

Diana Bryson: Okay we are on a call today with Ms. Ann Taylor who is from St. Petersburg and worked with Minson Rubin. Thank you, Ms. Taylor for taking the time to talk with me today.

Ms. Ann Taylor: Thank you. We were friends, I did not work with Minson. It was a friendship that embodied us both so each task was a friend task--- not a work task.

Diana Bryson: Okay that's good to know. So that gives us a good place to start! Where did you all become friends? How did you get to know Mr. Rubin?

Ms. Ann Taylor: Oh my lord! I would say our friendship developed when I tried out for basketball at 16th Street Junior Highschool and he was about the only person who didn't laugh at me. It was interesting, I had just gotten over polio, and was just getting back to school and trying out for it [the basketball team]. He just knew I needed help, and we started with a great friendship from there and that's how it's been all along! You could just know what the other person needs.

Diana Bryson: That's amazing, I didn't realize that you guys went all the way back to 16th St. Middle School. He wasn't the coach at that point, he was just playing on the team?

Ms. Ann Taylor: He was a year ahead of me so he was on the basketball team as well as Thomas Jackson and Ralph Johnson and a bunch of other guys who just died. They weren't mean guys, they were guys who would help anybody and Minson was the leader of the pack with that. His discernment at an early age was something that most kids didn't have and he used it well.

Diana Bryson: It seems like he had a lot of caregiver energy from his family background, being the man of his house at an early age.

Ms. Ann Taylor: Yes absolutely and he used that in everything that he did.

Diana Bryson: That's awesome. It's cool to know he was such a genuine person. So since you knew him from such a young age, Goliath Davis was able to tell me how he was a pillar of the community, and a storyteller, but what I wanted to get from my call with you was an understanding of his presence. What was it like to be in a room with Minson Rubin?

Ms. Ann Taylor: (chuckles.) It was awesome! Now awesome at seventh grade is different from awesome at adulthood. But in either case Minson had that draw-ability. If he came to the office, Mr. [Emmanuel] Stewart was principal, it wasn't as if Minson was just a student. Mrs. Stewart, the principal, knew that Minson Rubin had just entered the office. But he wasn't a bad student, he was a good student. He was someone that was always in a protective mode, or look out mode, and yet a fantastic athlete -- but he did not let that go to his head. In adulthood, or growing up in adulthood, any idea that Minson would concocted -- my phone would ring, and the first thing is "I had an idea" and I'd go "oh Lord, what have you got for me now"? I was always alarmed but once I heard the idea it was something genuine. Something that we would be able to build on: from the picnics, or recognizing athletes, or personnel from back in the Segregation Era that we would recognize. Whether it be at the schools, or when I had a program at the St. Pete museum of history and recognized all of the instructors for their diligence in making sure we all made it. You could count on Minson to be there, to be the speaker, and he allowed us to use all of his charts, and his poster boards and everything to speak about the segregation time and bring it up to today. Minson was just a unique human being that introduced the world to total honest uniqueness.

Diana Bryson: That's a pretty profound statement. So not only did he do these acts with love, but he was unique about it. He seems like he was also a do-er. He was the one who organized getting all of those posters done, the timelines, and finding the information. Do you know if he was putting this Collection together as it was happening or was it something that had happened after? I know that I have a lot of things like newspapers that talk about the Segregation era, that type of history and the things that you are mentioning, but was this something that he was thinking about at a young age or did he come to realize that this was important to do maybe a little bit later on in his life into his career?

Ms. Ann Taylor: No, no, no. Minson started this back at Gibbs Highschool where he started maintaining the collection. He had the idea before then but as he was able to have extra money to be able to pick up extra things that he knew we would need later on. Coming up in our day, in Segregation, you could see no way out. But in building his collection and showing we're making it you need something to look back on so that you know you have a history. You can see the people that were in the same boat as you and they made it out. When you look at the Step Johnson and the others from our period that made it out-- and Step Johnson made it to be president of Urban Music (who just retired) . He was on the basketball team that became state champs during Segregation time and Minson would say Step "this is going to be important we have to show others how we can make it out and we're gonna make it out." Segregation to most

people is just a word. but it was a life that we all wanted to emerge from in one piece. To have something to show the young people of today what it was like and if we could make it out of there with little to nothing you can do it too. But you need to know that you've got people that came from nothingness to aspire to great heights, giving them a sense of worth. You don't have a sense of worth coming out if you don't know from which you came. He would always say "we've got to keep this to show we made it, we honestly made it, and we're here to talk about it."

