesheet

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Within this time period, I did further research online to find any articles or photos for Biscayne National Park. Besides 3 articles, mentioning it, there is nothing in depth. I called museums, historical societies (Miami), libraries, local newspapers, researchers who may have had information on the beach, as well as made contacts through my advisor's networking. For the most part I will have to go to these places to search through their databases and archives when I return to Homestead/Miami/Ft. Lauderdale area. A person from the Miami historical society stated that she does not know anything about the beach at that time, but she gave me the number of the president of the society anyway so I could make sure. I also spoke with Dr. Jean Tinney, a historian, who stated that he doesn't have any information as he did not research that beach personally, but he would email me some information.
Figure A11: National Park Services document of the opening of Homestead Bayfront Beach North (Lowman 2012)

Figure A12: Designated Black Road in May 1960 (Lowman 2012)
Figure A13: Entrance to Homestead Bayfront Park in April 1962 (Lowman 2012)

Figure A14: Train at Virginia Key Beach (from www.virginiakeybeachpark.net)

Figure A15: Merry-go-round at Virginia Key Beach (www.virginiakeybeachpark.net)
Appendix C: IRB Documentation

Informed Consent to Participate in Research

Title of research study: Recreational segregation: Examining the impact of Jim Crow at Homestead Bayfront Beach on community identity
IRB Study # PRO 6563

Information to Consider Before Taking Part in this Research Study
Researchers at the University of South Florida (USF) study many topics. To do this, we need the help of people who agree to take part in a research study. This form tells you about this research study. You are invited to participate in a research study entitled, Recreational segregation: Examining the impact of Jim Crow at Homestead Bayfront Beach on community identity. The study is focused on recording the history, heritage, and oral traditions of the community of surrounding Homestead Bayfront Beach in Homestead, Florida. The following information is being presented to help you decide whether or not to take part in this minimal risk research study. Please read this document carefully. If you do not understand anything, please ask the project director or representative of the study.

General Information about the Project: This project includes student and faculty participation from the University of South Florida (USF) in connection with Biscayne National Park in Homestead, Florida. This study is aimed both at recording historical occurrences and at enhancing general public knowledge about the history and heritage of one of the previously segregated beaches in Florida.

The person who is in charge of this research study is Iyshia Lowman. This person is called the Principal Investigator (PI). However, other research staff may be involved and can act on behalf of the person in charge. The person explaining the research to you may be someone other than the Principal Investigator. The co-principal investigator is Dr. Antoinette Jackson of the University of South Florida.

Interviews and meetings with project participants will be conducted at Biscayne National Park or at a mutually agreed upon location between the interviewer and the participant within the surrounding community.

This research is being paid for by the American Conservation Experience (ACE).

Purpose of the Research: The purpose of this research study is to increase the understanding and knowledge about the people, places, and organizations that contributed to the modern day community of Homestead, Florida and continued effort to record the impact of the Civil Rights Movement, and
to assist the National Park Service in the preservation and in the interpretation of Biscayne National Park for the education and enjoyment of present and future generations. This study will address the research questions: How was community identity defined in Homestead in the 1950s and 1960s? How does the identity in the past compare to the current community identity? How does the past history of segregation contribute to the current identity?

Page 2 of 4 USF Informed Consent Form—IRB number: PRO 6563
Iyshia Lowman, -Project P.I.-(229) 449-6758 — ilowman@mail.usf.edu. Co-investigator-Dr. Antoinette Jackson- (813) 813-974-6882 -atjackson@usf.edu.

Study Procedures: If you take part in this study, you will be interviewed and asked permission to have your interview and/or oral history audio recorded, photographed, and/or videotaped. The interviews will be conducted at Biscayne National Park or at an agreed upon location within the community. The expected duration of the interview is 45 minutes, but no more than 1 hour. Participants may be interviewed up to three times as needed for the study over the course of one year. Knowledgeable people and researchers will be interviewed for up to 1.5 hours for 1-2 visits as needed. Recorded interviews will be transcribed and edited. Researchers will protect the identity of participants by using pseudonyms unless participants specify otherwise in writing. The Project PI will keep the list of participants and pseudonyms confidential. No information about sensitive resources will be made public without explicit permission from the participant(s). The research team will employ an alphanumeric code system to keep track of participants, and to keep informed consent form separate from raw data, such as audio recordings, and photographs. The digital photographs of the artifacts from the 1950’s and 1960’s may be used in the study and if so, will provide support and supplement the oral histories gathered. The research team will collect and keep all documents under lock and key in a designated location on the USF campus, and any digital documents in a password protected computer. All documents relating to the study will be retained for at least 5 years after completion of the research. Records shall be accessible for inspection and copy by designated research personnel only.

Videotaped oral history interviews will be retained by the Biscayne National Park as a part of their Cultural Heritage Resource Program. The transcribed information from the interviews may be interpreted by the Interpretation Department and used in displays, pamphlets, or other informational efforts for the park.

Alternatives: You have the alternative to choose not to participate in this research study.

Potential Benefits: The potential benefits to participants in the project are the opportunity to participate in a cultural heritage preservation project of national significance, and to influence future generations through shared stories.

Risks or Discomfort: This research is considered to be minimal risk. That means that the risks associated with this study are the same as what you face every day. There are no known additional risks to those who take part in this study. Best practices of the American Anthropological Association will be followed throughout the project.

Compensation: We will not pay you for the time you volunteer while being in this study.
Confidentiality: We must keep your study records as confidential as possible. However, certain people may need to see your study records. By law, anyone who looks at your records must keep them completely confidential. The only people who will be allowed to see these records are:

- The research team, including the Principal Investigator, the project funder, and all other research staff.

- Certain government and university people who need to know more about the study. For example, individuals who provide oversight on this study may need to look at your records. This is done to make sure that we are doing the study in the right way. They also need to make sure that we are protecting your rights and your safety. These include:

  A. The University of South Florida Institutional Review Board (IRB) and the staff that work for the IRB. Other individuals who work for USF that provide other kinds of oversight may also need to look at your records.

  B. People at the company who paid for this study, the American Conservation Experience (ACE) in association with National Park Services, may look at, and obtain copies of the study records.

  C. Agencies that regulate research: Department of Health and Human Services and the Office for Human Research Protection

Your privacy is important. However, the results of this study may be published. Only if you agree, will your identity be made known in all written data resulting from the study. Otherwise, your individual privacy will be maintained in all published and written data resulting from the study.

Voluntary Participation / Withdrawal: Your participation is entirely voluntary, and you may withdraw consent and terminate participation at any time without consequence. There will be no penalty or loss of benefits you are entitled to receive if you stop taking part in this study. You may also request that someone act as a representative for you, authorizing them to sign this consent form to help protect you.

Questions, concerns, or complaints
If you have any questions, concerns or complaints about this study, contact Iyshia Lowman at 229-449-6758 or via email at: ilowman@mail.usf.edu or Dr. Antionette Jackson at 813-813-974-6882 or via email at: atjackson@usf.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this study, general questions, or have complaints, concerns or issues you want to discuss with someone outside the research, call the Division of Research Integrity and Compliance of the University of South Florida at (813)974-5638.

If you experience an unanticipated problem related to the research and need to speak with someone locally, please contact the Biscayne National Park representative, Charles Lawson, Archeologist at: 786-335-3676 or Charles_Lawson@nps.gov.

Consent to Take Part in this Research Study
Protection of Confidentiality: Please state whether we have permission to use your name in this study and in any published material resulting from this study. If desired, participants will be given pseudonyms to protect their identity and privacy. (Check one):

_____ You have permission to use my name
_____ You may *not* use my name

_______________________________________ Participant’s Name (Print)

Page 4 of 4 USF Informed Consent Form—IRB number: PRO 6563
Iyshia Lowman, -Project P.I.- (229) 449-6758 — ilowman@mail.usf.edu. Co-investigator-Dr. Antoinette Jackson- (813) 813-974-6882 -atjackson@usf.edu.

_______________________________________ Participant’s Signature

I have been fully informed of the above-described procedure with its possible benefits and risks and I consent to:

_____ Participate in this study by having my interview and/or oral history audio recorded.
_____ Participate in this study by having my interview and/or oral history video recorded.
_____ Participate in this study by having photographs taken of me.

It is up to you to decide whether you want to take part in this study. If you want to take part, please sign the form, if the following statements are true.

**I freely give my consent to take part in this study.** I understand that by signing this form I am agreeing to take part in research. I have received a copy of this form to take with me.

___________________________________________ Signature of Person Taking Part in Study Date

___________________________________________ Printed Name of Person Taking Part in Study

___________________________________________ Signature of Representative (optional) Date

___________________________________________ Printed Name of the Representative and stated relationship to the participant (optional)

**Statement of Person Obtaining Informed Consent**
I have carefully explained to the person taking part in the study what he or she can expect. I hereby certify that to the best of my knowledge the subject signing this consent form understands the nature, demands, risks, and benefits involved in participating in this study.

___________________________________________ Signature of Person Obtaining Informed Consent Date

___________________________________________ Printed Name of Person Obtaining Informed Consent
IRB Approval

RE: Expedited Approval for Initial Review
IRB#: Pro00006563
Title: Recreational segregation: Examining the impact of Jim Crow at Homestead Bayfront Beach on community identity

Dear Ms. Lowman:

On 1/21/2012 the Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed and APPROVED the above referenced protocol. Please note that your approval for this study will expire on 1/21/2013.

Approved Items:
- Protocol Document(s): Protocol Consent/Assent
- Documents: Informed consent .pdf

Please use only the official, IRB-stamped consent/assent document(s) found under the "Attachment Tab" in the recruitment of participants. Please note that these documents (the consent/assent documents to be signed by participants) are only valid during the approval period indicated on the stamped document. It was the determination of the IRB that your study qualified for expedited review which includes activities that (1) present no more than minimal risk to human subjects, and (2) involve only procedures listed in one or more of the categories outlined below. The IRB may review research through the expedited review procedure authorized by 45CFR46.110 and 21 CFR 56.110. The research proposed in this study is categorized under the following expedited review category:
- (5) Research involving materials (data, documents, records, or specimens) that have been collected, or will be collected solely for nonresearch purposes (such as medical treatment or diagnosis).
- (6) Collection of data from voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes.
- (7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

As the principal investigator of this study, it is your responsibility to conduct this study in accordance with IRB policies and procedures and as approved by the IRB. Any changes to the approved research must be submitted to the IRB for review and approval by an amendment.

We appreciate your dedication to the ethical conduct of human subject research at the University of South Florida and your continued commitment to human research protections.

If you have any questions regarding this matter, please call 813-974-5638.

Sincerely,
John A. Schinka, Ph.D., Chairperson
USF Institutional Review Board
Appendix D: Interview Questions and Oral History Transcriptions

1. Biographical information about interviewee.
   [Please state your name, date of birth, address, and location where this interview is taking place. What is your gender? Do you mind stating what racial or ethnic group you identify yourself with?]

2. Tell me about your experiences at Homestead Bayfront beach.
   - What is your association with Key Biscayne National Park and Homestead Beach?
   - How long have you lived in the Homestead area?
   - How have the Beach and the area where you live changed over the years? When was the last time you were at the Beach?
   - Do you have family in the area?
   - What kinds of things did you and your family do on Homestead Beach?
   - What is your earliest memory of the beach?
   - What do you think of this project and what would you like people to know about Homestead Beach?
   - What were favorite experiences/memories of the Beach? What are your least favorite memories?
   - What is your most interesting memory of the beach?
   - Were there places you could not go on the beach or did not want to go? If so, why?
   - Did black people and white people share/use the beach? Please describe what racial and ethnic groups different from your own did on the beach and/or continue to do on the beach.
   - Do you or Did you know anyone who worked at the Beach? What was there job? How long did they work there?

3. Can you give me an example of a typical day at the beach?
   - areas frequented?
   - first and last day on the beach?
   - How would you refer to the beach then? What was it called?

4. Tell me about experiences at other beaches at that time.
   - Did you visit other beaches in Florida? Which ones? What was your favorite beach and why?
   - What made you go to Homestead Beach?

5. Tell me about any events or parties (formal or informal) held at the beach.
   - Who was included/invited?
   - Who hosted the event?
   - Were there ever any problems with the beach staff in reference to the event?
6. Tell me about living in Homestead.
   • How long have you lived in Homestead?
   • What kinds of things did you do for fun in Homestead?
   • [Where did you attend grade school and high school?]
   • Has Homestead changed over the years? How so?
   • What do you think was interesting about Homestead?

7. *For lifeguard/former employees:
   • Can you describe what it was like to work at the beach? What did it feel like?
   • Were there different employees for different areas of the beach or did you work the entire stretch of the beach?
   • Were there racial or ethnic restrictions on the beach? How were they enforced?
   • Were there any problems with people crossing into restricted areas of the beach?
   • Please describe your co-workers. Did you have co-workers from a different racial or ethnic background than your own?
   • Were there different jobs depending on your racial or ethnic group and depending on your gender?
   • Do you or Did you know anyone who worked at the Beach? What was there job? How long did they work there?

8. Is there anything else you would like to say about Homestead and Homestead Beach? Do you have any pictures of the Beach or of you and your family at the beach? Who else should I talk to?

Oral History Interview Transcriptions

Interviewee: Julius Keaton, employee at Biscayne National Park and former Homestead Bayfront Beach attendee. (Duration 30 min 50 sec)

Interviewer: Iyshia Lowman, Biscayne National Park intern and MA student at USF

Camera: Charles Lawson, archeologist at Biscayne National

IL: Ready? Today is December 9th 2011. I am Iyshia Lowman, intern at Biscayne National Park and Master’s student at University of South Florida. We are here with Julius Keaton at Biscayne National Park. Uh, and Julius, you agree to consent for the park and for my research to give your information to the…recording?

J: Yes, I agree with it.
IL: Okay. Great. Let’s get started. Okay, first of all just tell us about yourself. Tell us your name, date of birth…

J: Hello everyone my name is Julius Keaton. Born September the 5th 1952 in Camilla, Georgia. My mother came south, and when I say south I guess about two and a half years after I was born. I’ve been in Homestead. Been working at the park, goin on my 37th year enjoying every minute of it.

IL: Okay, and do you mind stating which racial or ethnic group you identify yourself with?

