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Statement by Georgina Sappier Richardson collected by Rachel George on February 19, 2014

Georgina Sappier Wilson

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General Information

Private or Public Statement? - Private

Statement Provider: Georgina Sappier Richardson

Date: February 19, 2014

Location: Motahkomikuk

Previous Statement: No

Statement Gatherer: Rachel George

Support Person:

Additional Individuals Present: Marcie Lister, Adam Mazo, Ben Pender-Cudlip

Recording Format: Audio

Length of Recording: 55:11

Recording

RG: So my name is Rachel George. I'm here today with Marcie Lister, Adam Mazo and Ben ... I can't say your last name, so you're going to have to say it.

BPC: Ben Pender-Cudlip.

RG: There you go. Would you mind stating your name for me?

GSR: Georgina — you want my full name?

RG: Yes.

GSR: Georgina Cecilia Sappier Richardson.

RG: Perfect. And today's date is February 19, 2014. We are in Motahkomikuk, Maine. And the file number is M-201402-00019. Georgina —

GSR: You asking me that?

RG: Have you been informed, understood and signed the consent form?

GSR: Um, hm. Yes.

RG: Okay, and I have to let you know that at any point in time during this statement if there is an indication that a child or an elder is in need of protection, or that there is imminent bodily harm or imminent risk of death to an identifiable person or group, including yourself, that that information may not be protected as confidential. Do you understand?

GSR: What did you say again now? *(laughs)*

RG: So, if at any point during this statement, you indicate that there is a child or an elder that is in need of protection, or that there is an imminent risk of death or serious bodily injury to an identifiable person or group, including yourself, that that information may not be protected as confidential. Do you understand?

GSR: I don't.

ML: It's the law. By law, if we hear anything that tells us—

GSR: Like if I said something to you about somebody may need help.

ML: Yes, like if you mentioned something about a child you knew who was in a dangerous situation, we could not keep that information confidential by law.

GSR: Oh, yeah, I understand that.

ML: We've already talked about everything that we will keep confident, and that will stay with the TRC, but this is a separate part.

GSR: Yes, I understand that.

RG: Okay, perfect. And, um, before we start, do you have any questions?

GSR: No, you haven't even said anything yet, how can I have questions? *(smiles)*

RG: Okay, so I'm going to open the floor to you to begin your statement. Um, wherever you feel the most comfortable. And keep in mind we can take a break at any time if you feel like you need one.

GSR: Oh, you want me to talk now?

RG: Yes.

GSR: Okay. My name is Georgina Cecelia Sappier Richardson. And, uh, in 1940, I was lost to the state of Maine. I never had seen my mother or my father. In fact, I don't ever remember my mother and father. Uh, I was placed in five different homes. I lived in one home several years.



GSR: One of the complaints I had was that I was always starved. I didn't have enough food to eat. I had no meat. I was forced to eat fat. Example: fat like what is in the beans and the pork. And that was meat to us children. I was sent out to the fields to pick green beans and then back in those days they used long sacks which came over your shoulder and you had to fill them up and walk along with that behind you. (*gestures to show what that looked like*) We took the beans, I took the beans and I took them in and I cut them. And got 'em, cleaned 'em, and got 'em ready for storage. I picked potatoes. I picked potatoes five in the morning until evening. I had to prepare them, some of them for storage. I ate all three items, which is peas also. And I ate them all raw because we couldn't have them cooked. And we had to eat our food raw. And to this day, I still like them like that. I was what they called an indentured servant at a young age. I was separated from the foster parents and their siblings. Only allowed on their side of the house to clean, serve meals, set tables, and at a young age, I was told never to open the refrigerator door and eat any other food and I was a very obedient servant.

I got up at eight o'clock — uh, five o'clock in the morning to do chores before I left for school. I worked in the fields only to turn my checks over to my foster parents and never seen any of the money from the work that I did during the week. And, um, something very serious to this affected me ... is when I was a child I wet the bed. I put the underpants behind the toilet, second floor. And I ... one of the grandmothers found my, uh, soiled pants and she rubbed it in my nose and put it over my head and I had to wear this around in front of the other people. And that really hurt me because I felt that was degrading me. And, but I had to put up with it anyway. And when I came to language, if I used the wrong word, they would put lye soap in my mouth for saying something out of place. Also I want to inject in here, this is when the lice time came, when people got lice. We just happened to get lice, and they always told us nits make lice. And they soaked my head with kerosene, and then they put a cloth over and then they set me beside the stove, because they said the heat from the stove would kind of help with this, this kind of treatment.