Diana Bryson: Wow. That's amazing. I think today especially, a lot of us- and me being younger when I was in grade school - segregation almost became like a flash card to me. Like, oh this was the time when Blacks and whites were separated. But I moved to St. Petersburg to go to USF St. Pete about five years ago and immediately I did some internships at local schools, Fairmount and Campbell Park, and I just noticed immediately this difference in the students there specifically. I think what you're saying about Minson's Collection giving power to these students is definitely one of the most important takeaways so far because I've noticed that even though this stuff went on about 50 years ago at this point I don't feel like we talk enough about it. Connecting with that history that isn't that far back is something that could be so beneficial to younger generations now. Especially for our Black communities in South Side St. Pete because a lot of the students lose inspiration because there is not a lot of inspiration around them. But these leaders like Minson, and you too being part of that, talking about that and sharing your words, thoughts, and reflections I think will empower those students and give them a backbone or foundation for them, you know?

Ms. Ann Taylor: Yes and this was definitely his wish because we knew nobody would tell the story the way it was. Everybody had to put a feel good spin on it to make the people of today feel good about themselves. But if you had it [information from the past] from when it was happening and people could really honestly look at what transpired from people that live it. You're not just reading a book from what someone said but these are the people that lived it and hopefully the story will gain traction and people will understand that, and this is Minson's words of all time, he said "everytime you hear someone mentioning something about what we have endured they speak about slavery, they never speak about segregation." If you look at it-- in slavery you had your rules, in segregation they made them up as they went along to either hurt you or imprison you or hold you back, etc etc. Segregation was not a cake walk in the park.

Diana Bryson: Right. I've read some of the articles he had about the sit ins that were happening in the 1960's specifically at, I think it was at Moss Brothers?

Ms. Ann Taylor: Yes it was at Moss Brothers.

Diana Bryson: Do you remember that happening?

Ms. Ann Taylor: Oh yeah, Dr. Wimbush and [Attorney] / Judge James B. Sanderlin and Reverend Davis were all involved. The sit-ins were definitely a thing down Central Avenue, McCorry's -- all over -- they were all over.

Diana Bryson: So compared to what's happening now with some of our protests and demonstrations - do you think the same energy is flowing through now or do you see a difference in the way people are acting? Obviously with social media, I've found it really helpful and found a lot of good information from following different people on Instagram. I think that to me, and my generation, it has educated us more on this history than school did for the most part. By sharing peoples experiences, like you were saying. So I was just wondering -- do you think there is a difference with this movement?

Ms. Ann Taylor: It is a different energy yes and it is a movement. When we were marching in a Segregated time they didn't pay us much attention or we were irrelevant. They'd shoot us, bang us, kick us that was the norm of what it was. Today, with the marching and movement that's going on, it's just not one race of people. This energy that's out here now is the interracial children, the younger generations that have heard the stories of their elders and they see it still going on. Everybody makes an excuse for it but the young ones today are fed up with it and they have a stronger energy because you do have people out there other than Black and Brown people. The world takes note when it's other than Black and Brown people doing something. You don't get taught this in school and showed that a Black person could do anything positive. The newspapers would never show a person of color doing anything positive-- you'd have a colored section on Wednesdays that they would put out and you could hear whatever and read whatever about a Black person doing something positive but otherwise no. But these kids today, I applaud them for what they are doing. Not the violence, I don't mean that whether it's malicious on their part or provoked by another entity. Violence period begets absolutely nothing but silence. In the world that we are living in now, people are trying to go back to a time that they found was a good time -- I lived that, Minson lived that. That was not a good time for people that looked like Minson and I. We've improved because we got a chance to vote, finally in 1965 which wasn't that long ago. Now they're trying to take that away from us again and the Minson Collection can bring you up to the present and show the similarities of what we are going through now compared to what we went through then. I don't want to over talk myself, I beg your pardon.