J: Uh, back in the day, we was called the n-words. (laughs) And that will push you over, but you gotta learn how to control the n-word. So…but I experienced a lot of that, especially on Saturdays when you had the opportunity to go to the aRy navy. That was uh, I say one of the cheapest stores at the time our parents could afford or my mom could afford and that’s where we went. But all the time, we always go there, there be some individuals out of Tennessee…okay, mostly out of Alabama that use the n-word. “Where you, so and so, goin?” And my mom say Don’t worry about that, keep goin.” So one day mom wasn’t with us (laughs) and we saw what the n-word really really means. We had to do little runnin, a little jumpin, a little hidin, a little throwin rocks…whole nine yards like that. Racial back then, there was a black section of the town and a white section of town.

IL: And this is here in Homestead?

J: Homestead.

IL: Can you, uh, tell me about your experience at the beach at the time?

J: Oh, oh, back in the day on Sundays we had a lot of good family outings and you know, like…on Saturdays, you had to do chores, once you finish your chores, you say, well, Sunday after church then the great-aunt will call up and say “Oh, we havin a picnic.” And you holla “Wherebout?” “On the beach.” So on Sundays we come out here. Some days we come out here, the water be above the ground and we go in the picnic area or our parking lot area. Some early mornings you come out here and see bobcats. You see different species of snakes which black people don’t like snakes (laughs). So it was…at that age, I thought coming out here was one of the great experiences because you get a chance to get away and play with your cousins…to ya aunt’s eat some good southern food. And just enjoy the day.

IL: Um, how long did you say you lived in the Homestead area?

J: Let’s say pretty close to about 35 years.

IL: And do you still have family in the area?

J: Yes, mother’s here.
IL: So what kind of things did y’all do…a typical day at the beach?

J: Oh, a day at the beach we play tag you it, we play, uh, underwater. We used to like Lloyd Bridges. Ya know we used to watch it on tv we Figure we’d be like Llyod Bridges and all that stuff. And we can only go so far, that was our favorite program, especially on Saturday. Sea Hunt. Boom. When we come out here, we thought we was Llyod Bridges. We wouldn’t have all the necessary equipment he would have, but with our imagination we just had a great time.

IL: What is your earliest memory of the beach?

J: Aw, man…

IL: Like the 1st time you got here…

J: First time I got here, my cousin brung us out here, ok, but we couldn’t get in the water. That was the 1st memory, I mean, I was about 7. She brung us out here and wouldn’t let us get in the water. I go…“ no, you can’t get in the water I just come to show y’all that. I go “Ah, mmmm!” (laughs). Oh, god.

IL: So what did y’all do?

J: Oh, besides that, we played tag, we played what ya call hide and go seek, duck n up. A lot of times we had to sit and watch the elderly play cards. (laughs) We ain’t like that. Most of us we had rules and regulations. If you outta eyesight, you were never coming again. So you always supposed to be in the eyesight, so they could see ya.

IL: What’s your favorite experience, your favorite memory of the beach?

J: Oh, we used to have parties out here. The Leeves party. The Leevs were prolly the wealthiest family in the black community. And they daddy worked in, was a masonarian. He had a truck and he always throw his kid’s birthday party and then we always came on the beach. And we load on the back of that truck…and when I say load, we load that truck up! Come out here and Ms. Margery would have the food, the music be playin, and aw, man, everybody just have a good time.

IL: Alright, so were there places you could not go on the beach or did not want to go?

J: Yep, you could not go toward the shoreline, toward the deeper water, ok? And like I say, uh, you couldn’t be out they eyesight for so many minutes and that was the bottom line.

IL: Did black and white people share, use the beach together?

J: No, this used to be all blacks, mostly how can I say…if you were light colored you’se on this end (points to the “white beach”). Ok, most of the Mexicans, the Puerto Ricans, all us would stay on this side of the beach.
IL: OK, at that time did you know anyone who worked at the beach?

J: Uh, we know the lifeguard. We known him for years…Mr. Ozell Williams and then it was, I think, Mr. Willie Bains. Because most the, most the lifeguards be the islanders from the Bahamas or Jamaicans cause they, you know, they know how to swim. (laughs)

IL: Do you know how long they worked here?

J: Oh, no, no don’t know that.

IL: Uh, did you got to any other beaches at that time?

J: No.

IL: Okay. So, um, you said that there were parties out here and there was a dance floor…

J: Oh, yeah that dance floor had goin on. We had a big round circle, okay, and the jukebox used to be right in the middle but on the edge and back then it was a nickel. Nickel used to play one song, so on a Saturday you had to have a couple nickels in your pocket to listen, but you had to have somebody to help you out there to put the nickel in and put the numbers in and all this stuff. It was, it was, it was different altogether cause that’s when you met your elder relatives on Sundays when you used to come out with these collard greens, and cabbage, and cornbread, fried chicken, you know what I mean? (laughs) And then you sat and threw down. Most of the time on Sundays, that’s what we’re looking for, we’re lookin forward to eatin everybody elses food. And after we eat, and after we eat all that we couldn’t swim! “Oh you guys gotta sit down for an hour two hours, all that good stuff.” Then, “you gotta lay down and take a nap.” “Aw, man!” (laughs) That’s the way it was. Back in the days, people was different. And its much better now, I mean, much better back then than it is now. Cause people back then cared for one another. People these days, they’ll rob you for nothin, they’ll rob you think you got something…so, ya know.

IL: Can you just describe to me the dances? What it was like to be there?

J: Aw, man. Looking at adults dance, you never saw that type of dance, they used to do on the dance floor and all that good stuff. And you know like the moves they used to make with the body and stuff. You go “Aw, man. That’s cool!” and stuff like that, you know. Like slow dances, you know like, when a kid sees another man put his hand on a woman butt, ya go “ooo” you know you get excited. Like they aint never seen part of the stuff you see out there you be amazed, it cuts ya, ya know.

IL: Um, at some point you told us you could see the white side of the beach from driving.

J: Oh, yes. Okay. We had a white road and a black road. The white road starts on 162nd which was “farmers?” (9m50s) road, that’s where it split, okay? The road on the north side was the black road. The road on the south was the white road. If you get caught on the white road any
day any part down there, you get stopped by the police. And you had to drive all the way back to the entrance to get on the right road. There...that was, that was complicated. Put it this way, I never saw certain things, racial things until we mostly yet travel back and forth on this beach, we could be broken down and stuff like that. Next vehicle pulls over especially if it was a different color minor ("minority") like a white cop “Can I help you, boy? Or What you doing, boy?” Stuff like that. I wasn’t used to that. In the long run, it didn’t phase me then cause I didn’t know no better, but as I got older it really got to me. Cause I remember I pull in South Carolina one night, well wasn’t more than about 2 o’clock in the morning, the man come, ran out the building with a shot gun, “can I help you boy?” And I know that I need that fuel, but I keep goin. (laughs) It was different.

IL: And how long had you been coming to the beach?

J: We came to the beach til they closed it down. We used to come to like every other Sunday or either ya know, when a good outing or either that you made good grades in school, you do this, do that. Yeah, that’s how it works. We came to the beach close to about 7 years. Okay.

IL: And you said, uh, so most of your family came out here, everybody would get together…

J: Family, parties, most of the uh families and that’s when the Leeves have their parties for the kids. And when I say parties for the kids, half of the community used to be out here, okay. That was good times. So Sunday my great aunt would say “since you’ve been a good boy or since y’all been a good boy, let’s go to the beach or let’s do this or do that.” My mother was afraid of the water so she didn’t bring anybody there. (laughs) When we went anywhere it was always the older, the elderly women that like to see stuff and do this or do that.

IL: Would there be any problems with the beach staff and, you know, having parties out here?

J: Oh, no, no. Because everybody did they thing, we know we had to clean up and we used to always start as a unit. We used to say “okay you gon police the grounds, gonna clean up the grounds, before we leave we gon party. We clean up before we leave.” So you know like we don’t want to leave a mess and that’s what we did. Not only that they elderly people used to guide us anyway, okay. “Oh you can’t do this you can’t do that. Oh, Imma tell your momma, Imma tell your daddy. I aint gotta tell you momma, I’ll…” (laughs). To me coming out here was different. We looked forward to coming out here. You can do your thing for about 4, 5 hours, then you know you going back home.

IL: Did they ever call the beach anything other than the each?

J: The black beach, the colored beach, the nigger beach (laugh).

IL: Okay, can you tell me about living in Homestead, like…?
J: Aw, man living in Homestead is all different together. It’s still segregation, it’s still racial and all that stuff. My early years my mom kept us close and we got to be teenagers we got to experience life on our own. I remember one year we was coming home from football practice, me and my brother we was the 1st blacks who played for Tom Harris Field. This is 1967 somethin like that and one night we was comin home from practice, it was late and uh, we made it to Flagler. Back then it was a whole lotta, how you say, big, big factories, big industries and the time and uh, ours was railroad tracks, once you made it to the railroad tracks you was safe. So we was crossing Flagler and they said “Where you?” me and my brother and his friend were comin home from football practice and I guess they was drinkin, whatever. Some country boys say “What you niggers doin out here?” I go “What?” “Oh we goin to so and so we gone..” Turn the car, they turn the car completely around and he aded at us and I said, “alright boys let’s hit the tracks.” To the railroad tracks. When we got on the tracks we had plenty of ammunition, we had rocks! And I placed my brother her, I put the other guy here, I said “alright, ready, chuck!” (laughs) Got right down there, throwin rocks. Oh, yeah, yep. Remember that night. That was the 1st experience that me and my brother went through that. After that, when we hit the tracks, we had no more problems.

IL: What other kind of things did y’all do for fun in Homestead?

J: Fun? You know what duck and up is?

IL: No.

J: It’s a gem, you pick so many on your team and you got an hour to find all the rest of them. We would, okay, you got 6 on your team, you got 6. You gotta find all your 6 before you got a chance to go. Okay, we didn’t have no boundaries. When we say duck and up, we split. You gotta find them okay. Yep, we played hide and go seek, we played tennis ball, we played one strike “stand mo’ reef” (15 m36s) That’s with a mop handle and a tennis ball. And you always pick the best catcher one with the good aim, cause once you miss you gotta run to 1st base, okay. The good aim will pick you off before you get to 1st base, and that tennis ball…that tennis ball. We played football, we played baseball, we had, I played little league baseball for a couple of years. Community back then it was more togetherness, not like it is now. Cause we always had baseball, we always had basketball and football. You can start a football game with anybody. It was real fun…untill, you got to high school, it wasn’t fun anymore. You had long hours to do homework and then they closed the only black school down here. Mase High. Junior and Senior high school. Closed and when I say closed I say closed it, but the opened it back up for junior high something like that. Okay. And then we had to go to South Dade High. We experience a riot, a fight, individuals goin to jail on the weekends, a lot of property got damaged, a lot of vehicles got damaged. It was…different altogether. It was April 11, 1970 when the riots started South Dade high school, you know all us guys were standing is the hall way. It started and really, it started in study hall. Cause that was the library. This guy was a white guy and insult the black guy. And the black girl “That’s my brother, leave my brother alone.” He said “Oh nigger girl get
out the, oh.” Once he said that word, it was on. That girl broke his nose. Fight started at the library and spread through the whole school. Okay. I say fight. That year we had…Miss Homecoming was a black girl. Okay. Once we started that school they wanted to know that they was out there reppin us. Okay. And…that year they told “Niggers go home and take your black queen with ya,” stuff like that. Then I go “Aw, man, god.” I never Figured I could experience this first hand but it happened. One day we was standing up, ya know, like the guys noRally stand up, ya know, and get ready for another class; these kids, the white kids come down the hall with guns. We go “Oh!” So we tried to make an exit. And the exits we tried to exit out that dude had put padlocks on there and locked the door. We go “Aw, man.” So we ended up squeezing out and believe it or now, we went through home economics. (in higher voice imitating female) “Hey, y’all can’t come up in here!” “Yeah, lady, they got guns we comin up in here.” Okay, we force our way up in home economics and all just went from there. I say yeah, oh it was awesome. Me and them got caught up on the 2nd floor out the class and…we uh, did some damage to the typewritin room. (laughs) (in higher voice imitating female voice) “Here where we did damage, do some damage here.” They say “Bait ‘em in her, bait ‘em in here!” I say, “Okay, I bait ‘em in here.” “Hey, what you white boys want!” So soon as they come in there, he whoop ‘em with one of the typewriter, push him in the corner, then “Bait some more!” (laughs) We was only doin, that was the only defense we had we was outnumbered, man! It was 2 of us against about 30 of them, but we evened the score after 2 hours. 2 hours. Man we had, knock ‘em out, drag ‘em in, and we lay ‘em on the floor. We didn’t know they had cameras in the room, like that. Since I was short, it only got my shirt. (laughs) It didn’t get my face, I was lucky. So you know all of us had to meet to the auditorium later so they start showing the films. They show that shirt, I go, “mmm.” I say, “You aint gonna wear the shit no mo.” Once I went home, I burned that shirt. I wasn’t wearin th e shirt no mo.” 2 weeks later, every Friday afternoon, 3 passenger buses pull up to the school and if you on the list you get on the bus. Okay. My luck was I was not tall enough so they saw my face, they only saw my shirt. So after that, I go “Aw, man, I aint know it was gonna be like that.” We got kicked off the bus one day and had to walk home. We was South Dade High school, and you know we had to go through some white neighborhood. And once we start running, we didn’t stop. Okay? You talkin bout, that was about it, yeah.

IL: Alright I just wanted to go back to…in your 7 years of, ya know, going to the beach…

J: Comin here?

IL: Yeah. How has it changed through the years?

J: How did it change? Um, in a certain way, it changed cause I got older…in a certain way like, another way like we used to come straight here, but after my aunt and them started bringing they fishin poles. And there was a big change after that. They used to fish over there, but we couldn’t fish unless they call us (imitating female’s voice) “Here, come and bring me this, bring me that, bring me that…” “Haha, you fall over n there and Imma hook you with this king pole
and pull you out and all this good stuff.” To me when I was small, and my great aunt always used to bring us out and they had their rules and ya know you go buy their rules. They tell us a lot about racial and how to control this and how to control that. And that she that’s what its gone me. See, one of my great aunts, actually they went through slavery. Some days I would travel with them or as I got older, they would take me to funerals and I had a van and I’d take them and they start telling me different portion of, different sections of like the story my great aunt told me one night…The boys that wanna go rabbit huntin they didn’t want to go work in the field that day and then the white owner come by “Where the boys at?” “Oh they went rabbit huntin and all that good stuff.” “Well, I tell you what, by the end of the night I want y’all off my plantation.” So the end of the night they had to pack up and move. And I go, “Y’all went though that?” And they go “Yeah.” And I go “Aw, man…” I say it gone be like that for us, it gone be a little different but it gone be better, baby. You gotta make it. If you don’t make it, you waste your life.

