

**HAYLENE GREEN**  
**West End Community Urban Garden Nursery– Atlanta, Georgia**

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Date: August 7, 2013

Location: Home of Haylene Green, Midtown, Atlanta, Georgia

Interviewer: Sara Wood

Transcription: Shelley Chance, ProDocs

Length: One hour, eleven minutes

Project: Women at Work in Georgia

**[Begin Haylene Green Interview]**

*[Interviewer's note: Haylene is showing me photographs of her farm. It's pouring rain and we're sitting in her apartment building.]*

**00:00:01**

**Haylene Green:** Everybody is in the garden—in the garden. We got a bit of things growing—bananas and everything, but yes, so I am the—I'm noted as the multicultural yeah tropical farmer, right.

**Sara Wood:** Wow.

**HG:** Chickens and everything, uh-hm.

**SW:** Wow, so I'm just going to start by introducing us both and then I'm going to have you introduce yourself and I'll just ask you questions and you just tell me some stories. So it's—let's see—

**00:00:41**

**HG:** Cards—and I was going to save this one for you. That's—

**00:00:49**

**SW:** Well if this is your last one I can get another one at another time.

00:00:52

**HG:** No, no, I have to reprint, yes. I have a few upstairs.

00:00:54

**SW:** Okay, they're beautiful. Thank you, are you comfortable?

00:00:57

**HG:** Oh yes, uh-hm.

00:00:58

**SW:** Okay, I'm just going to set this here. I'll set this right here. Okay, so it is August 7, 2013 and I'm sitting here with Haylene Green and we're at the corner of 10<sup>th</sup> and Juniper in Midtown in Atlanta, Georgia. And Haylene I'm wondering if you could say hello and—and tell me a little bit—tell me your name, who you are, and—and what you do.

00:01:20

**HG:** Okay.

00:01:21

**SW:** I'll hold it for you.

00:01:22

**HG:** My name is Haylene Green.

**00:01:24**

**SW:** Can you start over again? I'm sorry.

**00:01:25**

**HG:** Haylene Green Garden Queen. I was given that name by people that found out about my garden. I have a tropical garden in the West End of Atlanta, 1285 Ralph Abernathy Boulevard and it's located in a food desert: one supermarket, one grocery store within a five-mile radius.

**00:02:07**

I was fortunate enough to have my sister buying this property for one of the main purposes of fulfilling my dreams of gardening, farming.

**00:02:24**

**SW:** And Haylene will you tell me your birth date for the record?

**00:02:26**

**HG:** Birth?

**00:02:27**

**SW:** Your birth date?

**00:02:28**

**HG:** Okay, my birth date is March 23, 1945.

**00:02:35**

**SW:** And can you talk a little bit about where you grew up and what it was like there?

00:02:41

**HG:** I was born in Port Antonio, Portland in the island of Jamaica, West Indies. I was practically born in the ocean, it was just a wall that separates us from the ocean. We're that close to the Caribbean Sea. And it's more or less I would call it a rainforest somewhat because it rains a little bit just about every day but nothing to affect anything because it's just the climate of Port Antonio—that side of Jamaica. Everything grows because we have enough sun, we have enough water, and the soil is very good, very fruitful, good quality soil without having to use fertilizer.

00:03:39

**SW:** So and in the community was growing your own food was that just something that was inherent to the community and did everybody grow their food?

00:03:51

**HG:** Not really. Excuse me, where I lived that was not a farm but we had a farm about three miles out of the town. I lived more or less in the little town area as we might call it off Port Antonio. Each and every one of us that have yards or yard space for planting we might plant a small portion but we normally have large trees, for instance the native bread, fruit trees, acai trees, avocado trees, lime, grapefruit—those are trees, bananas that grows in our yard, but we don't call it a farm. That's just normal for us.

00:04:48

I have always since I know myself loved to play in the dirt, not to take away from Pikes [Nursery – *Interviewer's note: Pikes Nursery's motto is "play in the dirt."*], but that's actually what I do so I guess it's all of ours—play in the dirt. And I could plant a leaf, sometimes I do

plant a leaf thinking that even a leaf could grow but whatever plant that I may get, whatever cuttings, whether beg, borrow, or steal, if I put it in the soil it usually grows. I love farming. It's in my DNA.

**00:05:35**

**SW:** Were your—now did your parents farm and do other work on the side or—?

**00:05:41**

**HG:** Uh, in Jamaica it's not the custom of female—this is only for the modern days, back in the days females don't work. They stay home and take care of the children. So my mom did not work out for anybody—neither my grandparents. My father, my grandfather, but there are—I am what you would call a fifth generation farmer. Not all the siblings like farming or gardening, some just cannot take the outdoors but like I say, I am the eldest of six and whatever farm DNA that is leftover from my four (grand)parents I got it all because if I do not farm I'll get sick. If I have to rent, borrow, beg a piece of property somewhere I have got to put something on the land because I can't live otherwise. So farming is a part of me.

