

Mississippi Narratives
Prepared by
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Eugenia Weatherall

Foreword: Aunt Eugenia Weatherall is a tall, erect, high brown negro woman. Her accent is different to that of most of the negroes and one may tell before she speaks of the fact, that she has received an education above that of the other negroes of the community, and especially of her age and time. Her health is excellent and she attends to all of her household duties with the spryness of a person many years younger.

"Of cose, Miss, I was not born until 1863, but slavery hadn't been done way with then, it was not until the 'Mancipation was signed by Mr. Lincoln that we was freed. Now, I dont remember much myself since I was so little but I know what I was told 'bout it all."

"My parents was named Anderson and Catherine Bramlett and they belonged to de Bramletts what lived in Lee County. My mother was born on that very place and so was I. My grandmammy was sold a slave in Tuscaloosa Alabama. My daddy never was a field hand. He was as smart as they make them and worked 'round de lot all time as handy man. 'Sides he could weave baskets, chair bottoms, make horse collars, and axe handles. I guess the reason he was so smart to do these kinda things was because his father was a Choctaw Indian. Lawd, he wasn't scared of nothing either. He never was afraid of the overseers whipping him cause he was known to be the best shot any where in the country and they was scared if they hurt him he would get them. White folks was always our friends anyway. None of us ever did anything to make them not like us. My mother was part Indian too, way back some of her folks was an Indian. My grandmammy's nose was hooked down just like the pictures you see of Indians in the georgraphy."

"I was born during de midst of de war. My mother useter put me to sleep telling me 'bout de soldiers going through our place and 'bout de fierce battles what was fought there where we lived at and when I was a child we useter go out and look for bullets on de ground and find lots of them. They said too that General Grant spent the night about five miles from where we lived."

"After the war we moved up to Union County near a place they call Myrtle. I started going to school up there when I was six years old. My father and some other colored men built the school out of logs. They useter say that was the first negro school in that county. I 'spect it was the first in this part of the state, don't you? My daddy couldn't read and write but he believed in education and I went as far as the schools did in those days. Then we was thrown with the white folks on the place in our work and they was smart, they all went to colleges like Blue Mountain and the others. I been used to smart white folks all my life and niggers what knowed a little something. That's the reason I don't like where I live now. I ain't never liked it at all. Guess it's just the atmosphere I don't like. But I is been here a long time and I guess I'll die here. I ain't got but one of my brothers an sisters living now, dat's John Emmanuel, and he lives too far off to see."

"I married in 1883 to old William here. He was a preacher, never knowed how to read and write but I taught him how. He's crazy now and I have to watch him like you would a child. When we married we had the biggest kinda wedding. That's one thing they believed in in them days. White folks had regular shows when they married and I copied my wedding dress from one of the white women's that married 'fore I did. My dress was Canary yellow and had big white bows down the front. That was my wedding dress, my infair dress, the one I wore on the next day was a fancy suit made of blue silk. You shoul've seen them. Me and Weatherall has had eight children but ain't but four living now. We sent them all to school tho' and they is doing well. Ted is in Atlanta and is a nurse in one of the government hospitals there. He has gone as far as he could go in his work and just 'bout runs his end of the hospital. William Carrol and Potaphar lives in Detroit and works at de Ford plant. Charlie is a preacher in Detroit. He can do most anything else too and when he aint preaching he is paper hanging or doing some other kind of work in decoratin'.

"We haven't got but one grand child and he is blind. He goes to the school for blind children in Lansing, Michigan and is just as smart as he can be. Why his teacher carried him befo' a bunch of white folks the other day and had him play the piano for them. He can weave too, just like his great granddaddy!"

"William hadn't preached in a long time. 'Fore he learned to read I would teach him de text and he could get up and preach on it for hours. I knows de Bible from cover to cover tho'. I'se read it through nigh on to 30 times, dat's a record, ain't it?"

"Sure I member's bout the Ku Kluxers but we never had no trouble with them. Why one of my cousin used to make de robes and masks they wore and I have watched them dress up in them many a time.

We behaved our selves tho' like we should've and then if we hadn't I believe they would a been afraid of my daddy shootin' them. He sho' had the reputation of being the best shot anywhere!"

"I think I is got a record. I ain't done a thing I would be glad to get up and tell my maker 'bout. I studies the Bible, I minds my business and I ain't never done nobody no evil, that I knows of. I hopes I'm heading for the promised land!"

"Did I tell you 'bout my grandma runnin' away from the blood hounds? Well, twas three times she done it. She was living in Tuscaloosa then and it was fore she was sold to the Bramletts. I is forgotten who twas she belong to then but I is heard her call de marster, Marse Fred. He was a regular slave trader and my grandma was born on his place. He sold niggers just like I do chickens and eggs. My grandma was right peart and had a head of her own even when she was a young gal. She tried to run off from Marse Fred and he sont the blood hounds after her. They called them nigger hounds in those days and the first time she run off it twaren't long fore they cotch her. They didn't do much to her that time but just put her back to work and tell her she better not try that stunt again. She was set on running away tho' and it wasn't very long fore she tried it again. This time she got away from the blood hounds and hid out til she got hungry and then come creeping back beggin' fore mercy from de marster. He didn't give her much mercy tho' but just sent her to his whippers and they put stripes on her back with the big lashes they had. That made her so mad that she was more 'terminated than ever and this time she runned off over on the ferry across the black Warrior and hid out. Some of the patrollers found her tho and carried her back and that time cured her cause when Marse Fred saw her he took her out to the fodder block, that was where they crushed feed for the stock, and showed her where they put men who disobeyed they marsters. They would let the block down on them til it most nigh crushed them to death. He told her he was gwineter put her down there and try her out but she was so scared and cried and begged so hard he told her if she would promise never to try to run off again he would let her go. She did and he let her off and after that she was one of the best niggers on the place."

"'Nother thing I thought of after you left the other day was bout my Uncle Ned. He was a Baptist preacher and as good a one as you've ever heard. He couldn't read or write but one of the women on the place would read him his text and parts of the Bible and he would remember it and would preach grand sermons, a whole lot better than they do now days. Folks then had more religion than they do now. I feels like I am living out of my element now with the carryin' on the niggers round here do. I am down right shamed of it. Why our white folks back where we come from was all smart, had been to college, you know we was close to Blue Mountain, and they taught us all the good things we ought to know. I don't believe these niggers here know anything cept meanness. But to get back to Uncle Ned. He was shining when he could have a babtizing. He had his own special style. He and the head deacon would carry the person out in the water that they was gwineter babtize and have all de rest stand around in a circle and shout and sing. They would be quiet til the person comed out of the water and then the noise would start in right. One time they carried a big man in who must have weighed about 240 pounds and he was so heavy he carried thom both down with him and all you could see for a minute was, footses as black as night and what scrambling'! Youve never seen de like. De shoutin' sure started

up right then and if it hadn't been for some of the other men folkses they would've all drowned like rats. That was one more big day for the all."

"Well, I is got to go long now and see what old Weatherall has been up to. I has to look after him like he was a baby, cept he is more trouble. And he just won't behave himself at all. Lawzee me!"

Interviewer: Unknown

Transcribed by Ann Allen Geoghegan