

Otis R. Anthony African Americans in Florida OHP
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Interviewee: Mrs. Sylvia Griñan (SG)
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Mrs. Sylvia Griñan: ...our prejudices must cease for they are the stumbling blocks in the path of our democracy. As Robert C. Jones has said, "While the members of any group are not accorded equal opportunities as others about them, to make a living, to be assured an education, and to be able to enjoy the better prerogatives that our society offers because of the difference in color of skin or other physical characteristics, we cannot say that we are genuinely and completely democratic."

Otis Anthony: That's right.

SG: And Robert C. Jones said that. Pray this is a bad habit. It's a habit. You know? You're gonna—you're not born with it.

OA: Hmmm.

SG: It is extremely difficult to overcome, but with effort it can be accomplished. In my estimation, slavery was abolished because the Union was in peril. It was thought best to abolish this institution to save the Union, notwithstanding the serious consequences to the southern states. How can the negro fail to understand that the feelings the white southerner harbors against you is not because his color, the abolition of slavery meant to the whites in the south impoverishment and degradation and they associated their adverse circumstances with the negro.

OA: That's right.

SG: It wasn't because they hated us. This took too much away from them. The grandeur. The colonial—

OA: Umm hmm—he palatial—

SG: —was gone—

OA: —plantations.

SG: —and they blamed the blacks. Perhaps in the future the necessity to save a democracy will require that the practices of discrimination be abolished. How can a democracy survive if it permits undemocratic principals? Let us hope that, contrary to the ill effects that the abolishment of slavery engendered, the abolishment of discriminatory and segregation practice may not bring rancor, hatred, and persistent ill feeling. Let us hope that with every change in our economic, political, and social thinking there may also be a change of heart that will permit us to cease transmitting our prejudices to our children. Let us try to educate them in the practice of tolerance and understanding. Perhaps to learn to accept individuals of a different race and to recognize that because a nation, racial group, or individual is different it does not follow that he is inferior.

OA: There you go.

SG: To my fellow Cubans and Americans in Tampa I say, if—I'm talking to the Cubans now, black Cubans—if we repudiate racial prejudice in members of the white group how dare we practice it among ourselves?

OA: Umm hmm.

SG: It is not hard for the two negro groups to understand each other and perhaps a solution to the problem can be affected with certain action as follows: more Spanish and Latin American history should be taught in our schools. Every Cuban knows your constitution. This land of ours doesn't teach anything but American history and European history. Nobody knows anything about Cuba. But Cuba knows everything about America.

OA: There you go.

SG: All right. Now, all that's off the record, now some of this, you know—more Spanish and Latin American history should be taught in our schools. American Negro history should be included in the school's curriculum. Now, this is—what, how many years ago?

OA: Hm—hm—hm—

SG: And we got it now.

OA: 1950. They got it now. They even have this pamphlet in all the schools.

SG: Really? That's good.

OA: All the schools.

SG: The negro newspaper should have a section in Spanish and English devoted to Latin American news and local Cuban news.

OA: Umm hmm.

SG: The negroes of the or—upper social strata should let down the social barriers to where the Cuban negroes. Now, some of these things you can't grasp unless you have a college degree. Now that's stupid. You can be intelligent as the day is long—

OA: There you go.

SG: —speak the king's English, and they have a lot of money—you don't know what these people do.

OA: Yeah.

SG: Negroes of the upper social strata should let down the social barriers to where the Cuban negroes and the Cuban negro club should open its membership to many worth American negroes. It works both ways.

OA: Umm hmm.

SG: At one time they didn't accept American negroes. Now I think they do.

OA: Okay.

SG: Cuban negro children should attend the public elementary school so they might associate with a greater number of colored Americans. At that time we didn't say "black" we said "colored," remember?

OA: Umm hmm.

SG: Cuban men and women should try to obtain membership in American social and civic clubs about the City. Cuban children should be encouraged to belong to youth organizations such as Girl and Boy Scouts and YWCA. They didn't at that time. Many suggestions could be obtained for the problem of better integration of the Cuban and the American negro—I'm talking about negro now—the solution of which is unity, unity, so in this merging of spiritual and eternal bonds a new negro may come forth.

OA: (inaudible) are six?

SG: No that's it.

OA: Okay.

End of interview