**00:06:55**

Well I got my mom involved in gardening. She likes planting flowers, but I like planting fruits and vegetables. So we balance each other and together we have the flower garden in the front and the little plot in the back for planting the vegetables. That was my job.

**00:07:23**

My father and grandfather, they went to the field, like I said about three miles out of town and my father and grandfather would get up way before the family got up and went to the field and brought back food provision or ground provision—excuse me that my mom would prepare

for our breakfast before we went to school. So we ate all natural fruits, vegetables, and starch grown in our own field in the morning before we go to school at eight o'clock. Don't know how we did it because it's dark but I think he just farmed by the moon and the sun and the stars because **[Laughs]** that's it, that's how they were raised and so we ate. And we did not know that we were eating good because all the things that we are now paying quite a high price for, coconuts, bananas, the different ground provisions like potatoes and yam and the different names that is not familiar with the US, we were eating it and now they're all famous. Doctors are recommending them as most healthy foods. And chocolate, real natural chocolate, not processed of any kind, coffee, the—the fruits are numerous, more than I can name, and my father was a banana export in the days, he would export bananas to the UK [United Kingdom]. And so whatever was rejected which was really top quality bananas but if they have a little bruise or they weren't the size that they were supposed to be then they were rejected and so they came home to be distributed among family and friends, so we had lots to eat—all natural. We didn't know we were rich but we ended up being **[Laughs]** richer than we thought, healthy-wise.

**00:10:07**

I have always told people I have five children, and I spent more money on bread as a common food than I have spent on doctor bills for the past forty-seven years. Also my mom is still alive, she's eight-six and she runs rings around me and all the family. Thank the Lord, none of us have any terminal illness, so far as we know, and I think that—I rest assured, we—our religious beliefs and also what we put in our body, so that's—that's a plus. And my aim right now is to teach others for the future to eat nutritious, healthy food so that they can also stay healthy, lose weight, or do not gain weight, and sustain themselves. So that's what I'm doing here in Atlanta, Georgia and the best area it's underprivileged, underdeveloped, economically

they are under, and as I say in a food desert, so that's my plan to teach the neighborhood how to survive.

**00:11:51**

**SW:** Is that why you started the garden in the first place? I mean or did it start as something that you wanted for yourself and then it naturally opened up to the community there?

**00:12:00**

**HG:** Well this is a story since I like planting that's my first love, so like I say wherever I can find somewhere to plant I will. But in 1974 when I came to Atlanta we came here for a family reunion or a first visit to the South. As a child I came into New York and I used to plant in pots, whatever could grow in pots I would plant it. Okay, so coming to Georgia or coming down to the South we were fortunate to see a lot of trees, lots of trees in Georgia. It was a—I think between July and September that we came. So I said, “Oh my goodness, we need to move *here* because look at all these fruit trees.” I was just so fascinated about the amount of trees that they have in Georgia.

**00:13:14**

Well, it just so happened we all packed up. I left from Jamaica for the second time, families left from New York and we all moved down in 1975 to Atlanta, Georgia. I watched these trees grow, green, then brown, and then all different kind of colors and I'm waiting for the fruits. Unfortunately, they were not fruit trees. **[Laughs]** They were just trees. **[Laughs]** So I said, “My goodness, I did not know you could have so many trees without them bearing a fruit or a nut or something,” because in Jamaica just about every tree that we grow, I would say maybe ninety-nine percent of the trees we grow are edible in some way or the other whether it's the leaf,



the fruit, the nut, vegetables, whatever—they're edible. So it was very surprising to me that these trees were just green leaves.

**00:14:34**

So I said to myself, “Well I’m going to change that.” And so I set out to try to plant trees that are edible. And I’m in the process. I have—I don’t have any in abundance because I don’t have a lot of acreage, but I am growing bananas just like I would in Jamaica. I’m growing apples. Well, you do have apples in certain areas here. I’m growing peach. I’m growing plum. I’m growing every berry that you could think of. I’m growing herbs and spices and eucalyptus and flowers and tropical pumpkin, the vines. I—I’m just growing.

**00:15:30**

Over the years it’s been real good and I’ve been able to have all my family and relatives fed from it, friends, and even able to supply two or three farmers’ markets, local farmers’ markets in the—in the neighborhood. So I’m hoping to expand hoping that one day I’ll be able to get a nice grant and acquire a larger piece of land maybe five acres and my main interest is to grow and to teach others the young and old alike. I call it garden therapy, it’s my garden therapy. It’s good for me, good for the children, and it’s good for the seniors.