They also, before our caseworker —back then in those days we called them caseworkers— and before the caseworker came to see us we were threatened. I was threatened anyway. I can only speak for myself although there were more members of my family in the foster care system. And so, if I say we, I really mean just me. And, uh, that if we spoke to them about any of the abnormalities that we were going through, we would get the razor strap. A razor strap back in those days was a long strap and it was used to sharpen the men's razors. To keep them very sharp. (*shows the action of sharpening a razor with a strap*) And that, after you get the razor strap, they would leave welts on your bottom where you couldn't sit down. But that was a part of life. I lived behind the house in a fenced yard after all the work was done in the house. Between the house was a barn, and between the house and the barn they had a fence there where— should I say, a door.

(*Someone enters the room, quietly speaking in the background*)

GSR: I wasn't allowed to be with other children in town. We weren't allowed to have any friends at the house. We were taught to be a friend to myself. That I didn't need anyone else. And that's how I lived on that. And that proved out to be pretty good to me. The system has affected my whole life. I still suffer from this. I have nightmares. Very bad. The nightmares are — sometimes, I'm afraid to go to bed at night and close my eyes because I know that I could fall into a nightmare. And in the nightmares, they're so bad that after I have done my screaming in the night, my throat when I wake up is so sore, I can't swallow. So that, according to my doctor, is that I had so much trauma that this trauma has affected and come into my mind when I'm supposed to be sleeping. They label me as post-traumatic stress disorder, because, uh, according to my one doctor, it's like going through the war. That someone goes through the war and lives in that kind of atmosphere, that's what they have me down for, uh, this kind of system.

Uh, I lived in a town, do I have to say that?

RG: It's up to you.

GSR: I lived in a town on Boynton Street was the name of the street, I lived there for about 11 years. So much has gone on in my life. I am now ... a couple days and I'll be 75 years old. But so much has transpired in my life, (*brief pause*) that sometimes I wonder, is this a dream? But it's not a dream, it's reality. And I have to realize it's a reality because it happened. I'm hoping me saying a few things might help some other foster children. Number one, most foster children need love, because after all, your foster parents don't give you anything like that. You're only there to be, uh, given a bed. And if they want to give you some food, many times they've given us milk, hot milk with a few crackers and call that a meal. And you know, maybe to some people, that's normal. But I was always hungry, always, all the time. And, uh, when I was behind the house in these fenced places, I used to try to reach through this, uh, fence for food, because the garden was right there. And, uh, I suffered between my fingers, marks from the fence from where I was reaching so hard. And then my foster mother knew that I had been stealing — figure of speech — out of the, uh, garden.

Back then we slept three in a bed. And I guess that's normal, I don't know. For foster kids. Uh. It was just a bad nightmare. And I found that after studying about the foster care system which came into this country, was to take care of children that were orphans. Children that had nobody to go to. And they were supposed to take care of us, and give us three meals a day, a place to sleep. But that's not the way it was. We had to work. Even though the state of Maine — I'll say the state of Maine because the state of Maine is the one that took me.

Caseworkers didn't say too much to us, only they did most of the talking to the foster parents. Um, I remember one time when I was a little girl, God, they used to take me down to see these doctors down in town. And these doctors, psychiatrists, or whatever you want to call them, they would give me paper and tell me draw pictures and I used to love to draw anyway. And so one particular time I drew a picture of a house. And, I had the little children out front, playing on a swing. Put the curtains in the house. And when I showed the doctor — therapist, whatever she was — she took the paper and she scolded me because she said that that picture was not right. And she gave me another piece of paper, and she told me I've got to draw a right picture.



And what it was, she said that I did not draw the right house. I was supposed to draw a tipi, and I didn't color the little children brown. And I still couldn't understand that, because she told me, 'Draw a picture.' And I found that when I went there, it seems like they belittled you. Made you feel bad because they'd say bad things. You know, 'Are you stupid?' I used to think to myself, 'Boy, I don't know where these people get this kind of language.' But, that's what we had to do. Uh. Back yonder when we were kids.