Diana Bryson: No, no! I appreciate your insight so much and I think that everything you just said has so much value and importance to it. Last week we had an equity training with SPC that Dr. Williams put on -- she's a really amazing leader for our institution and I feel lucky to be affiliated with SPC -- one of our professors Micheal, I wish I could remember his name at this point, he mentioned, like you said, Black and Brown voices were always been heard less than white voices. He was talking about how he was questioned as being a professor. A white student had come up to him and said it was inappropriate for him to be teaching a class and he didn't understand that he had the background or education or how he could ever be qualified to teach that course. I know that that is not something that is uncommon, even today. I just have a lot of respect for my elders in general [so this doesn't make sense]. I hope that in my lifetime, my generation, can push for human value. How could your voice be valued less than my voice? It's a problem that doesn't need to be a problem and I hope it's something that a solution is found for. Moving on, getting back to the St. Pete specifics with Minson Rubin, Dr. Davis and I talked a little bit about the community values with the churches in St. Pete and I know Minson had saved a lot of things from Mt. Zion Progressive Baptist Church so I was just wondering if you had any connection to that church or could speak to them in any light with their history and connection with St. Pete or give me insight in that regard?

Ms. Ann Taylor: Deep history, no I couldn't. But I do know people that could, even Thomas Jackson -- the one I've been telling you to speak to -- it's known to be one of the churches that was there [in South Side St. Pete]. We've attended the church through programs that were around but I can't even remember who was the minister back then now.

Diana Bryson: I don't think I can pull my files up fast enough to research, but that's alright. If Mr. Jackson would know a little bit more I'd be happy to ask him about it too.

Ms. Ann Taylor: Yes.

Diana Bryson: Okay so one of my goals was to have your advice with what the young people of today [how we should move forward]. At this point, we are obviously doing a lot of learning but there is also a call to action. There has been a social responsibility that's fallen on Black and Brown people for so long in defense of your values. Now I think there is this call to action for white people to be there to defend, to stand up, and I was just wondering if you have any advice for our younger students, or our younger generations, just with moving forward with all of this. Maybe how you see it appropriate

with us moving forward, do you have any thoughts with that?

Ms. Ann Taylor: Well I think for Black people, or people of color, [they should] educate themselves on their own history so that they can know what moving forward looked like and why moving forward is so important without forgetting the past. Our caucasian brothers and sisters, they need to understand and educate -- not hear from their neighbor, or draw from something else -- but educate themselves on our Black history so that these misnomers that they have, they can put them aside. Because they are getting advice from their neighbor who may or may not be prodigious or may or may not have the right information so they may be a little hostile as that young man was speaking to the professor. He was under the impression that Black people can't learn, Black people are unable to be educated, Black people cannot work in our society. This is something that he acquired through his associations, I'm not saying his parents, but what I am saying is he learned history from the wrong person. As your doing, picking up on our history and learning by reading the articles without reservations, without malice. Don't listen to whether it's the president of the United States talking about how bad we are or one person that encountered an experience with a Person of Color and not all of us happen to be that way. If we could all just delve down, take a deep breath, and try to learn and not blame- we could come out with each side having respect for the other. I'll get off of this in a second, but they are all speaking about the police department, my daughter just retired after 32 years in the police department. There are good police and there are bad police. The establishment itself, the people incharge, is where they need to look because institutional racism- if it's only coming in with an occasional officer it can be wiped out but if it's in the head it's not going anywhere- no matter how many officers you get in and out. If the head of the institutions has this racist attitude and projects it to the others it's not going anywhere and that's why I tell them all the time "stop using a bandaid". Find the cure, find the problem. That's what the whites of today need to look at. Even Minson's life and see we are not all that bad.

Diana Bryson: You guys aren't bad at all!!

Ms. Ann Taylor: Even when Joe Waller pulled the mural off the wall - depicting us as monkeys with tails and whatever - nobody in city hall thought anything was wrong with it. They didn't even listen to us when we petitioned to have it removed in a place we are all supposed to be equal, we're all supposed to be represented but still had a depiction that they could make fun of, and laugh at, that people could speak down to. when Joe Waller took it down they found that he was a worse problem than they were. They were the problem- because they kept the racism going. Just pointing something out here, I'll hush now.