**00:16:27**

I have coined my little saying, “In the garden with Kay and H.T.”, he plows and she plants, “Come and take recess and toil in the soil.” So I am just getting back to recess with the school children like I used to have, which I think is very good for them. And since Pike Nursery already has “Playing in the Dirt,” I figure I would say, “Come toil in the soil.” So I made my own thing up [*Laughs*], in any case we’re playing with dirt and soil and growing and eating and having fun and living healthy.

**00:17:24**

**SW:** And so I just want to ask you I mean what is it like for you to watch these children learn about things that they're so maybe disconnected with? I mean I think Jamila Norman [from Patchwork City Farms] said yesterday that she had a kid say that they had never seen or eaten a tomato before. I mean what is it like for you to watch that? What are you experiencing? What are you—what are they coming to you with in terms of their stories and how are you changing that for them?

**00:17:51**

**HG:** Okay, well when I give the tours I have the same experience. I would hold up, I remember going to a school once and I held up a sweet potato. And I asked the children did they know what this was and they told me a tomato. And then I showed them the tomato, the difference between a potato and a tomato. Then I asked them where do they—the different vegetables come from and they told me without calling any particular supermarket, they called the name of the supermarket, but it's a supermarket. As far as they're concerned, cucumbers and carrots—I mean I have had grown people that have never seen what a tomato plant looked like. They cannot recognize a tomato plant. The grown ones might be able to tell you this is a tomato, but as far as they're concerned a tomato came from the supermarket. They never saw the tomato grow.

**00:19:05**

I have peppers, I—I am unique in what I grow because I am specializing in tropical plants—fruits, and vegetables and nuts seeing what I can get to grow healthy in the South that are from the islands. So I grow a lot of supplies that other farmers don't grow. Notable, one big

one is the hibiscus sorrel and the tropical pumpkin, even my okra seeds are from the islands. They are huge okras of every description—I have okras of all description.

**00:19:57**

When friends and family travel out of the US wherever they are going—or coming back from I ask them to bring me seeds. That’s all they have to do is bring me seeds, healthy seeds so that I can try it out to see if it’s conducive to the weather in the US or preferably in Atlanta, Georgia.

**00:20:24**

**SW:** And so when you see people do you sell these—you sell at the market, I’m wondering what are people’s reaction. Maybe people who grew up in the South who had never seen a tropical pumpkin before, what is it like—what is their reaction like and what is that like for you?

**00:20:37**

**HG:** It’s like going to the ballgame, they are super-excited. They have so many different names for whatever it is that my big tropical pumpkin—you see, I wear it over my shoulder. I call it my baby. It—it is—it weighs, fifty, sixty pounds. These tropical pumpkins, most of the people think it’s a watermelon because they—first of all, the color of the pumpkin resembles somewhat like a water melon because they’re different shades but then the shape of it doesn’t look like a watermelon so they’re in amazement wondering what on earth is this she has? I mean some people call it—“Is that a big gourd? Is that a watermelon?” And I just have to let them know that this is a tropical pumpkin and the seeds came in from Jamaica. When I grow zucchini they are larger than other people’s and that’s the way they are, they’re nice and soft and tender but they’re just huge.

**00:21:51**

Everything is grown in natural soil. No fertilizer, no pesticides, no herbicides, all natural. I do have problems with worms sometimes, but I'm just going to have to use whatever natural way of getting rid of them with the peppers or whatnot or planting things that deter some of the bugs or growing enough yellow plants, flowering plants, so that I can get enough bees and butterflies to ward off some of the insects. But when all else fails if I have to have some worm holes in some of my vegetables so let it be. I just go along with the worm holes—but it's all natural. All they did was ate some before I got to it, so you know I have to eat the rest. **[Laughs]**

**00:22:52**

**SW:** Haylene, I have a few more questions. Are you okay with time?

**00:22:56**

**HG:** Yeah.

**00:22:58**

**SW:** I'm wondering in terms of—can you talk about—you mentioned the tropical pumpkins and the hibiscus. I'm wondering if you could talk a little bit about how you would take these plants in Jamaica and if there are specific dishes to the part of Jamaica you're from that you would make with them and—and if people are incorporating that into their cooking here in the South.

**00:23:21**

**HG:** Yes, I am known for my famous tropical pumpkin soup and I make the tropical pumpkin soup and I sell it at the farmers' market and I am always sold out. People love it. It is made up

with the pumpkins and potatoes and carrots and not little tiny pieces, it's filling. It's a—it's a meal. When you have a bowl of tropical pumpkin soup with all the goodies that I put in there it's a meal. You don't have to have anything else aside from that.

**00:24:03**

In—in the islands it's just a soup for us and then we have another large meal but here you know I know they wouldn't have anything more. The hibiscus sorrel I mix it with ginger and some other secret ingredients and I make a hibiscus sorrel drink. And I also sell it at the farmers' market and when I have functions I am known as the "Hibiscus Sorrel Lady, Haylene the Garden Queen." Everybody wants my hibiscus sorrel once they taste it.