I was a kid, I had to walk over a mile to go to church and over a mile to go to school. Which I liked that, walking was an asset to me. Uh, I was a very, very obedient child. Because I knew what would happen if I wasn't obedient. And in fact, that runs into me today. Is being obedient, doing what people tell me, and that's where I run into mistakes. I would have loved to know my mother and my father. But that wasn't meant to be. Because they both expired. And, uh, my mother, I kept thinking about her. And years ago, when I had my first three boys, I lived out in Missouri, and I was supposed to come East to have her meet my babies. And, uh, I remember I was all excited about that. But she died on Mother's Day. I was supposed to see her in June and she died on Mother's Day. Because in the letter that she had another Native write for her, that she was going to tell me everything that happened and why the state took me. So that news wasn't ever meant for me to find out. But, I often wonder what it would have been like to be with my mother. My father. The void is still there. It will never go away, because after all, I am a human. And we all have mothers. Fathers. And I just wondered what it would have been like to have my mother just sit down and hold me and talk to me and let me know things were going to be all right. Uhh. I know one thing that scarred me bad was our foster father taking us out to the shed. Back then we had a shed attached to the house. And he would tell us to strip. And then, after I stripped, he'd use a razor strap on me. That razor strap, that, that was horrible. That was so bad. And then he told us to pretend it was my birthday.

For a long time I never knew what my birthday was until I went back into state of Maine and I went and I looked into the history. And I found out I was born on February 22, 1939 in Houlton, Maine. I am registered into the Catholic church up there in Houlton, Maine because I went there to find out more about my parents. And the priest said that I was registered down there as a member of their church. Although I never went to the Catholic church because the state foster parents put me in every other religion that had nothing to do close to the Catholic religion.

So really, I've lost a lot. *(pause)* I've lost my parents. I've lost my aunts, my uncles, my sisters, my brothers. Because they were sent to different foster homes. I was 30 years old when I come to look 'em up. And I did get to meet a couple aunts and a couple uncles. And they met me at the bus station. And when the bus driver opened the door to the bus, they said, 'Welcome home.' *(smiles)* And that's the sweetest words I've ever heard, is to be welcomed home. And I told my uncle, I said, 'You just don't know the hell —' And he said he tried to get us. But he

said once the state of Maine ... back then you got to remember, the state of Maine was our mother and our father. Not just me, but the whole Tribe belonged to the state. Which meant the state could take you — whoever was relative to — off that reservation and put you in these homes and there you must stay. You must be strong because of what we went through. I went through anyway. You had to be strong and, uh, I can say that, you know, even though that happened that many years ago, it didn't go away, it's still there today. And I wish it would go away. I wish there were some answers. Uh, but I don't have it, so I just have to let time take its, run its course. And if I can help some other little child, whether she be a girl or boy, I hope in the long run that these small children, innocent babies that are crying for help, for someone just to say I love you and to hold them. And not ridicule them. Not try to keep them down. Not to say bad things to them. Not tell them that because you're a foster child you are a nobody. Because that happened to me.

And I, this program that they have, I know it will help some other people out. Hopefully. It's not too late to save some of these darling souls that are just crying. And to be pushed from pillar to post. And hopefully, in this particular time, there's more protection for these little children that go into these homes. More understanding of the caseworkers. More, the little children being taken by the caseworker out to do things with, instead of just coming there and saying, you know, 'How are you?' But, when you're threatened before a caseworker comes, that if you tell what's happened, you're going to get the razor strap. And this put the fear into us. That we never say anything that went on behind those closed doors. That's a shame when you have to do something like that to innocent kids. And I personally have children. But I would never ever put them where they're not wanted. No matter how hard it gets, and it does get hard. But, that's been my lot in life, is this foster care system. I tried to, uh, treat everybody alike. Because I like, I love human beings, and I know we're all in this thing together, and that we're supposed to be here to help each other, no matter what your race is, no matter what your language is, we're all here together. And I thank God that I have this opportunity to talk with the people that have come to help us, get us to come out with the truth. It takes a little bit of the load off us. *(smiles)* And makes us realize that, yes, there are people out there that really care. But you got to find them. And I do, in my situation, I know God's put these people before me and that, uh, He's there, He's waiting because he knew time would come when I would be needing someone to come and help me out. And it's happened, and I thank God for that. God bless you for being here. *(smiles)*

RG: Um, I have a couple questions I would love to ask you.

