



[Title: Episode 1 - Community: "The Door Was Open"]

>> ARNETTA JAMES QUARLES: I am Arnetta James Quarles, a member of Emory Grove United Methodist Church. In this piece, you'll hear Thelma Scott, Richard Tyler, and Beverly Eugene Neal remember life in the African American community of Emory Grove from the 1940s to the 1970s.

[instrumental music]

>> THELMA SCOTT: Emory Grove had a lot of resources. We had a beauty shop. We had a bakery. We had a doctor's office. And people would always come to Emory Grove, whether it was for church, camp meeting, baseball. They had a tavern, with a pool hall.

>> RICHARD TYLER: It was a wonderful, wonderful place to live and to grow up. I still have such fond memories.

[children's laughter]

There was one main road, Emory Grove Road, which had a number of homes located on either side.

[sound of footsteps]

All of the houses were connected by pathways. There were paths all through the community. Some led right through people's yards, and that was not a problem. You'd walk right through the yard.

Back then, as hard as it may be to believe, no one closed their door. In the summertime, the door would stay open all day and all night.

[chirping of crickets and birds]

And if I went to visit someone, I'd just simply walk in the house. The door was open!

>> BEVERLY EUGENE NEAL: Everybody would raise pigs and have chicken coops. And everybody had a garden...lettuce, tomatoes, carrots.



>> THELMA SCOTT: We had plenty of apples and pears and peaches and cherries and...you name it!

>> BEVERLY EUGENE NEAL: No running water or anything, so everybody had outhouses, and it was country living.

>> THELMA SCOTT: Even though it was a poor, Black community, we never realized how poor we really were [laughter] because everybody lived the same way!

>> BEVERLY EUGENE NEAL: When you're in a situation and you don't know any different, you make it work. But then when you're exposed to what everybody else has, and it's better...Who wouldn't want hot water versus trying to put water on the stove to heat it up? Yeah.

[instrumental music]

>> RICHARD TYLER: The community leaders soon came to find that our only hope for any improvement in this community is urban renewal. And urban renewal was a good thing, and urban renewal was a bad thing.

It was presented in such a way that we're going to purchase your land, give you new temporary places to live. We're going to build affordable modern housing, and then you're going to come back. But, of course, you sell your house and your property for \$25,000 and they put up a \$75,000 house, you can't come back.

People were relocated. Some people went as far away as Washington. Some went to Baltimore. Some went to Gaithersburg, where African Americans could find housing.

Once people moved out, they razed all the houses, leveled everything, and put in what you now see as Emory Grove now, the big community center, the swimming pool, and the housing development. And Emory Grove in one fell swoop was swept right off the map.

And along with it went our way of living, our sense of community, our sense of togetherness, all of our traditions.

>> BEVERLY EUGENE NEAL: It was better. You know, everything was better, in one sense. And then, once you look back...Well, was it really better? I don't know.



[Title: Episode 2 - Camp Meeting: “A Place of Fellowship”]

>> Carolyn Taylor: This is Carolyn Taylor and I am the fourth generation of my family to grow up in Emory Grove. In this piece, you'll hear about the religious camp meetings that took place in Johnson's Park from Joan Owens, Beverly Eugene Neal, Reverend Glenn Taylor, Richard Tyler, Etta Johnson, Thelma Scott, Priscilla Scott, and myself.

[Children playing]

>> Joan Owens: When we were little girls, camp meeting was three Sundays in August. Second, third and fourth Sunday.

>> Beverly Eugene Neal: It was a big community day. People from not only Montgomery County but all over the state of Maryland...Sometimes out-of-state buses would come there...

[Bus honk]

>> Glenn Taylor: A lot of the people who moved out of the community — didn't matter how far they migrated — they came back to camp meeting.

[Children talking]

>> Carolyn Taylor: It was a place of fellowship, of friendship...and even with the camp meeting, it was a place where you wouldn't see anybody for a whole year and then you saw them...

[Insects buzzing]

>> Joan Owens: People would actually camp for maybe 30 days or so...

>> Richard Tyler: And of course if you stayed there all day, or a couple of days, you had to have some food!

>> Beverly Eugene Neal: They didn't call them concession stands, but every family had specialties that they cooked...

[Food sizzles on grill]



>> Richard Tyler: I literally saw some people that would bring something like a 300-pound, cast-iron kitchen stove on the back of a truck and bring a couple of cords of wood and stack it. And they would actually cook food and bake food...

[Crowd buzzing]

>> Beverly Eugene Neal: They sold goods, like dinners...ham sandwiches was our specialty...

>> Etta Johnson: Chicken! Always fried chicken...

>> Thelma Scott: Well, you know, this lady made the best caramel cake...you go to her table to buy the cake.

>> Richard Tyler: Dorothy Stevenson, she knew I would always come to her table for her lemon meringue pie. Mildred Williams, I would always go to her table for her famous chocolate pie.

>> Etta Johnson: Well, we call it: "soul food!"

[laughter]

>> Thelma Scott: And then we had worship service. And it wasn't no fun and games! It was like a REVIVAL.

>>Choir: I shall not, I shall not be moved.

>> Carolyn Taylor: And there was a 9am Sunday school, an eleven o'clock service, a three o'clock service, and a 7pm service.

>> Thelma Scott: And there was a man who had a...what do you call it?...a speaker? And you could hear it all over the campground.

>> Priscilla Scott: A loudspeaker.

>> Thelma Scott: And there was singing and shouting, and sometimes you'd be running around, playing and having a good time...and then you'd find out other people is down at the tabernacle.



>> Choir: ...that's planted by the water, I shall not be moved.

>> Richard Tyler: And everyone wore their finest clothes, and just hot as blazes during the latter part of August, but there was a certain appearance that you were expected to bring to the camp meeting.