**00:24:46**

I—when I prepare it you can have it sweetened or unsweetened and when I do sweeten I use raw sugar, natural raw sugar or agave sweetener. Lots of people prefer not to even use sweetener so they have a—you know a choice. I bottle it or I have it in cups. And I'm hoping that one of these days pretty soon I'll be able to get it out in stores. That's what I'm hoping for.

**00:25:27**

**SW:** I'm wondering too if you could talk about you mentioned the tropical pumpkin soup—if you can talk about maybe some of the—the meals or the dishes, the specific dishes to maybe—the Maroon culture or just where you grew up that you remember or you have fond memories of or any stories around.

**00:25:46**

**HG:** On the tropical pumpkin?

00:25:50

**SW:** Or any of the—.

00:25:51

**HG:** Any—oh.

00:25:53

**SW:** That you grew up with.

00:25:53

**HG:** The different foods that I grew up with? Wow, we—we produced the best quality yellow yam. It's a food like potatoes, it grows under the earth. And it has a vine and there is a certain amount of months or a couple years that you need to farm it. I'm also growing something else that is native mainly of Guyana, it's called eddoes. It's a root and it's a bulb. It's edible like a potato. The leaves are also edible and famous for our—what we call in the island—pepper pod soup. It is soft like a spinach. We put it in the water and steam it and then after we crush it and seasoning it up in the soup and so it would be as if you were having spinach soup. It's green but it's very healthy, very expensive.

00:27:14

I am able to buy the bulbs from the farmer, the large farmers' market, international farmers' market here and again, I just experiment and I put one or two of the bulbs in the ground to see if they would grow and they did. So I also grow eddoes.

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Yellow yam, the yams are not growable in—in Atlanta. They are able to grow in Florida because the growing period is just too long. I am hoping again that one of these days when I get some funds I'll have a large green house and I'll be able to grow avocado, we call it pear, tropical pear, mangos of every description, and all the fruits that we grow in Jamaica. One of the many fruits that we grow which is one of our main fruits is mangos and papaya. Yes, I have grown papayas and I was just a little bit too late in planting—since that time I've been able to grow papayas to fruit because it needs about a year so I have to start it early inside and then transplant it and get enough sunlight without being cold to produce papayas.

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It's—it's so numerous, the amount of different foods, I am hoping to do a lot more experiment on all the other things like coffee and chocolate and all those things to see whether or not I could produce any in a greenhouse from the time that it needs to grow. But everything that I grow starts either from a bulb or starts from a seed just a tiny seed—is the name of my upcoming publication, *Just a Seed, a Tiny Seed*. So watch for it.

00:29:52

**SW:** And Haylene I'm wondering since this is a—the project that we've been focusing on—women farmers you said in Jamaica that's not something that women really did. They took care of the kids and took care of things at home. Is it—do you think that there's—being a woman farmer yourself, do you think that there are qualities that women have or they possess to farm that maybe men don't possess or that any unique qualities of being a woman farmer as opposed to a man farmer?

00:30:28

**HG:** Yes, now women does farm but it—well farming, as far as farming is concerned, that's not working out. That's just natural, so it—we might not have gone to the big field, but there are people—most people who lives in the countryside live on their farm, so they don't have to go to the farm. The farm already came to them. Yes, but women does farm. They do farming a lot. And they're more patient and they're more gentle and they have more endurance and they plant lots more crops, a variety compared to the men.

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The men may concentrate on things that are large that they can export. Now when we say farm for instance mangos, nobody farms mangos really because you drop a mango seed in Jamaica and it grows wherever you—you drop it on the ground. There are so many mango trees that unless you're doing it for export which now a lot of mangos are being imported, nobody farms mango. They just grow. It's just a thing. You walk along the side of the road and you're going to and from school and you just pick a mango or just go in someone's yard and ask them, "Could you pick up a mango?" because they're all over the ground. And because we—we have so much rain and wind as well and sometimes hurricane—. Oh we got mangos. We got mangos. We have avocados. We have coconuts. We have bananas. I mean those are just natural. As far as the people in the countryside is concerned, it's not work—work. They're not getting paid. They might sell their produce or they—they might just give it away if they have an abundance, but women do farm.

00:32:55

And like I say, we're more variety-conscious, we plant lots more of different things than the male does, you know. They're growing chocolate and that's—they're sticking with chocolate and bananas maybe. But [*Laughs*] we're going to use up every drop of land and plant a whole lot



of everything—herbs and vegetables and fruits and nuts and whatever we can put our hands on—we’re going to grow it and that’s how most women farm. Yeah, they—they don’t have a lot of one or two of anything specializing because we have to grow everything we eat.