GSR: Yes dear.

RG: But before I do, can I just get you to state your name for the recorder?

AG: Sure. Andrew Gellar. *(entered the room during recording)*

RG: Perfect. Um, first of all, thank you for sharing that.



GSR: God bless you.

RG: You are incredibly strong and I am very, very, very appreciative that you felt comfortable enough to sit here and sit here on recording, not only on TRC recording, but with these guys here as well. What you did today was incredibly courageous.

GSR: What?

RG: What you did today was incredibly courageous.

GSR: Well it's the truth, and you know, I'm all for truth.

RG: That's what I like to hear.

GSR: And I think that, you know, if people will believe us —

RG: They won't have a choice.

GSR: We can't give it any other way, but for people to believe these things actually happened in this country. With the Native people. I know it's happened with the other groups of people and the little kids have been hurt, and some been killed. Oh, my. But I'm talking about the Native. And in this country alone, the United States government have nothing to be proud of when it comes to pushing us around. We are human beings. And we're proud. *(smiles)* And we'll take anybody in that needs help, and we'll share our food with them, our clothing if we can, and just everything, because that's what we're all supposed to do here on this earth is to love each other.

RG: So, I'm wondering if you can tell me a little bit more about what your experience was like with your foster parents. Would you be willing to share a little bit more about that? You can say no, you don't have to.

GSR: Which foster parents, though?

RG: Whichever ones, for example, the ones you spent the most time with.

GSR: Well, my mom [00:25:30] L., uh. *(pause)* I kind of lived in, with my one foster family, I kind of lived in my own little world. Because they didn't have no part for me other than for me to do the work. And so, I would say at a small age, I was just a small thing, and I'd have to take care of myself after I've done the work. Mom, she more or less put us in with our foster father's uh, supervision — not supervision — to make us mind and things like that. I don't know what I'm trying to say there. He was the ... leader of the house, and so we had to obey him. And the

... the reason I obeyed so much is because I was scared all the time. We bit our nails real bad. I bit my nails real bad, right down until they get almost bleeding because of, uh, the messed up things that were put in my head. I'm still going through that today about me being a nobody. *(softly cries)* That hurts me so much, he could take and beat me, and he could beat me and leave welts on me, and that wouldn't, just knowing that, just telling me I'm a nobody hurts me more than that. I could take a beating but, I ... it ruins your whole life because that's what you're wondering. Is that how they all feel about me? Am I that bad on this earth that I have to be told that I'm no good? But yet, I'm good enough for them to rape my mind and I'm good enough to rape my body.

RG: You are not a nobody.

GSR: *(crying)* Make me ashamed of my body. They never told us things that they, what they were going to do, it was all a shock. I had to — I can't get over what they did to me. And then the foster people — [00:28:05] Dad L. — I could see him now, that filthy, rotten, dirty man. Put me over his lap. But we were told we had to do what he said, and so we had to do it. There were other girls with me. Sisters. And they pushed me first. I had to be the one that had to take the first embarrassment. And uh, I hate sex. I hate sex so bad. It's just so evil, because of flashbacks. And I tried, but then my other foster father and mother, I'll call them B. 'Cause her last name begins with a B. He'd set and talk to me, and just talk to me about school or something like that. And then I was accused of, uh, wanting to be with that man. That was my foster father. And he never did anything of the way to me, and whoever was involved in the, uh, at the table.

And then, Mrs. W, she didn't have time for me. She just more or less gave me a bed and a roof over my head and some meals. *(smiles)* And then, uh, Mrs. Emory, God bless her soul, I think she's gone too. She said that the state brought me to her when I was just a little girl. She said I had the long dark hair, and she said they took me from the hospital, and that she brought me into their home. But my brother, my oldest brother, was jealous of me, she said. And he didn't like Mrs. E and her husband making over me. And, uh, she said her husband would come behind me, because I always went to the windows. And I'd look up and she said I would cry and cry and mumble and mumble and cry. And she said her husband would come behind me and take his hands and put them underneath me and lift me up. *(gestures, lifting up)* So that I could look out the windows. And she said that I'd just cry and cry. I asked her, 'Why did I cry?' And she said, 'Because I think you were looking for your mother.' Of course, I was a little tiny thing, she said. And then she said she had to let me go because of jealousy from my brother. And he's dead and gone. God bless him. So he was the lucky one. He got to stay in the same foster home all his days. And then they took and put me in another foster home, and that foster home, they treated me a little bit better.