>> Glenn Taylor: It was tradition to have the greatest preachers. Everybody would come to hear these great evangelists.

>> Richard Tyler: There were times when the pastor would just spontaneously lead the congregation out of the tabernacle and all through the camp meeting grounds, singing the old hymns.

>> Choir: We are soldiers, in the Army. We have to fight, although we have to cry.

>> Glenn Taylor: It was a place of worship. It was a place of fellowship. And it didn't matter where you were from and what denomination you belonged to, you were included.

>> Thelma Scott: You know, we had it for over 100 years. 1860 to 1967, we had camp meeting. That was one of the longest camp meetings in Montgomery County. The Emory Grove camp meeting.

>> Choir: We've got to hold up the blood-stained banner. We've got to hold it up until we die.



[Title: Episode 3 - Johnson's: "That Park Was Alive"]

>> Michael Johnson: This is Michael Johnson. I grew up in Emory Grove and still live here today. In this piece, you'll hear about the sports and entertainment scenes at Johnson's Park from myself, Beverly Eugene Neal, Reverend Glenn Taylor, Thelma Scott, Richard Tyler, and Greg Wims.

[Music playing]

>> Beverly Eugene Neal: Johnson's Park was kind of the center of entertainment for Black families all over Montgomery County and outside of Montgomery County.

>> Glenn Taylor: Edward Johnson was a native of Emory Grove. He was a[n] entrepreneur. He brought business, established a tavern in Emory Grove, and he built a baseball field for us.

[umpire shouting]

>> Glenn Taylor: The baseball field that's still there was the first park in Montgomery County — Black or white — that [you] could play night baseball.

>> Michael Johnson: And because everything was segregated — this Johnson's Park was a magnificent place. It looked like Orioles Stadium in Baltimore...

[Sound of baseball hitting a bat]

>> Michael Johnson: And it was just so professional, the way they did things.

[crowd cheering]

>> Glenn Taylor: Before they integrated the Major Leagues, many of the old Negro League ballplayers would come through. And some of the famous baseball players actually played here at Johnson Park.

[Baseball sounds]

>> Thelma Scott: Every Black community had a baseball team. Today, most of the Black boys play basketball. Back then, everybody had a baseball team.



>> Michael Johnson: Not just the men's! All of the women in every community had a softball team. A lot of them played at that park also. So that park was alive!

[coach shouting and whistling]

>> Richard Tyler: Mr. Johnson himself would sponsor a big, what we called, a picnic, in which you would come to see a series of baseball games— perhaps a couple of double-headers — and they would have concessions there also.

>> Michael Johnson: I mean, I lived down the road here. But when I saw those lights...Boom! I was at ballpark.

[sports sounds fade]

>> Richard Tyler: Following the double-header baseball game, as evening approached, there was another structure on the campground—on the opposite side— and that was built as a dance pavilion.

[music]

>> Greg Wims: That was also a mecca for some of the big stars.

>> Beverly Eugene Neal: Fats Domino and James Brown. I remember them coming...Ike and Tina Turner...

[Ike & Tina Turner song plays]

>> Greg Wims: It was what we called the Chitlin' Circuit.

>> Beverly Eugene Neal: When stars came like that, I mean, the place would be packed. With cars all over the grounds, everywhere. People all over the place...and as kids, we kind of had to sneak up on the side, and kind of look in...

>> Richard Tyler: They would play and dance until the wee hours of the night. I could open my bedroom window as I was home and hear the music playing and just long to be there.



[Title: Episode 4 - Education: “You Were Expected to Do Well”]

>> Dee Dee Morgan: This is Dee Dee Selman Morgan. I grew up in Emory Grove and attended Longview Elementary. In this piece, you'll hear Michael Johnson, Carolyn Taylor and Greg Wims remember what it was like to go to school there in the 1950s, and how things changed when schools integrated.

[piano music]

>> Michael Johnson: As a kid, I went to Longview Elementary School, which was segregated.

>> Carolyn Taylor: Longview was...the teachers were Black, the cafeteria workers...the principal was Black.

>> Michael Johnson: They were just nurturing. People knew who you were.

>> Greg Wims: All the Emory Grove teachers [were] stern, but they were loving. That's the difference.

>> Carolyn Taylor: We had to be really, really good because, you know the employees of the school system were friends with the families. So you couldn't do anything — they'd tell on you.

>> Greg Wims: Even in the neighborhoods...The grocery store owner: loving but stern. You didn't have people coming in and stealing things because you know if you did they could tell your parents and you'd be in trouble.

[Low murmur of students outdoors]

>> Michael Johnson: The most important thing was the level of expectations. You were expected to do well.

[Sound of students fades]

>> Michael Johnson: After that I went to Carver High School. I went there for the seventh grade. After that year, schools integrated.



[Music swells]

>> Michael Johnson: The communities were not integrated at all. You went where you went before integration, and the whites went where they went before integration. And then all of a sudden, Black people come to this white school that had been around for years. And you were seen — if you were African American, you were seen different.

[Music]

>> Michael Johnson: The level of expectation just dropped. And so there, you were kind of tracked. You were expected to do something menial. You were expected to be a custodian or — to do work that was all manual. It was like you were in a strange place...all the things that were dear to you...that nurturing...it was just gone.

[Music pulses]

>> Michael Johnson: I had things a little different from some of the guys because I was an athlete. But those people that were just ordinary students — much sharper than I was — that you would expect to do really well, and to go to college, just to have a great life...They weren't pushed to do anything like that.

[Music]

>> Michael Johnson: But education-wise, Longview was...it was a great — I got a great education. And the teachers were very influential. So when I got a chance, and got out of high school and went to Bowie State University, I too became a teacher. And I taught in Montgomery County for over, for maybe 34 years.

[Music fades]