**00:33:44**

**SW:** And I’m—I just want to circle back on something you mentioned. You said that you came into New York and you—you had left Jamaica for the second time. I’m wondering why you decided to leave Jamaica and—and you talked about why you decided on Georgia but—.

**00:34:00**

**HG:** Yeah, well I actually had no—no—it wasn’t my decision. I came here with my parents. My mom was actually born in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. My grandparents are Jamaicans, but they went to work on the Naval Base, American Naval Base in Cuba and so I am a part Cuban, part Jamaican. My mom is Cuban and my father is Jamaican and my father is a Jamaican descendent—a Maroon.

**00:34:36**

If you have read up on the Maroons—

**00:34:38**

**SW:** Can you talk a little bit about the Maroons?

**00:34:41**

**HG:** Well the Maroons were a group of people brought over from Africa—this is the short story of it—and they were brought over on the ship like all the other slaves who were brought over but

they never became slaves because they would not have it. They did not listen to a slave master and so they were thrown off the boat and left to die or survive. And survive they did. And it's a lot of history about the Maroon culture, it's similar to the Geechee Gullah people. That's all along the water coast there are groups of people that inhabited the island and that's when I say it's in my DNA—farming and fishing were their survival and hunting. So when their slave masters or their boat owners thought that they threw them off and they ran up in the hills and they were going to die, no, they went up in the hills and on the water coasts and they fished, and they farmed, and they hunt. And they became a large army and overturned I think if I'm not mistaken the British or something. I have to go back in my history [*Laughs*] and survived and became a strong group of people that did not become slaves.

**00:36:30**

They liked to own—they're entrepreneurs. Now we—now what we—back in the islands we have a word to call it either peddling or iglering, but it's really owning your own business. They don't care if it's just bananas or mangos or some other fruit, they just believe in growing and reaping their crops and selling it and eating from the land and being independent. They're not a group of people that can really deal with too much pressure, they like freedom. That's the main word—freedom. They like to be free to do what they want to do when they want to do it at whatever time they want to to do it. And I sure do have the DNA very strong because that's what I am.

**00:37:27**

**SW:** And just—just so I know for sure, how did your parents actually meet?

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**HG:** Uh—

00:37:35

**SW:** Do you know how they met?

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**HG:** My parents—my mom [*Laughs*]  
—my mom actually had me when she was seventeen years old when she came back home from Cuba—they came back from Cuba to Jamaica and she was going to sewing school. And I think my father was either a neighbor to the lady who taught sewing or related to her in some way. And so he was older than my mother. And so first she got pregnant with me before they got married, but then they got married. And then they were six children out of the marriage.

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My mom is eight-six years old and she's still alive. My father passed away when he was eighty-five. But I have an aunt that's right now—is vacationing in Jamaica, my father's sister. She lives in Toronto and she is going to be 103. And she is still able to travel every year. She spends about two or three months with one of her daughters in Jamaica. They go on vacation and then she comes back up. She used to spend summers in Toronto, Canada and the winters in Jamaica but they're not able to do that anymore, so she just takes vacation—still alive. We're from a long, long living group of people.

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Let's see, what else?

**00:39:22**

**SW:** Oh what are your—I would like to know—could you tell me some of the names—your—your parents’ names and your aunt’s name for the record?

**00:39:28**

**HG:** Okay, my mom is Hazel Cherrington. She’s a Cherrington for her maiden name. She was married Roberts. My aunt Amy, she was a Cherrington and she got married to Marshall. I have I would say maybe a good—I might be exaggerating a little bit but there might be about 500 of our generation cousins and aunts and uncles and grand-this and grand-that still alive and then we adopt friends into the family that becomes a part of the family. So we have a lot of generations, all over the world—England and Canada, Jamaica, other islands, and all over the US, lots of us.

**00:40:29**

**SW:** And what was your father’s name?

**00:40:31**

**HG:** Oh my father is Frank Roberts—Frank Obadiah Roberts. So I’m coming from a generation of Roberts.

**00:40:41**

**SW:** And Haylene why did they choose Atlanta or why did they leave Jamaica in the first place and why did they end up choosing Atlanta?

**00:40:51**

**HG:** No, well when we came to the US we came into New York. Yes, my uncle was seventeen. They—Cubans back in those days they were not under Castro, it was not communist. They were born on the American naval base, so at the time you could—they were born in Cuba but they were actually working for America, and Cuba and America had relationships at the time. So you had the freedom to travel from Cuba to the US without a problem.

**00:41:33**

So when my—when my mom—when my parents came to the—to this country they actually just came with their birth certificate, yeah, that's all they needed to show that they were Cuban-born. And—and they were able to come in without a problem. I had no say in the matter. I came here as a child, so but my father was an entrepreneur as I said, a Maroon tribe, and he was a shoemaker. Yes, and but my uncle came to the US when he was seventeen and because we're such a close knit family that's how it goes. One comes. The other one sent for the other one and the generation that—they just come up in—in droves. We moved like that. Once it's conducive to a family member and we send invitations out to the family then everybody may agree, "Oh yes. This is where I would like to be," so that's how it went.