I ran away from the state. One time. Because I was a foster kid, the state was after me. And I went willingly. But then they put me in solitary confinement. They put me through the system of where the doctor came in and jabbed you with his fingers and all that stuff, and, I remember that time. And then when they put me in solitary confinement, it was a mattress on the floor and they'd push a tray in there for me to get some food. And they'd let me out to go to the bathroom. But that's because I ran away from the home. And I went down over a hill. When I



think about it, I don't know how I ever made it. (*brief laugh*) I went down over this hill, fell, [00:32:30] scummed my legs up. But the girls that was with me, they told me, 'We got to go to church.' They said, 'You wear jeans under the dress.' You know, back in those days we wore dresses. They said, 'You take your jeans and you roll them up underneath these dresses and then when we get ready to go into the church, we run.' And I, everybody is hollering, 'Georgie come back, Georgie come back,' (*laughs*) But I just kept right on... because this other girl, she was from way up in Northern Maine, 'Come on Georgie, come on Georgie!' And I said, 'Oh, I got to go back, I got to go back.' And, uh, they got me. I got clear up to Fort Kent. Never been there before, but I get up to Fort Kent and, uh, this one girl her name, Legaski was her name, very French, and her mother hid us up in the attic. And then we heard — and she'd bring us food up through that little hole in the attic. And then we heard the police. And they weren't after Joanne Legaski, they weren't after the other girl Sawyer. They were after me. Simply because I was a foster child. And they had to look out for me. (*laughs*) Something like that makes me laugh today because the way we went about it. And the falls we had. And, uh, I think about that. My son says to me one time, not this boy, 'Mother you ran away?' I said, 'Yeah, I ran away with the girls from the foster home.' (*laughs*) I said, 'Just an experience and it was something different, it was fun.'

Now, when I went to high school, I took the commercial course back in those days. I was a whiz in shorthand and typing. Loved it. The reason I liked shorthand so well is because I could write my own diary and no one could read it that didn't understand shorthand. And, uh, I got two pins for shorthand, and one for typing. I loved typing, you know. The sad thing about being in high school, the white boys, excuse the word ... the, uh, Caucasian boys. (*laughs*) White is not a color. The Caucasian boys wouldn't date me because I was an Indian and I'm supposed to have been dirty. I couldn't ever understand, you know, what they were talking about because we did, we only took a bath once a week. And then it was two in the tub. Yeah! And I'll never forget, my (*pause*) sibling and I, we heard our foster mother tell us, when we were younger, you use bleach here, and bleach there and bleach here. And we figured, 'cause she said, 'It makes things nice and white and clean.' And so we seen the bleach bottle, it was down behind the toilet in the bathroom. And we filled the tub full of bleach. And we sat in that tub of bleach trying to convince each other that we were getting white. (*laugh*) She ruined her skin, God bless her.

But I mean this, when you have someone that is constantly putting you down as a child, because you're from another group of people, you get to the point where you say— I used to say, 'God why, what did I do wrong, that you would let this happen to me? What did I do so wrong?' And I did, I said, you know, 'I don't like you anymore because you put this skin on me.' And then I heard that God gave people the dark skin because they were bad. And I didn't feel I was bad. But they preached that into us in the church. Preached, preached to us. With this dark skin, (*rubs the skin on her hand*) meant we were bad and we were going to be easily seen out there in the world and people would stay away from us. I just can't get over that, because I

didn't ask for that dark skin. But then as I grew older, I realized my dark skin was for a special reason. Because Jesus was dark. Jesus was born in a country where people were dark. And that made me feel good. Little by little in my life, certain things would come out that would make me feel good. About certain things like the dark skin. But I wished I would have seen my mother in real life and talked to her. What would she have said to me? I would have loved to had her say, 'Georgina, you're beautiful.' But I got to tell you one thing, [00:37:52] I can understand why people say I'm no good. I was born in Houlton, Maine, on Kendall Street on rags. I wasn't born in no hospital. (*softly crying*) And I was born on a bunch of rags. And maybe other people were born like that, but the other family members were born in hospital in Houlton, Maine. Me, I was born on rags. Maybe that's why I like rags so much today, is because of the way I was born. (*laughing*)