IL: So how was it at the beach between the races? Did you see any white people or interact with them?

J: Oh, yeah, yeah, check this out, check this out. We had, we had, back in the days we had the white landlord collect rent. I was his rider, okay? I was his rider, he’d come and get me on Saturday morning in his Dodge, “Come on lets go riding with me, come on.” I say okay. We go riding in these black communities and ain’t too many of them bother with him, but he get out, they gone rob him. (laughs). So I was just like a lil stooley. He wouldn’t get out of the truck, he say, “Okay go on so and so.” (makes knocking on door sound). “Rent man!” “Well who is it?” “Rent man!” (laughs) “Well tell that man…” “You wanna tell him yourself, ma’am, he’s standing right out there, well you know he gotta write your receipt, ma’am. You gotta come on out, stuff like that.” It was like that, it was nice, it was nice, yep. So Boyd used to come get me every Saturday, every Saturday time to collect rent? Come get me, used to ride through all of these communities. It was some good people. It was some good people. Real good people.

IL: So how was it on the beach after…after you were allowed to go on the other side?

J: Oh, Oh, it was way different. That’s when we, they started letting us fend out on our own as we got a little bit older. We start collecting the little fiddler crabs and stuff like that. It was, it was like, it was real amazing…like we go in the picnic area and you see these little holes and you see these little crabs come up and you go “Oh! Aw, man.” Yeah, next thing you know you go looking for a stick, you dig em out. You dig, you dig, they come outta the hole. “Aw, man wait wait don’t do it that way , don’t do it that way.” “How you gone do ‘em?” “Put water in the hole they come out.” And we Figure out, put water in the hole they come out the hole, oh, they wasn’t no different about it, it was fun. It was safe. I tell ya it was real safe.

IL: It was safe even after…?
J: Yeah, it was the safest spot. Not only that, you come out here it’s a different world anyway. You can see the water, you can see different creatures. That’s does something to the kids mind. It was fun, real fun.

IL: So when were you able to go onto the other side of the beach?

J: Which side? (laughs)

IL: (laughs) the white side, the white side.

J: The white side? When it was integrated in ’68. Right. We used to go to Virginia key a lot, cause all the brothers was out at Miami talking bout “we havin a picnic come up here.” We used to come to Virginia key a lot. And then my mom said, “Ya know our beach aint “hardly naked?”(25m50s) Y’all wanna go to the beach all the time, we gone huh, take y’all local.” “Aw, man.” “Yeah, we gone all take y’all local.” So we started comin to the other side.

IL: Okay.

J: Before they started pricing! Uh, other side used to be free but it was different. What they had, we didn’t have. They had swing sets, they had volleyball, we didn’t have none of that. So when we did get over there, ya know what happened. (laughs)

IL: Were there any white people when y’all went over there?

J: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. (laughs)

IL: So how was that?

J: It was like…it was different altogether. That we you integrated, the 1st time you integrated. You got little black kids playing with little white kids and all that you know. On the shore line, it was very fun. It was different altogether.

IL: Um, they were allowed to play together?

J: Mhmm, some parents just let ’em. Yeah, I’m like, “oh, it wasn’t like this,” they just let ‘em.

IL: Oh that’s how it was.

J: Yeah they just let em.

IL: Okay, so overall living in Homestead for as many years as you have, what do you think is interesting about Homestead? What has kept you here?

J: The most interesting thing about Homestead is Biscayne Bay. Okay. I don’t care where you go, you can always go to the bay. Its different altogether. The bays is…it’s like a ride…say you leave home and come out here, you walkin and you watch the sun rise. Okay, once you
watching the sunrise you see different species of fish, crabs,…ya know, just out of the ordinary, you see different lizards that we never saw, and you see different species.

IL: Okay you like seeing different species.

J: Yeah, instead of looking at 4 walls all the time. (laughs) Yeah, comin out her is what you call real, real, real, real country, real adventure. Ya know black people don’t like getting in the water and all. (laughs)

IL: You didn’t feel that when you were living in the city, in Homestead?

J: No.

IL: Okay, you mentioned Virginia Key, could you tell us about it?

J: Oh, Virginia Key? Virginia Key Beach was different altogether that’s when you had to make that drive to get there. You gotta go up and across that bridge and then there was next to a sewer plant, that was really freaked out. It would freak you out. There was 2 roads, you got one to the sewer plant, one to the beach. Get on the the wrong road ya go “Aw, man, you missed the beach, you gotta turn around!” They sea was much different. They land since they was on the north end, they landscape was much different, much, much it was way different. And they trees. They landscape was way laid out, pretty. I saw very pretty. So, I mean you couldn’t beat they sea at the time.

IL: Do you think it was better?

J: Yes, better, bigger, okay? You go “whoa, alright.” So then you can see the ocean. You can always see the bay over here, but over there every time you can see the ocean. And when you see a fish jump up or a dolphin jump up, you go “Aw, man, that’s cool!” Virginia key was altogether different because it was right next to the lining, oh!

IL: Was it a different feel on the beach when you went out and played?

J: Yeah, the sand. Once you put your foot in that sand and walk through it to get to that water…ooo, girl, oo. It was different altogether. They sand was most like…say you walkin on a sponge to get to the water it was different altogether. Cause then you see little species of fish, you like “oh man.” You try to chase then and you like, “what you doin? You can’t chase no fish! You chase ‘em but you know you not gonna catch ‘em, right.” (laughs) Then you see little species of crabs, you know like, they water much cleaner cause close to the ocean and that was “ooo.” Especially the breeze, when it blows north, blowing south it was…(mumbles)

IL: Did y’all play with family?
J: Yep, family…family and friends. (laughs) Well, you know, all of us was like that. “Oh, I invited that neighbor, this neighbor, this neighbor and all that stuff.” Once we get there, we had a great time.

IL: So you didn’t play with anyone else besides family and friends?

J: We played with everybody. We played tag you it, duck and up, and some would say, “what’s that game?” We had to teach a lot of them the games we was playing on this end that they don’t play on that end. Like stickball. Ya get a mop handle and a tennis ball and you got a game. And they “Ooo, that’s fun, let’s do that all the time, like the way you did it!”

IL: Okay. Is there anything else that you would like to say about Homestead or the beach?

J: Homestead is improving and at the time the beach was our get away, especially on Sundays after church. Looking forward to eating southern food. (laughs and mumbles) “When y’all gonna be there? You said you was gonna be there.” You work hard and say your mind’s gonna be there. It be a lot of us there. We had uh, 1 car, but sometimes be 8 or 9 of us in that car comin this way. Sometimes there’d be more than that. Sometimes we be sitting on each other’s lap. (laughs) It was fun, it was fun.

IL: Do you still come out to the beach with your family or anybody else?

J: Do I still come out to the beach? (laughs) This is my getaway, which I call my plantation. Some nights after work, I come back out and fish. And you talk about beautiful sea, fresh. You can look at the nuclear plant and it’s all lit up for ya. The full moon…and it’s just different altogether. Yeah, I still come out here, matter of fact, I had plans for this weekend. (laughs)

IL: Is there…those are pretty much all the questions that I have. Anything else, you want to let me know.

J: Thank you.

IL: Thank you. Is there anyone else you think we should talk to beside you know, who you already…

J: Oh, yes, Boyd! Boyd was my old “running mate.”(32m36s) Boyd Valentine. The mechanic, yeah. Yeah, Boyd.

IL: Okay. Thank you very much

J: You’re welcome.
Iyshia: We are here at Biscayne National Park on December 9th, 2011. This is Iyshia Lowman, intern with Biscayne National Park and USF Master’s student. Charles Lawson is running the camera and we are here with Ozell Williams. Uh, can you just tell us a little about yourself? Where you were born? How long you’ve lived in Homestead? Where you’re from?

OW: Sure My name is Ozell Williams. I was born in Camilla, Georgia, raised in Homestead, spent 3 years in service, US Army, and uh, went to school at Daytona, Florida…and the 1st lifeguard job I had was Bethune beach and New Smirma Beach, which was the segregated beach for Daytona Beach, Florida. I left there and came back here, and I started working for Dade County Parks and Recreation which is Homestead North, which was a segregated black beach. I worked here for probably approximately 5 years then I went onto further with Dade County in all 37 years. This beach was basically for black citizens of Homestead, Florida and for Goulds, Perrine, Richmond Heights. As a matter of fact we…they had a bus that would pick up kids in the summer for swimming classes from Richmond Heights, Perrine, and Goulds bring them here, we taught them swimming and a lot of them became good swimmers and we were very proud of them. They used to say that black people couldn’t swim, that was the biggest lie they ever told, but anyway it was a pleasure working here. We had a park manager here, Warren Ferguson. Mr. Ferguson who was very good and inspired us to do better for ourselves. Our head life guard was Harry Brit, myself, Nathaniel Thompson, and also we had swimming instructors here, who was Gary Brown and, uh, Paul Moore. We had custodians here who were Willie Bayne, James Bell, and Freddy Gascut. We had concession attendants here, who was Rosetta Scott and Clarice Davis. During the summer, like I say, we had the swimming classes and the beach would be open basically Saturday and Sunday and during the week when we didn’t have a crowd they had Australian Pines along the road there and we would cut them pines down and that’s why you don’t see them cause we cut them down. So we was always doing something to keep busy.

IL: Can you describe a typical day at work?

OW: Okay we would get here, check the area, make sure that the area was clean. The concession attendant, not the concession attendants, the park attendants would clean the bathrooms and we would make sure there was no glass on the beach. People would start coming around 9:30 (am) we would stay here until 5 o’clock which was close. We had a concession stand where we could by hot dogs, sodas.
IL: Okay, were there racial restrictions on the beach?

OW: No, when we came to work we came to work, that was it. There was no thing about any…racial.

IL: So did you work on both sides of the beach?

OW: When they closed this side down, then I went to the other side, me and Harold Brit.

IL: Okay, when did they close this side down?

OW: I think it was ‘round ‘64 or sometime. I’m not quite sure, but when they closed it down we went to the other side. And we never lost anybody here either.

IL: So do you know why they closed it, this side of the beach?

OW: Well, I guess it was a case for money, they had to…well the law stated that they had to…uh, integrate. That was like every place else doin around the south here.

IL: Okay, can you describe what it was like once integration started? Were there any differences, big changes, problems?

OW: No. As a matter of fact I never had a problem. It was very good, uh, when we got there, everything went fine. We were good lifeguards and we knew our job and we did our job.

IL: Um, how can you describe your relationship…were there white lifeguards?

OW: Yeah.

IL: Okay, can you describe your relationship with…?

OW: It was very good. Very good. As a matter of fact people had common sense. (laugh)

IL: Okay, did you have any problems with any of the white people on the other side of the beach, did you work both sides?

OW: Well, when they closed this one down, then I went over there, I stayed there until I went someplace else. No, I had no problem with anybody. When I told them they had to do something they did it.

IL: Alright…and can you describe your relationship with the other workers here?

OW: It was very good.

IL: Friendly?

OW: We more or less had a family type deal. Everybody was pleasant and that was good.
IL: Did you ever come to the beach…the 1st time you came to the beach you started working here?

OW: Yes.

IL: Okay, so you never came here like…?

OW: No, cause I was away. So when I came back, I applied for the job and I got it. Very easy because I come outta the surf so that was, this was not the surf, this just a little hole. When I worked at Bethune Beach that was surf; the ocean more or less.

IL: Can you describe Bethune and New Smyrna Beach, please?

OW: It was a very good beach, they had a picnic area. They had concession stands, they had a motel, and they had a bar there. So everything was fine.

IL: Okay, what are your thoughts on it compared to Homestead? Like…any big differences anything like that?

OW: It was a big difference because you were in the surf! This was just a hole. Otherwise you had to be a very good lifeguard up there. You couldn’t just be mediocre, because you had to swim through the surf to make rescues. I guess that’s why I got the job here so easy cause I was a very good swimmer.

IL: Can you walk us through a typical day at the beach?

OW: Well like I said, we come in we make sure that everything is open and clean from there we would set the tower up and when the people would come we would get in the stand and watch and make sure that they were alright. And if I took a break then he was in the stand, if he took a break then I was in the stand. Otherwise both of us if one was in the stand the other was walking around, making sure that everything was alright.

IL: Alright…and was that the same thing with the other beaches? Same kind of system like that?

OW: Yes.

IL: Um, Did you have any…um, you lived in Homestead?

OW: Yes, I lived in Homestead most of my life until I went into the Army.

IL: Can you describe what it was like living in Homestead, going to the army, and coming back?

OW: It was very different. Well you know living in Homestead, Homestead was very segregated. You couldn’t go here, you couldn’t go there. So I went in the service and I was stationed in England…and I got the chance to see all these beautiful things. Excuse me I said, “No way, is somebody gonna tell me where I can’t go anymore.” So I started going where I
wanted to go. It was a big difference. As a matter of fact it was an eye opener. You seeing all this beautiful stuff here and you say “Gee, I enjoyed this!” And it set a kind of pattern of the way I wanted to live. Cause I saw the nice things and I enjoyed them.

IL: Did you have any family in Homestead?

OW: Yes, I had family and my, uh, grandmother raised me…grandfather…my mother moved back to Homestead. I have sisters and brothers. And uh, I’m sure it was alright growing up. I can’t kick. Because like I said basically when I was growing up, I was going to do what I want to do anyway. You can kill me but you can’t eat me (laughs).

IL: Okay. And what did you do for fun when you were growing up?

OW: I used to skin dive, I used to hunt…yeah, hunt like rabbits and deer and all that. Deer, wild hogs and turkey. Life opened up for me. I start seeing beautiful things that I enjoy doing.

Charles: (to Interviewer: Can I ask a question?) So, uh, when you join the army you go off and you experience unsegregated life, what was it like to come back and take a job at a segregated beach? Well to be a part of the, a part of that system?

OW: Well I had to deal with it until things changed. But as far as I was concerned I was gonna do what I wanted to do anyway. Like I say, you can kill me but you can’t eat me. I eat all the animals I kill (laughs)

IL: Were there any events or parties held at the beach?

OW: Well...was it July they used to have, well people used have big cookouts and all.

IL: And so did you work during those times?

OW: Yeah.

IL: Okay. Could you describe the cookouts?

OW: Yeah, the beach would be crowdeded, I mean jam-packed, but we had the rules and they followed the rules and everything was fine.

IL: Okay.

OW: we basically worked as a team. We was running the park we kept everything smooth.

IL: And so, when you came back from the service and started living in homestead again, could you describe your life to me then?