**00:42:44**

**SW:** And what—what is your uncle's name that your—your mother's brother who—?

**00:42:47**

**HG:** Samuel Cherrington. He passed away at the age of eighty-nine last year—last year February I think of 2012. He went in the service, got injured, and broke his leg in about three places. He got out of the service with honorable discharge and was possibly the first and only

black service station and mechanic shop he became a mechanic and he was in Jamaica, Queens. That's where he started out at a very young age and had a very, very successful mechanic and filling station for many, many years until he retired in Florida down in Orlando, Florida to be with his sister. One of my siblings lived in Orlando and my mom went down to be with her and when my dad got sick, she's a nurse and so they moved there and my uncle, well like I say, we all follow each other, so a group of us moved to Florida as well. We lived in several different places in Florida. I did myself, I am also a nurse, so I lived in Naples, Florida, Fort Myers, Florida, Fort Lauderdale for quite a number of years but we all came into Atlanta to start out with at a family reunion and fell in love with Atlanta and just moved and then spread out from there onward.

**00:44:50**

**SW:** And so you were telling me you are a nurse but I think on the phone you said you also worked as a lithographer. Can you talk about some of the things that you did before you ended up with this garden here?

**00:45:01**

**HG:** Yes, well I've always had a garden. But my husband and I inherited a printing shop from his parents in Jamaica so we left from Jamaica in our twenties after having children and we went back home to Jamaica to operate the printing business. We became very successful and after a while maybe about three or four or five years we decided to come back. As a matter of fact it was leaving from Jamaica to the family reunion in Atlanta that brought us to Atlanta because we just came to a family reunion, fell in love with it so much, packed up the printing business in Jamaica and came back to Atlanta.

00:46:03

Well when—when I became a printer or owning a printing business I was really not familiar with printing. You know it was just inherited. Because we were so successful with the printing business I decided that anything that I want to know or learn to run my business successfully I need to go to school for it. I'm what you call a school freak, I love school.

[Laughs] I go to school for—I would say I'm sixty-eight now and I—I've not been out of any kind of school for more than eight years of my entire life. I go to school for any and everything that I want to know. I'm always learning, always trying to do, you know, research. So anyway, I went and took up lithography for about years and became a full-fledged printer.

00:47:15

So when I opened—while I was in school I opened a printing business here in Atlanta and became the second largest triple minority print shop, female, black, island person—Jamaican. I printed for the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, Georgia Power, the Atlanta Gas Light, and a host of different large churches. I was the sole printer for my conference, printing for the Seventh Day Adventist Conference here South Atlantic, and I still have the tide envelopes that I designed many years ago sitting in the aisles in the church. I did a whole lot of things—very, very resourceful.

00:48:21

I—like I say, I like to learn and so work is you know—it doesn't become hard to me because I just do what I like.

00:48:31

**SW:** And—oh sorry.

00:48:33

**HG:** That's it.

00:48:33

**SW:** Can you tell me just a couple of things? Tell me your husband's name and did you guys—you guys met in New York?

00:48:39

**HG:** Yes, he came to school. He—his parents were furniture manufacturers, mahogany furniture manufacturers and they just sent him to school here. They—they didn't come to live here themselves. They were quite comfortable manufacturing furniture. And at one time they had one or two furniture stores in every parish in Jamaica. There are fourteen parishes and so there were one or two or three furniture stores because they were able to manufacture it, you know his father manufactured along with the different—. He taught people how to carve and you know build furniture(s) especially out of mahogany and mehol, real good quality furniture(s). So many people are still in their trade right now from learning from my father-in-law and he's still alive. He's ninety-five years-old and my mother-in-law is ninety-two.

00:49:55

**SW:** And what are their names and what is your husband's name?

00:49:58

**HG:** Winston Green and Virginia Green is his mother and Alfred Green is his father, yeah.



00:50:12

**SW:** And what was the name of the printing business in Jamaica and the—the name of your business here?

00:50:17

**HG:** Okay, when we—when we obtain the printing business in Jamaica it was called Brer Graphic Printers. Don't know how they come up with that name, it sounds like Brer Rabbit. We kept the name Brer Graphic Printers because it was already established but when we came to Atlanta and I was finished with printing school and opened here we were called Speed-O Graphic Printers. And we moved back down to Jamaica after we retired from here in 1998 after the Olympics and we transferred the name Speed-O Graphic Printers to Jamaica as well and did well. And I guess because we had been away from Jamaica so long we cannot get accustomed to so much vacation, it's just too much so we always find ourselves coming back. So that's what we did.