And she — Peter Sappier, the man that's on my birth certificate, he hated me. You see this scar? He put that scar on me. (*rubbing forehead*) For what I understand that there was a fight and a bottle was thrown, a broken bottle was thrown. And one of 'em were holding me and the bottle missed and came down and hit me in the head. And that, apparently back then, they didn't sew the wound closed. And then my scar over here came from the bottle. And then I have another scar somewhere. And I didn't fall down and get these scars, they were there when I ... but the sad part about it was my life. I've always been ... jealousy has always been thrown at me. I could never do anything right. I could never do anything perfect.

A relative — well, let me tell you first — Peter Sappier died at ten, when I was ten, the state of Maine caseworker collected Social Security from my age ten up until I gone into the, uh, ready to depart. And the caseworker came to me and she had a big piece of paper and she says, 'Georgina, this piece of paper shows that the state of Maine will never be responsible for you. But we found a relative,' she said. And I said to her, 'A relative?' She said, 'Yeah, they'll take you in.' Well in a way I was happy, in a way I was scared. Happy and scared, happy and scared. So what the state of Maine did, they put me a big suitcase. And they put underwear in there and a few other things that I need. They got me a ticket on Bangor and Aroostook railroads. They don't have that now but back then they did. And they said, 'You're going to go to Connecticut.' I said, 'I don't know anybody down there.' They said, 'We got a relative.'

And I thought, oh, gee, I'm scared to death. I just graduated from high school and I was thrown out there in the world. I got down there and there for a few days, I was treated good. But it was like I was still on the state because I had to take care of this apartment and all this stuff. Then when I was told, 'You've got money. You call the Welfare caseworker and tell her you want that money.' And I've always been obedient. So I did. They said that they'd send me a check, the state did. Well, the caseworker. And they sent me this check. I never seen a penny of it. I was beat up so bad.

(*pause*) (*crying*) They beat me. They put a great big scar on my head. They took big things of hair out of my head. (*puts both hands to her head*) I'm begging, 'Don't hit my head anymore, don't hit my head anymore.' Two of them. They took my suitcase and they said, 'Okay, you're going to go back on the big Aroostook railroad.' No place to go. They didn't give me no money. But they bought me a ticket and sent me from Connecticut back up to [00:43:04] Marcel. I had no place to go, no money. And I had a friend in school that was poor, God bless



her, she's dead and done now. And I called her up and she said, 'Is this you, Georgie?' And I said, 'Yes.' And she says, 'Where are you at?' And I said, 'I'm here and I have no place to sleep.' And she said, 'You wait right there,' and her and her mother came over after me. I never was so happy to see these people because they were poor. And I was poor, I was homeless, I had no place to go. And they took me upstairs to their house. And I can see her now, her name was Doris. She was all smiles. And she said, 'What happened to you?' And I told her. She said we'd go to the police but it's in another state. And I was threatened. 'You go to the police and they're going to find your body at the bottom of this cliff and there will be a note in your — ' my thing saying I committed suicide. That person is still living. [00:44:20]

I don't trust that person. It's not the first time, not the first time. But once she started beating on my kids, it was different. No one beats on my kids. They're gifts from God. But to think someone would do this to another human being. But the person went through Child Welfare too. And apparently maybe they were hurt worse than I was hurt, I don't know. But some people do, if they go through the foster system will turn out to be the abusers. And that's a fact of life. But to do that to me, my hair, great big things out of my hair. (*gestures tearing*) Tearing my hair right out of me.

I'll never forget that time. That was in Connecticut. But it was just like I was back with the rest of the people that abused me. I tried my best to make it up with this person and be nice to them. Do everything. But that's people you need to get ahold of. You need to get ahold of people like that. Because they're not just hurting me, they're hurting other people. But when you have a title behind your name, I learned this, when you have a title behind your name, that makes a difference. That makes a big difference. They'll look at your title and they'll say, 'Nah, this person wouldn't do something like this.' But they do, they do. It's so.