OW: Okay. When I came back and uh, I got a couple of old mediocre jobs and that wasn’t working out for me, I was just waiting, I can’t live outta this. So I said best thing is to go up to
school. So I left and went off to school and when I was going to school that’s when I became a lifeguard up there and when I got back here I became a police officer in the city of Homestead…and they had some segregated set up rules. It was about 5. We could not arrest the white people when it started, but after it started then if anybody did something in my presence I arrested them. Because if they told me you couldn’t then, then I would’ve told them “take this badge.” But anyway it worked out.

IL: When did you become a police officer?

OW: 1962. And I was working here at the same time.

IL: Wow, 2 jobs.

OW: Yeah, I had 2 jobs for years. You know if you want anything outta like you gotta go out and get it. She’ll tell ya, I worked 2 jobs for yeas (referring to wife who was present). She liked the Cadillacs, and I wanted to buy them for her, she liked the big house I wanted to get it for her.

IL: Can you tell us about your experiences as a police officer? Do you feel it was…well you already said, you couldn’t arrest white people technically, but were there any other issues like with any of the…your co-workers, your fellow officers?

OW: well when we 1st started, when we would do our reports we had to do them in the car. They had a squad room where everyone did the reports so one night, I had to do a report so I went in the squad room and I was doing my report. Then the sergeant came in and he says, “what are you doin?” I said “what do you think I’m doin’? I’m makin my report.” “Well you…” I said, “Well I’m here!” So he says, “I’m gonna tell the chief.” And I said, “You tell who you want to!” So anyway after that everything was squared away. Sometimes you have to reach out and get things what you want.

Charles: If, uh…why, why do you think they hired you in the 1st place if the interest would’ve been to have you do reports in the car and you can’t arrest white people, there’s a reasoning behind…

OW: That…That was all over the south, you, black people, white police officers couldn’t arrest white people, okay. When you start and you take the job, you…you make the changes. See you can’t change anything from outside, you gotta get inside.

IL: What would you like people to know about Homestead Beach?

OW: I want them to know that it was a very nice beach, uh, people enjoyed themselves, people learned to swim and uh, it was very nice place to be.

IL: Um, well, is there anything else you would like to include any like what was an interesting point about homestead beach?
OW: Well, an interesting point about it is that it was a nice place to work. That was getting people working here because I learned so much from the manager here that inspired me to be better. So that was very good.

IL: What were the other jobs that you tried to do that you said didn’t work the, uh, best for you?

OW: Well, they just had little old mediocre jobs and you didn’t make much money so I needed something that make money because I like to live good…I still like to live good. Cause God blessed me to retire. My wife is retired. We don’t have a whole lot of money but we live good. I like lobsters, steak. So I just like to enjoy life.

IL: Um, and I was told the particular, the separated areas of the beach ya know, black people could go to the white, white people couldn’t go to the black did you have any instances of that happening?

OW: No.

IL: Um, well those are all the questions that I have. Do you know of there is anyone else we should talk to about this particular project?

OW: Let see, one of the Parkertons is still living. I don’t know his, his phone number, but uh…Nick can probably get it for you. It’s, fellows name is Willie Bayne, he’s still living.

IL: Okay, well thank you very much for coming out and talking to us.

OW: You’re quite welcome, glad that I could be of help.

Charles: Um, if you could do an interp program here, if you were a park ranger, staff and wanted to point around what went on around here any particular story, anecdote, something funny going on something that would be of interest to national park visitors that come off the street, what would you want to tell them?

OW: Well, the picnic area was nice down here. People used to come out and do the little picnics, the little barbeques and all. They had the little dance floor and uh, people used to come out and fish along the side there.

IL: What was the dance floor like?

OW: It just a little round circle, cement circle and they had a little juke box. ‘Course the jukebox was in the concession’s place, but they could punch the little records outside. So they enjoyed themselves.

IL: How were the dances?

OW: Oh, they did the boogie-woogie (laughs). The key thing is long as people happy that’s what counts. Now that was the same thing with Virginia Beach they had up there, they had,
course they had a little train and all that up at Virginia Beach. I worked there too. As a matter of fact, sometime when it would be real crowded there they would pull me from here set me up there, put somebody else here because that water had a lotta current in it and you needed your best lifeguards there.

IL: And how long did you work there?

OW: Um…I must’ve worked there about 6 years. And then I eventually went to parks and I stayed there the rest of my time. I ran pools and uh, tennis.

IL: Um were there any other races that were on the beach beside white and black?

OW: Well they had, the Spanish started coming when I went over to the other side. You had a few that came here before I went over there. So otherwise what happened is mix the beach, ya know, everybody had to go there up cause they didnt have any other place to go. But everything was normally good. We didn’t have many problems because we always had the police force close by. Everything went fine.

Charles: Did the Civil rights act of ’64, did that close the beach immediately? Or did the signs just come down and people could go on either side?

OW: No, no, no. When, the ’64 came they closed it.

Charles: closed.

OW: Right, so me and Harry went over to the other side.

Charles: What happened to the rest of that staff over here?

OW: Oh, most of them had went to other jobs. But like I said me and Harry…Mr. Ferguson the manager, he went to another park. As a matter of fact he went downtown.

Charles: What happened to this property then…immediately when, what when on here afterwards?

OW: After they closed it, wasn’t too much of anything. We just came over and kept it clean until the government bought it.

IL: Did they make any other changes, I know that there is a volleyball court over there and other stuff, have there been any changes over there?

OW: You mean over on the other side?

IL: Uh huh

OW: Well basically the boat ramps was improved.
IL: What were they like before?

OW: wasn’t that good (laughs). And then they improved the swimming. I used to do a lot of boating in the area. I dove for many years that was my fun at the time…and I was very good at it. She don’t want me to go out now (referring to wife). (laughs).

Charles: Skin diving? Scuba diving?

OW: Yeah, both.

IL: Alright, I’ll say it again, that’s all we have for you (laughs).
IL: This is Iyshia Lowman, Master’s student at the University of South Florida, intern at Biscayne National Park. I am interviewing Boyd Valentine, employee at Biscayne National Park. And Boyd do you give me consent, uh, to video tape and audio record this interview.

B: Yes, I do.

IL: Okay, this interview is going to be for Biscayne National Park as well as my master’s thesis do you give me permission to do that?

B: Yes.

IL: Okay, thank you very much. Okay Boyd first off, uh, let’s start with some information about you. Would you state your name, uh, age, and location where this interview is taking place?

B: My name is Boyd Valentine. I am 58 years old and this interview is taking place at Biscayne National Park…of Homestead.

IL: Okay, and what racial groups do you identify with?

B: Black.

IL: Okay could you just tell me about your experiences at Homestead Bayfront Beach during the, uh, 1950s and 60s?

B: When I go back, you know as time goes on, you know, bein that I’m 58 that ended in like in 19-, in the 60s the late 60s, mid 60s. I don’t even know, remember what year, but you know my mom, she was a very protective lady. We didn’t come to the beach that much, but when we came we came with people who she know was going to look after us make sure we wasn’t getting into trouble or anything. But, uh, coming out here, I remember coming out here the...I remember the roads they were more like the 1st bridge up there, when you come in where the blinking lights are. That was the last chance you had to get on this to get on this side, you know to go to the so called black beach. And uh, I remember a sign said “colored beach” at one time and the other side of the road, I never experienced that until they did integrate but we used to come down the road with one area, it turns into more like a rocky road. You know, its gravel and we used to come around here and I’m trying to remember exactly how it looked, but I remember when we used to get in there things used to be a lot of, a lot of seaweed in some area…and we got into the water the rocks and you didn’t notice them right then but they were
you know you really had to get out so far the rocks got a little sharper…and uh, I remember fish being in the water, occasionally a jellyfish something like that, you know, occasionally I remember seeing a jellyfish out there and uh we used to we were so, we were actually comfortable out here. You know you come to the beach and everything, you have a little picnic. There were not too many “brazilians”? out here. No, I can’t remember and snack bars and I can’t remember any lifeguards, not saying that there weren’t any I just can’t remember. One time actually I can say this now, my uh, a couple of my friends we played hooky and we came out here you know one of the other guys I hung out with, he had a car. We came out here and people out here they were actually swimming and we was swimming in the water. This, an incident that nobody knows about the guys that I was with they’re dead now. There was this one girl I don’t know who she was now, she was a young girl around about 14. She was in the water and she got out there and she couldn’t touch the bottom, she got a little too deep and she start goin under and swallowing water and I swum over there and grabbed her. I pulled her back and then I walked her out of the pool and she was coughin and gaggin. I think she was drownin…and I pull her out, I pulled her out. She was pretty. I was looking at her and I set her down and she ran over. She said told her brother that, “Why didn’t you come get me? He had to save my life!” I say “Wow, I saved her life?” That was the end of that. I guess I did save someone’s life sometimes. I mean one time in my life, but it wasn’t like “wow, that would’ve been totally different if she drowned.” Girl drowns at the beach. I don’t know. At the black beach they prolly would’ve you know, they prolly…that wasn’t that other side that was this side over here. That was just one incident. Another incident that I remember we came out here, I can’t exactly say who we were with. I mean, like I say I’m 58 now and we had uh, like wieners and everything. Then the little fire roasted the wieners on the fire. I hated wieners, (laughs) still do. And we roasted the wieners on the fire, ya know. We had little marshmallows and stuff. I hated marshmallows too, especially when they were roasted, I mean I was a picky kid. It don’t look like it now but I was. (laughs) And um, we stay out here…I don’t know if this place closed at a certain time or not…but I remember the kids a lot of kids played. Ya know, the kids from up the, ya kow, Randy??, Goulds uh, lot of them come up here. And uh, havin fun, I guess do what people do at the beach. And I like I told ya wasn’t too many times I came out here to swim, but we used to come out here and fish. On here what we call the Jetty now? That walk that goes to the Jetty? That actually the walk wasn’t there then. It was actually just rock that went all the way out to the end of the channel before they blocked it off and actually, I don’t know what happened now, but the tide actually come up hire now than they used to. Cause we used to walk all the way to the end. And my Dad and I, my sister, we used to go out there and fish. And when we go out there people used to be in the little pool out right here. We called it a pool. And we come back to fish, we caught there jacks, barracudas. And then we come back and always wash them…and uh, you know, it was just fun people havin fun. And we go out there again, ya know and I spent most of my time on the Jetty with my dad was to go fishing. As far as the beach area, I didn’t swim too much in there. I learned how to swim when I was 10 years old. The boy scouts used to come out here. Now, for a long time I thought that there was a drowning out here.
My friend usually said it wasn’t here, it was in a lake somewhere, but I thought it was out here when a guy by the name of Kelly Scott. He was in the boy scouts. The boys scout leader then, I don’t know, can I say his name? He’s dead now. Name was Joe Remy and Joe Remy was the boys scout leader and some way Kelly Scott drowned. That was a big thing in Homestead then. When he drowned, um, everybody, I mean a lot of people just didn’t die in Homestead like that especially kids. He, that thing, was, it’s more like a hurting thing. It was like “wow.” His family became loved by everyone because everybody giving sympathy and everything. And um like I say for a long time I thought it was out here and I’m pretty sure it was, but like I say Julius has a better memory than me. He remembers things like I can’t imagine. But that incident you know it was a separate incident, I remember all the guys ya know when I got older right before they closed this down we used to swim across.

IL: To…?

B: The other side, ya know just get in the water and swim across to see who could swim across. Now, I say “we,” but it wasn’t really “we.” Me I used to get about 1/3 of the way out and I come back. I was cautious. I say “forget this.” Then when the water got a little cold, a little deep, I didn’t know how deep that water was, I just headed back. Like I say again, I never remember a life guard. If lifeguards were here they were more out here in the earlier parts of the day and I don’t remember who they were if they were here. You can scratch that.

IL: And when you swam out, that 1/3 of the way did you saw the other side of the beach? The white side of the beach or you just mainly saw the black side?

B: Uh, no actually um, you couldn’t, I couldn’t I can’t remember seeing you know they didn’t have a lot of these buildings out here. You could hear things over the other side and where the headquarters building is now? Those were where weeds I mean mangroves. When you go out on the jetty you can see that side. It wasn’t, it didn’t look like it did today, but you can see on that side it was more like a foreign land. It was something that you always looked at and you saw wonder how it is over there, but you reluctant to go on that side as a matter of fact you wouldn’t go, your parents wouldn’t take you on that side. I can’t remember if we were even allowed to go on that side…maybe to work or something like that but like I said it didn’t bother us.

IL: Well, um what did you see when you look over there? Did you see people doing stuff?

B: Activities you know, they was playing, you know you couldn’t really see everything over there. You know they didn’t have the things that they have now but you could see you know things that people just playing you know I can’t actually I remember seeing people kinda I long way off like I say mangroves blocking a lot of things. You go out on the jetty you can see things, I didn’t know, I really can’t say, they kept the mangroves up so can’t, ya know, maybe see people in bikinis ya know, I don’t think, I don’t think that was accepted. (laughs) It’s true. It’s more like remember how I said people very possessive of what’s not theirs because you know one color or race they say “wow, That’s ours,” no its not. It’s whatever, people have their
freedom. They prolly be ridiculed, persecuted and everything for doing certain things but hey, people always had freedom. Other people take it away from them. That goes on today, I will not get on--I will not get into that part. It goes on in a certain, I mean, if you really look close look between the lines you’ll see it. And it’s certain things you say “wow, people still possessive.” They still shallow minded and that is one of the, that’s one of the biggest things that...it, people say things they don’t realize what they saying they actually don’t. Like uh, I been a boat mechanic, I just say this right quick, I been a boat mechanic for ya know, I am mercury technician. My title is boat mechanic, that’s what the title, I say Im not a mechanic! Mechanics don’t exist anymore! They really don’t, but whatever, you know, I say boat technician, boat mechanic and um, I have actually had people doubt my abilities. It’s not uh, it’s not too much you can do about people doubting your abilities. I mean, uh, all races can doubt you abilities, but there are some white people gonna doubt you, there’s a lotta black people who gone doubt you, but there’s still this tension that goes on, “wonder does her really know?” No matter what you do no matter how things improve people can’t accept things sometimes people can’t accept things. They, they, I mean it’s uh is more like uh a superior type attitude and a person feels better when someone is inferior to them and believe it or not it happens. It’s a mental thing or an emotional thing whatever it is some people just feel better when they feel someone is inferior to them because it makes them seem like they’re more than what they really are. And people have trouble with that they can’t, uh, I don’t know if it’s, I think a lot of its teachin. People teach you and they get it embedded in you, I mean you get it embedded in you in your mind in the back of your head. I mean something I mean uh…you take uh, an animal and you can train that animal to do a certain thing. I mean it’s hard to break that animal from that. I mean that is the way of life. Some people are like that. There was one guy I brought fishing. It was fairly recent about 2 years ago, I brought him fishing out here one night. He’s an older guy and Im not gonna call his name, but you know he’s the dad of a friend of mine and uh his daughter said she knew this guy named Boyd Valentine that would take her fishing. Old guy about 70 years old, he was so afraid. He was asking questions like “Do any white people hang out there? You know, them people will get you out there, they bother with you, you could end up dead.” I said “no, Biscayne is bout the safest place you can be in Homestead.” I mean no one’s gonna bother you out here and he was so frightened he came out here and you could see the nervousness on him. And, uh, after a while when he start catchin them snapper, especially when, uh, those 14 inch snapper, you could see him calming down. I mean, He was calming down, I mean tremendously. We allowed to catch, ya know 5 snappers over 10 inches, you know and I caught a few and gave them all to him, he was so happy. Well ya know I thought about that for a while, I say, this guy still lives in the past. His memory is so intense that it still affects him.