00:51:26

**SW:** Haylene I'm wondering, you said—so after you—you finished with the printing business is that when you—I just want to get a sense of time—is that when you decided to start the—the garden that you have in the West End after the printing business or was it at the same time?

00:51:43

**HG:** Oh well I always had a garden. I even when—I went into real estate so I have so much *[Laughs]* after we retired from printing here went back to Jamaica and then decided to come back. I think my son called us back and he said, “Come, the real estate business is really

booming. And you know all of us can get together,” and the entire family—cousins, the entire family decided to go into real estate investment. For a while it was a good—good idea. Then the bottom fell out. So I had gardens because I had a lot of property. I was owning quite a bit of property but when the real estate bottom fell out I decided to you know, narrow the living field and we moved into a condo and I leased property from the Athens—it’s Georgia, it’s not Georgia State. I attended Georgia State—what—University of Georgia in Athens. They, in DeKalb County, they had property, I inquired and inquired and inquired because I had to find somewhere to grow and I was led to the University of Georgia over there. They had some property on Wild Cat and I leased several plots for about three years. And that’s where I did my farming until my sister acquired this land in West End. And then that’s where I am at the present time.

00:53:56

**SW:** And how many acres is—how big is it, can you tell me like the—?

00:54:01

**HG:** No, it’s not acres. It’s just one acre with the business on it, but the US Department of Agriculture came up with if you have a tenth of an acre of land that you can produce on you are a farmer. And I have about I would say a good half acre, maybe a little more that I am growing on. And we can sustain ourselves on it if the weather permits. **[Laughs]**

00:54:45

**SW:** This rain.

00:54:46

**HG:** This rain, we love the water. It does good for me because I don't have to pay a water bill but at the same time it's a little bit too much. So there are the trees that love it. I have figs, my fig trees they're just bearing in abundance. They're not as big as they are normally because there's so many of them. My persimmon tree, my persimmons were destroyed because of the rain. They came in and bore and got rot. My muscadine vine is doing very well. My grape vine is not doing so well. I have to do something about that. I did not get a good crop with my squash, my zucchini or my pumpkin or my crookneck. I didn't get—the okras had a late start but they are now bearing out of them—. If you can eat okra leaves let me know because I have the most beautiful large okra leaves, very pretty from the rain. Oh my mint and my herbs, well not my thyme, not my oregano, not my um, rosemary but my mint, the—the running mint, they love the water. What else—my hibiscus is doing very well. I have watermelons. They had a late start but they're coming. My berries too much water, like I say, well my sweet potatoes are doing—seem to be doing okay but the okras they are oh, huge. **[Laughs]** What else?

00:57:06

**SW:** Well I guess I'm out of questions for you but if—is there anything else that you want to add that you think is important for this interview, anything I didn't ask you that maybe I should have?

00:57:19

**HG:** Well, I would like for you to ask me **[Laughs]** do you want some money to continue with your program? I would love to get some grants and I would like to get some investors and I would like to get a larger property and I would really love if our people would take more interest

in farming or gardening or learning to produce for themselves to sustain themselves with healthy food. I really wish and I'm going to try my ever-best as much as possible to encourage them and teach them about farming, our culture, to let them see it's not as hard as they may think. They don't have to have a lot of land. You could grow in containers. I'm teaching container gardening. I'm teaching at different senior centers and bringing tours. I want to have an agri-tourism business going so people can come and watch to see tropical plants that they never—they only read about or never even heard about. I am—I am in need of land and money and volunteers, volunteers, volunteers. That's what I need.

**00:59:10**

**SW:** Is it all coming out of your pocket?

**00:59:12**

**HG:** At the present moment it is. Yes, I am hoping that I'll find some way to get some grants or do some fund-raising from the things that we produce by selling them at the market. We might be able to turn the money over or someone would just take an interest in what I do and decide that well, there are lots of empty lots sitting vacant around here and maybe we can use it for the area. If ten percent of the people especially in the West End decides to plant a garden they will be able to feed all the others because there are a lot of land around the West End that are not being used wisely.

01:00:14

**SW:** Do you see other people in the West End since you've been teaching parts of the community about what you do and feeding them in a sense, do you see people trying to pick that up themselves in the West End?

01:00:28

**HG:** A few, as a matter of fact, I had a woman come into visit my sister to do some business with my sister today all the way from North Carolina and she asked could I give her some of my plants? So although I didn't want to I went ahead and did anyhow because she's my sister's friend. **[Laughs]** And so she wanted—I had a couple of butterfly bushes and she was in love with my purple butterfly flowers. And so I gave her a pot of that and I gave her some poppy—my nice yellow plants, pulled-up. I gave her some seeds. I gave her some eucalyptus and she was trying to get a whole lot more from me **[Laughs]** but I decided that well, you know I need it for teaching and so what I did politely was tell her each time I started giving I said, “You know I bought this from such and such a place, I bought this from such and such a place,” hoping that she will get the message. **[Laughs]**

01:01:54

I'm just happy about growing and I'm just really—and—and it's a therapy. It does well for me. It really keeps me from worrying about things that does not need to be worried about.