Anyway the system, the foster system has been with me all my life. It never died. And I've had a lot of sorrow, a lot of crying. One time I got to tell you, because as a foster sister you care. You think yourself, well, what use? What use? I almost jumped off a rail. With the cars going underneath. And I said, 'Lord, forgive me, I can't please anybody anymore.' I've tried to please people, I've been a people pleaser. And you know? That night that I stood there in that pouring rain, watching them cars go underneath me, and it was raining hard, and I said, 'Lord, you have to forgive me.' I'm fighting everything, I don't mean fighting, you know. (*holds up hands*) I'm trying to find my space, that's it, my place on this earth. And I said, 'Forgive me, please forgive me for what I have to do right now,' and you know? I no more said that and the moon came out. (*smiles*) He showed me, go back where you were. Go back the house. It stopped raining. And I said you know, 'You're so real Lord, you're so real. You knew I was down so much.'

And the children didn't even know that I had tried to do something like that. And I probably will try it again if things don't go a little differently. For a lousy piece of bread, some rags to

sleep on. And to be under the power and domination of someone that thinks they're better than you are because they were raised with a mother and a father and you're the little one.

I'll probably be around for another 80 years, I don't know, but anyway — hopefully through the grace of God and [00:49:21] Andy — but it's been so hard. It's been so hard. A long time I didn't even know who I was. (*cries*) I didn't know who I was. I just found out I was Georgina believe it or not, in the past five years. When I went to get Social Security. 'Cause the state screws you up. They could take one letter from your name and make another name. They can take your birth date and change those dates and the year. You don't even know who you were or how old you are sometimes with the state. And the caseworkers make those mistakes. They hear it wrong, or they hear it from those foster — Now, mind you, there's some good foster parents. Because I think now they're starting to look into people that are really human beings for other children. But we didn't have that. There was only an interest in that lousy 40 dollars a month. That's what they paid to have me in that foster home. Forty dollars a month. And yet, I did the dirty work. I went out in the fields. I gave my money to them, and all along, the foster system was paying for my room and board.

And I think that's where you got to smarten some of these younger children up. They're taking care of you. The state's taking care of you. Don't. (*drawn out sigh*) They never told us that much, I found everything out after doing some research on myself. And, uh, I just wish that my family could have been a family. My ch-, my siblings, I just wish that could have been. But now it can't be, because when you've gone through life and then you meet them at 30 like me, you're not close. You don't have the trust as if you had your brothers or sisters right there with you. You lose all that contact. And you lose your religion. You lose the right to inheritance if there is inheritance. Your aunts and uncles, uh, your language. You lose friends. Well, you never had friends to begin with, so I guess you can't ... the only friend is yourself, and I kind of like my friend. I did. I really like my friend, because she was obedient to me, and she did, she was good to me. Even though we never had anything, she was good to me. But, uh, I just wished you know this system would stop. But you can't. Because children need homes.

And you know, maybe in a foster care — Down in Pennsylvania where my boy was living, I went to, uh, to the social, to the people down there to get help for some of his medical stuff. If they knew you're a minority, that's what gets me. If they know, like these social services and everything — if they know you're a minority — right away you're down in the dirt. (*points to the floor*) But them down there in Pennsylvania, they think I'm Mexican or Spanish and I said, 'I'll be what you want me to be today.' Because they're dark, they treat me with respect, the Spanish people do. And I don't feel all alone. Because even though I don't speak the language, I like, you know, those people. But again, like I said, I just wish my life would have been better. I might have been a doctor. You never know. A lawyer. Maybe an Indian chief, I might have been. (*laughs*) But I thank you God all, bless you all. I thank you for the opportunity to share with you, Heather.

RG: Rachel.

GSR: And — ?

ML: Marcy.

GSR: *(laughs)* And, um, Adam?

BPC: Ben.

GSR: Ben?

BPC: Ben, yes.

GSR: *(laughs)* I thank you all. God bless you, you got a lot of work to do. And you know? Keep looking up, don't look down like you're doing now. Because if you keep looking up, *(smiles)* your path is brighter. When you look down, you run into all kinds of trouble.

ML: Thank you, Georgina.

GSR: God bless you. Yeah, I'm ready now. She gave me some tobacco. Smells like pot! Or something. *(laughs)*

ML: Now how would you know how that smells?

GSR: I know that smell! I smelled it one time on the clothes of somebody.

[END OF RECORDING]