IL: But you helped with that.

B: Oh yeah, I mean, it, I mean-momentarily. I guess it did relax him a little bit. I mean, he relax a bit more and he prolly seen something that uh, realize something that he never thought existed before that people really not out to get ya anymore. Ya know, you have some that, but a lot of
people don’t. I have friends of all races and I mean good friends, creed or whatever and I have never looked at it like that. I just look at it like people has been, most people been naïve to the world and um believe me its best to not say a lot of things because there’s a lot of things going on that you don’t know about and sometimes you can get paranoid. A person, sometimes I can get paranoid but I try not to ya know for my protectionary thing. I say wow man I may have gone too far…but Iyshia, in the early years of my life it was more intense than it is now. The older you get, the less it bothers you. A lot of things don’t bother you now. You know you getting to me being 58 in 20 years I’ll be 78 years old. If I, I’ll be 78 regardless dead or alive. I don’t have much, I don’t have that much longer on this planet. Things just don’t bother with you. I mean fear, it just don’t bother you the way it used to. While you’re reluctant to go here reluctant to go there, right now as of today I was born in the era I was discriminated against and people don’t understand it. People think you’re supposed to get over things. As a child, that’s where you experience the most…you experience the most fear, caution, and everything else. That’s when things are really burned in your head. And it’s hard to get them out. When you’re uncomfortable with things as a kid and uh if you were a kid and some you had some kinda fault with you and someone made fun of you, that’s gonna stick with you throughout your adulthood. It’s just certain things that someone could say that bothers you and there’s somethings that people can do now, there’s some places that I could go right now I’m not comfortable at. Even if the people are friendly, I don’t feel it, I see it, but I don’t feel it. If it makes me uncomfortable I don’t want to be there. Believe me it’s not fear, its emotions, it’s the feelings that I get. It makes you…the feelings it, you revert to the old misery miserable type feeling you had and you don’t like that type of stuff. I mean people right now anybody, if someone comes up to a person they says uh, something that makes them think of something that really bothered them before they don’t want to hear it. Activities, a lot of things go on that you don’t want to hear anymore. I heard the n-word so much when I was a kid. It was so, it was accepted, I mean it was really, I mean it was something over like nobody liked it but nobody wasn’t saying anything too much. I mean, it was, I mean the people say it but that’s how they address you and it was not like uh, spook, n-word and all this but I mean more like whatever and then you throw a racist word back or something like that someone comes in the car you know how they do and then you more like “wow.” But Imma tell you, you’re really not too aware of a lot of things until until you are aware of them, until someone makes you aware of them. Someone starts retaliating…they are more like and then it starts bothering you and then that’s when the anger comes it. Believe me if you don’t control that, you don’t get over yourself, it’ll bloom, it’ll emerge. You start thinking, doing, and actually believing stuff that’s not even there. You know when someone can say a certain thing you relate it to other person who said it. A lot of people have different meanings and then some people just dont realize. Like we talked about earlier, what they are saying. When you get a super sensitive person like me that is it could be beneficial, but it’s more of a curse. Makes your life very unpleasant a lot of times. You want to go to a neutral place but you don’t feel it, I guess that’s why I am so fascinated with Norway, cause I was thinking. So when I started researching, I kinda lost my feelings a little bit for it. You know I’ve gone to France
some people say go back to Africa, I’ve never been to Africa. Never in my life have I been to Africa. Matter of fact, I’ve never been outta this country other than the Virgin Islands and that’s American. I went to the British Virgin Islands that’s as far as I been outta the country. I feel uncomfortable in a lot of things right now. I would defend myself in a lot of ways, you know, I’m not afraid of people. Never been afraid of people but so of now I’m not afraid to speak. I will speak my mind, people look at me and they’re reluctant to say a lot of things to me because of…they say, you don’t want to make Boyd angry. Those are degrading words to me. I don’t wanna, I’m not the Hulk. “Don’t make me angry, you wouldn’t like me if I’m angry.” I don’t like that. I am not a violent guy or anything and um, when a person does something or says something always thought you supposed to…I mean in my mind I have to blown that match out before it becomes a forest fire. Believe me people will go too far. Sometimes a person does things, they get into they own zone and a person does a person will do a thing because they are trying to break you down so they can entertain themselves for some reason or they can feel like they want to feel about something and uh, so I always more like act defensive on a lotta things out here. People come to you on the street, you know someone just come by and just say a dirty word to you. And you’re like especially, I look at people I look at the way they look, I mean, they all walks of life. You have people what they call different names…white people, black people, they have different names that they call people. They have the Southern people the Northern people and you some people are just totally ignorant, hateful, taught to to be hateful, they kids they teach them kids to be hateful and I still don’t know what they’re doing. They use the words “They stink!” How? I never understood that. He say “they stink!” What you mean they stink? You know what stinks? Uh, a skunk, when he lets out his musk. I mean you still have that scent lingering and uh, a stinkbug stinks, a polecat stinks. People don’t stink, unless they don’t bathe. Now it don’t take the black person, red person, yellow person, because that “they stink, they steal.” Iyshia, what I mean, can you identify with that? How in the world, “THEY steal.” I mean it’s, they do this if you ever go on the sight I was on you won’t believe the things people still say these days. I never finished that sight cause I can’t understand, Iyshia or Aaliyah. You know the singer Aaliyah? When she died in the plane crash, I read an article, you know, online that’s where I usually read my newspaper now online, much better and it came in “who cares about this ‘n-b,’ she just a priority singing all that rap crap, they outta all die!” I say, “God, people is still ignorant. It’s still go back to Africa.” Who in America is from America? I know the American Indians when Columbus or when the Pilgrims came they were here. Columbus discovered America or RE-discovered America whatever you want to call it, America the beautiful. Im not gonna get into somethings because it’ll be you know it was its not really appropriate, but uh…when someone goes into a place and claims “God’s country or God’s world,” whatever. They take the uh, if you notice that there’s a lotta kind of religions there are lot of different kinds of bibles and America has different cultures, religions in America. They say the land of the free, land you know or United States…United States of America, okay? You have, uh, the people who wrote the King James bible here new King James bible, the uh, this bible and then you have the people who wrote the Mormon’s bible the Jehovah witness and then
you have the Muslims and when you think about it you come to America, you say, “wow, all these other people in the world, they goin to hell.” They have all the wrong ideal of wonder who deceived them. Tell me this part who said that we were right? Can you prove that we wrote the right bible? It was translated in the right language as us but the people will see they do the same thing. They will say those people are pagans, infidels, they are everything. People say it all over the world. Tell me whose right? You don’t know. Imma say it right nobody knows anything. They can’t even tell where they came from. I mean over the past, I mean we can actually record back, you know, from the bible 6,000 years how it become now in the last 100 years I mean people on this planet has came farther than they did in the 1st 5,900 years? You know how many, how much technology they have from 1912 to now? You go to that Pioneer Museum, you’ll see in the 40s hey um the equipment that they were using, the telephones that they were using and the things that they have now, it was unimaginable back then that they have a cell phone this thing that they call a cell phone, touch tone. My phone here I can take it and read books, whole novels. This thing is just like unlimited, I really can’t use it that good, but (laughs) you know. I mean that’s for the one of young kids, you know born into this stuff still and old world you know, if um, if I could imagine a lot of things like what people think, I think it’s a miserable, miserable life to hate. It gotta be. People, uh, ya know back in the 60s when uh James Brown you know started it, ya know, “Say it loud, I’m black and I’m proud.” Ya had the Black Panthers come out. The Black Panthers were a good organization, they weren’t violent and everything, ya know, but people gonna make them look violent. They got to get the leaders out of there. They got to get the people that whose going to bring these people to the realization that they may be someone. And, uh, so they started saying all kinds of corrupt things about it, arresting the leaders, while falsely accusing them of things. Angela Davis…I mean geez wiz. Yeah, I mean it’s uh, you wonder, ya know why did they do that. It’s an ego trip, superiority, “I wanna be God. We are God.” The white Christian race, uh, when I get to heaven “Wow, I love you black people music.” These things I heard. “Music that you black people play in church…when I get to heaven, I’m goin to, I’m comin over to y’all side so I can hear that stuff!” I heard these things with my own ears and I was like…”wow…are you sure you gone get there?” I be sayin to myself, “Man, you gone have to pray just to go to hell.” (laughs) Geez wiz what kinda attitude is that? What? I mean, when we when you get to heaven. Tell me this, Lyshia, how-who knows whose right? Anyone knows God? Do they? I mean you been told this, you been told that ya know. I mean when you young that’s when you start believing things. I mean anybody who can—when you think of these things if you can believe in Santa Claus without a doubt when you were a child. I mean this fat guy with the red suit insisted in your mind. He was real. No matter what the odds were you never doubted. You look up on your house you have a flat roof, you have the only thing up there is a pipe and you wonder how in the heck that guy got down that pipe. You never think about how that guy goes around to millions of houses in one night, you have no concept of time. You, really when you a kid, you really don’t think about that there’s a place outside of your little town there. You don’t doubt. That is why people are so conceited with their thinking these days when it comes to racism! Because they taught as kids
they have no doubt that people are inferior. That’s why that beach was black, that beach over there white. 1/3 the size as that one. That was, I mean, when we started goin over there, people started goin over there I couldn’t believe the size of that place. It was like, I’m not kidding, its about 1/3 the size of that place. When I got in that water over there, believe me it wasn’t too much tension because we went there a lot of people stopped goin. Oh, they honestly did, not kidding. Um, I remember getting in that water and walkin…walking out in the deeper water, I didn’t feel the sharp stones anymore. They were all smooth. It was like “wow.” I wouldn’t have dared try to swim across there. I prolly wouldn’t have made it. It’s like “whoa, this is pretty nice you know.” It’s um, you forget about things using that picnic grills. I can do a lil picnicking out there and everything and um, the solidity (34m35s) of the water it’s the same and everything but um, I could’ve swore that water seems cleaner. I think it might have seemed cleaner because of the, uh, sea growth on the bottom. Out here like I say there was sea weeds in there and there were some over there too but not like here and we had more. The sand looks better and the water couldn’t seemed cleaner cause all the water come from the ocean and we still had the little fish over there.

IL: When it was integrated did you got to the beach more?

B: Well I actually went, when it was integrated, I was uh, more like a teenager then, I mean my mom was more like loosing her grip on me for confining me in a place. It was like, you gotta let go sometimes. I mean, I’m 15-16 years old hey…you take off sometimes. You don’t have to long as you be home at a certain time. Have too much…I mean I was one of the, I was a very good swimmer by that time, I was on the swim team at school and uh, so…I didn’t have, I don’t remember having a lot of trouble over there, you know when they integrated it. And you know like I said, I really don’t know what year they integrated, I really don’t, but I know that, uh, this place over here you still have to come at the entrance right there where the red light, the blinking lights there was a flood there and you turn off the main road, it was actually 2 roads come down and uh, it might have been the 2nd road I can’t remember that good, but you came on down and that little bridge that place where you came in today, that little place where you went cross?

IL: Yeah.

B: That was, that didn’t even exist. That canal came all the way through. All the way through, I mean that was cut off, I mean could not get over there at all. As far as I know right now that side wasn’t even workin and I don’t know anyone that worked over there. I don’t know all this place was the county’s’. At one time and when they uh I think the park service actually had somethin to do with the uh integration of the place over here because you know this became Biscayne National Park it was come Biscayne National Park and it was uh I mean very historic out here, I mean Biscayne Bay and everything I mean that, it’s a treasure out there, that place is beautiful. And uh it’s not like it used to be all the coral reefs and everything because I guess its I don’t know if it’s dying or it’s not like it used to be. You know they putting in the effort to restore a lot of areas and preserve and then the water park. They did a great job. This a beautiful place to
me, I don’t say that too often. I love working here, I love being here. I like being here more than working. I don’t want to work anymore. I been workin a long time, but I enjoy the park a lot. I stay here after work. I might stay here bout 2 or 3 hours. I mean, I don’t, it’s a lot of things that I don’t be concerned about like I was. I be more concerned about safety walkin around town than you know out here. Any parts of town, ain’t no safety issue out here.

IL: How long have you lived, uh, worked at...here?

B: I’ve worked at Biscayne since 2007. I worked at Everglades since 1975 up until 2007. Down in Flamingo the whole time. This my 36th year in the park service.

IL: Congratulations.

B: Thank you. I never worked for anything else, I mean anyone else. I went to the military, from there to the National Park Service, always worked for the government. Apart from the few guy-jobs when I got outta high school. Get me a car or something.

IL: So you were born in Homestead?