01:02:09

**SW:** Haylene I'm all done with my questions but there's one thing I do want to ask. What kind—what—your sister's name and what is the name of her business that she runs, what kind of a business is it?

**01:02:21**

**HG:** Yes, my sister and brother-in-law and nephew, their son, they operate West End Community Business Center and my company is the West End Community Urban Garden Nursery. It's Claudia Knight, Stephen Knight, and Odossa.

**01:02:47**

**SW:** Great.

**01:02:51**

**HG:** Let me see if I have—.

**01:02:55**

**SW:** Well I don't have any more questions for you. You've been really kind with your time. If there is anything else you want to add please feel free.

**01:03:03**

**HG:** Just encouragement—encouraging as many females young and old as possible, get going with your garden. You can grow herbs and you can just specialize in herbs on your porch, on your deck, on your fire—fire—what is it called?

**01:03:29**

**SW:** Fire escape.

01:03:30

**HG:** Fire escape, in your little plot of land, or in boxes, you could build little shelves and plant anywhere you can have sunlight, air, and water—you can grow.

01:03:50

**SW:** There is also one thing I wanted to ask you and both Ceci and Jamila brought it up last night that you know it's—it's people sometimes when they go to a market and they see a woman sitting they'll say, "Where is the farmer at," and she'll be standing right there. But the other thing that Jamila and Ceci talked about was you know we're some of the very few black farmers that you see at the market and sometimes people will go up to them and say, "Oh, is this—is this a food justice project?" Like they won't—they're not used to seeing in the—in their—in the market seeing a black farmer. Do you think that it's—it's a rare thing? Are you seeing more people in the black community getting interested? I'm just curious. I thought that was interesting that they brought that up yesterday.

01:04:37

**HG:** Yes, what I found out and this is my own opinion, there are not many black farmers at the moment especially where we're farming in the West End because it's not a lot of farmland. It's not huge. It's just you—we would more or less call it a garden. We are farmers. But we grow a garden, kitchen garden or just a small garden. The—there are more black farmers, female out in the rural areas, but I find out that one of the reasons that you don't find as many black female farming is because they grew up farming as a—not as a—as a pleasant thing. They were made to farm. And once they were able to—once they were matured and able to get away from the country they didn't want to farm anymore.

**01:06:12**

Some of them they're afraid of bugs. Some it—in these modern days do not want to get their hands dirty. And the majority it's because they either heard stories about slavery, picking cotton, they themselves have picked cotton as a child, living on a farm growing up and want to get away from what their grandparents and great-grandparents did, but it is becoming—it is becoming more—it's recycling itself. It's coming back around again where—where people are getting more educated and more aware of healthy eating and to eat real healthy you have to really grow yourself or have friends and family or know other people that is farming, because if you don't then you really don't know what you're eating.

**01:07:29**

Then there are others who grow their gardens just for the family and friends, so they're not commercially doing it as a business. And like I said, it is—it is becoming more prevalent. And it will keep on growing as we enlighten people more to what is good for them.

**01:07:56**

**SW:** And six children, what are their names?

**01:08:01**

**HG:** My children, okay no, I have five children—

**01:08:05**

**SW:** There were six siblings, okay.



01:08:07

**HG:** Six siblings. My—my oldest son is Winston, Jr. My daughter next is Anna—Anna Marie, and then I have real twins, Michelle and Marsha, and then I have a son that came ten years after the twins and that's Mark Green.

01:08:34

**SW:** Wow, do any—do they help you farm at all? Do they help with the garden?

01:08:40

**HG:** [*Gestures*]

01:08:40

**SW:** No.

01:08:42

**HG:** No children or grandchildren took after their mother. No one likes farming. They're afraid of bugs. And they're afraid of dirt and wetness and [*Laughs*] creepy crawlies. No, they're—they—they took after their dad. He was born and raised in Kingston. I was born and raised somewhat in the country in Port Antonio, so I can't find one of my children or my grandchildren that have any interest in growing. But as they all got older they turned the tide on me. Now they are the ones telling me what nutritious value the fruits and the nuts and the vegetables have. And everybody is eating naturally but they don't want to grow it so they come to me or they go and buy it from other farmers. But although they're not farming themselves they all take an interest in eating healthy.

**01:10:00**

When I was telling them as children, they didn't understand but now they do understand, everybody is seeking that healthy eating.

**01:10:11**

**SW:** Well Haylene I wanted to say thank you. This has been really fun to sit with you and listen to your stories. I appreciate your time.

**01:10:17**

**HG:** Thank you, thank you.

**[End Haylene Green Interview]**