Diana Bryson: No, no. That's great to point out. That happened a few years after all of the desegregation was implemented in St. Pete. I think that that is something that we don't think about typically. You know- what kind of facilities are they [the people in charge] working in? Locker room talk is being made by these leaders about Black and Brown people and I think Joe Waller -- he ended up spending a few years in jail for that, he had repercussions --

Ms. Ann Taylor: Absolutely and a quick point about St. Petersburg. The new Pier that's been beautified -- I haven't been there, I have no intentions of going -- but the part over by Spa Beach that they are encouraging everybody to come, and go, and look, and see, in segregation people my age were beaten and were not allowed into Spa Beach. A person like me, you're trying to encourage me to come to a restaurant so that I can come and look at Spa Beach? Not a chance in hell. It wasn't a place that I was wanted or allowed when I was coming up. Now, I have no interest in going because you all want to spruce it up. It's the insensitivity of the people on top. Where you have Demons Landing, that was the Black people's swimming pool. That was called South Mole but they take it away because it's irrelevant, leave us in the pits. But they beautify if they want to use it or if they have a point. But that sensitivity button is still there. Nobody looks at it because it's only about Black people.

Diana Bryson: I did read the articles about Spa Beach. For some reason I thought that that was on the other side of our coast but that is where the pier is now, huh?

Ms. Ann Taylor: On the side they have a restaurant there now. That pier has always been there but they branched out trying to beautify some of the other areas and Spa Beach is right there on the side, where they used to have the white beaches to swim. It's right there on the side, they beautified that area. It's over there near an overlook of the city, some bar or restaurant is over there that you can just walk up to and sit with your wooden chairs. In the building where I am some of the ladies was asking "have I seen that?" They can't wait to go and see it and "I think it's going to be so beautiful." "Aren't you going to go, aren't you interested?" I said "absolutely not. I have no interest in it now" then I spoke about how when I was interested I wasn't allowed and they were like "what do you mean you weren't allowed?" You've got all of that wrong. So many people aren't educated with Segregation, or with what was. They are only living their lives and they can't imagine what somebody else's life would be like.

Diana Bryson: Right. They just want to have their cocktail and overlook this beautiful city and all of these things. From my understanding of St. Petersburg it seems like, no

matter what, they will always put tourism dollars over local lives.

Ms. Ann Taylor: Yes.

Diana Bryson: If I had my way every dollar that went into increasing tourism revenue should be matched in and put into our educational systems. I think that it's one thing to encourage economic mobility, development, and beautification but to cover up our history. To act like those things didn't happen, I mean that makes me want to install some signs (without asking for permission) and saying "where you're standing Black people weren't allowed to". It's the same with the Green Benches to a certain extent.

Ms. Ann Taylor: Absolutely! When I was president at St. Petersburg Museum of History and we were doing the timeline and speaking about the lyncings that was here "oh you don't want people to think we were those kinds of people" but you were! Tell the truth. Then they put something about the benches and had the artist, Lisa, write on there "oh mommy, I just can't wait to sit on these benches" and I told them "you can't put that there." They had depictions of Black people and the writing was happy talking kind of thing -- but we weren't even allowed to sit on those! Then they said well we don't want that kind of [attention] and I said "don't tell lies about the benches tell the truth and start to heal. Knock this off that everything has been so good for everybody because it hasn't." Get to learning from people from my age and so forth so you'll know something instead of covering it. It's wonderful that you are in this mode to learn and I hope it doesn't make you bitter with your learning but make you learn enough to want to be part of the solution.

Diana Bryson: It's part of my responsibility to be part of the solution. I wouldn't see it any other way. I feel lucky to [be here]. I don't really understand why people my age don't want to talk to people older than us. First of all- I don't trust the history books any more, I don't know these authors personally so I'm like "who better to learn from than people like you that have lived through it." Your insight is the most valuable thing I could learn from and especially if I am to try to make changes in the future I can come back to the things you've taught me and through those [lessons] into their faces you know?

Ms. Ann Taylor: It makes sense what you're saying. To be armed with real information not hearsay. Not you feel good but from actual living beings that encountered it and how and why. still not let it affect you negatively but to help you be a better person with it.

Diana Bryson: Well awesome. I think we are definitely over 20 minutes which was my goal for this conversation! (laughter)

Ms. Ann Taylor: I'm sorry! (laughter)

D- Don't apologize! Now, I want to talk to you more just off the record!! Because I feel like we should. I was telling Dr. Davis that I would love to take all of you out to lunch and be able to see you in person so I hope that maybe next year sometime that things are safer and quieter so we can set something up. I would love to shake your hand and look you in the eye and thank you for teaching me and helping me grow so much.

Ms. Ann Taylor: You're welcome. Whatever I can do, while I am still here, it is going to be a pleasure.

D- That is good to know. So I am going to go ahead and end the recording.