B: No, I was born in Greenville, Mississippi...and my mom, she was a single mom, she had 4 kids, we-some kinda way we ended up in a place called Coachville, Pennsylvania and believe me I remember that place. I was about 3 or 4 years old, I know I was. I remember we lived there, because she was a migrant worker. And uh this building that we lived in was uh people go I don’t know who used to keep the kids while other people go work, I only remember the building. A long building and I know that that bathrooms or the outhouses that were at the end of the building. The rooms or the apartments that we were in prolly rooms they didn’t have a bath room. You went down to the end of the building to cook and to use the bathroom when you need to. And uh some kinda way I don’t remember leaving Pennsylvania but I remember when we 1st arrived in Homestead. I get kids are able to sleep the whole journey. I guess as you come from Pennsylvania back on a bus back in them days I mean with the vehicle that the way they were made and the way the roads were very few that they have 27 oh, was the main road comin down here then. Ya know, I don’t know how old US 1 is not really but uh I remember being in Pennsylvania one time and I remember being down here. The 1st place that I remember seein was Williams hotel, Vica (41min) Williams hotel. Im gonna show you that in my book. A matter of fact I am going to if you’re interested, Im going to give you that book and I will, I mean I actually will, I like what you’re doing here and it’s a very cheap book. It’s not really that special at all, I’m goin to get me another one, but uh I think you’ll find it interesting. I remember um, Vica hotel and we were living in a place called Mary Russells for a night. And after that we moved to a place right behind 4th St on 3rd terrace a single road, you know terrace always cuts off and it was a long building we was living in apartment number 4. I was 4 years old I remember my birthday. I turned 4, so that made me about 3 years old when we were in Pennsylvania. You know back then when you was a kid that young time really don’t exist an month is 10 years to you I mean things are bigger than they are these days. I remember we moving on over there
place called Elroy School on a place where we moved called 6th court. Moving on 6th court we stayed there, and like I believe about 5 years my mom met a guy by the name of Charles Williams, my step-dad, that’s the one I used to call my dad. She met him and we had-you know she had more kids I mean actually she had 8 kids with him and she had 4 already so there was 12 of us. Adum that’s the one who used to bring me out here all the time. When we came but uh it was so many things that when on here, when you get this book when you read this book, very easy read, you’ll see a lot of things that went on in Homestead. I mean, has a lot of information this book is written by ya know co-authored by Jesse Robinson and uh actually called it Jesse Robinson cause he was a great community leader in Homestead. And back then he came from uh a town up in he was born up in the Panhandle of Florida somewhere. You’ll see it in there too and uh, great community leader like I say you know there a lot of activity went on back then, but it was major separation back then segregation. The town started right there at the Florida East Coast railroad tracks in Homestead which don exist and more. It’s the metro bus pathway now. They dug those railroad tracks up some time ago right there at the tracks I called it white town. Florida East Coast Railroad was right there, they tore that building down too I actually have pictures of that tons of pictures of that thing somewhere but not from the beach though. That railroad when you go we used to go in the back of the railroad and the 1st place “boom” downtown right there on Mowry St. That was one of the main roads there but Krome Ave? That road is old. I used to see pictures of that you know renovation and everything I used to see pictures of I got pictures of that road when it was dirt, wooden building. That 1st national bank which is a police station now, Homestead Police Station that was the 1st National bank established in 1932 as the 1st national bank but that building was there way before that. It was much narrower than that used to be called J.D. Red a place on it be JD Reds and as time went on they actually expanded that building the to some JD Red they made it bigger and better and everything. That’s when uh, Jesse started working there. He started working there for $1 a day. I’m not gonna talk too much about that because that’s all in the book. And uh you’ll find that very interesting I love history. I mean you know, out here you know on the town history I like the other parts too. I mean I do research whole lot of things. I have a book called “Ghost towns of the old west.” Well “Ghost towns of the old West” is actually, a ghost town is determined by you know a town that is not inhabited by people anymore and out west they have I mean this book is this thick. It has so many places on there that have a story right there. If you want to actually want to go back in time, I mean imagine. Oh man, that’s the book to read. It makes you feel I mean gives you a feeling, a brand new feeling like it does when I go back in time you know. Actually let me tell you something Iyshia, actually, being comfortable is way feels much better than being modern and back in the days uh, a lot of people were comfortable. It was a comfort zone a lot of people called it. And I always thought in my mind the less you know the less things you get into the more happier you are. You think about there are some things the more you get involved, the more complicated you know life could be. You know I mean? You don’t have to sometimes right know you know I’m in so much activity now just being a citizen of the US you know there are just so many things you have to do these days you
have to deal with everything and um it’s not relaxation. You can’t, it’s not the part where you just sit down and just--there’s no part sitting down and doing anything. There no such thing as sitting down and doing anything. If you do, everything around you deteriorate. And when I say deteriorate you’ll end up with nothing. If you have a home and it’s paid for and you just gonna enjoy your home for the rest of your life…miss paying taxes on it for 3 years. You know what they’re gonna do. They’re gonna sell your taxes to the people who out there waiting on someone and then when they sell your taxes it’s more like on hold until for 3 month until this outstanding interest rate goes up on it and some people can’t pay it and then the next year they do it again and it I mean it doubles every 3 months or something like that and it get outrageous in about 3 years’ time those people come claim your home. I mean you can have it paid for and they get it for a little less $25,000. But the paid the tax people. They can take you house, you can’t set round and do anything anymore. It’s over its gone. So your whole life you gone have to be partially stressed out just to hold on to your life unless you move somewhere in Canada up in the wilderness and freeze to death. Someone told me if I ever move to Canada I’ll never come back. I don’t think that’s true, when the weather gets below 50, it bothers me, I mean I like it but momentarily, I don’t want to live in it. I’ve been to New York in the winter time that is not forgiving. Oh, my God, I didn’t know it could get that cold. It can. What a town New York, 10 minutes from Ontario where the snow, you have snow drifts where it actually snows sideways.

IL: (laughs) Weird.

B: I mean, its blowing it’s just a blizzard its coming off the lake I guess. Cold there. People get used to it. My daughter spent 2-3 years up there in the military. We used to go visit her “OOO.” You can go from here to probably about a quarter mile down the road, I don’t think I would’ve made it back. I would’ve frozen solid, it was cold. But you know they’re native birds, not native, I don’t know crows everywhere. I see crows out there when its 5 below zero walkin around. I don’t know how in the heck they did it. They just walkin around, I don’t know what it is. I think they survivors. Mankind should study crows. Not to be conniving like a crow ya know, study how they survive. You have anymore questions? Let’s gone knock some questions out, I mean.

IL: I have no problem listening to you talk, um, I want to know were there any parties, events, or anything that y’all would have at the beach or get together for?

B: Talking about in my older days something like that? Oh yeah, uh, like I say the boy scouts come out here. Okay, I remember I used to put out newspapers. The Homestead News Leader. And it was a guy he actually used to work for the park service but he uh the main guy who recruited the paperboys, my brother started being the paper boy first you know then I took over you know. I mean we were making tons of money. 5-6 dollars a week, I man Oh man I mean, come on! And um the papers back then you know wasn’t--they came out on Thursdays and Sundays and they were 15 cent a week. We used to keep the nickel and tha paper gets tha dime. And uh that’s why you know we had a big paper route. Bo Ellington, uh, he uh what’s the
Homestead News, the recruiter for the paperboys, he picked up he brought all our papers and everything and every now and then he would bring us out here and have a picnic. And uh, we’d have uh, we’d buy these big bag, he’d buy us this big bag of wiener called Circus wiener. I re—I would never forget those wiener they were the worst. Awfulist tasting wiener in the history of wiener. They tasted like they were made out of 70% flour. They were awful, but they was cheap. You get a big bag of 50 for about $2, I’m not kiddin’ and they cooked all of them and people run around happy they didn’t care. Used to have sodas back then uh they had a few can sodas but a lot of sodas were in bottles. Ah, we ain’t had to many we had kool-aid in the big cooler and everything have it in a cup and I mean having potato chips. I don’t remember havin hamburgers but we probably did I don’t know and the uh—when we used to come out here we used to have chaperones you know we had grown people you know you have to have a certain amount of grown people to watch all those kids and everything so um, so we had chaperones but you know but anyway uh, I don’t remember exactly who they were we used to come here and we used to have fun. I mean the uh, I can’t remember any bbq grills in the picnic there might have been some there might have been the ones—some, there might have been a few. I don’t think it was that many and I remember a shower being outside. We didn’t have the inside shower over the other side they had the inside showers and outside showers but over here we might have had, I can’t really remember, but I remember the shower you know when you go out you have to hit yourself with water 1st you know to get used to it before you get in the water. And Mr. Bo he was one of the nicest men you know I go—I can’t remember, he worked at Everglades for a long time. He passed away some years ago. And he had a son names Winston Ellington, he’s still around actually he’s in that book as a little old kid. Winston’s about 60, 70 years old now, but he was in the choir. Thing about it he looks that same way. Gosh. Geez wiz, I mean. And um, I don’t remember coming out her to have a family picnic as a matter of fact I know we didn’t, some people did, but we never did. My mom she, uh, she wasn’t and activities, outdoor activities lady at all, you know. Like I said she was very protective and water like that…that’s more like death penalty to her. That’s dangerous like a lot of people think of snakes, deadly. All snakes should be dead, you know how some people think about snakes. And uh I mean when it comes to water she always warned us about water. “Stay away from that water!” Drown, she tells these stories about people drowning. Scare the crap outta ya. You know and when I started coming up my favorite thing was water I loved to swim. Used to be out there the few times that we did come out here and have a lot of fun. It was totally different. You know we had a pool in Homestead too.

IL: Oh, really?

B: It was in Roby George Park. It was uh, for the black part of time. That’s right on 4th St, Roby George Park. I think at 4th St and 11th Ave. Roby George Park is still there they had a pool. I don’t know if it’s still there now. I don’t really think it was, but that pool was there a long time. Only black people swim in that pool. Now right on the corner of Camel Dr and US 1, there was a pool there, guess what pool that was? You got it! I never ever swim in that pool, I never
thought of swimming in it. I didn’t want to swim in it. I loved our pool the one we had. You know 8 ft. you know and I was in um, I learned how to swim in 5th grade. When I was in 5th grade we started goin to that pool in summer school. My mom always put us in summer school that was the best babysitter in the world. And um, we used to go, that’s when I learned how to swim, free swim lessons. Uh, and that’s when I really got hooked on swimming and we uh, never…let me see. We never had a tragedy in that pool something like that. I swallowed some water but you know that’s one of them things. I remember this one time, this black guy, it was a older man, he came out there he had a white boy with him. This boy was about 4 years old and he was there you know looking you know like “wow.” This boy he got up on the diving board and he jumped in everyone like (gasps) and that little rascal went down and came back up. We never seen anyone that small swim. Say “whoa! You see that itty bitty boy he swimming!” I mean, heck, you know like we were 10 years old learning how to swim and I’m sure there were a lot of people that could swim but that young? I don’t even really know when they put that pool there but that’s how a lot of people learned how to swim in that pool, plus out here I guess a few people learned out here otherwise it was the canals. The rock pits that we did a lot of swimming in. Rock pit right off Reverend road, I remember swimming there as a teenager. I don’t think that thing has a bottom. I mean you know how Florida is Florida goes down. I mean and it’s kinda (makes sound=“flume”) goes in to nothing in some places. That thang is deep; it’s still out there now. I think it used to be Florida rock and sand and we used to have a little place called the mussel white. It was still, it’s across Palm Drive in Florida city. I think, uh, actually they start digging there again for rock and sand and well people used to go out there. I heard there was a few drownings out there. It’s some—at the one right on Reverend Rd. and Davis Parkway it been quite a few drownings out there and uh you can’t really call this a consequence of not having nowhere to swim because we did. You know in my days we had the pool we had the beach area out here. Sometimes people just chose to go out there and swim ya know kids they sneak off. I was one of them. Fortunately, I’m here now so I didn’t drown, I could’ve easily drowned, but you got another place right off Lucy St and 6th Ave. Right now there is a neighborhood community center. There used to be a rock pit, it was and oh my God did some kids drowned out there. I don’t know how they—I know we had some kids that drowned out there. They used to swim at that place. Its right behind that Fannie Turner which is called the…right behind Fannie Turners home. That’s the home Fannie Turner was the 1st you know, maybe that actually established schools down in Homestead. She had a house build right there on the corner of Lucy St. and 6th Ave and its still there today and it was back in the 30 something, maybe or maybe 40 somethin like that. It was nice, it was Commissioner Moss office right now but right there behind that street was the rock pit right in that area used to be wooded area and they used to warn us a lot. I mean the thing is we used to actually make up poems about not going to the rock pit. Um, “Don’t be a fool, just swim in the pool. You might live long enough to finish school.” That was mine you know. (laughs) 1s place. “Goin to the…flowers in the garden gotta be chopped swimming in the rock pit gotta be stopped.” Written by I’m not kiddin one of the Florida City commissioner Eugene Berry. He won the 1st prize he
beat me out. I bet if you talk to him now he’s remember that. You know some of my experiences in Homestead, aw man. We didn’t get our 1st vehicle til around 196—maybe ‘64, ‘63. My dad had a Chevrolet panel truck which they call SUV’s these days. SUV’s just came out. Chevrolet came out with a 6 cylinder engine size 230 engine, I remember that so good. He bought it from a guy named Mr. Israel who was from Nassau and the top speed on it was 80 but it only get 60 and wow we were livin high on the hog. People used to pick at our truck, make fun of it. We don’t care. I mean that was like uh…escalade to us, the equivalent to these days and uh, I remember uh, getting out. [sound of someone opening and closing the door]. I remember living in that place on L. Lewis for the 1st time going to school. I didn’t even know my name was Valentine until I go in the 1st grade. All my brothers and sister’s name are Hudson. My mom names me after my grandmother because she said she wanted to keep the name goin on. You know I didn’t ask the thing is like I caught hell with that name. I was Boyd Valentine. I didn’t never think that there was another Boyd Valentine in the world. Who could be named—it was the doctor, the doctor that delivered me in Greenville, MS was named Dr. Boyd, she named me his 1st name and named my last name Valentine. The reason she named me his 1st name cause it was $35 what it costed me to be born and she didn’t have it he let her go so I was a k-mart baby. I was born absolutely free. It was like “wow” and my name ended up being Boyd Valentine, my grandmother name is Lindsey Valentine when she married a guy named Louis Valentine from Louisiana. He was in Greenville, MS because at that time they were workin on the levy. You know for the river and he met her then, but I didn’t know she was married before then to a guy but you know she had a divorce and everything and my mom she loved her grandmomma which was Lindsey Valentine which I end up with the name Valentine. But guess what? I don’t have any sons. Two of my daughters kept their name after they got married, naw, 2 of my-- all 3 of my daughters kept their name, they loved it. But the kids names is whatever they were. Some of the girls named Valentine, but the boys Hortons, Nunezs, there aint no Valentine. If Tamera don’t, I mean Tamera not gonna have anymore kids. Kim…Angie, she has a boy named Valentine so I can go on. Maybe the grandkids are gonna have, I don’t know I don’t think I’ll care after I’m dead, but I would like for it to keep on going. I love history, I like to go back. Ancestry.com, I don’t fool with that stuff that’s phony to me. What I believe is people to people dot com. Get me some old people that mostly gone now. When I was growing up I hung with old people they could tell you stories and their wise…most of them are wise, but you know they could tell you stories. Unbelievable. You know the stories they used to tell me, so things scare the crap out you. May mom used to tell me stories about in Mississippi and everything, a lot of things she kept secret like she didn’t really want to think about them too much. She didn’t have the most happiest life in the world. When she was comin up I made my world happy, I actually did, I do now. My favorite person, my favorite partner is me. I get off somewhere and I can do what I want to do in my mind. People cant relate to that and there’s some people who can actually, actually deal with you and actually enjoy the things you enjoy. The people who don’t they really don’t understand the things that you are going through in your head. Sometimes you have to reminisce just to recapture that peace you had in
older days like I said before modern times are not as good as the peaceful times you had back in the days. I mean the less complicated things were the better off they was. The less you know about a lot of things the better off you are like I was sayin earlier the different things as a kid you believe. You can either corrupt a kid or you can teach him some good stuff and a lot of people, some people they decide to bring up their kids like them, corrupted them. Discriminate, this person like this, I have never done that. I will never do that cause I have been treated bad and good by all walks...people and life and everything. People can be ignorant people can be naïve subject to anything sometimes they just can’t sometimes they just can’t I mean they’re limited a lot of people are. I mean they’re in a comfort zone if I go down this road here, I never have to Figure out how to get through another road in life in the mind. And they get like that and they’re not gonna accept anything. If it takes for a person to look at another person as being inferior to make them feel like someone they’re gonna do it. And there, the mind is set that why it happens that from the days that whatever happened I wasn’t there however all this racism started it started as uh, I guess it did with the Jews and the Germans…Hitler. I mean it been going on way before then you know Medieval days racism been going on, but you know the Germans actually looked at the Jews as less than animals. They honestly I mean thought in their mind that these people were below nothing I mean trash. They made them wear yellow—I mean I mean just so they could recognize who they are and you think to saw how is your mind ever, how can your mind be that corrupt and you can still feel like a human. I mean you think about that, if you ever recover in some kinda way…I think it’d be bad repercussions within yourself. I mean you’d be so ashamed of yourself and some people actually were. There were people who remember doin things and it came so kinda way they had a change of heart and they committed suicide. They couldn’t even take—they say “how could I do that?” Some of them never did you know some of them came to America and lived to be 90 years old and some of these war criminals thy finally caught them. 87, 92 years old and gave them life in prison a whole 3 days, but that’s probably how long they had to live I mean geez wiz. If like I say if you can um, just be taught they right thing. I mean if people could be taught the right thing which will never happen, look at the world today Ilyshia. If you looked at people right now, you look at uh the leaders of the countries…I say plural, “countries,” you have leaders what are they doing why do they kill each other? We have this planet here, have enough resources for triple the amount of people right now. You know what it is? Pride, I want to be God attitude, I want to be the leader I mean and people get into wars. Do you know that probably 80% of the people probably don’t know what the hell they’re fighting about? They don’t have the slightest idea and then the go forth and say “I hate those people, they are dirty, they’re—“What do you mean you hate those people you don’t even know them? Somewhere, someone here, you killing up each other cause these people are telling you to kill up each other. That’s the way I look at it. I can’t help but think of that way why they doing it? Some people are crazy, I tell ya. Uh, World War Two—

