

Transcribed Excerpts from Interview of Formerly Enslaved Person Fountain Hughes, June 11, 1949

Hermond Norwood: Well, just tell me what your name is.

Fountain Hughes: My name is Fountain Hughes. I was born in Charlottesville, Virginia. My grandfather belong to Thomas Jefferson. My grandfather was a hundred and fifteen years old when he died. And now I am one hundred and, and one year old. That's enough. [recording stops and starts again]. She used to work, but what she made I don't know. I never ask her ...

Fountain Hughes: When I, you mean when I was slave?

Hermond Norwood: Yeah, when you were a slave. Who did you work for?

Fountain Hughes: Well, I belonged to, uh, B., when I was a slave. My mother belonged to B. But my, uh, but, uh, we, uh, was all slave children. And after, soon after when we found out that we was free, why then we was, uh, bound out to different people. [names of people] and an all such people as that. And we would run away, and wouldn't stay with them. Why then we'd just go and stay anywheres we could. Lay out a night in underwear. We had no home, you know. We was just turned out like a lot of cattle. You know how they turn cattle out in a pasture? Well after freedom, you know, colored people didn't have nothing. Colored people didn't have no beds when they was slaves. We always slept on the floor, pallet here, and a pallet there. Just like, uh, lot of, uh, wild people, we didn't, we didn't know nothing. Didn't allow you to look at no book. And then there was some free born colored people, why they had a little education, but there was very few of them, where we was. And they all had uh, what you call, I might call it now, uh, jail centers, was just the same as we was in jail. Now I couldn't go from here across the street, or I couldn't go through nobody's house without I have a note, or something from my master. And if I had that pass, that was what we call a pass, if I had that pass, I could go wherever he sent me. And I'd have to be back, you know, when uh. Whoever he sent me to, they, they'd give me another pass and I'd bring that back so as to show how long I'd been gone. We couldn't go out and stay a hour or two hours or something like. They send you. Now, say for instance I'd go out here to S.'s place. I'd have to walk. And I would have to be back maybe in a hour. Maybe they'd give me hour. I don't know just how long they'd give me. But they'd give me a note so there wouldn't nobody interfere with me, and tell who I belong to. And when I come back, why I carry it to my master and give that to him, that'd be all right. But I couldn't just walk away like the people does now, you know. It was what they call, we were slaves. We belonged to people. They'd sell us like they sell horses and cows and hogs and all like that. Have a auction bench, and they'd put you on, up on the bench and bid on you just same as you bidding on cattle you know.