IL: Boyd, I hate to cut you off, but, uh, I think we can—would you like to, we can go for another interview later on?
B: Oh yea, I mean me I can talk for weeks you know.

IL: It’s been an amazing interview like—

B: Well I think you but I have a lot of things I can’t talk for weeks, but you know I would.

IL: I was wondering, do you have anyone else you think I should talk to or…?

B: Like in the park?

IL: Well anyone, anywhere that you think would have any information for me?

B: Well, let me get some information to people, get they’re permission and everything.

IL: okay, well can you…continue this another time thank you.

Transcription (Duration 55 min 33 sec)

Interviewee: Robert McKnight, Miami artist

Interviewer: Iyshia Lowman, Biscayne National Park intern and MA student at USF

IL: This is Iyshia Lowman, intern with Biscayne National park, Master’s student at USF. I am interviewing Robert McKnight. Robert, this recording is just going to be used for Biscayne National Park for their internship for their interpretation program as well as my Master’s thesis, do you consent to that?

R: Yes.

IL: Uh, if you just start off with some information about yourself. Your name age and where this interview is taking place.

R: Uh, my name is Robert McKnight, I’m 61 years old were conducting this interview in Miami. Uh…

IL: So do you mind stating which racial group you identify with?

R: Um, I identify with African American.

IL: Okay, you can face me, just face me

R: Oh, oh, okay.

IL: Could you tell me about Homestead Bayfront beach?
R: Um, I grew up in Miami we moved to the south in Richmond Heights back in I think it was around 1950 actually it was around 1960. We stayed pretty much in the Richmond heights area. We ventured out that area and gone south. As we got older, especially when I wasn’t with my parents and I was in school. That was in the area that we used to go. Get outta school and go down south, I discovered actually the beach in when I was in high school. We would go there just to get away from the Richmond Heights area and it was (takes phone call. continues @5 min 17 sec)…

IL: Alright you were telling about your experience…

R: Okay, um, yeah, when I was in high school, like I say that was an area that that we used to venture there down south weekends sometimes during the week to like get away from the Richmond Heights area and you kind of getting away from the parents and whatnot. It was the difference there was that beach was more…less used than we didn’t go to Masters and Hammond and VA key beach. The other side VA key beach was further away and the only time I used to go to VA key was with parents. Then we would find a way to get a way down to Homestead because the beach I mean it was off on the, off beaten path. You go down…the roads basically follow the canal down, up to the base and because it was it was isolated you know and you go through like the uh fields the plant fields and then sometimes summers we used to work at those fields. And then from there we go to leave the planting fields cause we used to cut sticks for pole beating and that was like a little side job that we did and what we used to do is go to the beach. I remember the beach it was basically a small hole, it was a hole in the away from the bay. It…Matheson Hammock was the same way because of the off get to-to to get to deep water I mean water above your to your waist you had to go to into the bay you had to walk out a couple miles and then to get even in high tide you have to walk so far out and you had to catch steppin on the creatures especially with the little spikes…the urchins, sea urchins and stuff. So you had this uh, basically a swimming pool. The side and that was the swimming hole.

IL: Okay, can you tell me, what’s your earliest memory of the beach?

R: The earliest memory the earliest memory would be like around high school I didn’t really remember going out to that beach as a child. Uh, with the family we used to we would go to VA key beach. Matheson Hammock we used to go past Matheson hammock as I was growing up until like the late 60s actually in the 70s that we started going out to Matheson Hammock. And then we started going to I was in 7th or 8th actually, yeah, junior high we used to venture down south to go to we call it back then we called it Black Point.

IL: Okay,…and what did you what we some of the things you did while y’all were at the beach? At homestead?

R: Uh, play games, you know swim and uh I wouldn’t say drinking beer cause we want able to drink in high school. But basically it was go there and swim and sit on the beach and sit on the beach.
IL: What kind of games did y’all play?

R: Uh, football, uh basically. You know or baseball. As a matter of fact the only reason we went out there was to play a little touch football. And then have like um, you know, dances.

IL: dances?

R: Yeah, we had dances out there.

IL: oh, did they?

R: Yeah, you know. I mean the whole idea was to go out there, go out there with some young ladies and you know, enjoy the sun and dance and play some sports and you know.

IL: So did you have formal dances or did y’all just went out there and…?

R: No, these was just somebody would bring a radio and basically it was informal because we wasn’t even supposed to be there. You know you couldn’t really plan a whole lot because if you planned it you know the person who had the care usually got had to stay home. Somebody got wind that we was tryin to get away from home. You know so it was like, so it was like impromptu. You know it was time, you know…used to say sometimes “I’m goin off to work.” I’d use of the car and you know I was off and we’d go. We’d go off there see who would show up it was always like I say it was always impromptu. No plans. The only time I started planning to go out there was when I got a little older. Actually when I came back from school I was uh I go there, just because uh, coming down to Miami in, in Miami area a lot more things goin on that you get into trouble. You know there’s a lot more trouble to get into in Miami so to keep from getting into trouble, you go to the south end you know in the I heard it it called in the country you know.

IL: Um do you know the um when you started going to the beach what age, what year that was?

R: Um, that would’ve been like ‘68, ‘70. 70s uh…up until 76 I stated I was I was uh, came back from school so ‘76 this tome to about the ‘80s I used to go there. A matter of fact I when I got a job with the county I used to go I got a job and worked for the county I used to go to the park for the job. Go down there to get supplies and materials. It was a county park in the late ‘70s and ‘80s I think it still is now.

IL: When’s the last time you’ve been to the beach?

R: That beach? The last time I would say would’ve been in the ‘80s when I left, I quit Dade County and I went from Miami to Orlando. I came back here, ya know in my 40s. ‘40s and ‘50s you know don’t really go to the beach.

IL: (laughs) So you went to VA key beach and Masters and Hammock? What were those beaches like? From Homestead.
R: Masters and Hammock was similar to Black point. Um, it was more there was more people at Masters and Hammock beach because it was a mixed beach after the—yeah actually around the 70s. VA key was always a black beach. We always go to VA key because uh, well most people from all comm—black communities went to VA key. You know a lot of the parties and things to do at VA key. Things between—um the communities, in the city in South Dade. I got a chance to meet a more people from different parts of Miami then down, down south. You know down south the only people that really most of the people that went to the beach were from down in the south end. You can go there but you don’t meet any of the people from the North end.

IL: So like, how were the people down there and how were the people in VA key like? Were they different?

R: Well you know, uh, back then it was like the only difference would be people called it country. The people just called it, you know it was, that’s the country. You know, they slow and they backwards, you know. I mean-- its people think you know and um, it was a lot less uh, when you go to those beach when you got to that beach you didn’t have the hassles between the you, come from… uh, Liberty City or Overtown, or Coconut Grove. You know it jus wasn’t no especially among the black communities. No separation between where you came from. It was like this (puts hands together) you know because it was all Homestead…Homestead, Goulds, you know and they see there wasn’t that much, kind of um, separation you know because it was that was the little community beach.

IL: Okay. Did you and your friends have any issues going to that beach?

R: No. No.

IL: So they were kind of welcoming.

R: It was all, yeah—It was always welcoming, and it would be--yeah like I say it was never there was I never felt you know that it was…I’m from Richmond heights I gotta hang with people from Richmond Heights. It was all kinda all the beach.

IL: Were there places you could not go on the beach?

R: Uh, on the beach uh…

IL: Yeah, at Homestead.

R: I didn’t I didn’t recognize the only place we used to go to is the swimming area, I know they like um the boat areas and since we never had boats, we—you know it’s like you don’t think about going over there it’s like to go on a boat. You know you stay there where you park, go swim, you don’t want to go in the uh, into the water, the bay because the one time, one time you step on the urchin or shell or something you cut your foot and the whole day blown. So we just pull up, go there, swim, and it seemed to me like there was always like the black people like
sittin in the swimming hole we never-- I never paid attention to what anyone else is doing and um, just like I sayin the boats? The little boat docks the only time I really paid attention to any of the other things happening out there was when I was a, um, working with the county. I was a park service officer so I used to have to go there to you know check to see if the docks need to be repaired and document that and other than that…

IL: So you never saw anyone of any other races?

R: I never paid attention. Yeah, I mean, uh, it didn’t, you know the times I came there, um, especially in my younger years was more I’d say you…you know I never got, I never got hassled about being there. I went to the right there and swam and played on the beach, played on the down in the sandy area there and this was like ’67, well ’67, ’68,’69, ’70 so there was a little bit of integration you know in during that time I found that unless you like kinda looked--looked for a problem there wasn’t a problem. The same way at high school. The high school that I went to was integrated, just integrated, 3rd class and um, we had a riot there because someone was walking through the parking lot meanwhile a white guy was driving his car in the doughnuts in the parking lot, the brother decided to walk in the, in front of the car do you see, he was looking to start an issue. And the guy stopped his car and told him to get outta the way and then of course there was a confrontation. In, uh the 2, you know, the 2 groups and everything turned into a free-for-all you know hence we had a riot. They threatened to bring the KKK down, we threatened said bring ’em on and we see people riot along. We used to know them from Homestead calling themselves KKK. You know and going like “Man, I know you!” (laughs)
But it was like that was the way it was if you go out and look for a problem, you’d find a problem. You just kind of did you’re thing and this could be that uh, bad apple in the group that’s gonn, that’s not gonna like the way someone’s walking you know? And there’s gonna be some others that just you know, take it. And it’s like “You didn’t, I’m over here so it’s not, I don’t have no problem with you, you know” And that was I used to, you know my time there.

IL: What high school did you go to?

R: Um, Miami-Killian.

IL: Miami?

R: Miami-Killian, we played like the, the South Dade back then was called the rebels. You know so they used to wear red…grey and blue. Red, grey and blue with the Confederate flag on they helmet. It was—you know, and we integrated. They—we integrated and 2 into the integration, no 3 years we played ‘em. 3 years that’s ’70 like 4 years into integration they had to change that name. The same thing happed it’s like “come on man,” you know somebody…”hey let’s…” took that name was insulted by it you know every time we playing we was insulted we use it against them “We gone kick them rebels ass!” (laughs) You know and that was, uh, that’s was the, that time the way the youngsters dealt with it, either we gone make some changes. If you alright with me the way-- what I’m doin, then alright with you but if there’s things that you
want to hold over me or I want hold over you, then we gone either have to change it or come
down and look at it the same way, you know.

IL: Were you, have you ever gone into Homestead the city itself?

R: Yep, yep. Um, the…back then…actually, actually when you think about it back in the 70s, in
when I was in high school I didn’t really go into Homestead. I went into Florida City. Um,
because Homestead just wasn’t you know, the place. I don’t know if I start talking about it. You
know its…it’s not a place I wanna be. The people, I don’t know nobody there. I know people
down in Goulds, Florida City, so we avoided Homestead. You know, now later on when like I
say after I came back from college Homestead was a different place. There was more Mexicans
there than Rednecks. So it’s like you go there…different feel, yeah, but I know, no, I never went
into Homestead as even my I never my parents never take me to Homestead. Matter of fact, I
ain’t know like I, me, lived in Miami, there’s places you never went to. This part of town I’m
living in right now, you never came here. We would come as far as you know, 7th Avenue…uh,
and its I mean its like after 7th Avenue, man, we didn’t come on this side til 7th Avenue.

IL: Why is that?

R: We just didn’t. It just wasn’t it wasn’t you know, our people wasn’t over on this side so we
stayed on the other side of by, they used to have the like orange blossom parade running down
7th Avenue? When they did the expressway, um, you stayed on the west side of the expressway
you know as far as when it got to, the expressway when it got into Overtown now you know you
on both sides of it, but this area here, uh, yeah, I only know 1 kid that went to school during the
70’s that black guy at um Archbishop Curly. That was like rare in the, somebody who liked to
go to school there. Edison was white school. Northwestern was all black. Same when you go
down south. In Homestead, it was Maze High School. Uh, and that was it. The rest of the
schools back down there Palmetto, South Dade, all schools in South Dade really didn’t integrate
until um, I know Killian when that opened up that was integrated in ’66. Um, Palmetto
integrated in like ’64 because my brother went there, but South Dade stayed relatively un-
integrated til ’68 and there was still not that much not that many blacks going to school there.
And they held onto the South Dade rebels thing for a while, and after they had the riot in
Killians, they had riots there then they decided to change the names of the school. You know
and it wasn’t it wasn’t um, like any kind of real violent, violent riots down there, but it was just
like you know people just you know didn’t get along. You know and they didn’t know that there
were certain things they didn’t like, you didn’t like, they didn’t like, and then they started out
with boo-- I can’t think of it the name is something, something ambiguous…pirates or something
you know. Well as far as on the beach that little beach, um, you did you just didn’t really pay
attention that there was some there was an area where the whites when, but what I remember is
they always had their boat. (laughs) You know we had to move the water area you know and
plus because down there there’s the island um, Elliot Key, and they would take the boats and go
to Elliot Key. We couldn’t go to Elliot Key. We didn’t have boats so we didn’t take a boat
anywhere, we just swim, in that little tidal basin. Cause that’s all it is they dig down below the tidal level and the same water that’s in the bay when high tide you know comes in you know the water in there rises, when it goes out, goes down and enough so that you can always be, you can always be, uh, at neck level especially at low tide. At low tide and you know you be a little bit more careful about, whose swimming and…cause it’s gonna be deeper.

IL: Can you describe any other things about the beach that you noticed? You notice any areas or anything like that?

R: No. It was kinda sparse, kinda sparse. It had coconut trees. Uh, didn’t have um, I don’t remember having any kind of concession stands cause anytime you’re out here you had to bring your own. Uh, I know that the beach, the, the dock area had like those, I remember it being kinda Spartan kind of beach where you made sure you brought everything you need to enjoy yourself there.

IL: Okay, so there was nobody who works there anything like that?

R: Nah, until the county, until the county really took it over there was it was almost a “You’re on your own.” No, they they had life guards. They had lifeguard, but then they still was almost …cause they would they would the um, yeah the only thing I reckon there.

IL: When did the county take it over, do you know?

R: I started with the county in ’76. Um, and I know I only moved to the South end of the county until the 80s and then ’83-’84 I was assigned to some of the park areas. So I’m pretty sure, I would say the county took it over that they had in ’78 they had the progress that they had, cause they re-did they re-did the docks, uh, and I think they dredged the canals and the road, and fixed the roadway out there, cause there wasn’t no roadway out there, there was just a dirt road. They put in a paved road so I think it’s like I would say roughly I’m thinking like around the late ’70s.

IL: Um, is there…what do you think about this project that you’re involved in? What are your thoughts?

R: I think it’s I think it’s needed so that we kinda tell the history how we use the resources how we how the resources served everybody and it’s also if you shed some light onto on how people either shared or didn’t share land and how they made, restricted others people’s use to the land or how they you know either shared, shed some light on how we either have moved ahead as a people as a people, not only as a people but as a human, as a race. Um, and because we had this thing of different beached, yet right right in Key Biscayne you know you had 3 different groups of beaches you know and one was dedicated to one group of people one race and you had to go past them other beaches to get (laughs) to…

IL: So it’s like white, black, then…?
R: You didn’t go to the “Obie” (38.33) beach. Right along the key, you come across, you’re allowed to come across the bride and then keep driving and go through that little gate and go to Key Biscayne, I mean go to VA beach. We didn’t go to uh, Crandon park. I don’t remember going to Crandon Park ever as a child. I always went, as a child we always went to VA key. We used to look across at what they call Bear cut and see the white people on the other side in the boats in the, you know everything. On the other side you have the black people and everyone had, you know, you had, a lot of us had our boats and doin the same thing but all on the other side, you know its like…unmentioned divide right there in Bear cut you know.

IL: What beach was the white beach? What was the white beach called?

R: Uh, on the other side is Bear cut beach and bear cut went all the way around to Crandon Park and like I said I never went around to Crandon Park until the late uh, actually until I came back from school. We used to go there in the summer…yeah, in about ’72-’73.

IL: Was that a black beach or just…?

R: It wasn’t a black beach, it wasn’t dedicated, you know what I mean? The only one that’s I knew we had no problems going to was on let’s call it the wait…nobody told us that was the beach, ok? My parents that was the only beach they took us too. Okay, now, you know how they say “They know something that we don’t know?” That’s why sometimes we would venture, you know and look they wanted to like (imitates slapping) “what the hell’s goin on over there?” They know that there was, there was unspoken or that word from their generation would know that this was he beach for us, when we go there, you know. Our generation was keep looking across there then you eventually went over there then they tell you had to get outta there and you like “no, man!” You know and it’s just like on the getting on the bus. You can’t, gotta sit in the seat, sit in the seat. Then it takes one person that says question why and then it’s like a, it’s like a snowball after that. Everybody’s like “she gave it a try let me give it a try.” Here we go with that, come and go over there and find out, “wow, that’s a pretty nice beach.” You know, got a another view of the ocean we looking across got this, this beach and it’s got like this channel that drops some un-Godly 60 feet with the water running through it at 3 miles an hour and its jus if you get caught up in it, you dead. (laughs). They say you do go out and swim…

IL: That’s at VA beach?

R: Yeah. When the lifeguard tell you don’t go past the buoy, don’t go past the buoy because if you keep—if you weren’t strong enough, a weak swimmer. Naw, matter of fact you could be a strong swimmer, the the…current take you away. People drown like crazy, because they didn’t listen to the, the lifeguards can get to you, they can try to get to you. You know when you’re dealing with that that strong a current, um, they takin they life at risk to go after you. You know.

IL: So you saw people drown like at…?
R: I've been there when people drowned, I wouldn't say that I saw them. They gather around somebody and they put a cloth over them, you know. I mean, uh, I didn't see uh, and you see the thing when the ambulance come down there, uh, you know, you know that something happen and somebody went way beyond the buoy (laughs).

IL: Wow.

R: And that, that was you know, that was one of the-the reasons the beach was end up, end up closed for a while because it was with that such a treacherous current through there, the risk of having a lot of people killed or dyin, it's easier to say close the beach, then go swimming. Cause right now they have no swimming. You can go to the beach but they tell you you only supposed to swim at your own risk. You know, as they advise don't swim. You know, uh, and uh, not to say that the other side uh look across and basically whites on the other side they had the, it was the same problem! So they the only, they had the luxury of going around to Crandon Park. Um, VA beach even though it's on its own little island there was a certain point that that wasn't the beach that we went to. So we didn’t go past there’s was a curve that comes around looks toward Miami Beach? That was uh, that was a separate beach. Yeah, and you can go down-- go down the same road that you used to go to this beach but you couldn’t walk around to the beach to the one facing Miami Beach. This was, wasn’t no sign to say, I don’t remember no sign sayin it but every time I used to go that people would tell you that dock you couldn’t go past this point. You know. And everything facing…uh, that would be east, southeast on VA key, you know it was black and anything facing Miami Beach it was basically the 70s it was a gay beach. Uh, and the one time it used to be a nude beach, uh you know, but that was unspoken up until a point a unspoken word. Rule.

IL: Do you remember seeing any signs?

R: No, the generation I came up in, the signs, we used to hear signs. I remember hearing a sign, I never saw the signs. My—I would say people ten years older saw signs my generation we just we wasn’t that sort of pictures of that remembrance of that Jim Crow. You know.

IL: Is there anything else that you’d like to say about Homestead Beach? Anything you think is interesting or…?

R: I mean the one thing that always stood out with me was that that it was on the back side of the agricultural, the agricultural area. The times we used to work the fields and go, we used to call it “cuttin’ sticks” The poles for the pole beans, and then we partied, that we can go, we would be able to cool it at the beach after work.

IL: Oh, so you the place where you cut sticks was right by the beach?

R: Yeah, cause the all of the fields the plantin field on the all that area that’s developed now over the racetrack is…
IL: Oh, I’ve been there before, I don’t know the name.

R: Yeah, all of that, then was real…go down, then you go down the road to Homestead Air Force Base and all of that. Around Homestead base, Homestead base was in the middle of it. Um, but then you can you know when you, when we used to go out in the mornings the talk was let’s cut this, cut it cause the deal we had was faster you can get the amount the poles then you can go to the beach. In 17, back then at 17, it was like (imitates sound when cutting sticks at a fast pace) (laughs) You know and all the people would go “Slow down!” You’re like “Slow down?” (laughs) We tryin to get outta here and go to the beach. “Naw, you can make this much money if you go fast, nah, but they told me if I go this much I can get this much money.” I didn’t you know, more than rationize cause I was making more than enough for me. (laughs) You know, uh, that’s about my recollection back in them times you know the generations like I say there was the generations that see the heavy Jim Crow and then there was the generation that when these thing stated makin people started making sense about the way things was and I mean that that was the generation that I came up in with you uh, beneficiaries of my parents fight to change you know. Cause I remember going goin to Killian and goin in the guy and you had the white guys on this side and the black guys on this side and you had the you know coach come in, the black coach, come in and like “h we gone play. How we gone play a sport together if y’all sittin over there and y’all sittin over there?” And then there’s the Phillipinian (Phillipino?) sitting in the middle tryin to catch flies, everybody lookin at him like, “What is he doin?” Basically by doin something uh, ridiculous you know everybody kinda relax and pull together. That was the generation, you know you lose. Sometime you took something stupid to kinda pull it together where, you didn’t really put out those, pay attention to all those restrictions that were there you know and the fact that things were changing so you had to go with the flow.

IL: Is there anybody else you think I should talk to about this project, anybody that you haven’t mentioned?

R: Uh, I kinda asked my brother he doesn’t like to do interviews with that kinda stuff (laughs). Right off hand, uh, right off hand I don’t have anybody like I say that I can talk to and see if they wouldn’t be willing and I think sometimes some of it, some of the people that I know that live right down that have lived there for a long time. I got a few guys a few friends uh that I can ask and see if they would be especially if I can find guys that are willing to talk, uh, well I got one in mind, but I just have to find out of he’s willing to…there’s another guy David White is a name, uh, he’s from…uh, you know…

IL: And you tell I would very much appreciate it I just thank you for doing this interview cause we don’t have a lot of information on this right now. So you’ve gave me a lot of infoRation. So…

R: That’s what I do, I’ll talk, I personally talk to a few other people that are from my group and then find some of the and you know my mother just passed last month so most older the older
generation is goin. Not that uh, my brother’s a different generation, you know. So people are a lot of the good information is dying out only thing I can do is try to talk to a few people and see and let them know what you’re doing in the research and basically the need to record stories, you know.

IL: Make sure, they’re not lost.

R: Yeah

IL: That’s all the questions I have for you is there anything else that you would like to say?

R: I think we’re good.

Transcription (Interview taken audio recorder (2min 15sec) and with written notes)

Interviewee: Willie Synagogue, employee at Everglades National Park

Interviewer: Iyshia Lowman, Biscayne National Park intern and MA student at USF

IL: This is Iyshia Lowman, intern with Biscayne National Park, Masters student at the University of South Florida; here with Willie Synagogue at Everglades National Park

Notes

-1959: moved to Richmond Heights

-1958: 1st day at Homestead Bayfront Beach, 7th birthday party
  - carousel (corn dogs and sausage dogs cooking)
  - 1 speaker on a pole in concrete slab: WMBM and WAMB AM radio stations played all the time
  - Concrete slab (dance floor?) and a table

-beach meant for relaxing

-Grandmother states “Don’t you look over there at them white women!”
  - would see white people walking on the boardwalk with “oasis smooth surface” (swimming hole)

-Rocks on the black side of the beach

-no incidents/mingling with white side that he can remember

-Virginia key had shootings and mixed crowds
-no drownings that he knew of at HBB
  - lifeguard’s stand would be by the carousel; sat there and slept
  - when water reached waist, adults told them to come back so that the water was at a lower level
  - His mom stated, “You could disappear.”

-He left Homestead/Richmond Heights in 1973

-There were packing houses on the road to the beach yet a separate road. It had trees with shaded areas

-He went to Miami-Killian High from 1965-1969
  - By that time there was integration, the black side was closed down and they would take field trips to the white side. They were not allowed to be in bathing suits.
  - The beach had as little as the black side, but had clean water and the sand was rotated by a bulldozer

-He was drafted in 1972

-1968: There would be races down the road to the beach, and the “Colored only” sign was still up but had grass growing over it. The roads were still separate.

-1968: South Dade High School riot started by his wife.

-Heard of riots in Miami every week

-Black students were sent to white schools, never the other way around but the blacks were never trusted in the white neighborhoods (they would steal from the mango trees)

-1973: He had to take a race relations class in Miami Beach because he said the “n-word” around a group of blacks but was overheard by their white colonel

-Krome avenue after 6 pm is dangerous for blacks. There would be lynching and cross burnings. There were no street lights.

-Women were accepted on the police force

-He states that people would stay in their comfort zones, usually outside of racist zones

-1972: Olympics black power athletes from Homestead (Larry Black and Harry Tinkler)

-“Mexicans” didn’t go to the beach. They went to Miami Beach or Matheson-Hammock. Everyone that spoke Spanish was called Puerto Ricans or Mexicans by outsiders
- If they weren’t white they wouldn’t get that much attention (hole in the wall)

- South beach (drug addicts in bikinis walk the street) = Virginia Key

- “Mexicans” (“oyes”) go to Homestead Bayfront Beach currently. Current idea of the beach = drug use, string bikinis or nude, and instances of underwear left in the water; not a place for families and kids

  - Older residents tried to recapture comfort and relaxing times but they didn’t like the beach as it is now.

- 1965: pool for whites built on MLK Blvd across the street from black apartments, yet black men would sit on the roof and look at the white women at the pool. However not many people went to the beach.

- His dad worked at Everglades as a custodian until 1982 when he retired

- 1903: Moore (and synagogue) family came to South Dade

- 1958: Mayday event: tetherball, no swimming, may pole, and Mayday dance

- Stanley Roberson